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United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

## Return and Readmission of Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) to Lebanon and Jordan

The following information has been provided in response to a query from a state asylum authority. The information is valid as at 6 December 2017.

As outlined in UNHCR's *International Protection Considerations with Regard to People Fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic* (Update V), UNHCR

*“considers that it would generally not be appropriate to return nationals or former habitual residents of Syria to neighbouring countries and non-neighbouring countries in the region, unless specific arrangements are in place that guarantee that the individual concerned will be readmitted to the country and can re-avail him/herself of international protection. Depending on the country, the individual concerned may not be readmitted, or such return may not be safe for the individuals concerned, and it may be impossible for their (specific) needs to be met.”<sup>1</sup>*

UNHCR notes that neighbouring countries, including Lebanon and Jordan, have severely restricted the entry of Palestinian refugees from Syria.<sup>2</sup> Most publically available information on entry restrictions relates to Palestinian refugees seeking to enter Lebanon or Jordan coming directly by land from Syria; however, it is UNHCR's understanding that these restrictions apply equally at all entry points (land border, airport, or seaport) and irrespective of whether an individual has previously resided or transited through Lebanon or Jordan, respectively. Based on available information, UNHCR concludes that Palestinian refugees from Syria who entered and subsequently left Lebanon or Jordan, respectively, would generally not be readmitted to Lebanon or Jordan for the purpose of seeking international protection or taking up residency.

Additional details on entry restrictions:

### 1) Entry restrictions Lebanon

Since May 2014, Palestinian refugees from Syria have only been allowed entry in limited circumstances.<sup>3</sup> They can obtain a limited entry visa (transit visa, usually valid for 24 hours) at the

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR, *International Protection Considerations with Regard to People Fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic, Update V*, 3 November 2017, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/59f365034.html>, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> “Jordan effectively closed its borders to Palestine refugees from Syria (PRS) early in the conflict; Lebanon followed suit in May 2015” (emphasis added); United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), *Syria Crisis*, accessed 6 December 2017, <https://www.unrwa.org/syria-crisis>. See also, UNHCR, *International Protection Considerations with Regard to People Fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic, Update V*, 3 November 2017, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/59f365034.html>, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> “(...) access to territory has significantly decreased with the border ‘de-facto’ closed for people fleeing violence. Palestinian refugees from Syria also face increased challenges in accessing the territory since May 2013”; ECHO, *Lebanon: Syria Crisis*, March 2017, <http://bit.ly/2sIjuPg>. “(...) 41,000 Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic in Lebanon are particularly vulnerable, given border restrictions, their precarious legal status, difficulties in regularizing their stay and limited social protection services” (emphasis added); UN General Assembly, *Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East – 1 January - 31 December 2015*, 14 September 2016, A/71/13, <http://bit.ly/2knXlhU>, para. 29. See also, Maja Janmyr, *Precairity in Exile: The Legal Status of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*, in: *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Volume 35, Issue 4, 1 December 2016, pp. 58-78, <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdw016>; Finnish Immigration Service, *Syrian and Palestinian (in Lebanon and Exiting Syria) Refugees In Lebanon*, 29 September 2016, <http://bit.ly/2yYQY0z>, pp. 15-17; Amnesty International, *Families Ripped Apart as Palestinian Refugees from Syria Denied Entry to Lebanon*, 1 July 2014, <http://bit.ly/1GceGocv>; BADIL, *Palestinian Refugees from Syria in Lebanon: An Overview*, Al-Majdal, Issue No. 56, Autumn 2014, <http://bit.ly/1V3kkeM>; Inter Press Service, *Lebanon's Closed Doors for Palestinian Refugees*, 6 July 2014, <http://bit.ly/2yAhBoc>.



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border for purposes such as an embassy appointment in Beirut (must be verified) or for the purpose of transiting through Lebanon *en route* to a third country (requires flight ticket and visa for a third country). This does not entitle Palestinian refugees to residency in Lebanon. In addition, a small number of Palestinian refugees from Syria have been able to secure a visa for Lebanon by obtaining prior approval from the Lebanese General Security Office. This requires a sponsor in Lebanon and cannot be processed at border posts.<sup>4</sup> UNHCR has been made aware by a United Nations entity of a Palestinian refugee from Syria who had been returned from a third country to Lebanon after exiting Lebanon legally. On re-entry to Lebanon through established borders, the individual was reportedly immediately deported to Syria, as he did not have an embassy appointment or a flight ticket/visa to a third country; the deportation was carried out despite the fact that prior to his exit he had resided legally in Lebanon.<sup>5</sup>

## 2) Entry restrictions Jordan

Since 2013, legal entry to Jordan has not been possible for Palestinian refugees from Syria.<sup>6</sup> Those Palestinians who nevertheless managed to cross into Jordan (either they arrived prior to the restrictions in place since 2013, or relied on forged documents or smugglers) usually lack a secure legal status and are reported to be at increased risk of arrest, detention and forced return to Syria.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See UNHCR, *The Situation of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*, February 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/56cc95484.html>, pp. 12-13, and sources quoted therein: “At the onset of the conflict in Syria, it was reported that Palestine refugees from Syria were initially allowed entry into Lebanon using their ID cards or travel documents issued by the relevant Syrian authorities, provided they had obtained a Syrian exit visa in advance. However, since August 2013, entry restrictions were reportedly introduced for Palestinian refugees from Syria and individuals started being screened for entry at the border. The restrictions reportedly resulted in the denial of entry of some Palestine refugees from Syria between August 2013 and April 2014. Since May 2014, additional entry restrictions have reportedly been imposed as the Ministry of Interior announced a stop to the issuance of visas for Palestine refugees from Syria at the border. Since then, entry at the border is reportedly only granted with either a verified embassy appointment in Lebanon, or a flight ticket and visa to a third country: conditions that the majority of Palestine refugees from Syria are unable to meet. Individuals who are able to meet these conditions are reportedly usually only issued with a 24 -hour transit visa. In addition, limited numbers of Palestine refugees from Syria are reportedly able to secure a visa to enter Lebanon by obtaining prior approval from GSO. This reportedly requires a sponsor in Lebanon and cannot be processed at border posts, but has to be done in Syria prior to travelling. Access to Lebanon for ‘humanitarian reasons’ or in order to seek international protection is reportedly not possible.” [footnotes omitted].

<sup>5</sup> Confidential information, UN entity, November 2017.

<sup>6</sup> “The Government of Jordan announced a policy of non-entry to Palestinians fleeing the Syria conflict in early 2013. This stemmed the flow of Palestine refugees from Syria towards Jordan and compounded the extreme vulnerability of Palestinians seeking safety in Syria, as well as that of those who managed to enter Jordan”; UNRWA, *PRS in Jordan*, accessed 6 December 2017, <https://www.unrwa.org/prs-jordan>. “In the initial months of the Syrian crisis the Jordanian authorities did not differentiate between Syrian and Palestinian Syrian refugees. However by April 2012 an unofficial policy of turning Palestinian-Syrian refugees away from the border became clear. This became an official policy in January 2013 when Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour told the newspaper *Al-Hayat*, ‘Jordan has made a clear and explicit sovereign decision to not allow the crossing to Jordan by our Palestinian brothers who hold Syrian documents’. He indicated that they should stay in Syria ‘until the end of the crisis.’ He argued that this was justified on the basis that ‘Jordan is not a place to solve Israel’s problems... (and) Receiving those [Palestinian] brothers ... would be a prelude to another wave of displacement’”; Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD) – Legal Aid, *Mapping the Legal Obstacles Palestinians Face in Jordan*, December 2015, <http://bit.ly/2zDT0CW>, p. 8. “Jordan refuses entry to or forcibly deports Palestinian refugees escaping Syria, in clear breach of its international obligations (...). The Jordanian government should urgently rescind its ban on Palestinian refugees and end deportations of Palestinians from Syria”; Human Rights Watch (HRW), *Jordan: Palestinians Escaping Syria Turned Away*, 7 August 2014, <http://bit.ly/2hzHlhx>. See also, Al Monitor, *Jordan Admits to Barring Entry of Palestinian Refugees from Syria*, 8 July 2014, <http://almon.co/24n9>; HRW, *Not Welcome: Jordan’s Treatment of Palestinians Escaping Syria*, 7 August 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53e4a3de4.html>.

<sup>7</sup> “The irregular status of PRS in Jordan means they endure a considerable degree of insecurity. They face difficulties in civil processes such as registration of births and in access to government services, and are at constant risk of refoulement”; UNRWA, *PRS in Jordan*, accessed 6 December 2017, <https://www.unrwa.org/prs-jordan>. “Living in an illegal way inside Jordan affected the PRS seeking assistance and protection, both physical and legal protection (Santos 2014, 27). Many detentions and deportations of PRS took place: there was also the frequent inability to register births and marriages”; European University Institute/Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies/Migration Policy Centre, *Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) in Jordan: The State of Exclusivism*, RSCAS 2015/91, <http://bit.ly/2jqr4fg>, p. 13. See also, The Sidney Morning Herald, *Caught in a Double Bind, Abu Eyad Made the Hardest Decision of His Life*, 26 March 2017, <http://bit.ly/2zC75kd>; Al-Shabaka, *Palestinian Refugees From Syria: Stranded on the Margins of Law*, 19 October 2015, <http://bit.ly/1GPz6Or>.



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Palestinian refugees from Syria holding Jordanian nationality or valid Jordanian documentation would presumably be permitted to enter Jordan.<sup>8</sup> However, multiple cases of Jordanian citizenship being revoked for Palestinians coming from Syria have been documented.<sup>9</sup>

Cases of refoulement and forcible returns from Jordan to Syria, including of Palestinian refugees from Syria who held Jordanian identification papers, have been documented.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> “Since the beginning of the crisis in Syria, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has been receiving and hosting hundreds of thousands of people displaced by the conflict, including thousands of PRS [Palestinian refugees from Syria]. Jordan, already host to more than 2 million registered Palestine refugees, **introduced a policy of non-admission for PRS in 2013** that impacted on the arrival rate, although Palestine refugees and their families nevertheless continue to enter Jordan. While some enter irregularly, **others are holders of Jordanian passports and national documents that enable them to negotiate the border crossings with fewer restrictions**” (emphasis added); UNRWA, *2017 Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal*, January 2017, <http://bit.ly/2n5lpbS>, p. 29. See also, HRW, *Not Welcome: Jordan's Treatment of Palestinians Escaping Syria*, 7 August 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53e4a3de4.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Middle East Monitor, *Palestinians & Jordanian Citizenship*, December 2015, <http://bit.ly/2hqYUfJ>, p. 15; HRW, *Not Welcome: Jordan's Treatment of Palestinians Escaping Syria*, 7 August 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53e4a3de4.html>.

<sup>10</sup> UN Committee Against Torture (CAT), *Concluding Observations on the Third Periodic Report of Jordan*, 29 January 2016, CAT/C/JOR/CO/3, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/58beafe04.html>, paras 13 and 14 (c); ARDD – Legal Aid, *Mapping the Legal Obstacles Palestinians Face in Jordan*, December 2015, <http://bit.ly/2zDT0CW>, p. 8; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), *Concluding Observations on the Consolidated Fourth and Fifth Periodic Reports of Jordan*, 13 June 2014, CRC/C/JOR/CO/4-5, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/541bf99a4.html>, paras 55, 56; HRW, *Not Welcome: Jordan's Treatment of Palestinians Escaping Syria*, 7 August 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53e4a3de4.html>. See also, The Daily Beast, *Arab Countries Are Forcing Palestinian Exiles Back into Syria*, 26 August 2015, <http://thebea.st/2zBgxEj>.