

## **Refugees also have Rights !**

**Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon and Jordan  
EMHRN Mission 17-28 September 2000**

Report based on a mission of inquiry by Mohammed Tahri and Maria de Donato

## **Les Réfugiés ont des Droits aussi !**

**Les Réfugiés Palestiniens en Jordanie et au Liban  
Mission du REMDH les 17-28 septembre 2000**

Rapport basé sur une mission d'enquête écrit par Mohammed Tahri et Maria de Donato

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Secretariat of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN)  
Wilders Plads 8 H  
DK-1403 Copenhagen K  
Denmark  
Tel:+45 32 69 89 12  
Fax:+45 32 69 89 01  
E-mail: [msh@euromedrights.net](mailto:msh@euromedrights.net)  
Web: [www.euromedrights.net](http://www.euromedrights.net)

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Copenhagen, mai 2001  
Secrétariat de Réseau euro-méditerranéen des droits de l'Homme (REMDH)  
Wilders Plads 8 H  
DK-1403 Copenhague K  
Danemark  
Tél: +45 32 69 89 12  
Fax: +45 32 69 89 01  
E-mail: [msh@euromedrights.net](mailto:msh@euromedrights.net)  
Web: [www.euromedrights.net](http://www.euromedrights.net)

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*Our warmest thanks go to all the people, and local and international organisations, who enabled us to carry out our work under the best conditions possible.*

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## **CONTEXT OF THE MISSION**

This report has been compiled at the request of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) on the basis of missions carried out in Lebanon and Jordan by Ms. Maria de Donato, head of the Legal Department of the Italian Council for Refugees and member of the EMHRN, and Mr. Mohammed Tahri, lawyer and member of the EMHRN. The purpose of the missions was to study the Palestinian refugee situation in these two countries with regard to international legislation relating to refugees and human rights.

The missions were carried out in Lebanon from 17/09/2000 to 22/09/2000, and in Jordan from 22/09/2000 to 28/09/2000. During this time, interviews were conducted with representatives of the authorities of the host countries, refugees, representatives of the popular committees of the camps and communities of Palestinian refugees, representatives of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), representatives of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), representatives of the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC), and representatives of NGOs and humanitarian and human rights defence associations.

It must be pointed out that it wasn't possible to cover every aspect of the refugee situation in its entirety, given the brevity of the mission and the abundance and diversity of sources of information.

## INTRODUCTION

Any observation of the situation of Palestinian refugees faces a two-fold problem: firstly, the long period of exile with all that has happened (wars, massacres, displacement); secondly, the obscurity surrounding the legal status of Palestinian refugees, in particular, the absence of legal mechanisms and instruments to ensure the protection of Palestinian refugees in their host countries, as opposed to other refugees who do benefit from this protection within the framework of the Geneva Convention and the High Commission for Refugees.

To understand this situation better, we present the testimony of a refugee:

*'My parents fled Palestine in the summer of 1967, taking refuge in Beirut, where I was born in October of that year. My father, who was an influential figure within the Al-Fatah commandos, had decided to follow Yasser Arafat to Jordan. After Black September in 1970, my father followed Arafat to Lebanon.*

*My mother and I stayed behind in Amman. When I started school, I soon realised that I was different from other people. Because no-one in my family was registered as a Palestinian refugee with the UNRWA, I couldn't be enrolled either as a pupil from abroad or as a fully-fledged pupil in my own right. My family, like all the other displaced families of 1967, had never been able to register with the UNRWA because this entitlement only existed for the Palestinian refugees who had fled in 1948.*

*After the death of my mother in 1980, I left for Lebanon. I was unable to live with my father, so I lived in Beirut in the Burj El-Barajneh refugee camp.*

*I survived the Israeli bombings and the horrors instigated by Amal Shia and his militia, who terrorised the Palestinian refugees, subjecting them to cruelty before killing them. No exceptions were made, not even for children. I saw photos of children made to eat dog by militiamen. I survived the war but I hadn't yet found peace.*

*I was born in Beirut, but no document existed to verify my past. I wasn't entitled to register with the UNRWA, or the HCR, or the Lebanese authorities either as a refugee or as a foreigner. Not being registered meant that I didn't exist and that I had no way of claiming any rights because I had no status. Fact was, I was neither citizen, nor refugee, nor immigrant. I was nobody...*

*I am Palestinian but I have no homeland or government to recognize me as such. The Lebanese authorities have put up with me since birth, but they have not acknowledged my right to an existence. You cannot imagine the humiliation I face every day.*

*The Lebanese police have arrested me at least five times because I have no identity papers and, therefore, no documents authorising my being in Lebanon. The police picked me up in the street like a criminal, took away the money I had earned illegally as a baker's assistant and took me to the police station, where I had to stay until some friends - who were registered with the UNRWA - finally came and vouched for the fact that they knew me and that I lived with them in the camp.*

*When you don't have any rights, you can't ask for justice. I am continually at the mercy of others. Not being able to sign a lease means I can be thrown out onto the streets from one day to the next. Not being able to work legally means I have to work illegally and be exploited, with the constant fear that I could be sacked at any moment.*

*To marry my Lebanese wife I had to pay 750 American dollars to obtain a document from my district town hall - one that is usually issued to persons unknown. This document vouched for the fact that I was known and that I lived in the district, without making any mention of my Palestinian origins.*

*I thought that having this document would mean I wouldn't have any more problems. However, after the religious ceremony in front of the Sheik, when I presented the document before the civil court in order to register the marriage, I was informed that the document wasn't legally valid and that the marriage only meant something in religious terms.*

*When my wife became pregnant, I persuaded her to have an abortion because I didn't want to be selfish and consign my child to a life of hell. Given that the principle of patriarchy prevails in Lebanon, even though his mother would have been Lebanese, my child wouldn't have been recognized as Lebanese and so his fate would have been the same as mine. That was why my wife's father finally asked the Sheik for a divorce.*

*The Palestinian refugees in the camps cannot talk freely because they are afraid of losing what little assistance they receive from the authorities linked to the political movements in Lebanon, and above all, because they fear the pressures and controls systematically carried out by the Syrians. Many Palestinians have been taken off to Syrian prisons and never heard of again.*

*I no longer believe in the right to return or compensation. In any case, these things don't affect me, since the Palestinians of 1967 are not looked upon in the same way as the Palestinians of 1948 who, for their part, are registered with the UNRWA. Nobody is interested in us - the international community, the UNRWA, the authorities of the country in which we live, not even the Palestinian authorities themselves. In fact there isn't a single body that exists to take care of our rights.*

*I believe that we should be accorded a legal status and rights enabling us to live like other human beings. I just want to be normal, to have my right to exist recognized and to live in the same way that everybody else does.'*

Not only does this testimony reveal the sense of confusion experienced by many people in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and Jordan, it also highlights the different situations faced by a large majority of Palestinian refugees living in exile today, and particularly those in Lebanon. It helps us to understand in a very real way the everyday problems these people face as a result of their particular legal status.

Although these camps have long been established, rights as fundamental as the right to an identity and civil status are still far from enshrined.

This lack of recognition and legal protection has a disastrous effect upon the way in which these refugees live, to say the least. It's clear that they could only have ended up living under such inhuman and degrading conditions because they haven't been given any assistance, which has forced them to live off others.

One might well ask how this situation came to be. How come, after so many years, the international community hasn't been able to solve this problem, one which, the more it goes on, can only get worse and give rise to increasingly unacceptable human rights abuses ?

In order to answer this question, our study will first recall the chronological order of events leading up to the creation of the refugee camps, which, over time, have become over-populated and whose sanitation conditions have become more and more atrocious. From there, the study will look at the legal framework decreed by the international community regarding Palestinian refugees, together with the principal rights that the international authorities have recognized are theirs. By comparing these rights with what is actually implemented by the authorities of the different host countries, we will be able to see how far the the executive has succeeded in implementing decisions taken by the international community.

Finally, we will briefly review the effect it would have on the everyday lives of Palestinian refugees if the host countries were to implement these rights. This will help us to understand the daily humiliations that refugees have to face as a result of the legal status they have been assigned, leading to the following recommendations.

### **Recommendations**

We ask that the international community and the authorities of the host countries, in particular the European Community and its 12 partners from the South Mediterranean:

1. Promote and consolidate a policy of development with the host countries to improve the standard of living of the native population and that of refugees, thereby avoiding destabilisation in the region.
2. Enlarge the mandate of the UNRWA to ensure that refugees are protected, and promote the adoption of ad hoc regulations for all Palestinians, without discriminating amongst them.
3. Give financial support to the UNRWA so that it can continue to ensure assistance for the entire Palestinian refugee community
4. Reinforce legal co-operation between States and human rights organisations in order to initiate permanent dialogue between civil society, the institutions of the host countries in the region and the Palestinian refugee community resident in the host countries, and to ensure respect for human rights and the adoption of ad hoc legislation.
5. Promote the rights of refugees through permanent co-operation between NGOs with experience in the field and local NGOs and administrations in order to establish and encourage the exchange of information, consciousness-raising and legal training.

## 1 A REMINDER OF THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

It is estimated that around 3.6 million Palestinians are currently refugees, and that a good third of them live in 59 camps situated in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip<sup>1</sup>. This huge displaced population did not come about all at once. In fact, it's the result of three generations of refugees being forced to change camps and host countries in response to events impacting upon them over time. As we shall see, these events were not solely the various wars with Israel, but were also the result of problems caused by regional political instability and by the political decisions taken by certain Arab governments at the time of international events such as the Gulf War. Whatever the reasons, the fact remains that the situation of Palestinian refugees today is the result of a highly tormented and chaotic state of affairs that has been going on for nearly fifty years.

On May 15th 1948, in the wake of the British authorities leaving Palestine, the first Arab-Israeli war broke out. This conflict brought about a significant movement of populations emanating from the zones usually occupied by the Arab populations of Palestine, who were fleeing the fighting, and in their desperation, sought refuge in the countries most nearby.

Between April and August 1948, some 300.000 people from the urban and rural areas to the north of Palestine (Haifa, Acre, Sakad and Galilee) took refuge in Lebanon and Syria, whilst the Palestinian populations of Jaffa and the districts of Gaza and Beersheba took refuge in the Gaza Strip. Palestinians from the coast, including those living in the areas of Haifa, Jaffa, Ramallah and Jerusalem, fled towards the West Bank.

Between October 1948 and January 1949, some 150.000 to 200.000 Palestinians were expelled to Gaza, whilst about 150.000 remained in Israel and were granted Israeli citizenship.

After the armistice was signed in 1949 - apart from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which remained under the control of Jordan and Egypt respectively - Israel controlled virtually all the Palestinian territory which had hitherto been under British guardianship. This was a much larger territory than had been foreseen for the Jewish State in the 'Plan of Partition'<sup>2</sup>. Another result of the war was that, all in all, around 750.000 Palestinians were forced off their land to seek refuge in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

The same scenario was repeated a few years later in 1967, when the third Arab-Israeli war broke out, the so-called 'Six Day War'.<sup>3</sup> After the Golan Heights and the Quneitra region were taken by Israel, upwards of 115.000 further expatriates swelled the ranks of Syrian refugees in Damas and Dera'a.

This massive exodus was added to by some 162.500 Palestinians from the West Bank and 15.000 from the Gaza Strip; they were already refugees as a result of the 1948 war and once again found themselves in a position of insecurity, this time fleeing in the direction of Jordan. They were also joined by almost 240.000 (displaced) Palestinians from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip who, unlike the refugees of the 1948 war, now became refugees for the first time.

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<sup>1</sup> Annual report by the Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) 1 July 1998 - 30 June 1999. Note that there is considerable uncertainty surrounding the actual number of refugees.

<sup>2</sup> Resolution 181 (II) of 29 November, 1947 of the United Nations General Assembly on the partition of Palestine.

<sup>3</sup> Between the 5th and 10th June, 1967, the Israeli army carried out a preventive military attack to stop themselves from being surrounded by Arab countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq, supported by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Algeria, Libya and Sudan.

In 1970, the presence of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on Jordanian territory created a certain political instability. King Hussein of Jordan decided to wipe out this instability in one fell swoop by restricting the power and independence that the PLO had slowly but surely accumulated over the years. This decision was met with great hostility and the PLO opposed it. The Jordanian authorities took harsh repressive action in the face of every response during September of that year. It came to be known as "Black September" as a result of the 4.500 deaths and 10.000 people who were injured.

As a result of this repressive action, there was a further movement of refugees. The Palestinians who had fought with the PLO against the Jordanian authorities fled to Lebanon, where they found refuge and settled.

This Palestinian presence in Lebanon created a certain insecurity on the northern frontier with Israel. During the 1970s, in response to the raids on its territory by Palestinian commandos, Israel began carrying out reprisal attacks, mainly in southern Lebanon.

These interventions from abroad, added to by political discord within the country, sparked off a civil war in Lebanon that lasted from 1975 to 1991. During this time many camps were destroyed and their populations massacred. Among the most well-known of these massacres are the ones which took place after the PLO left Beirut in 1982, carried out by the Lebanese Christian Militia. These massacres are known by the names of villages which have sadly remained famous, Sabra and Shatila, where some 3000 deaths were recorded. Terrified that this kind of massacre might happen again, thousands of Palestinians moved on to camps which were much more remote.

Later, during the 'War of the Camps' which took place from 1985 to 1987, Amal Shia's Lebanese militia terrorised the Palestinian refugees living in the camps, aiming to wipe out once and for all the last vestiges of the PLO's presence in Lebanon. This time of terror also brought about mass displacement.

The migrations were not solely due to the bellicose tensions that existed within the region. They also came about because of conflicts that were taking place outside it. The Gulf War in 1991 also had a significant impact on migrations. In fact, one immediate consequence of the PLO's support for Iraq when it invaded Kuwait was that 400.000 Palestinians were expelled from Kuwait by way of reprisal.

In September 1995, 35.000 Palestinians were expelled from Libya as a result of Moammar Gaddafi's campaign against the agreements concluded between the PLO and Israel. Others who have been forgotten are the thousands of people who were displaced as a result of the civil war in Lebanon, and those who have been forced into exile again and who have had to leave Lebanon and Jordan for good to go and settle elsewhere, but are not allowed to return for a variety of reasons, mostly political.

## 2 A REMINDER OF THE LEGAL CONTEXT

### 2.1 The international legal framework

Palestinian refugees have a legal status that is very particular. Most of the international legal instruments applied for other refugees, determining the rights and obligations of States towards them, do not apply to Palestinian refugees; as a result, they do not come under the general system of legal protection in the way that other refugees do.

Following on from the proclamation of the birth of Israel on 11th December 1948, the United Nations General Assembly voted for Resolution 194 (III). Its paragraph 11 stipulates that, regarding Arab refugees, the General Assembly:

*'Resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for the loss or damage to property which, under principles of international law and in equity, should be made good by the governments or authorities responsible.'*

Note that although this resolution grants the right to return and compensation for harm done, it does not set out the criteria defining what a Palestinian refugee is.

This same Resolution 194 created the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) with a mandate to facilitate the repatriation, settlement and economic and social recovery of refugees, as well as the payment of compensation. Because it was impossible to find a political solution for authorising the massive repatriation of Palestinians, this Commission was unable to fulfil its task, and although it is still in existence today, it no longer has any real power as such.

Without doubt, the only international legal instrument that is truly capable of providing Palestinian refugees with an adequate framework for legal protection is the Geneva Convention of 1951 relating to the status of refugees.

Article 1 A of this Convention defines a refugee as anyone who

*'[...]owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a certain social group or political opinion, is outside his country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, if he has no nationality and finds himself outside his country of habitual residence[...], owing to such fear as described, is unable or unwilling to go back there.'*

It must be underlined that this definition of refugee does not centre upon types of refugees; it points to the presence of a quality in anyone who fears persecution for reasons based on an objective situation, and who, because of this fear, is unable or unwilling to return to his country of origin.

However, this Convention has not been accepted for Palestinian refugees.

In fact, as the preparatory work for this Convention got under way, the international community arranged for Palestinian refugees to be exempted from the benefits agreed by the Geneva Convention, and created a special UN organisation to look after the particular case of these refugees. This special body, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was created on December 8th 1949, on the basis of Resolution 302 of the United Nations General Assembly.

This was made possible thanks to the incorporation of exclusion clauses in the Geneva Convention. Article 1D of this Convention stipulates that the Convention need not apply to

those people who already benefit from the protection or assistance of a United Nations body or institution other than the HCR. Should this protection or assistance cease for whatever reason prior to the fate of these people having been settled conclusively, in accordance with the relevant resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, by rights they should benefit (ipso facto) from the Convention. Similarly, article 7 ( c ) of the Statute of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees stipulates that High Commission's mandate does not cover people who continue to benefit from the protection and assistance of other bodies or institutions of the United Nations. Finally, provision for the same type of exclusion was made in Article 1 paragraph 2 (i) of the 1954 New York Convention relating to the status of stateless persons.

The reason why the international community wished to exclude Palestinian refugees from the general system of protection for refugees and stateless persons is explained by its desire to see the Palestinian refugee problem treated as a direct follow-on from the decision adopted by the United Nations through Resolution 181 (II) of November 1947, concerning the partition of Palestine; the question of the Palestinian people was to receive special attention. For reasons which were entirely political, many countries, the majority of them Arab countries, were convinced that if the question of the Palestinian refugees corresponded to a definition that was general in character in the sense of the 1951 Geneva Convention, they would soon have been forgotten by the international community and treated as a matter of little importance.

Although the Arab League, through the Casablanca Protocol adopted in 1965, attempted to introduce basic criteria relating to the treatment of Palestinian refugees (right of abode, right to employment etc.), in practice, the Arab countries have hardly ever acknowledged any specific legal status for Palestinian refugees.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of these decisions, and because Palestinian refugees have been unable to exercise their right to return, they continue to be excluded from all the protection mechanisms and guarantees that other refugees generally have access to - because today, no agency or entity exists with a mandate to protect Palestinian refugees or ensure that their rights are taken care of, either at the international level or in those areas that are looked after by the UNRWA.

## **2.2 The UNRWA**

The UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees in the Near East, was set up on the basis of Resolution 302. Created as a temporary entity, its mandate is to assist Palestinian refugees economically and socially. For example, the organisation administers a programme of credit at preferential rates (soft loans) and manages specific aid programmes for vulnerable groups (women, children, disabled persons etc.) All these programmes are carried out in partnership with NGOs.

The United Nations General Assembly has renewed the UNRWA's mandate every three years since the time it was set up.

Today, the UNRWA represents the largest United Nations programme in the Middle East, with more than 22.000 employees, the majority of who are Palestinian refugees working in some 900 centres.

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<sup>4</sup> One of the reasons why no legal status has been defined for Palestinian refugees is that, for years, the PLO was opposed to their being accorded a status, be it as refugees or persons naturalised or resettled in a third country. This is because the PLO feared that such recognition would result in the international community no longer putting so much effort into finding a definitive solution to the Palestinian refugee question.

Through its regular programme, the UNRWA renders assistance to almost 3.600.000 Palestinian refugees registered in its zones of influence, that is, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Of these 3.600.000 refugees, some 1.100.000 live in 59 camps.

Since the 1990s, following on from the agreement of Madrid, the UNRWA has suffered a financial crisis because its budget has been reduced, making it very difficult for the UNRWA to carry out its mandate. Resources are now largely insufficient in face of the needs of an ever-increasing number of refugees. For example, in order to guarantee the schooling of some 500.000 students in 650 schools, the UNRWA has had to recruit teachers who are paid by the day. Moreover, as a way of coping with the insufficient number of classes, a daily rotation system is being operated in the classrooms. In some educational establishments, this rotation system is operated thrice over. These schools, built in the 1950s and 1960s, are in an advanced state of disrepair.

The consequences of this situation are obviously very serious as regards the quality of education provided, putting those who have no choice but to live under this system at a disadvantage.

The Palestinian community and the authorities of the host countries are very worried and interpret this reduction in funds as a sign that the international community is no longer prepared to keep up its responsibilities. Meanwhile the absence of any progress towards peace can only heighten the frustration of refugees, who no longer see any way ahead to a better future.

### **2.2.1 The UNRWA definition of refugee**

The United Nations General Assembly left it up to the UNRWA to define which categories of people were eligible for assistance. However, this definition has evolved over time.

According to the UNRWA, following on from the definition established in 1952, a Palestinian refugee is a person who lived in Palestine for at least two years before the 1948 conflict, who, because of the conflict, suddenly lost his home and means of support, and who, in 1948, found refuge in one of the countries where the UNRWA intervened. Anyone corresponding to this description, and his descendants, is entitled to help from the Agency in those areas where the Agency was set up to operate, that is, in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

In 1993, new rules were introduced in the wake of the UNRWA consolidating the directives relating to registration: according to the new rules, a Palestinian refugee was defined as anyone who lived in Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948 and who lost his home and means of support as a result of the 1948 conflict.

The majority of Palestinian refugees were able to register with the UNRWA, but all those who did not meet the strict criteria could not go on the list of persons eligible for assistance. In fact, because the large majority of refugees had had to leave their homes in a great hurry, many found themselves in the impossible situation of being unable to prove their identity or the fact that they had lived in Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948, two years before the 1948 conflict broke out. Nor could they prove that they had lost their homes and means of support.

In addition to this problem of lack of proof and documentation, it must be underlined that the UNRWA was unable to take a satisfactory census of the population. Indeed, at the time, it was very difficult to know where the refugees were settling, and when their whereabouts did become known, certain migration centres could not be approached because of a reigning insecurity. As a result, the lists drawn up by the UNRWA remained incomplete.

Many of the early refugees did not go and sign on with the UNRWA, ill-aware of the dramatic consequences that their failure to do so would have a few months later. This would not only affect them, but all the generations that followed, depriving them of any assistance during an exile which was to last decades.

In addition, people who had succeeded in finding work or who had some means of support did not register. Other refugees with nothing and no means of support registered more than once in different areas under false identities.

After the Six Day War in 1967, roughly 240.000 people who had been resident in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, now becoming refugees for the first time, were helped by the UNRWA when they arrived in the host countries. The UNRWA did not distinguish between the 1948 refugees and those who were displaced in 1967. To deal with the emergency, the UNRWA adopted temporary measures to help anyone in need of immediate assistance as a result of the 1967 hostilities; however, once the emergency was over, the displaced people of 1967 who had lost their homes and means of support were never given the chance to register with the UNRWA; this was because, under its own definition, the UNRWA was only able to assist the Palestinian refugees of 1948.

Another area of contention concerns the registration of women. According to the rules that have been set up, a woman on the UNRWA list who marries someone who isn't on the list automatically loses her status with the UNRWA. Her status remains 'frozen' for the duration of her marriage and can only be recovered in the case of divorce. Any children of such marriages automatically take on the same status as their father and are thus not looked upon as being registered.

Bearing in mind that, in order to benefit from UNRWA assistance Palestinians must first be registered, many women prefer not to declare their marriages so that they can live under less wretched conditions; they register their children as their brothers and sisters.

Discrimination of this kind practised by the UNRWA is no doubt linked to the prevailing system of patriarchy in Muslim countries. The question here is one of deciding whether the standards that have been set up for human rights should take account of regional cultural conditions or whether they should be applied universally.

Thus, because of the very strict criteria laid down by the UNRWA, many 1948 Palestinians and the people displaced in 1967 are not considered refugees under the UNRWA definition of refugee, even though they are refugees in the eyes of international law.

Indeed the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees and the 1954 New York Convention relating to the status of stateless persons should apply to those who do not benefit from the protection or assistance of a United Nations body or institution.

The problem of statistics is still unresolved because the criteria accepted by the various parties who compile them are not the same. Even the figures for the first census, which was carried out at the beginning of the 1950s, vary enormously. According to the estimates made by Arab countries, there were roughly 900.000 Palestinians; according to the Israelis, the number was 520.000, according to the UNRWA the number was 960.000 and for the United Nations Economic Survey Mission the figure was 726.000.<sup>5</sup>

In June 2000, a similar situation was repeated. For example, whereas the UNRWA indicates that roughly 376.472 Palestinian refugees live in Lebanon, this number is 450.000 according to the PLO and nearer 200.000 in the opinion of the NGOs we talked to.

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<sup>5</sup> A. Takkenberg 'The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law', 1997, pg.19.

The people we interviewed felt that, bearing in mind the fact that registration is linked to the right to return and compensation, no detailed and exhaustive census has been carried out because of the divergent interests of the parties involved.

Only one conclusion can be drawn from all this: there are no reliable statistics concerning Palestinian refugees.

### **3 LEBANON: THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

In accordance with the Lebanese Constitution, which makes unequivocal reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, Lebanon joined up to the International Pact relating to Civil and Political Rights on 3rd November 1972, and to the 1966 Pact relating to Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. On 12th November 1971, Lebanon also joined up to the 1965 Convention relating to the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

However, in spite of joining up to the Pacts and the Convention described above, Lebanon has not ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees. In Lebanon, issues connected with asylum, the sojourn and entry into and exit from national territory by foreigners is regulated by the law of July 10th 1962 by the Ministry of the Interior - Directorate General Security. Article 26, Chapter 8 of this law stipulates that anyone persecuted or condemned for political reasons by a non-Lebanese authority and whose life or liberty is threatened for these reasons can ask for political asylum in Lebanon.

Article 27 stipulates that the law of asylum can only be dealt with by inter-ministerial commission. This commission, presided over by the Minister of the Interior, is composed of leading figures from the Ministry of Justice and representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and General Security. Once this commission has reached a decision on something, there is no possibility of an appeal.

According to the HCR, this commission is not really operational. The truth is that in the past 25 years it has only ever met once to deal with just five cases of petitions. Moreover, these were special cases involving high-profile political figures, only one of who was recognized as a refugee.

On the basis of an agreement between the Lebanese government and the HCR, asylum seekers are assisted by the HCR which, after putting applicants through an internal process of interviews and verification, decides what status they should be accorded.

If the applicant is accorded refugee status, he receives a document from the HCR that prevents him from being expelled by the Lebanese authorities. It's rather like a document authorising the fact that his presence in the country will be tolerated. The document doesn't actually grant him the right of abode or the right to employment, or special assistance of any kind from the Lebanese government. In fact the only assistance the person could possibly call upon is the kind that is granted on a case by case basis by the HCR itself.

It goes without saying that the process described above would never be capable of dealing satisfactorily with the problems of all asylum seekers. After all, it leaves them with no means of support and no real acknowledgement on the part of the Lebanese government. It's clear that under these conditions the only possibility of making life easier for asylum seekers is to try and find them new homes in countries which will make them more welcome. This is why the HCR helps individuals in this situation relocate to the United States, Canada or Australia.

#### **3.1 Violation of the principle of non-refoulement**

According to the principle of non-refoulement provided for by the 1951 Geneva Convention, and indeed by other international instruments relating to human rights, no person must forcefully be sent back to a country where his life or his liberty might be endangered on grounds of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a certain social group or his political opinions, or where he might be exposed to the risk of torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

It is acknowledged that the principle of non-refoulement forms part of customary international law. Basically, what this means is that all States must respect the principle even if they have not ratified the Conventions relating to human rights or refugees.

One of the things established by Article 31 of the law of 10th July 1962, relating to the right to asylum in Lebanon, is that sending a person back to a country where his life or liberty is in danger is not permitted.

In practice, however, it has already happened that asylum seekers have been imprisoned in Lebanon for several years for not being in possession of identity papers or documents authorising them to be in the country. In contempt of the principle of non-refoulement, some of these applicants have even been expelled or sent back to their country of origin where their lives may have been at risk or where they may have been subjected to torture.

Lebanon applies the same rules to asylum seekers who are not in possession of identity papers or documents authorising them to be in the country as it does to all other foreigners in the country. No consideration is given to the fact that an asylum seeker may well have had to flee his country without having any time to gather up his personal effects.

After being arrested and judged by a court, after about a month's detention, the applicant is normally referred to the General Security Service of the Ministry of the Interior, which has the task of expelling him.

It would appear that the HCR has intervened time and time again to defend the interests of asylum seekers who are on the point of being expelled to countries where their lives are at risk.

### **3.2 The status of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon**

If the normal procedure for acknowledging the status of refugees does not function as a rule in Lebanon, one can well imagine that the situation only gets worse when it comes to the particular case of Palestinian refugees. Indeed it should be pointed out that these refugees are not subject to any of the procedures described above and that no special procedure has been set up to deal with their cases.

It's painfully obvious to say the least, but the Lebanese authorities have not deemed it useful to adopt special legal dispositions to define what status or rights should be granted to Palestinian refugees. The Lebanese authorities look upon Palestinians in the same way that they look upon all foreigners living in their territory; they take no account of the fact that Palestinians are different from other foreigners, that they are stateless and therefore unable to benefit from the protection of their State - for the very good reason that it doesn't exist.

In this respect, all the Lebanese authorities do is hand over registration documents, identity papers and documents authorising people to stay in the country; they don't so much as give the Palestinians the chance of being admitted to the procedure relating to the status of refugees that is provided for under Lebanese law.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> As a way of dealing with the significant Palestinian refugee presence on Lebanese soil, in 1959, the government set up the Department for Palestinian Affairs (DPA), which was to 'assist

Even if the Palestinians were granted access to these procedures they would have nothing more to gain anyway. Given that, as pointed out above, the governmental procedure doesn't function properly, the only thing they would have to gain would be a document saying that the government is prepared to tolerate their presence on Lebanese territory - a very paltry privilege, which, in any case, they already have de facto.

The Palestinian Community in Lebanon can be divided into four groups:

1. The refugees of 1948 who are registered with the UNRWA and the Lebanese General Security
2. The refugees of 1948 who are not registered with the UNRWA but are registered with the Lebanese General Security
3. The displaced persons of 1967 who, not having refugee status, cannot be registered with the UNRWA but are registered with the Lebanese General Security
4. Palestinians living illegally in Lebanon.

#### **4 PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON WITH REGARD TO THE INTERNATIONAL PACTS RELATING TO CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS AND ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS**

##### **4.1 Right to dignity**

After 50 years in exile, Palestinian refugees continue to live under atrocious conditions.

There are several reasons for this:

- The assistance given to refugees by the UNRWA and the PLO has greatly reduced over the past ten years. The resources put at the UNRWA's disposal by the international community have been whittled away over the years; meanwhile, the assistance that came from the PLO simply stopped when the PLO was forced out of Lebanon.
- The refusal of the Lebanese authorities to accept the settlement of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon deprives them of all access to self-sufficiency and development.
- The increase in the number of refugees in the camps, principally as a result of the thousands of refugees who returned after being expelled by the authorities of the Gulf States (the Kuwaiti authorities in particular) by way of reprisal for the PLO's support for Iraq during the Gulf war. This drastic increase has led to overpopulation in the camps, which, in turn has led to a severe deterioration in the living conditions there.
- General socio-economic conditions have deteriorated and the standard of living has gone down, brought about by an increase in the cost of living and higher unemployment.

According to the UNRWA, the refugee situation in Lebanon has been made very difficult not only because the level of assistance is fundamentally insufficient to deal with the needs of an increasingly large refugee population, but above all, because these refugees

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refugees, in collaboration with the UNRWA, grant them administrative documents for the purposes of identity, movement and residency, determine the sites of the camps and their management at local level, and regulate the flow of resources.' As an administrative organ of management and control linked to the Ministry of the Interior, the DPA was not concerned with protection, and its activities were principally concerned with the question of who was where.

have no access to the job market. Added to this pressure of not being able to work and become financially independent, there is the climate of mistrust which politicians and the local media have no hesitation in stirring up with the native population vis-à-vis the Palestinian refugees. They do this by reminding the Lebanese people on a daily basis of the potential dangers of allowing Palestinian refugees - who are looked upon as primarily responsible for the civil war - to settle and be naturalised in Lebanon.

Paradoxically, if nobody in Lebanon wants the Palestinians, for their part, Palestinian refugees dream only of returning home. Although both sides clearly wish for the same thing, this simply cannot happen at the moment because the Palestinians have no home.

Over the past 50 years, the number of Palestinian refugees has tripled; demographic growth and Palestinians returning from the Gulf States have caused this. Because of unemployment and because their access to work is restricted, most Palestinian refugees have no choice but to live concentrated together in the camps, where inactivity is the norm, with no sign of a better life on the horizon.

Currently, some 210.000 Palestinians, representing roughly 55% of the total population of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, live in the 12 official camps managed by the UNRWA.<sup>7</sup> Part of the land on which these camps have been set up is the property of the government. The other part belongs to private landowners who have leased the land to the Lebanese government. The UNRWA, for its part, is responsible for managing the camps.

There are also 11 'displacement centres'. These are the unofficial camps that were established spontaneously by the majority of Palestinians who, for one reason or another, couldn't register with the UNRWA. The UNRWA is not responsible for managing these camps.

In the majority of the camps, the number of dwellings is wholly insufficient; this means that a great many refugees have to live in decaying and unhealthy slums, which get worse and worse as time goes on. Maintenance work on the buildings can only be carried out with prior authorisation from the military authorities. According to the statements, it appears that such authorisation is never given, so it's really a question of a de facto ban. Bearing this in mind, and bearing in mind the decision of the Ministry of the Interior not to allow the camps to increase in size, no extra storeys can be added to the existing buildings; nor can the many buildings that were destroyed in the war be made good again.

Coming alongside a sizeable growth in population, this ban imposed by the Ministry of the Interior has resulted in huge overpopulation, forcing refugees to live in dwellings that are far too small in relation to the number of people living in them. It's not uncommon to see families of eight forced to live in a area of only 12 m<sup>2</sup>.

A Palestinian refugee living in the Rashidieh camp has stated that the Lebanese soldiers who control the entrances to the camps do not allow the refugees living there to bring in building materials of any kind (nails, planks of wood etc.) In cases where the ban is violated, the refugees are arrested and put in prison. One witness told of how he once tried to bring in some stones for the burial site of a member of his family; he was arrested and taken to the military barracks where he was held for 24 hours; he was only set free after paying a fine of \$165. The document he was given by the barracks in question when

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<sup>7</sup> The refugees are divided up in towns and villages and in the twelve camps as follows:

Tripoli : Nahr El-Bared, Beddawi

Beirut : Burj El-Barajneh, Shatila, Mar Elias, Dbayeh

Saida : Ein El-Hilweh, Mieh Mieh

Tyre : Rashidieh, El-Buss, Burj El-Shemali

Baalbeck : Wavel

he was set free made no mention of what he had done to get arrested or the fine he had paid.

The Department for Palestinian Affairs in Lebanon acknowledges that some 200.000 Palestinian refugees live in camps which are actually only capable of holding up to 50.000 people. Overpopulation is particularly striking at the Shatila camp, where around 20.000 people live in an area of 1,5 km<sup>2</sup>. In spite of the ban on building work, the refugees, not having sufficient space to live in, have set about building extra floors illegally. These new dwellings are often subsequently rented out to other Palestinians or sold on the basis of fictitious contracts which are legally worthless.

With the exception of the Rashidieh camp, the system for supplying drinking water is so dilapidated that there is a very serious risk of contamination. The same can be said for the dilapidated system for supplying electricity; it's ancient, with numerous electrical wires dangling haphazardly and dangerously over the roofs and walls of the buildings. In the Shatila camp, and at the displacement centre on the site of the old Gaza hospital, this ancient technology has been the cause of several serious accidents. Hygiene conditions are deplorable because of the humidity, neglect and the sheer lack of ventilation. Lastly, most of the walls of the dwellings still bear the hallmarks of war (traces of bullets, mortars and rockets).

Nevertheless, inside the camps there are popular committees representing the different political movements to which the refugees are affiliated. These committees have the role of identifying the problems that exist in the camps and suggesting improvements to the Lebanese authorities who, according to the statements, mostly just ignore them.

#### **4.2 Right of abode and the right to civil status**

Decree 319 of 2nd August 1962, relating to the entry, exit and right of abode of foreigners in Lebanon, stipulates that a foreigner who is not in possession of identity papers given to him by his country of origin has the right to live in Lebanon if he holds a document issued by the General Security Directorate and an identity card given to him by the General Directorate of Refugee Affairs in Lebanon.

Article 4 of this decree points out that people who come under this category should present themselves at the Directorate of General Security before the end of September 1962 in order to register their situation and receive the documents granting them abode. Following the dispositions of this decree, the majority of Palestinians in Lebanon were able to straighten out their position in the country and obtain identity cards from the Directorate General of Palestinian Refugee Affairs.

After the Cairo Agreement was signed in 1969 between the Lebanese authorities and the PLO, Palestinians received preferential treatment in relation to other foreigners. Many Palestians who weren't registered with the UNRWA and the Lebanese authorities received documents from the PLO, giving them permission to live on Lebanese territory. When the PLO left in 1982, these documents lost their validity. Palestinian holders of these documents were not able to register with the Lebanese authorities because from 1975, on the basis of dispositions of the Ministry of the Interior, identity cards and travel permits could only be handed over on presentation of UNRWA ration cards.

For this reason, thousands of Palestinians, being unable to register either with the UNRWA or the Lebanese authorities, found it impossible to get hold of identity cards or other such civil documents which normally would have been issued to them by their country of origin - which didn't exist. As a result, many of the Palestinians we interviewed stated that they were unable to get married or divorced because they weren't in possession of any civil documents.

Some Palestinians have managed to get hold of documents from different political factions, but these are legally worthless and are not recognized by the Lebanese authorities.

Palestinian refugees who aren't registered with the General Security are often arrested and detained for not having identity papers.

According to representatives of the popular committee of the Ein El-Hilweh camp, some displaced Palestinians from the camp were arrested and imprisoned for almost a month for not having identity papers. After they had paid fines of \$200 the Lebanese authorities wanted to expel them, but with no state willing to accept them, the authorities were forced to send them back to live in the camp.

It can happen that refugees who are arrested have to stay in prison until other refugees who are registered with the General Security or representatives of the popular committees go to the police station to vouch for the fact that the arrested persons are known and that they live in the camp with them.

Very often, refugees are given no documents in relation to their arrest. Two Palestinian refugees currently living in the Rashidieh camp showed us documents which make no mention of what laws they had broken or what sums of money they had handed over as fines.

This generalised absence of civil documentation leads to the most bizarre situations. For example, if a woman is registered as a refugee and marries a man who isn't registered, it is in her interests not to declare her marriage or the birth of her children so as not to lose her status as a registered person. This is why she will register her own children in an attempt to pass them off as her brothers and sisters. Apparently this happens everywhere, and many Palestinians buy false registration cards in order to live less wretched lives, knowing full well that they run the risk of being arrested by the security forces.

### **4.3 Freedom of expression**

According to the Department of Palestinian Affairs in Lebanon, Palestinian political leaders are very important people. They are prosperous, highly respected and can easily capture the interest of the press, and without being hassled too.

However, according to the people we interviewed, this freedom of expression is conditioned by the presence of the Lebanese security forces and the Syrian militia (especially in the north of the country) who control the entrances and exits of the camps, even though they are not allowed to enter the camps.

Indeed they say there are many Palestinians who have been arrested by the Syrian militia and transferred to prisons either in Lebanon or Syria. No-one has had any news of these refugees, most of who belong to pro-Arafat organisations.

For reasons of safety and so as not to suffer any hassle, Palestinians are afraid to express their opinions, not only because of the controls carried out by the Syrian militia and the Lebanese security forces, but also because of the different rival political factions which co-exist in the same camps.

### **4.4 Freedom of association**

Under Lebanese law, Associations and NGOs have to be registered under the names of Lebanese citizens. The founder members of any organisation or association have to be Lebanese. Similarly, they are supposed to employ Lebanese staff and provide services principally for the Lebanese people.

The Palestinians, who like all other foreigners in Lebanon are unable to organise and form associations, have to lodge their requests to set up associations with the Ministry of the Interior under the names of Lebanese citizens, whoever they may be.

In cases where the Lebanese authorities discover that the associations are not in fact Lebanese, they are forced to cease activities. In fact in 1997, the association for Vocational Training and Technical Committee was investigated after authorities from the Ministry of the Interior received an anonymous tip-off, suggesting that they were only working to help Palestinian refugees.

According to the representatives of the NGO Co-ordination Forum, there are 16 associations registered legally under assumed Lebanese names in Lebanon. Of these 16 associations, 10 are political and 4 are charitable Islamic organisations. There are around 15 non-legally registered associations working for the refugees in the camps.

#### **4.5 Freedom of movement**

Before 1969, the Palestinians needed special authorisation to leave the camps. This disposition was done away with in 1969 and since that time Palestinians have been able to settle and move around freely. However, it must be pointed out that anyone wanting to go in and out of the camps is subject to identity checks carried out by the Lebanese or Syrian army.

On 22nd September 1995, the Lebanese authorities introduced restrictions on the issuing of re-entry visas (decree 478) following on from Libya's decision to expel some 35,000 Palestinian refugees from its national territory.

The Lebanese authorities forbade refugees to re-enter Lebanon without a re-entry visa and, at the same time, asked their embassy representatives not to issue any new travel documents without prior authorisation from the Ministry of Interior on a case by case basis.

Because of these restrictions, many Palestinians who had been working in the Gulf States and who were then expelled by these countries after the 1991 Gulf War were unable to return because the authorities of these countries refused to issue them with visas, including those people who were in possession of Lebanese passes.

Meanwhile many others hadn't wanted to risk leaving Lebanon and emigrate to other countries for fear that they wouldn't be able to go back and find their families later on.

On 12th January 1999, the government of President Emile Lahoud announced that Lebanese passes should be looked upon as passports and that it was no longer necessary to obtain an exit and re-entry visa for each trip abroad. However, because decree 478 had been adopted a great many Palestinian refugees who worked or lived outside Lebanon were suddenly cut off from their families and were compelled to ask other countries if they could stay there long-term or be granted nationality or the status of a refugee or stateless person.

Today the 1948 refugees are automatically entitled to a travel permit valid for a maximum of five years. For their part, displaced persons are entitled to a travel permit valid for one year only. They all have the right to return to Lebanon.

Palestinians are forbidden from living in the areas near the frontiers, where they can only go with prior authorisation from the Ministry of the Interior.

#### **4.6 Right to employment**

On the basis of resolution 621/1, decree 6812 of 1995 , and decree 17561 of 18th September 1964, relating to the organisation of the employment of foreigners, Lebanese law introduced restrictive clauses vis-à-vis foreigners in order to protect the interests of the Lebanese people. The normative clauses make reference to political interests and the principle of reciprocity, before pointing out which jobs must be carried out exclusively by Lebanese citizens (more than 70 jobs!). The law makes provision for exceptions in the case of:

- foreigners who have lived in Lebanon since birth
- foreigners who are Lebanese in origin or have a Lebanese mother;
- foreigners married to a Lebanese person for more than a year;
- foreigners who are specialised in work which requires a qualification which is difficult to obtain in Lebanon.

Foreigners must obtain a work permit from the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs.

Despite the absence of a Palestinian State, the Lebanese legislator made no provision for any exceptions regarding application of the principle of reciprocity. As a result, Palestinian refugees are forced to work illegally and do unskilled jobs; mostly they work in small shops, usually within the camps, or do building or agricultural work (seasonal work) .

Palestinians who do fulfil the criteria outlined above should be entitled to be assimilated as Lebanese and therefore be authorised to work. However, this is made impossible because of the principle of reciprocity. Thus, Palestinian refugees, after more than 50 years in exile in Lebanon, have to compete in the jobs market with some 150.000 foreigners from Sri Lanka, 60.000 Egyptians and about 500.000 Syrian workers who, unlike other foreigners, do not need any prior authorisation from the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs.

According to the UNRWA 60% of Palestinian refugees live below the poverty line and 36% of them are not in a position to draw any income.

Palestinians are generally paid less than their Lebanese counterparts for the same kinds of work. Because their living conditions are so wretched, many young people give up school to work illegally in order to help their families. Others turn to drugs and crime or join the ranks of politico-religious fanatics.

#### **4.7 Right to education**

Palestinians are entitled to an education in the same way that Lebanese people are. Young Palestinian refugees can be enrolled in private or public Lebanese schools. However, when Lebanese schools and universities enrol their students they give priority to Lebanese candidates. According to the Department for Palestinian Affairs, around 20% of Palestinian refugees have so far had access to a Lebanese education.

In Lebanon the UNRWA ensures education in 73 schools (primary and secondary). The education in these establishments is provided free and they are attended by around 39.000 students.<sup>8</sup>

Lebanon is the only country where the UNRWA has opened 3 secondary schools, one at the Burj El-Barajneh camp, one at the Ein El-Hilweh camp and one at the Rashidieh camp.

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<sup>8</sup> Annual Report of the Commissioner General of the UNRWA 1st July 1998 - 30th June 1999, pg. 30.

Around mid-September of this year, students living in a refugee camp near Tripoli in the north of Lebanon demonstrated outside the offices of the UNRWA, demanding that they open another secondary school.<sup>9</sup>

The representatives of the popular committee of the Ein El-Hilweh camp stated that after they had protested long and hard, the UNRWA finally allowed the children of the people who were displaced in 1967 to enter the UNRWA schools; previously these children hadn't been entitled to be enrolled either in the UNRWA schools or Lebanese schools.

According to last year's UNRWA annual report, 42% of the UNRWA schools in Lebanon were built in the 1950s and 1960s and today are in a state of disrepair; there are also not enough of them. To cope with this insufficiency, the UNRWA has had to introduce a system of double rotation in the classrooms of 18 schools. In each small classroom in the UNRWA schools there are around 40 students.

Because class sizes are too big, students graduate from the elementary stage almost automatically in order to free up spaces for students coming up from the lower classes.

Since 1995, a fall in standards has been noted. Failure rates are now up to 40-50%. This is not only a result of the atrocious living conditions which the children face in the camps but also because of the lack of good teachers due to the fact that salaries are extremely poor.

The people we interviewed criticised the UNRWA for recently spending 2 million dollars to build two super-modern schools when, for the same amount of money, it could have built an extra two schools or added an extra storey to each of the 18 existing schools.

#### **4.8 Right to health**

Access to public sector health care services is limited because the infrastructures need setting up and developing. Indeed the public hospitals are largely insufficient given the country's population. The majority of the population are obliged to use private hospitals; these cost too much for the Palestinian refugees who, being unemployed, cannot meet the costs of medicines and hospitalisation.

The UNRWA provides medical services for Palestinian refugees in 24 private general hospitals and one maternity and childcare centre. These offer basic medical services only in the areas of maternity, childcare, family planning, and the prevention and control of infectious and non-infectious diseases.

The principal factors limiting access to healthcare in Lebanon are an increase in the population, an increase in the cost of medical care and the budgetary restrictions that have been imposed on the UNRWA.

In fact since 1993, the UNRWA has had to introduce restrictive criteria; this has led to subsidies being suspended for certain emergency treatments and medical staff recruitment, and a reduction in medical equipment and the level of maintenance.

Given that the demand for healthcare is extremely high, the few doctors recruited by the UNRWA have to see from 150 to 200 patients per day, and cannot, therefore, provide a high quality medical service.

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<sup>9</sup> Throughout the time of our mission in Lebanon, young Palestinians were on hunger strike, demanding that secondary schools be opened so that they could continue their studies.

Currently, the UNRWA is barely able to meet the basic needs of refugees; it has tremendous difficulty meeting so-called secondary needs through partial reimbursement, equal to 25% of the cost of treatment in hospitals (which, for the large part, are private), contractual agreements and extra-budgetary contributions.

There have been many cases of Palestinians who have not been able to leave hospital because they have not paid the costs of their stay.

NGOs have received medical equipment from the international community but the funds they have been provided with do not cover their operational costs. As a result, doctors are extremely poorly paid and very few are willing to work for these NGOs.

The future of these refugees gives the UNRWA serious cause for concern. Indeed if these restrictive measures continue to be imposed, it is highly conceivable that the lives of refugees will be put at risk because the vast majority of them will be left without any medical assistance.

#### **4.9 Right to social security**

The Lebanese law of 26/09/63 on social security, in its dispositions relating to foreigners, sets out as the condition that a foreigner wishing to claim social security must hold a work permit and be from a State which applies the principle of reciprocity.

As a result, Palestinian workers are excluded from the social security benefits across the board, i.e. even if they have a work permit; they can't meet the reciprocity principle criteria because their State still doesn't exist.

### **5 JORDAN: THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **5.1 Legal status**

Jordan joined up to the International Pact relating to Civil and Political Rights of 3rd November 1972, as well as to the 1966 Pact relating to Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Similarly, on 12th November 1971 Jordan joined up to the 1965 International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

However, Jordan has not ratified either the 1951 Geneva Convention or the New York draft treaty relating to the status of refugees.

### **6 PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IN JORDAN WITH REGARD TO THE INTERNATIONAL PACTS RELATING TO CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS AND ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS**

According to UNRWA statistics, the number of Palestinian refugees recorded on 30th June 2000 was 1.570.192. This figure is disputed by the Foreign Ministry's Department for Palestinian Affairs (DAP), which considers the actual number of Palestinian refugees in Jordan to be much higher than the figure put forward by the UNRWA.<sup>10</sup> This difference in the statistics is explained by the fact that the UNRWA definition of refugee is too restrictive. Meanwhile the UNRWA acknowledges that this restrictive definition means that, to this day, they have not been able to register on their lists roughly a third of the Palestinian refugees in Jordan.

After Jordan annexed the east part of the West Bank in 1950, roughly 90% of the Palestinian refugees then living in the West Bank were allowed to take Jordanian nationality. Many of the Palestinians who couldn't register with the UNRWA were able to become Jordanian nationals. Everyone who took up that opportunity now has access to

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<sup>10</sup> 1998 Annual Report of the Department of Palestinian Affairs in Jordan pg. 22.

the same civil, political, social, cultural and economic rights as their Jordanian counterparts.

According to the UNRWA, some 100,000 displaced Palestinians from the Gaza Strip live in Jordan. The UNRWA does not have a mandate to look after these people or anyone who is not registered with them. However, the Jordanian authorities and the UNRWA do provide the most destitute and vulnerable people living in the camps with basic assistance. Displaced persons who have registered as foreigners have been given documents entitling them to stay in the country and provisional passports by the Jordanian authorities.

## **6.1 Discrimination**

According to what we have learned in our interviews, although Palestinian refugees have been given Jordanian nationality, they are strongly discriminated against because of their Palestinian origins. In practice, roughly 90% of all government posts, in particular in the army, police, magistracy and the universities are reserved for people of Jordanian origin.

The Jordanians of Palestinian origin appear to be convinced that the authorities look upon them as temporary citizens who shouldn't really be given the right to settle because it is envisaged that they will one day return to Palestine. In his book entitled 'Jordanians, Palestinians and the Hashemite Kingdom', Mr. Adnan Abu-Odeh, a writer and former head of the Jordanian government, explains that although the laws do not advocate any form of discrimination as such, a certain de facto discrimination exists vis-à-vis Palestinians. Some people claim, for example, that the electoral system prevents Jordanians of Palestinian origin from being properly represented in parliament. According to the statements, it would appear that in those areas where Jordanians of Palestinian origin are in the majority, the number of seats up for election is generally less than the number of seats in areas where the majority of people are Jordanian in origin.

Jordanians of Palestinian origin want to be considered as Jordanians proper. They also believe that the right to return should only be a matter for Palestinians who want to keep the right to choose to stay in Jordan or to return to Palestine should the opportunity arise.

## **6.2 Right of abode and the right to housing**

According to UNRWA statistics, some 280,192 Palestinians live in 10 refugee camps given to them for use by the Jordanian authorities (Amman New Camp, Baqa'a, Husn, Irbid, Jabal El-Husseini, Jerash, Marka, Souf, Talbieh, Zarqa). Four of these camps were set up after the events of 1948 and 6 following the Arab-Israeli war of 1967. Palestinians with Jordanian nationality and the displaced persons of 1967 live in these camps. As in Lebanon, the camps were set up on land that belongs partly to the State and partly to private landowners who lease their land to the authorities.

The Jordanian government has the responsibility of ensuring the upkeep of the infrastructure and public services (post offices, police stations, banks, roads etc.) All these services are co-ordinated by UNRWA representatives, the Department of Palestinian Affairs and 'Camp Improvement Committees' in the camps. These committees are made up of noteworthy Palestinians who live in the camps and take on the role of municipal advisors.

The camps are overpopulated because it is impossible to increase their area alongside the increase in population. In Jordan too the authorities forbid the building of extra storeys on the dwellings in the camps. However, it appears that this ban is in place purely for safety reasons. Indeed, the foundations of these dwellings could not withstand the weight of any extra storeys; as it happens, the construction of a second floor is only tolerated on condition that the building does not rise any higher than three metres.

According to witness statements in the Jerash and Baqa'a camps, around 25 people commonly live in an area of less than 100 m<sup>2</sup>. There also, the equipment everywhere is dilapidated and ventilation in the dwellings is mostly inadequate. Bearing in mind the lack of space, it isn't uncommon to find the distance between dwellings reduced to the bare minimum; overcrowding is rife as a result.

According to the UNRWA, Jordan is in the process of developing an aid policy to improve socio-economic conditions in the country. The Jordanian authorities gave Palestinian refugees 323 million dollars for the year 1999 for the purposes of education, social welfare, housing, healthcare, upkeep of the camps and public safety. The Jordanian authorities have done a good deal for the Palestinian refugees, but they regard the reduction in aid from the international community as a kind of punishment.

Although the refugees are grateful to the Jordanian authorities for making them welcome and granting them Jordanian nationality, they are worried about the future. This is mainly because the international community no longer seems as willing to help and support them as before.

Refugees have testified to being unemployed and receiving no financial assistance. Some have ended up living off their wits and in wretched conditions. Because their resources have been reduced, the UNRWA can no longer guarantee basic assistance for even the most destitute of people. It appears that very few people and families are provided with food.

### **6.3 Right to education**

In Jordan, 198 primary and secondary schools are administered by the UNRWA for roughly 141.000 students. Students who wish to continue their studies can attend public secondary schools and training centres, there being no UNRWA secondary schools in Jordan.<sup>11</sup>

According to the UNRWA, 106 out of 198 schools were built in the 1950s and 1960s. 21.7% of schools are in need of repair. There are not enough schools, they are poorly equipped and the numbers of pupils they have to accommodate is too high.

One of the results of diminishing financial resources has been that, for the UNRWA to ensure everyone an education, they have had to engage teachers on temporary contracts and pay them by the day. According to information obtained in the Jerash camp, teachers are often required to teach subjects for which they have not been trained.

There are roughly 50 students in each class (three students per bench). In 93% of schools the UNRWA has had to introduce a system of double rotation in the classrooms in order to accommodate all the students.

According to the teachers we interviewed, life for the students in the camps is very difficult because they haven't got anywhere to study or concentrate. The overcrowding that exists not only at school but also at home is not conducive to their studies.

### **6.4 Right to health**

People of Palestinian origin are entitled to the same access to public healthcare as every other Jordanian.

The UNRWA entitles all refugees (whether or not they live in the camps) to benefit from the assistance of doctors in the 24 private general hospitals that exist in Jordan. These

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<sup>11</sup> Annual report of the Commissioner General of the UNRWA 1998, pg. 27.

doctors provide preventive and curative health care services as well as family planning. However, the costs of hospitalisation are not reimbursed by the UNRWA.

The quality of the medical services provided is very basic because of a lack of doctors (1 doctor per 150/200 patients per day). The lack of medicines is also sorely felt.

## CONCLUSIONS

Before concluding, an elderly refugee of 1948 relates the vicissitudes of his time in exile:

*'My name is Said Ibrahim Hocine.*

*In 1948, I was 23 years old. I was driven out of the place where I was born, Akka in Palestine. I took refuge in Lebanon under catastrophic conditions. At the beginning, we were welcomed with open arms, but nothing could replace my home, my land, my country, my family and my friends. Then, over the years, things changed a great deal. From being the victim of oppression, a reluctant refugee, I later came to be seen as responsible for all the world's misfortunes. Fifty years of misery and suffering. No longer having a country, I wandered from one place to the next without knowing where I was going next and when I would return.*

*I was dragged through one war to the next, involuntarily, just forced to put up with things. I lived through the atrocities of the 1948 war; I lived through the massacre of Sabra and Shatila, from where I miraculously escaped, picking my way through the dead bodies and rubble under heavy fire from Sharon and his militia.*

*I had to suffer the long civil war and its atrocities in Lebanon. The Tell Ezzater camp, where I had taken refuge, was in turn destroyed. Each time one war ended, another took its place. I will never forget the devastating war of the camps. For two long months, my family and I had to hide in a shelter at Hai El-Wata.*

*It makes me ill, not being able to live normally like every other person in their own country. The indifference of people leaves me cold. People from that short-sighted, cold and faraway place called the international community. Without any work, without any documents, without any rights, without the freedom to speak up, to go and see my daughter, who has just had a baby.*

*And I feel shame.*

*I feel shame at holding out my hands like a beggar. My survival depends on food aid from the UN. My younger children can only get work as porters in the market, if they're lucky. I don't even have to right to dream decently. As you can see, since the last war, I have been living here, in a building that was almost completely destroyed by the bombardments. Look at the burnt-out walls, riddled with holes.*

*More than fifty years.*

*I'm so sick of being the eternal pariah, far from my country, far from my oldest children, who were forced to emigrate to Sweden and Germany. I'm frightened of dying without ever seeing Akka again, after fifty-two years, the town in Palestine where I was born. I dream of cupping in my hands the soil from the fields where I was born, and sleeping peacefully under the shade of the olive trees.'*

Pending a global political solution regarding self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, after more than half a century, the Palestinian refugees still live in hope of one day being able to return home.

With the exception of those Palestinians who have been able to take the nationality of another country, only the refugees of 1948 meeting the too-restrictive conditions set out by the UNRWA have received the protection and assistance that has been decreed at the international level. All the other refugees of 1948, the displaced persons of 1967 and various others have been excluded from this assistance.

All the Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon and Jordan have been subject to legislation which is applied for foreigners in general. The authorities of these countries have not made any allowances for the fact that Palestinians are different from other foreigners

because they are stateless and as such cannot benefit from the protection of the Palestinian state - for the very good reason that it doesn't exist. In order to get round this problem, the authorities of these countries have had to adopt ad hoc normative clauses to ensure that respect for the rights of Palestinians corresponds to their particular status. However, to this day no clauses have been implemented setting up specific ad hoc legislation.

The Palestinian question will not be resolved without a political solution on the part of the international community. However, the international community and the authorities of the host countries must concentrate their efforts equally to:

- promote and consolidate a development policy with the host countries in order to improve the standard of living of the native and refugee population and thus avoid destabilisation in the region;
- enlarge the mandate of the UNRWA in order to ensure the protection of refugees and promote the adoption of ad hoc rules for all Palestinians, without discriminating amongst them;
- support the UNRWA financially so that it can continue to guarantee assistance for the entire Palestinian refugee community;
- reinforce legal co-operation between States and human rights organisations in order to institute permanent dialogue amongst civil society, the institutions of the host countries in the region and the Palestinian refugee community, and to ensure respect for human rights as well as the adoption of ad hoc legislation;
- promote the rights of refugees through permanent co-operation with NGOs with experience in the field and local NGOs and administrations in order to establish and encourage activities such as the exchange of information, consciousness-raising and legal training.

## APPENDICES

### MISSION TO LEBANON AND JORDAN 17 - 28 SEPTEMBER 2000

#### MISSION TO LEBANON

##### **Monday 18 September**

- 09:00 - 10:00 Visit to camp *BURJ EL-BARAJNEH*.  
Meeting with the head of the Vocational and Technical Training Committee (VTTC), Ms. SUKAYNAH SALAMEH.
- 10:00 - 12:30 Visit to the camps *SABRA* and *SHATILA*.
- 12:30 - 14:15 Meeting with the Director of the NAJDEH Association, Ms. HAIFA JAMMAL.
- 14:30 - 18:20 Meeting with the head of the Popular Committee, Mr. ABU HANI.
- 18:30 - 19:30 Meeting with Mr. SELIM MAWAD, member of the René Moawad Foundation.

##### **Tuesday 19 September**

- 08:30 - 10:00 Visit to the displaced persons centre 'GAZA building'.  
Interviews with refugees.
- 10:00 - 11:20 Meetings with members of the Coalition of Palestinian Political Parties: Mr. ABU HASSAN, Mr. ABU RACHIDI, Mr. ABU MOHAMMAD, Mr. MUSTAFA LIOVANI.
- 11:30 - 11:45 Meeting with Mr. ABDALLAH GHASSAN, member of the Palestinian human rights organisation 'Rights'.
- 12:00 - 13:30 Meeting with representatives of the Palestinian Political Associations in Lebanon, Mr. HUSSEIN ABU AL-NAMEL, Mr. ABU AHMAD ZATAR, Mr. HUSSEIN BASSEM.
- 13:50 - 14:15 Meeting with Mr. SOUHEIL AL-NATOUR, lawyer specialised in the field of Palestinian refugees.
- 14:30 - 15:30 Meeting with the Director of the UNRWA in Lebanon, Mr. ALFREDO MICCIO.

##### **Wednesday 20 September**

- 08:00 - 09:00 Meeting with Mr. RACHID KHATIB, Deputy Director of the organisation 'Norwegian People's Aid' (NPA).
- 09:15 - 13:30 Visit to camp *EIN EL-HILWEH* (South Lebanon).  
Meeting with representatives of the camp's Popular Committee: Mr. ABED MAKDAH, Secretary General; Mr. GHAZI ASSADI, member; Mr. ADNANE RIFAI, member.
- 15:00 - 16:00 Visit to camp *RASHIDIEH* (South Lebanon).  
Meeting with Mr. ABED ASSAAD, head of the Disabled Persons' Centre 'ABU DJIHAR WAZIR' (camp *RASHIDIEH*).
- 16:45 - 18:30 Meeting with Mr. SULTAN ABU AL-AININE, PLO head in Lebanon.
- 18:30 - 23:00 Interviews with refugees from camp *RASHIDIEH*.

#### **Thursday 21 September**

- 08:30 - 10:00 Meeting with the Co-ordinator General of the NGO Coalition Forum for Palestinian Communities in Lebanon, Mr. KASSEM AINA.
- 10:10 - 12:30 Meeting with the Director General of the Department for Palestinian Refugee Affairs in Lebanon, Mr. KHALIL SHETAWI (Ministry of the Interior).
- 12:45 - 13:40 Meeting with a refugee protection official with the UNHCR in Lebanon, Ms. LEILA JANE NASSIF.
- 14:00 - 14:45 Meeting with the Executive Director of the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), Mr. ZIAD ABDUL SAMAD.
- 15:00 - 16:00 Meeting at camp *BURJ EL-BARAJNEH* with the Director of the VTTC.  
Meeting with women refugees.
- 16:10 - 19:30 Meeting with Palestinian students.

#### **Friday 22 September**

- 08:30 - 11:30 Meeting with the President of the Association AJIAL - Centre for Social Communication, Mr. SALAH SALAH and Ms. SALAH SANNIA, member of the PLO.
- 12:30 - 13:30 Meeting with the Director of the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC), Mr. NEJIB FRIJI and the Special Assistant to the UN Special Co-ordinator (UNSCO), Mr. JOHN BELL.
- 13:45 - 15:00 Visit to the Centre for Palestinian Studies.  
Meeting with the director and head of the library.

#### **MISSION TO JORDAN**

#### **Friday 22 September**

- 18:30 Arrival in Amman.

#### **Saturday 23 September**

- 08:45 - 10:00 Meeting with Ms. FADILA, Centre for Arab Archives, Amman.
- 10:15 - 11:30 Meeting with the Deputy Director of the Research Centre Urdun Al-Jadid ( Amman), Mr. HAITHAM HOURANI.
- 11:30 - 12:15 Meeting with the writer and Embassy Representative of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. IBRAHIM MUHANA.
- 12:30 - 13:30 Meeting with Professor MOHAMMAD OLWAN, Head of the Faculty of Advanced Legal studies, Arab University of Amman.
- 17:30 - 18:30 Meeting with Ms. ABLA ABU ALBA, member of the General Secretariat of the 'General Union Of Palestinian Women'.
- 18:30 - 20:00 Meeting with Mr. NAWAF ZARO, writer, journalist and specialist in Middle Eastern affairs.

### **Sunday 24 September**

- 08:15 - 12:15 Meeting with the Executive Director of the Research Centre Urdun Al-Jadid, Mr. HOCINE ABU RUMAN.
- 12:30 - 14:00 Meeting with the Director General of the Department for Palestinian Affairs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Mr. ABDULKARIM ABU HAJJA and with the Director of Information and the Mobilisation of Resources, Ms. ORUB AL-ABED.
- 14:30 - 16:30 Meeting with Mr. IBRAHIM MUHANA, Embassy Representative of the Palestinian Authority and Head of Information and Research at the Research Centre Urdun Al-Jadid.
- 18:00 - 21:30 Meeting with Ms. Sa'eda Al Kilani, journalist.

### **Monday 25 September**

- 08:15 - 10:00 Meeting with the Director of the UNRWA in Jordan, Mr GUNNAR LAFBJERG.
- 10:00 - 14:00 Visit to camp *BAQA'A*.  
Meeting with the UNRWA head of the camp, Mr. MOHAMMED M. AYYASH.  
Meeting with different representatives of the Palestinian community.  
Interviews with refugees and visits to their dwellings.  
Meeting with the camp head from the Authority of Palestinian Affairs, Mr. ATTA AL-WAHEEDY.  
Meeting with Mr. MOHAMMED AL-MUR, member of the Right to Return Committee.
- 14:30 - 18:30 Visit to camp *JERASH 'GAZA'*.  
Visit to the UNRWA elementary school.  
Meeting with the director of the school, Mr. MOHAMMED AHMED AL-HALABI and teachers.  
Meeting with members of the committee for improving the living conditions of camp inhabitants.  
Visit to the camp dwellings.
- 19:00 - 21:15 Meeting with Ms. ISSAM ABDEL HADI, President of the 'Union of Palestinian Women'.

### **Tuesday 26 September**

Drawing up of the report.

### **Wednesday 27 September**

- 08:30 - 09:30 Meeting with Ms. AMIRA YAAQBAH, member of the Centre for Arab Archives, Amman.
- 09:45 - 11:20 Meeting with the Scientific Secretary of the Centre for Contemporary Middle Eastern Studies in Amman (CERMOC), Ms. HANA DJABER.
- 11:30 - 13:30 Meeting with the former Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Jordan and President of the 'National Society for the Enhancement of Freedom and Democracy' (JUND), Mr. TAHER N. MASRI.
- 13:45 - 14:45 Meeting with 'Families Development Association' officials, Ms. THARWAT JIBREEL and Ms. ISLAM ABU TAHA.

- 14:45 - 15:30 Visit to a group of refugees at *WAD EL-HADED*A.
- 15:45 - 16:50 Meeting with the Secretary General of the Right to Return Support Committee, Mr. AHMED YUSSEF and committee members Mr. ABDEL MAJEED YASSIN and Mr. AHMED ABU SHAWER.
- 17:00 - 18:15 Meeting with the former Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Jordan and writer on the Palestinian question, Mr. ADMAN ABU AUDEH.
- 18:30 - 19:30 Meeting with the former Minister for Social Development, Mr. ABDEL SALAM KNAAN.
- 21:00 - 22:30 Meeting with the President of the 'Jordan Society for Human Rights' (JSHR), Mr. SULEIMAN SWEISS and with Ms. OBAB MURAD, member of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation.

**Thursday 28 September**

- 08:30 - 09:00 Meeting with Ms. AMIRA YAAQBAH, member of the Centre for Arab Archives.
- 9:30 - 10:30 Meeting with Ms. STEPHANIE LATTE, researcher at the Centre for Contemporary Middle Eastern Studies (CERMOC).
- 11:30 - 13:30 Meeting with Mr. OMAR S. AL-KHATIB, Embassy Representative of the Palestinian Authority.
- 14:00 - 16:00 Meeting with representatives of the People's Democratic Party, Mr. SALEM NAHHAS, Secretary General, and Mr. NIDAL GHANEM, member of the Policy Office and representative of the Right to Return Committee.
- 16:30 - 18:00 Meeting with Ms. ABLA ABU ALBA, member of the General Secretariat of the 'General Union of Palestinian Women'.

## PERSONNES ENCOUNTERED

### MISSION TO LEBANON

Mr. KASSEM AINA, Co-ordinator General of the NGO Coalition Forum for Palestinian Communities in Lebanon

Mr. SULTAN ABU AL-AININE, PLO head in Lebanon

Mr. GHAZI ASSADI, Member of the organisation 'Norwegian People's Aid' (NPA)

Mr. ABED ASSAAD, Head of the Disabled Persons' Centre 'ABOU DJIHAR WAZIR' (camp *RASHIDIEH*)

Mr. HUSSEIN BASSEM, Representative of the Palestinian Political Associations in Lebanon

Mr. JOHN BELL, Special Assistant to the UN Special Co-ordinator (UNSCO)

Mr. NEJIB FRIJI, Director of the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC)

Mr. ABDALLAH GHASSAN, Member of the Palestinian human rights organisation 'Rights'

Mr. ABU HANI, Head of a Popular Committee

Mr. ABU HASSAN, Member of the Coalition of Palestinian Political Parties

Ms. HAIFA JAMMAL, Director of the NAJDEH Association

Mr. RACHID KHATIB, Deputy Director of the organisation 'Norwegian People's Aid' (NPA)

Mr. MUSTAFA LIOVANI, Member of the Coalition of Palestinian Political Parties

Mr. ABED MAKDAH, Secretary General of the organisation 'Norwegian People's Aid' (NPA)

Mr. SELIM MAWAD, Member of the René Moawad Foundation

Mr. ALFREDO MICCIO, Director of the UNRWA in Lebanon

Mr. ABU MOHAMMAD, Member of the Coalition of Palestinian Political Parties

Mr. HUSSEIN ABU AL-NAMEL, Representative of the Palestinian Political Associations in Lebanon

Ms. LEILA JANE NASSIF, Refugee protection official with the UNHCR in Lebanon

Mr. SHOUHEIL AL-NATOUR, Lawyer specialised in the field of Palestinian refugees

Ms. RABAH, Member of the Palestinian Croissant Rouge

Mr. ADNANE RIFAI, Member of the Popular Committee of camp *EIN EL-HILWEH*

Mr. ABU RACHIDI, Member of the Coalition of Palestinian Political Parties

Mr. SALAH SALAH, President of the Association AJIAL - Centre for Social Communication

Ms. SUKAYNAH SALAMEH, Head of the Vocational and Technical Training Committee (VTTC)

Mr. ZIAD ABDUL SAMAD, Executive Director of the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)

Ms. SALAH SANNIA, Member of the PLO

Mr. KALIL SHETAWI, Director General of the Department for Palestinian Refugee Affairs in Lebanon

Ms. AMNA DJABRIL SULEYMAN, Head of the 'Union of Palestinian Women'

Mr. ABU AHMAD ZATAR, Representative of the Palestinian Political Associations in Lebanon

## **MISSION TO JORDAN**

Ms. ORUB AL-ABED, Director of Information and the Mobilisation of Resources

Ms. ABLA ABU ALBA, Member of the General Secretariat of the 'General Union of Palestinian Women'

Mr. ADMAN ABU AUDEH, Former Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Jordan and a writer on the Palestinian question

Mr. MOHAMMED M. AYYASH, UNRWA camp head at *BAQA'A*

Ms. HANA DJABER, Scientific Secretary of the Centre for Contemporary Middle Eastern Studies in Amman (CERMOC)

Ms. FADILA, Centre for Arab Archives

Mr. NIDAL GHANEM, Member of the Policy Office of the People's Democratic Party

Ms. ISSAM ABDEL HADI, President of the 'Union of Palestinian Women'

Mr. ABDULKARIM ABU HAJJA, Director General of the Department for Palestinian Affairs (Foreign Affairs Ministry)

Mr. MOHAMMED AHMED AL-HALABI, Director of the UNRWA elementary school at camp *JERASH 'GAZA'*

Mr. HAITHAM HOURANI, Deputy Director of the Research Centre Urdun Al-Jadid

Ms. THARWAT JIBREEL, 'Families Development Association' official

Mr. OMAR S. AL- KHATIB, Embassy Representative of the Palestinian Authority

Ms. SA'EDA AL KILANI, Journalist

ABDEL SALAM KNAAN, Former Minister for Social Development

Mr. GUNNAR LAFBJERG, Director of the UNRWA in Jordan

Ms. STEPHANIE LATTE, Researcher at the Centre for Contemporary Middle Eastern Studies and Research (CERMOC)

Mr. TAHER N. MASRI, Former Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Jordan and President of the 'National Society for the Enhancement of Freedom and Democracy' (JUND)

Mr. IBRAHIM MUHANA, Writer and Embassy Representative of the Palestinian Authority

Mr. MOHAMMED AL-MOUR, Member of the Right to Return Committee

Ms. OBAB MURAD, Member of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation

Mr. SALEM NAHHAS, Secretary General of the People's Democratic Party

Prof. MOHAMMAD OLWAN, Head of the Faculty of Advanced Legal Studies, Arab University of Amman

Mr. HOCINE ABU RUMAN, Executive Director of the Research Centre Urdun Al-Jadid

Mr. AHMED ABU SHAWER, Member of the Right to Return Support Committee

Mr. SULEIMAN SWEISS, President of the 'Jordan Society for Human Rights' (JSHR)

Ms. ISLAM ABU TAHA, 'Families Development Association' official

Mr. ATTA AL-WAHEEDY, *BAQA'A* camp head from the Authority of Palestinian Affairs

Ms. AMIRA YAAQBAH, Member of the Centre for Arab Archives

Mr. ABDEL MAJEED YASSIN, Member of the Right to Return Support Committee

Mr. AHMED YUSSEF, Secretary General of the Right to Return Support Committee

Mr. NAWAF ZARO, Writer, journalist and specialist in Middle Eastern affairs

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