



## COI QUERY

Country of Origin	Palestine
Question(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Background information on UNRWA (beneficiaries, area of operations, cards)</li><li>2. Can individuals who have at some point received UNRWA protection be removed from their parents UNWRA card and if so, on what basis?</li></ol>
Date of completion	10 April 2019
Query Code	Q13-2019
Contributing EU+ COI units (if applicable)	

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## COI QUERY RESPONSE

### 1. Background information on UNRWA (beneficiaries, area of operations, cards)

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) services are restricted to eligible 'Palestine refugees', defined under UNRWA's mandate as 'people whose normal place of residence was Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948, who lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict.'<sup>1</sup>

According to Landinfo's September 2018 report, other persons/groups that are not refugees are also eligible to receive UNRWA's assistance under 'Other Registered Persons'. It applies to the following categories:

- The poor in Jerusalem and on the Gaza Strip already registered by UNRWA. [...]
- Frontier villagers. [...]
- Compromise cases. [...]
- MNR (married to non-refugees) family members. [...]
- Female spouses to registered Palestinian refugees. [...]
- Kafalah children.<sup>2</sup>

UNRWA services are available to all those living in its area of operations (Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem)<sup>3</sup> who meet the definition, who are registered and in need of assistance. Eligible for registration are also the descendants of Palestinian refugee males, including adopted children,<sup>4</sup> and 'Palestine refugees can register with UNRWA irrespective of their current place or country of residence'<sup>5</sup>. Differently from the UNHCR, UNRWA does not remove persons who gained citizenship of a new country from its mandate.<sup>6</sup>

According to 2004 information, the UNRWA issued two types of cards: registration and ration cards. Registration cards are issued based on family units and indicate that the persons listed are considered Palestinian refugees under the UNRWA definition. This card provides its bearer with access to UNRWA services.<sup>7</sup> Ration cards were only issued to persons enrolled in the UNRWA's Special Hardship Assistance programme, introduced in 1978, for food rations and other goods to the neediest families.

<sup>1</sup> NRC, Undocumented and Stateless: The Palestinian Population Registry and Access to Residency and Identity Documents in the Gaza Strip, January 2012, [url](#), p. 48

<sup>2</sup> Norway, Landinfo, Report, Palestine: UNRWA services, 24 September 2018, [url](#), pp. 9-10

<sup>3</sup> UNRWA, Where we work, n.d., [url](#)

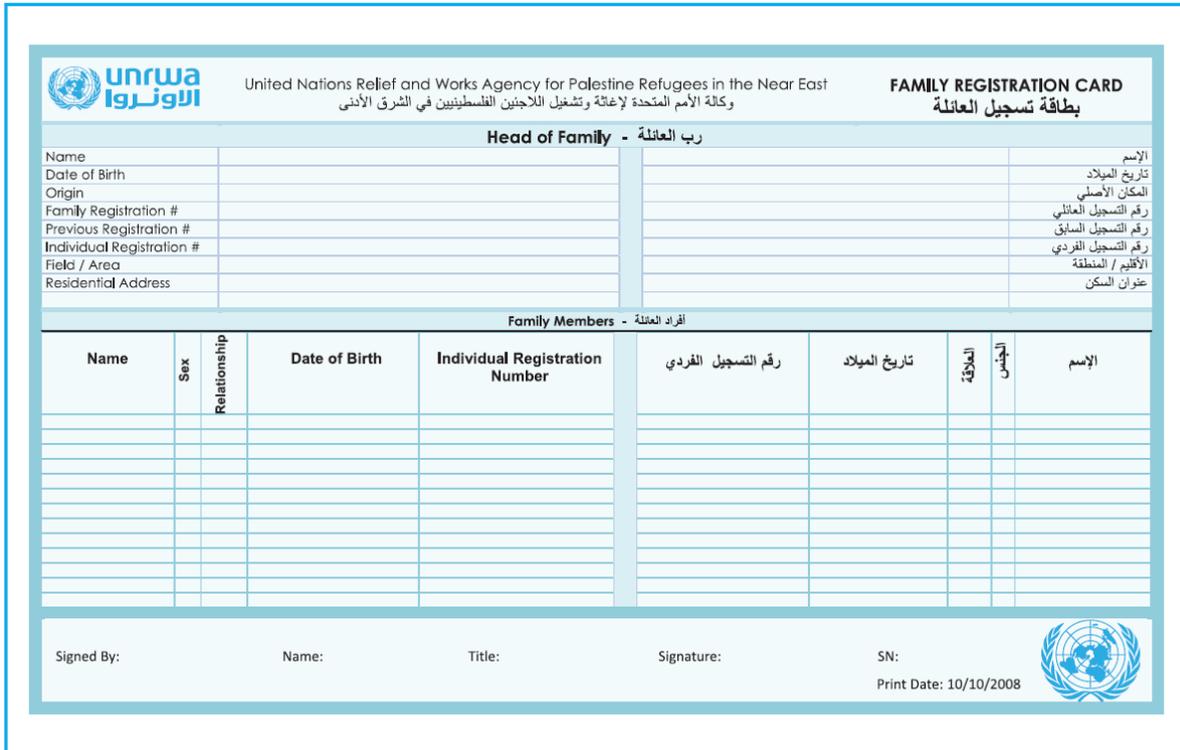
<sup>4</sup> UNRWA, Palestine Refugees, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>5</sup> UNRWA, What we do, Eligibility & Registration, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>6</sup> Middle East Forum, Reforming UNRWA, 2012, [url](#)

<sup>7</sup> Canada, IRB, Lebanon/Jordan: Cards issued by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA); movement allowed between camps and countries with a card issued by the UNRWA; whether a UNRWA card is used only for food rations; whether this card is valid in all camps (2002-December 2004), 6 December 2004, [url](#)





The image shows a bilingual registration card from UNRWA. It is titled 'FAMILY REGISTRATION CARD' and 'بطاقة تسجيل العائلة'. The card is divided into two main sections: 'Head of Family - رب العائلة' and 'Family Members - أفراد العائلة'. The 'Head of Family' section includes fields for Name, Date of Birth, Origin, Family Registration #, Previous Registration #, Individual Registration #, Field / Area, and Residential Address. The 'Family Members' section is a table with columns for Name, Sex, Relationship, Date of Birth, Individual Registration Number, رقم التسجيل الفردي, تاريخ الميلاد, and الاسم. At the bottom, there are fields for 'Signed By:', 'Name:', 'Title:', 'Signature:', 'SN:', and 'Print Date: 10/10/2008'. The UNRWA logo is visible in the top left and bottom right corners.

Image 2: UNRWA Bilingual Registration Card <sup>12</sup>

In 2009, UNRWA adopted the Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instruction (CERI), replacing the earlier (2006) instructions.<sup>13</sup> In line with the CERI, UNRWA registers families as well as their individual members, with the following information on each family: name of head of family, nationality of origin, religion, district of origin in Palestine, field, area and district of residence, camp/non-camp resident. On an individual level, the registration system contains the following information: first name, sex, date of birth, marital status and relationship to the head of the family.<sup>14</sup>

No other more recent information on UNRWA's cards was found amongst consulted and listed sources within the timeframe allocated to respond to this query.

## 2. Can individuals who have at some point received UNRWA protection be removed from their parents UNWRA card and if so, on what basis?

UNRWA's 2009 CERI stipulates the following grounds for the removal of individual names from its registration system:

<sup>12</sup> UNRWA, Relief & Social Services, Eligibility and Registration Programme, [2009], [url](#), p. 4

<sup>13</sup> OIOS, Evaluation Report, Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 19 March 2010, [url](#)

<sup>14</sup> UNRWA, Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI), 1 January 2009, [url](#)



The names of registered persons may be removed from UNRWA's Registration System in the following circumstances:

1. Upon the death of a Registered Person, on the strength of:

- A death certificate issued by the government authorities.
- Government records of reported deaths.
- A declaration by a Family member supported by a written statement from an UNRWA Staff Member.
- Circumstantial or hearsay evidence (extreme old age, information from "mukhtars", etc.) which establishes a reasonable presumption of death.

2. Names of persons or families who have been falsely registered or whose registration has been duplicated shall be removed from the Registration System on the strength of:

- Verifiable information given by an UNRWA Staff Member in writing.
- A voluntary declaration by a member of the Family concerned.
- Information given by any other person, subject to confirmation by the registration staff.
- A comparison between UNRWA and governmental records revealing an obvious duplication.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, a registered family member who establishes his or her own nuclear family should, at his or her request, be issued a separate registration card for his or her new family.<sup>16</sup> In case of an error in the registration system, a person may be re-registered with the approval of the Chief, Field Relief and Social Services Programme if s/he is convinced that the removal was made in error.<sup>17</sup>

According to BADIL, a Palestinian human rights advocacy organisation, the UNRWA registration statistics should not be taken as statistically-sound or comprehensive. This information is collected by the UNRWA for internal purposes, in order to assess individual eligibility to receive education, health, and relief and social services. New information on births, marriages, deaths, and changes in place of residence is recorded only when a refugee requests the updating of the family registration card. Families are encouraged to have a separate registration card for each nuclear family, which is not obligatory. Information on family size may therefore include a mix of both, nuclear and extended families, in some cases including as many as four generations.<sup>18</sup> Registering as a Palestine refugee is a voluntary process and the information on registered refugees cannot be automatically updated.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> UNRWA, Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI), 1 January 2009, [url](#)

<sup>16</sup> UNRWA, Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI), 1 January 2009, [url](#)

<sup>17</sup> UNRWA, Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI), 1 January 2009, [url](#)

<sup>18</sup> BADIL, Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, 2013 - 2015, n.d., [url](#), p. 52

<sup>19</sup> UNRWA, Medium term strategy 2016-2021, 22 August 2016, [url](#); Daily Star, Why UNRWA's refugee count is so high, 6 January 2018, [url](#)



No further information on the removal of individual names from the UNRWA registration cards could be found amongst consulted and listed sources within the timeframe allocated to respond to this query.

## SOURCES USED

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