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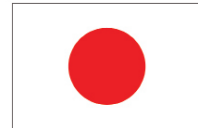
Peace Building

In Lebanon

Joint news supplement



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.



من الشعب الياباني
From the People of Japan

Special Edition

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A space for understanding the “other”

Once again, I am pleased to put into your hands this 7th issue of the “Peace Building” joint news supplement. This two-year old initiative engages the media in bringing together journalists from diverse backgrounds to work on promoting peace – an experience befitting a country that has long boasted freedom of speech and a vibrant media scene. As elsewhere around the globe, the media in Lebanon affects how people think and how they understand and interpret situations. Ultimately, the media has the power to influence people’s actions; it shares accounts of suffering and stories of joy, and establishes emotional connections on multiple levels, regardless of social, cultural, or political divides.

We at UNDP recognize the power of diversity and believe in the role of the media in creating safe spaces for voices of moderation and reason. In partnership with Annahar, As-Safir, and The Daily

Star newspapers, we hope that this supplement contributes to understanding the “other.”

This supplement sheds light on the numerous positive initiatives taken by both the Lebanese hosting communities and Syrian refugees, which often go unnoticed. This winter season stands witness to the many acts of compassion by the Lebanese toward Syrian refugees who are suffering from the harsh storms and freezing temperatures. People from all walks of life, religions, and social status have come together in support of vulnerable communities, once more reflecting Lebanon’s generosity amid this crisis.

Luca Renda
UNDP Country Director

Education: key for a resilient society

Japan’s foreign minister Fumio Kishida has announced his country’s new foreign policy of creating resilient societies that are able to combat extremism and the proliferation of violence throughout the Middle East. He has underlined the need for providing assistance for education, the reduction of income disparities, and the creation of job opportunities for young people.

Education is critically important for building a resilient society. Last year, I witnessed an impressive scene in a tented settlement in Bekaa, where a Syrian teacher was telling a Syrian folktale to children displaced from Syria. As they listened to the story

being told to them in a gentle and joyful voice, the children’s eyes were radiant. At that moment, I felt that these children had recovered their dignity and confidence.

I realized that education represents a means for preserving human dignity and relieving suffering. It brings hope to children, who in turn bring brightness to communities.

The government of Japan has been providing assistance to a variety of education projects in Lebanon. One of our priorities in this area is to improve the educational environment, especially

the water and sanitation facilities of schools. Recently, our embassy concluded an agreement with union of municipalities of Jabal Amel in the south to assist in the urgently-needed rehabilitation of 13 public schools, including the improvement of their water and sanitation facilities. A number of schools in Lebanon have taken the generous step of accommodating displaced Syrian children, and we continue to support such schools in a bid to help them meet these challenges. We are looking forward to seeing children shine.

Seiichi Otsuka
Ambassador of Japan

Terror in Lebanon isn’t Syrian

There’s a big difference between Lebanon’s inability to absorb more Syrian refugees and the refugees’ supposed connection to terror being waged by ISIS and the Nusra Front.

When we hear complaints about the rising number of refugees, we should remember Lebanon’s weak capabilities and infrastructure and its indebtedness, and the international community’s failure to live up to its financial commitments to help refugees, who are impoverished and needy. The Lebanese state and its various institutions can’t fill the gap.

As for terror in Lebanon, in reading the figures we find that this phenomenon isn’t Syrian, and there’s a lot of fear that it will be proven to be a Lebanese phenomenon. The largest number of terrorists is made up of Lebanese; they are the children of our society. They were trained by ISIS and Nusra, but the suicide bombers and terrorists aren’t outsiders. The ones who have been caught are moving around in Roumieh prison and elsewhere; the majority of the perpetrators are Lebanese and some of taken refuge in Palestinian refugee camps in a flight from justice.

Thus, we shouldn’t make connections or generalize when it comes to our accusations. Yes, takfiri groups might exploit the neediness of refugees, especially youngsters and adolescents, to recruit them for military

and terrorist acts. However, the reality has shown that these groups have relied on poverty and ignorance – with Lebanese and non-Lebanese – and a suspicious culture that permits religion to justify all types of terror.

As for the economic impact, the figures show that there are about 1.3 million Syrians registered with the UNHCR and about 500,000 unregistered ones. This latter group hasn’t avoided registration in order to avoid paperwork and statistics-gathering, but because they don’t require the assistance of the UNHCR and aid groups. Today they live with us and among us and help stimulate the economy, which suffers from a substantial recession because visitors and Arab tourists aren’t coming. The Syrians both reap benefits and provide them, like any other citizen, although they don’t have access to health and hospitalization services.

We shouldn’t view Syrian refugees with hostility, which might provoke a similarly hostile response or even acts of revenge that might cover terrorist groups.

Terror, whether in Lebanon or any other place in the world, has no nationality, religion, or humanity.

Ghassan Hajjar
Editor in chief
Annahar newspaper

It is said...

My aunt, from the south, tells me how she would go to Safad and Acre to purchase things for the home. She would mount a horse, ride toward Palestine and return the same day. There, in the south, the Palestinian Lira was the main currency.

My friend Bakri, from the Bekaa Valley, tells me that when his father was able to save some money from his business, he would quickly purchase land, like all villagers, because it was the only guaranteed investment. He purchased land in the Ghouta suburbs of Damascus. Up till recently, Umm Mahmoud and her children would cross the Nahr al-Kabir river on foot to visit relatives on the other side, and sometimes spend the summer there. They would return the same way, to where their home happened to be. It was said to me that one day, a large number of Palestinians sought refuge in Lebanon, fleeing from the fire and destruction and awaiting their “imminent” return. It is said that one year, Lebanese fled barefoot in the direction of Damascus, fleeing from those who turned their land and sky into pieces of fire; they remained

there as honored guests until it was time for them to return, which didn’t take long.

It is said that one year, large numbers of Syrians crossed into the “Land of the Cedars,” fleeing from the fire that surrounded them on all sides.

It is said that some of them set their own fires in their country of refuge; it’s said that most of the refugees were only members of poor families who were being forced to battle their need, the cold, and the injustice until it is time for their imminent return. It is said that some of the hosts made things even more desperate for the refugees, adding to the bitterness of their exile.

It is said that many of the hosts worked quietly to safeguard the dignity of those who had lost their homes.

It is said that in the same period, Egypt launched a campaign entitled “I don’t get it anymore.”

It is said that...

Hanady Salman
Managing Editor
As-Safir newspaper

Syrian refugees in Lebanon: Politics and security vs. the humanitarian situation

Kassim Kassir

From the first moment of the Syrian crisis and the arrival of Syrian refugees to Lebanon, Lebanese political factions began dealing with this social-humanitarian issue from a political and partisan perspective, and not from a purely social, humanitarian and legal one. Their method of dealing with the issue has changed based on changing political calculations, or because of internal security conditions in Lebanon.

In order to avoid drawing a mere general conclusion, I'll present some information via the developments in the Syria crisis over the last four years.

During the first phase of the crisis, Prime Minister Najib Mikati headed a government that included members of the March 8 camp and some centrist figures (the Progressive Socialist Party and President Michel Sleiman's representatives). This government announced that it would pursue a policy of "disassociation," and that it would set down no obstacles to the entry of Syrian refugees. Meanwhile, the March 14 camp and Islamist groups sympathetic to the Syrian revolution announced that they welcomed the refugees and would offer them every possible type of support.

Although some March 8 groups, especially the Free Patriotic Movement, demanded a specific policy on how to deal with these refugees, the Mikati government was keen to avoid adopting any organizational measures, out of a fear of the reaction of the Islamist arena sympathetic to it.

Later on, when the number of refugees rose substantially, some political circles and media outlets, especially those close to the FPM, began to urge that the Syrians not be referred to "refugees" or the "displaced," because these terms would have legal and practical repercussions.

And in practical terms, the entry of Syrians remained unrestricted and unregulated, free of legal obstacles.

However, after Mikati's government resigned and Tammam Salam formed a new Cabinet, figures from the Future Movement or close to it received portfolios that included the ministries of interior, justice and social affairs. Meanwhile, the number of refugees continued to rise while their presence had a growing impact on the socio-economic situation. Ministers from the Future Movement then began to adopt the call for regulating the situation of refugees and their entry into Lebanon; they went as far as agreeing to halt their entry, with the exception of special cases.

The complaints about the refugees began to grow when political or security developments took a certain turn. For example, the presidential election in Syria saw tens of thousands of these refugees take part in the voting, particularly at the Syrian embassy in Lebanon. The mass of people made its way through the street leading to Hazmieh; politicians from March 14, the Future Movement and some pro-Syrian uprising Islamists were vocal in condemning the behavior of these refugees and demanding that they return to their country. The government



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decided to withdraw refugee status from Syrians entering the country, while the March 8 parties praised these refugees and their support of President Bashar Assad.

On the other hand, when security incidents take place – whether in the town of Aarsal or elsewhere – such as a murder committed by a Syrian national, all Syrian refugees pay the price. They are harassed and sometimes attacked directly, or expelled from villages and towns. When bombings take place in certain areas, such as the southern suburbs of Beirut, the refugees are the first to pay the price. Some municipalities have taken security and administrative measures against them, covering their movements

and living arrangements, and also conduct counts of their numbers.

There is also the issue of social assistance to refugees by political groups and humanitarian associations. In general, most of this assistance is linked to the political affiliation of refugees and their stance on the regime and the opposition. Assistance is provided based on these considerations, and not humanitarian ones.

Although the Syrian crisis is four years old and the number of refugees remains high, we have yet to see a unified vision on the part of political factions when it comes to the refugee issue. There are no precise statistics about the situation of these refugees and the impact of their

presence on Lebanon's economy, society and security. Instead, each faction views the issue from its own political or "security" perspective, which reflects negatively on the refugees' humanitarian situation.

The danger resulting from this situation continues to grow in Lebanon and the region, but the issue is absent in the political objectives and programs of the various sides, whether we're talking about the Syrian regime or the opposition. It's as if the refugees are merely a number, which can be exploited for political reasons, or for financial gain by the various factions. It's a dangerous problem that should be confronted by everyone.

The need for a parallel or counter-narrative

Ziad Majed

For a while now there has been an increase in measures targeting Syrians and Palestinians arriving from Syria; they range from “administrative” measures to make their entry and residency more difficult and “security” measures that place refugee camps and gatherings of refugees under strict monitoring. These steps have been accompanied by behavior, decisions and reports by the press that can be termed racist. They represent an attempt to spread generalizations about hundreds of thousands of people because of their identity, color or the behavior of some of them; they seek to isolate them and enforce restrictions on their movement.

However, these measures and behavior don't sum up the issue of Syrians in Lebanon, and can't be considered the only indicator of how Lebanese deal with Syrian refugees. In fact, there is interaction on the cultural, political and humanitarian levels between groups of nationals from both countries; there are many joint relationships, initiatives and activities that have emerged out of this context. However, their impact has remained limited if compared to the impact of bureaucratic measures and decisions. The impact of these initiatives remains is outweighed by that of the political statements and media campaigns that target refugees.

This disparity doesn't come exactly as a surprise, even if it deserves condemnation. Lebanon's sectarian division over what is taking place in Syria strengthens the first aspect. The accumulated political and socio-economic crises find their outlet in the accusations made by many groups who hold others responsible for what befalls them. The mixture of racism and class hatred makes the targeting of a large group of refugees easy, since they have little no social, economic or legal (and political) protection. However, this doesn't erase the difficulty of the conditions and exceptional nature of them in a country that has experienced civil wars and occupations that have left many individuals and groups with various types of fears and obsessions. Moreover, it isn't easy to deal with a catastrophe of the magnitude of the Syrian crisis, which has left Lebanon with a mass of refugees who make up one-fourth of the country's total population.

This leads us to a preliminary conclusion that appears pessimistic: the current situation is moving in a vicious circle and the passage of time only further complicates things; the humanitarian crises in refugee areas and in Lebanese areas hosting refugees in the north and the Bekaa are becoming worse, and these areas were already impoverished. The successive military and security developments in recent months on Lebanon's eastern border with Syria have rendered the several-years-old national discussion over Hezbollah's growing involvement in the battles to defend the Syrian regime tenser and more difficult, even though this doesn't alter the hierarchy of responsibility for how things have unfolded. Moreover, the racist rhetoric and measures, which might continue to emerge from time to time, and some emotional and hatred-laden responses to them, will likely continue to restrict humanitarian initiatives and social and cultural activities by Syrians and Lebanese. These latter activities, however, exemplify interaction and solidarity; they allow for cultural enrichment and innovation. Those who love the theater, cinema, music and arts in general are aware of how much Syrian residents of Lebanon participate in such endeavors. Therefore, so that we don't give in to pessimism, or the most apparent aspect of the Syrian scene in Lebanon, we should make more efforts to see coordination among people who work in the fields of law, culture and research and reject simplistic approaches and racism. The many legal challenges to government decisions that violate the Constitution, the Human Rights Charter and international covenants signed by Lebanon require the kind of specialized efforts and individuals that will allow us to confront them. Media coverage of activities highlighting the importance of Syrian contributions to cultural life in Lebanon should be encouraged and made general. Scientific studies should tackle economic issues and the socio-economic and security challenges as a result of the Syrian refugee presence, while countering the misleading figures and statements that have become entrenched over the last decade. We need to bring out the extent of the exaggeration and imprecision in the “official” discourse about these issues.

If these actions aren't sufficient to confront the current

situation and its related problems, then they should form the basis for undertaking such a confrontation. In any event, they highlight a “parallel” or “counter-”narrative to the prevailing one on refugees. They form the basis of a new type of relationship in the future between Lebanese and Syrians. Perhaps they will serve as the beginning of sound

efforts that are then considered an alternative group of ideas about how to deal with refugees and their residency, rights and obligations, to be presented to the Lebanese authorities as well as international institutions and organizations, which should be playing more progressive roles in reducing the suffering of hundreds of thousands of people.



For Lebanese Christians, not all Syrians are Syrians

Wissam Saade

Syrians aren't all one bloc, and naturally, neither are Lebanese. But is this how they see each other?

Syrian refugees or residents of Lebanon differ from each other based on social class, sect, region, political affiliation and the reasons why they are here. They also differ from each other based on their emotional stance vis-à-vis their smaller neighbor and its people. But they also differ from each other based on how Lebanese view them; they are in the mirror for many Lebanese, especially Christians, and they are not all "Syrians."

When the two countries achieved their independence from France, the geography was more residence- than demography-based. It continued to permit the Maronites to claim pride of place, while there were more Christians in Syria at the time than there were in Lebanon. It was said by many that the Maronite Patriarch declined to ask for the borders of Lebanon to extend to Wadi Nasara in Syria and include the Orthodox Christians there. Much of this is the stuff of legend, although the number of Christians in Syria and their presence made the Christians of Lebanon feel two things. One was a reassurance that Syria also had a "Christian face," one not limited to the history of Christianity. The second was that the feeling of Lebanon as a modern political entity had become strong enough to allow Lebanese and Syrian Christians to perceive that they differed from each other. It's true that Michel Chiha added "refuge for oppressed minorities" to his definition of Lebanon, but he also retained an idea of "non-neighborly" relations with certain groups, namely the Armenians, Syrians and Assyrians, and not the fundamental bloc of Syrian Christians.

These two new separate political entities were to a large extent determined by the psychological independence of each. There was awareness that the division of these two post-Sykes-Picot political entities wasn't particularly favorable when it came to the Druze of each country, for example, even though the Druze had a role in establishing the idea of Lebanon. But everything has changed today. The era of Maronite supremacy in Lebanon has ended, while the numerical supremacy of Syrian Christians compared to Lebanese Christians lost its impact long ago. Lebanese Christians have only taken modest advantage of the loss of Iraq and Syria's loss of a large number of Christians. At the same time, Christians in the Levant have lost their sense of separation based on these post-Sykes-Picot states. You begin to hear comments such as "they dress and eat like we do." There has been an increasing sense of a common Levantine Christianity, not just because Gen. Michel Aoun and his political current have exploited this notion, or because of the policy of "alliance of minorities," but because it's an automatic result of the collapse of these states.

In reality, the ways of dealing with Syrian Christian refugees can be measured on two levels.

The first is when "Syrians" are discussed as a whole. Previously, during the Civil War and era of Syrian tutelage, it was preferable to speak of "the Syrian," a singular that also meant an absolute. It meant Hafez Assad, the Syrian army, and Syrian workers. Today, there is less talk of "the Syrian" in this sense; people have come to speak of them in the plural, in a reference to their demographic weight and the repercussions of their presence.

At the second level, there is a serious attempt to distinguish among "the Syrians" and not render all of them "Syrians," when this term is used. The largest concentration of Syrians is in areas with a high percentage of Sunnis, such as north and east Lebanon, with the resulting daily burden of life in these areas. But "the Syrians" in the view of Lebanese Christians and Shiites form a "Sunnite bloc," which represents a dual problem. First, they aren't Lebanese, but like the Palestinians in Lebanon they're potential members of Lebanon's Sunni sect. Today, the overwhelming majority of residents of Lebanon from all nationalities are Sunni, and this is expressed in types of sectarian awareness in different forms, much of which involves tension. This doesn't take away from the formation of a Sunni Lebanese



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negativity toward the refugees, while there is the irony of the emergence of people who blame the Syrians for their revolution against the regime of Bashar Assad, while there are those who blame them for not bringing down the regime. This feeds a general negativity, some of it of an offensive character, based on these two contradictory foundations. In the custom of Lebanese Christians, Syrians mean one thing, and Syrian Christians mean something else. They are, socially, and in relation to the Lebanese imagination, not just Christian but Lebanese also, or the "most Lebanese" of the Syrians. At the same time, there is a slowdown in the rise of the numbers of refugees and this intersects with the fact that most of them are Sunnis, i.e. the third major component of Lebanon, albeit divided into three categories: Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian.

There are certainly feelings of racism against Syrian refugees. They have been "created" as an element that is different than Lebanese but it hasn't produced a unified

Lebanese response to them. There is no all-encompassing Lebanese racism, but rather racisms, each having its own problem with the Syrians; this intersects with the problem with Lebanese as well.

This meeting of racisms at a particular moment might hint that we are on the threshold of having the conviction, even if passively, that the Lebanese have become a people in and of itself. It might also hint that what was torn apart by the Syrian tutelage and uprising is being united by the demographic threat, but this is deceptive.

This sectarian consciousness is a vital, malevolent thing. On the one hand, it overestimates the seriousness of the colonial division of Syria and Lebanon, while on the other, it breaks down these "national" borders with its knowledge, functions and desires.

Syria and Lebanon: repeated border closures approaching racism?

Munir el-Khatib

Not many Lebanese know that Qalaa Street in Beirut was named after the prison that was located there, that it was built by the Ottomans and used by the French, and that it continued to be used by the Lebanese state up the 1970s. Today, the prison is now Zahiya Qaddour Public High School and, ironically, it is one of the rare cases in which a prison was turned into a school in Lebanon or in the rest of the Arab world.

Moreover, not many Lebanese know that Syrian President Hafez Assad was imprisoned there in 1961 after he fled to Lebanon from Syria via the port of Tartous, following the Egyptian-Syrian unity coup. He was then turned over to the Syrian authorities, who imprisoned him in Mezzeh. Afterward, he left prison and took up official posts, finally becoming president of the republic.

Before Assad's flight to Lebanon and after he was turned over to the Syrian authorities, the borders between the two countries were closed dozens of times. Sometimes they were indefinite measures, before the borders would be reopened. Usually it was for a few days, but in some cases it would last for three months. Amid these repeated closures, there was absolute chaos on the borders between the two countries. This situation became completely "normalized" with the Syrian military presence in Lebanon, even if official crossings maintained their prestige and carried out entry and exit measures according to the laws in force. After the Syrian withdrawal the borders were organized to a degree. But when the "Arab spring" arrived the border situation became chaotic. Lebanese came to know new, unofficial crossings, through which terrorists and tons of goods and weapons were smuggled, and naturally thousands of refugees.

The problem of the two countries' borders is as old as Independence. In their capitals, talk about the border is different than that of residents of the border area, stretching from the Nahr al-Kabir in the north to Shebaa in the south. This problem has undergone several phases: "From complete separation to completing unity" to "One people in two countries" during the era of Hafez Assad to today's "Two peoples in half a country."

Between Lebanon and Syria everything is possible, except borders. Since their formal, legal appearance, there has been flight in both directions. There are entire areas of Syria established by Lebanese. In Lebanon, there are large economic sectors founded by Syrians. Even the currency of the two countries was issued by a single bank, the Bank of Syria and Lebanon, which was neither Lebanese nor Syrian, but French. Prior to this, the French Mandate enforced the Egyptian currency, which is where we get the word "masari" today, meaning money. Before that, the Ottoman Piaster was the currency.

Things remained thus until the mid-20th century, when the currencies were split and the two countries differed over how to appraise their money. This dispute, as usual, led to a closure of the borders - we mean the official ones, not the unofficial ones which have remained open to all, in both directions, looking for work or other needs.

Because of the disparity in prices between the two countries, their governments differed and the borders were closed once again. Sometime, the borders would be closed because of Lebanese customs duties at the ports of Beirut and Tripoli, which raised the prices of goods coming from Syria. At other times, it would take place because Lebanese companies were sole importers of various goods needed by Syrians, and Lebanese controlled this trade.

On one occasion the borders were closed because of contending political stances by the two governments and their contradictory policies during the era of Syrian coups d'état. They were also closed because of the sharp criticism of the Syria regime appearing in Lebanese newspapers. The two countries tried to organize the movement of labor

coming from Syria and enforced certain fees and specified the amount of currency that could be held by individuals crossing the borders. On one occasion, President Shukri Quwatli prevented Arab tourists from going to Lebanon, where they would spend their summers in the town of Aley. The Syrian finance minister, Khaled al-Azm, was the "star" of the decisions to close the borders in the 1940s and 1950s, but he ended up exiled from Syria to Lebanon.

The border measures also saw difficult days that ended up in a total rupture, with a decision by the larger country usually the reason. But despite the crises and political estrangement between Lebanon and Syria their relations remained distinguished and never led to a total break, or a distance that would allow the passing of a decision such as the one to impose a visa - even if Lebanon's General Security considered it a measure to regulate the entry of Syrians.

The course of the crisis between the two countries, which has led to the visa requirement, is not the product of the current developments. Naturally, things have accumulated since the Civil War up to the assassination of Rafik Hariri, and the stance on the war in Syria. In the last four years we have seen posters informing Syrian workers about nighttime curfews, in Lebanese towns and villages, whether Christian or Muslim, and whether they are pro- or anti-resistance. In other villages, it has been illegal to rent to Syrians and some have even banned their entry. These discriminatory measures are political ones par excellence and confront Lebanese with the test of seeing their political clannishness turn into racism against Syrians, with the innocent on both sides paying the price.

What has taken place is a stain on the country's honor, one that will weigh heavily on future generations.



Beirut's changing faces; we flee from them and to them

Mohammad al-Attar

In the first rehearsal for the play *Antigone*, which was performed at Al Madina Theater in mid-January, I encountered 43 Syrian women who had come from the camps of Sabra, Shatila and Burj al-Barajneh to take part in re-interpreting the tragedy by Sophocles.

On a small whiteboard I wrote the following question: "Why do you want to participate in this play?"

I didn't expect that among the answers, which ranged from "wanting to discover the theater" and "sharing stories of war and the difficulty of refugee life," that the one most cited would be a desire to address a Lebanese public that they believe sees them only as dirt poor, ignorant, conservative and close-minded.

"We want to tell the Lebanese that we had a good life, and homes, and jobs. We're not beggars, we have dignity," said Mona, who was displaced from Rural Damascus province and lost a son to an illness under harsh conditions.

"I want people to see us in a way that resembles us," answered Wafaa.

She had been displaced along with her family from the outskirts of Aleppo when it became a battlefield; she is the mother of five children who ran a small shop next to their home, and doesn't know what happened to it.

In fact, the women's insistence on giving priority to this topic was surprising. I expected that the stories of war and loss were their primary motive for speaking out and re-producing *Antigone*.

Over the three months of the project to perform this play, I would learn that the near-daily confrontations that women would withstand in the face of racist or condescending comments stood for a large portion of their tales of injustice. Thus, it wasn't only stories of oppression, war and losing loved ones that emerged during the rehearsals. The stories of Syrians who are crushed inside Beirut's pockets of poverty were also strongly present. I found myself, a middle-class Syrian, and also a refugee in Beirut, learning from my work with them how racism in essence is based on strongly-rooted class criteria.

When I walk through the street, it's simply not the same as it is for them. My social circles, no matter how diverse, are different from theirs. Syrians in Lebanon, like Lebanese of course, are made up of classes and these worlds are practically closed to each other.

When the bus taking the female trainees stopped to let them off in Gemmayzeh, where we were working that day, it caused a momentary halt in traffic. This was enough for a woman in a luxury car to scream at the women, "What are you people doing here?" This prompted other people in the street to intervene, and let out their anger on the women with a strange appearance in their neighborhood.

The anger of the woman and those who followed her harbored astonishment mixed with condemnation. What were a group of hijab-wearing women, with their modest clothes, doing in this part of Beirut? Why were they meeting here? Don't they have places where they live, and never leave?

My team and I had preceded the group to our training location and thus were unable to catch this short "show" in Gemmayzeh. Fatima was the first woman to enter. She approached me with a sad smile and said, "Seriously, what are we doing here?"

The same thing took place in practically every place we went in the city. As much as it would unnerve me, it would make the women more determined to continue with their project. Most of the time, they would recall these incidents as rare funny spots in the rehearsal. How could they overcome this injustice? I believe the answer would come from others, Lebanese men and women, whom we would regularly encounter by chance. They would always smile at us and offer assistance whenever they could. We couldn't have gone forward without them. The world would be truly desolate without such people, and Beirut certainly has its inescapable share of them. Beirut is fierce and always tense, but it continued to stubbornly resist the spread of harshness



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to its heart. Through its people, the city would always return some of the hope that we had just lost upon encountering others.

A few days before the performance, Farah arrived. She had been forced to leave her home and land in rural Aleppo and live, with her husband and four children, in a musty room in Shatila. She asked me to add another story to the tale that she was telling in the play. She said she had to talk about her Lebanese neighbor, Umm Khaled, who made their life possible in the camp; Farah insisted that the play would be lacking without her. I tried hard to convince her that the script had been completed, but Umm Khaled was Beirut for Farah. Each one of us had his or her intimate intimate Beirut, to which we would flee when the city's harsh streets became oppressive.

The women of *Antigone* know that their difficult conditions have left them more fragile and susceptible to ugly racist incidents in Beirut. But they brought all of this to the stage, to confront the audience that would come to know their happy spirits, their love of life, and the difficult paths that brought them to the camps of the Diaspora. They knew that they had difficult destinies but none of them intended to surrender any time soon.

At the end of every performance the meetings between them and the audience would see long bouts of laughter mixed with stolen tears. A small portion of their dreams had been achieved but they were aware that they faced a difficult path ahead of them, in enduring their lives as refugees. This applies to Syrian refugees who today are now facing new official measures that will make their situation even more difficult.

The decision by General Security on Dec. 31 of last year reminded them that discrimination first affects the poor.

This unfair decision to regulate the entry of Syrians in to Lebanon, along with the loopholes that were deliberately created, states, ambiguously, that there is no problem for well-off Syrians to enter, or to settle their status. As for the poor, the laborers and those fleeing from oppression, there are other borders that will be closed to them, or that will force them to leave for parts unknown. In fact, the discrimination against refugees is taking a more dangerous course. This time, it's not just racist behavior by individuals, or media outlets using the rhetoric of hatred against the Syrian presence. It is a government decision, backed by Lebanon's political elites.

Thus, Lebanon is cracking down more and more, but we once again find refugee from its harshness with its people. Lebanese, as individuals and associations, have rushed to fight back against this decision and overturn it. A sit-in was held at the National Museum and media outlets and social media have launched campaigns. The group Legal Agenda has launched a legal campaign, backed by other groups, to mobilize against this decision. These people share the anxiety of Syrians and are offering them unconditional support, reminding us that together we will face huge dangers if we give in to the policies of discrimination and the rhetoric of hatred. They reminded us all that though we aren't in a position of power today in countries being torn apart by wars and the contending interests of politicians, nevertheless we are not a small group, and we are certainly not weak. Thus, we can only work together to allow the aspect of Beirut that embraces outsiders to win out over the aspect that seeks to repel them, even if this takes a while.

Syria and Lebanon: Mutual racism?

Amer Abu Hamed

Racist behavior is generally linked to a lack of knowledge of the victims by the racists in question. While knowledge is a process of enlightenment and absorption that delves into circumstances, history and background, a lack of knowledge – or a deliberate lack thereof – is linked to ready-made generalizations. And in the Lebanese – Syrian case, the Lebanese appear to be unique in this lack of knowledge toward Syrian refugees. In fact, both sides in the equation are characterized by ignorance, although the results are usually one-sided.

To engage in a comparison, the metaphor of “host and guest” might be closer to the truth than the version prevalent in the media. It’s also more precise, if we consider the relationship from the standpoint of racist behavior, because the components of racist thought don’t exist between these two neighboring, intertwined countries. Thus, the narratives about the skin color, looks and smell of Syrian workers are actually a type of racism - borrowed from international methods of expressing anger - over the Syrian presence, and not a problem of contending identities. The relationship between host and guest usually begins in a friendly manner, but then becomes imbalanced when the visitor is forced to reside in another country and is unable to leave. The host becomes angry and is unable to either tolerate the burden posed by the guest, or eject him. Over the long term this relationship becomes one of the strong versus the weak, forced to live in the same place. The visitor may not rebel against his host; if he does, he becomes an occupier and the host will exploit his position to pressure the guest, using all possible means, in the hope that he will finally be rid of him.

However, we rarely deal with the other side of this relationship, leaving aside the duality of victim and aggressor. It’s true that the guests have adhered to the protocol of their hosts tolerated insults in order to survive, after having fled the violence raging daily in their country. However, these people coming from the bigger country

to the smaller one bring with them a version of Lebanon and its people that also lacks credibility, one in which generalizations, racism and superficiality prevail at times. The point here is not to conclude that counter-racism exists, but rather to unlock the ambiguity surrounding this problem that appears in the media - where Lebanese are in essence evil and Syrians are in essence innocent, and that behavior is based on differences in “identity” between the people of the two countries.

The version that many Syrians used to have about Lebanon and the Lebanese prior to the Syrian revolution hasn’t seen a big change, except that it remains hidden because of the current conditions. However, its content is the authentic Baathist version, namely that the Lebanese are superficial, sectarian and agents of the west. Serving as more than a mere mistaken generalization, this view in fact lays the groundwork for violence and opening up Lebanon and its people to interventions by outsiders. This is especially when racist, thuggish behavior enhances the belief that Lebanese, because of their nature as agents of foreign countries, their limp dialect, and their attention to the pettiness of the west, can only be brought into line by Syrian military force. In fact, many Lebanese were previously mocked about their dialect and their young people’s “western” appearance during the days of the Assad occupation. And more recently, it seems there are pro-regime and anti-regime Syrians who long for a return of this occupation.

Many Syrians who have sought refuge in Lebanon have yet to alter this condescending view, which sees the country as marginal and vapid. Some of them have sought to cement this description as if it were an unchangeable reality, just like the Assad regime’s long presence in Lebanon. These factors, along with the anti-refugee discourse, don’t do much to help Syrians understand Lebanon’s complex and diverse society. On the contrary, these versions have made it more difficult for them to adjust to their new country, which differs in its openness to the west and the unaccustomed to margin of freedom for those coming from Assad’s Syria. Both parties to the relationship exhibit mutual ignorance and engage in hateful clichés and stereotypes. Lebanese and Syrians haven’t been given the opportunity to get to know each other, unless it has been under exceptional circumstances. The Assad occupation of Lebanon presented Syrians as thieving soldiers, while the Baathist ideology cemented Lebanon as a place that is weak and open to outside intervention. The Syrian uprising hasn’t presented a new Syrian vision of Lebanon and the right-wing political and media machine in Lebanon hasn’t stopped for a moment in generating hateful rhetoric. Both versions have yet to be treated, or overcome; a long history poses a heavy burden for both peoples.

If the Syrian regime is the most important author of this history, will the end of this regime open up a new door for allowing Lebanese and Syrians to get to know each other?



I confess

Rita Daou

Araya, my beautiful home village in the qada of Baabda in Mount Lebanon, is about 50 kms from Damascus, or an hour and a half at the most by car. Nevertheless, back in those days I never set foot in that country, which was so close and yet so far.

Our home was located on the Damascus highway. When I was a child, I was told that the road was called this because it led to

Damascus; it was always busy, full of cars, buses and trucks, some of them with Syrian license plates, but I never once thought about going to Syria.

I confess – I never once wanted to go to Syria.

Later on I moved from Araya to Jounieh and then went abroad for a few years, and Syria became even more distant. The only time that I went to Damascus was in 2009, to cover a two-day event. Those two days didn't change much when it came to my feelings about Syria and its people.

I confess – for me, Syria and all of its people were reduced to that soldier who would stop me at the checkpoint to my village and in my country, to search the car and ask for my papers. I would answer defiantly, and revenge would be taken, in the form of a longer-than-usual search.

In my head, all Syrians were equal to the Arab Deterrent Force that we were "hosting" in my uncle's home on the floor above ours; this ADF, however, suddenly turned into an occupying force.

To this I can only add the painful feeling of injustice and impotence vis-à-vis the oppressive behavior of Lebanese security agencies during the era of Syrian tutelage, and this behavior affected journalists as well.

Because of this I left Lebanon and remained distant from my family, husband and children, and everything I love, as I searched for stability and a margin of freedom, as well as a dignified life.

When the Syrian revolution erupted all of my previously-held notions disappeared. When the war began – and my colleagues can attest to this – I became Syrian.

A long time before the term "Je suis Charlie" emerged, I would repeat for anyone who was listening, "I am Syrian."

I write about the beautiful news of Syria with passion and love, while Syria's tragedies crush me, haunt me, and never leave me. I have memorized Syrian geography; I practically know the name of every village and town, and love them all.

Today, I wish with all my heart that I could visit Syria.

I confess – before the war, I didn't know many Syrians. I'm sad because I only "discovered" them because of the war.

I should correct myself here: I knew and would follow a number of Syrian intellectuals, whom I met via the An-Nahar newspaper supplement. But for me, they weren't "Syrian." They were the group of people who have no country or nationality, a group of people who speak their mind and move people's consciences, and then move on.

After the war, because of my work in the media and my contacts with Syrians inside the country, I discovered many heroes: they're the ones who haven't been ruined by the war, and have not been overtaken by extremism, or destroyed by hatred.

In Lebanon, I met other Syrians. I find a true delight in watching friends and colleagues "discover" Syrians themselves, and listen to the conversations that took a long time in coming: about traditions and customs, or politics, or Lebanese and Syrian cuisine, religious groups, or Beirut and Hamra street.

I have discovered many intellectuals among them – not because they are well-versed, but because they are modest, spontaneous and reserved, choosing their words carefully when they discuss the history of relations between our country and theirs. They are intellectuals because of their politeness, quiet voices and patience when it comes to all of the discrimination and difficulties from which they suffer in Lebanon.

I discovered that to the extent that I sympathize with Syrians who dream of achieving democracy and freedom and who are struggling for this, I also understand those who defend President Bashar Assad,

because they see no alternative except extremism. We too, as Lebanese, are divided and we fight for our ideas and die for our dreams.

I discovered Syrians who live in refugee camps, small rooms and makeshift homes. They are also patient. I experienced the Civil War in Lebanon and my home was on the front lines. My village experienced one of the massacres of the War of the Mountain. I know people who were kidnapped, who suffered, and who died. But I don't think I've ever seen the kind of pain that I've seen in the refugee camps of Lebanon, and I haven't seen such patience before.

I'm also surrounded by people who don't share my opinions. Some of them are oblivious, which preventing them from focusing on anything other than the burden posed by the refugees. There are fewer job opportunities, while security tension is rife, representing the repercussions of the conflict for our country. There are those who are fearful; they are afraid of extremism, of chaos, and of the other, to the degree that the human aspect is lost in such a situation.

But of those around me, some people have reconciled themselves with their selves, and with their past. There are those who know that crime is not a feature of a certain people or nationality, and they know how to distinguish between a person and what a person does. There are those who are embarrassed by border procedures whose price is paid by those clinging to life.

Around me are people who love Lebanon without hating everything that isn't Lebanon.

Therefore, I don't feel frustration or despair.

Peace will be built by those who dream, and by those who are patient.



The double tragedy of Palestinian refugees from Syria

Thaer Ghandour

Everyone who resides in Lebanon - whether Lebanese, Syrians or others - agrees that the Syrian refugee presence is the country's greatest challenge. There are many preconceived notions that apply to refugees, such as the accusation that they being responsible for the rising crime rate, which isn't true. On the margins of this refugee presence we also find the quasi-surreal issue of Palestinian refugees from Syria, who have become refugees once again, this time in Lebanon. They bring with them their accumulated memories of injustice, stretching back to the Nakba of 1948, only to encounter here an injustice that is even greater.

Palestinian refugees in Syria began arriving in Lebanon at the end of 2012, when the battle for Yarmouk broke out in the Syrian capital. Their numbers gradually rose to 80,000 during the first months of 2013, and then fell, gradually, to reach approximately 44,000 by the end of last year, according to UNRWA. More than half of them came from Yarmouk and most of them sought refuge in Sidon and elsewhere in south Lebanon; the rest are distributed among Beirut, Tyre, the Bekaa Valley and north Lebanon, where there are already-existing Palestinian refugee camps.

The measures taken by Lebanon's General Security are the biggest reason for this decline, which began in the second quarter of 2014. In fact, a number of decisions were taken, and then withdrawn. Most importantly, international aviation companies were asked to not bring any Palestinian refugee (who is a resident of Syria) to Lebanon from any country in the world, irrespective of the documents he or she was carrying. Then, General Security banned the entry of Palestinians from Syria into Lebanon, cracked down on the renewal of residency permits for those already here, and reduced the period of this residency. In the end, the authorities required a prior visa (under impossible conditions). These measures weren't all written; some were communicated verbally to Palestinians at border crossings, and in the absence of any official documents. This led to the separation of a number of families between Lebanon and Syria; it prompted a number of these refugees to try and flee by boat to Europe, with all of the danger that this entailed.

Also, General Security returned a number of Palestinians to Syria by force despite the danger to their lives, and this policy led to a range of difficult humanitarian cases. For example, some women were allowed to enter, but without their children, because they were Syrian nationals. As for the children, they are Palestinian refugees in Syria because their fathers are Syrian. Also, the parents of a deceased refugee, Abu Ali Ramadan, were prevented from receiving his body and burying him, until several Palestinian factions intervened to allow one of his sons to secure this permission.

At first, those arriving from Syria stayed with their relatives in Lebanon's Palestinian refugee camps but when their numbers began to rise, some were prompted to rent homes or garage spaces in the camps. Rents ranged from \$200 to \$700 a month, depending on size. Some charitable associations established refugee reception centers, despite the high population density there. UNRWA took responsibility for Palestinians arriving from Syria, and not the UNHCR, as in the case of Syrian nationals.

Initially, UNRWA paid \$100 to each family as a monthly housing allowance in addition to a \$30 food allowance. But in September 2014, UNRWA informed 1,110 out of 12,000 families that the assistance would be halted after it set down a number of "civil criteria." The agency later accepted an appeal that was lodged by some of the families.

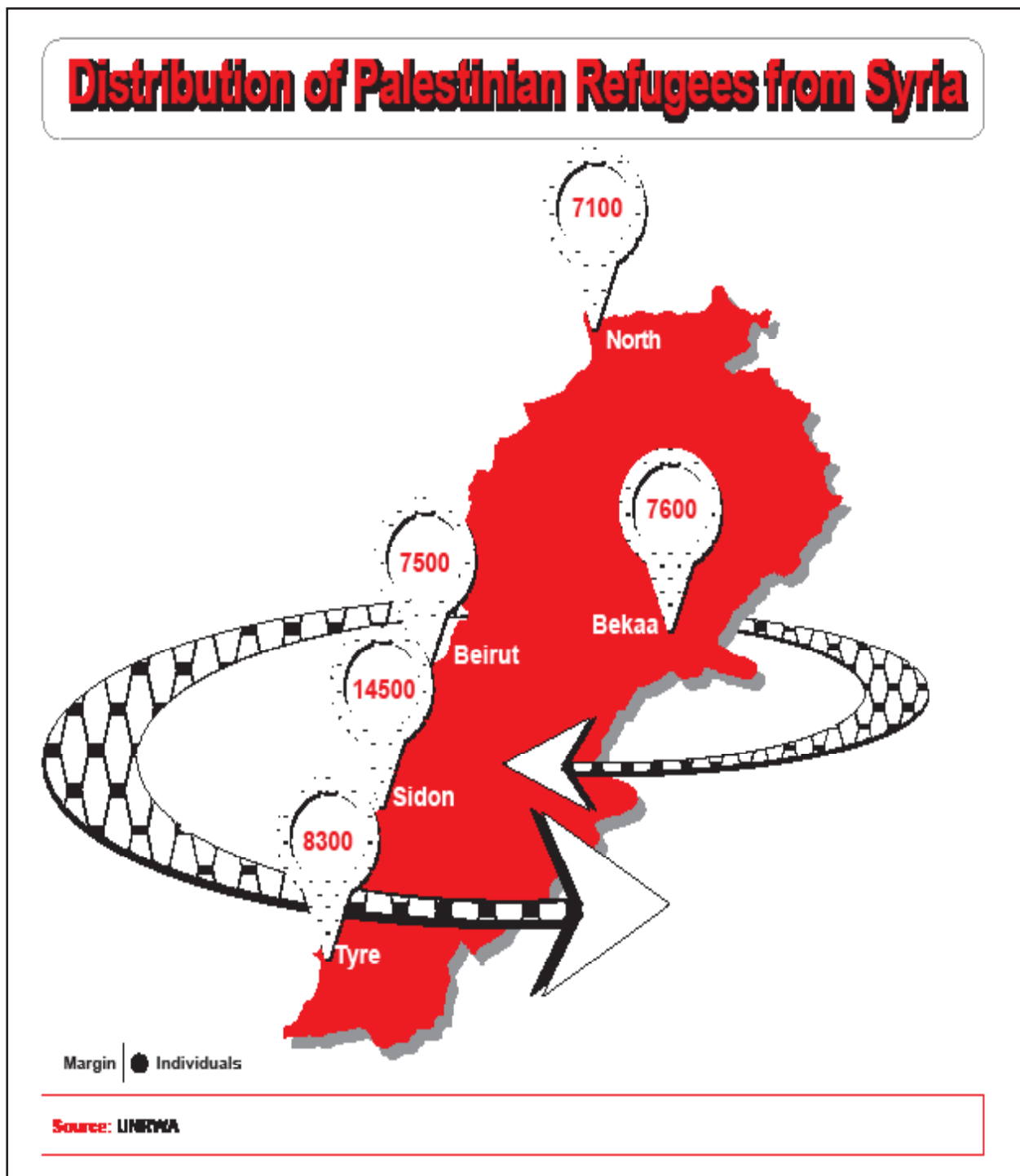
UNRWA dealt with the refugees arriving from Syria like Palestinian refugees in Lebanon in terms of health services.

It covers part of the bill, particularly with primary care, and pays part of the cost of some operations.

Refugees from Syria encountered another problem: the high cost of medicine compared to Syria, especially because most of them didn't have jobs.

UNRWA schools took in students arriving from Syria but they encountered a considerable problem, namely

the difference in the curriculum, and particularly the foreign language component, as they depended highly on Arabic-language instruction in Syria. This prompted UNRWA to open additional, afternoon courses for Syrian Palestinians for two school years, then incorporated the students into half of its schools (7 out of 14) during the current academic year.



The humanitarian side of culture: Words are not deaf

Faten Hamoui

How can one plunge into the topic of the repercussions of the Syrian crisis on socio-economic conditions in Lebanese communities in terms of culture in around 600 words? We shouldn't forget that it's also a time in which questions still surround around the issue of the proper term to use – refugees, asylum, emigration – when talking about Syrians in Lebanon.



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All of the problems of the Lebanese are related to the fact that the majority of them distance themselves from the search for common ground; in fact, they go out of their way to drive wedges among themselves, on many levels. They come up with slogans against hatred and racism, but their deeds hardly match their words. If this is the case with Lebanese, you can imagine what it's like with Syrians. On the other hand, we shouldn't talk about Lebanese as if they're all the same in terms of values and principles. They don't all resemble each other if we're talking about humanitarian ways of dealing with any person who's not Lebanese. It would also be a shame to talk about Syrians as if they're cut from the same cloth, and remind us of the behavior of the Syrian army prior to 2005. The fundamental problem is the level of awareness when it comes to the words "humanitarian" or "humanity."

It's only natural for Lebanese society to be affected positively on the cultural level, via any cultural experiment that is performed or published. One of the most important roles an intellectual or artist plays lies in opening horizons up for everyone who takes in his or her cultural production, and merging his or her opinions with efforts to improve community life and spread awareness. Thus, any addition to Lebanon's cultural life represents the enrichment of society.

Going back to the word humanitarian, we should avoid

using prejudicial views about people and not placing them in the dock just because of their color, race, religion, sect or nationality, etc. The intellectual and artist should give voice to his or her humanity, over and above everything else, to demonstrate the essence of true culture.

Perhaps this argument is moving in circles, and perhaps I'm just trying to state the obvious. But the notions that some exclusionist intellectuals bestow upon us have nothing to do with my concept of culture. They make me wonder: if I read a book I find to be significant, without knowing the name of the writer, will I change my mind when I found out the writer's name? What if I hear a wonderful song on any instrument? Will something be lost from acknowledging the quality of the performance if the musician is Syrian? What about painting, acting, directing, sculpting or any other creative act?

When corruption seeps through an individual, criteria are turned upside down. Questions are posed that take you back to the worst expressions of life. You see a television report talking about a Syrian child who froze to death; you hear voices asking, "Where is your humanity in the face of this tragic scene?" Here, we should ask where we all were for this child, and for those who can't find shelter or food, before the storms hit in Lebanon. It's a case of humanity being expressed verbally, without searching for the solutions to the problems – everyone doing so based on

his or her awareness and our joint strength when we work together. It's a humanity that's dotted with unproductive seminars and gatherings, and writings that haven't ended the sufferings of Palestinian refugees yet, despite the selection of the most important words to move people's consciences or bring them back to life. It's a virtue to say, "We have the honor of trying to produce change, even through words." There is talk about so-and-so dying under tragic circumstances, which breaks one's heart and brings tears to the eyes. Then, some people continue their lives as if nothing happened, while others say it's a case of lack of humanitarian concern.

The image of the dead child why stir up the ideas of person A or B, and produce a powerful poem, or a harsh painting full of blood; it might become a script for a television series or film, etc. It's a tragedy that makes intellectuals either wallow in sadness with their cultural production, or move away from such a thing, to show us the joy that is possible and that life will continue. To show us that non-military resistance is fruitful and important, and that cultural life is enriched by all human light. To move one's circles toward something that is better in practical and not theoretical terms.

Words are not deaf; they have eyes and ears, and souls, if we want this. They remain deaf if they are meant only to be words.

استجابة لبنان للأزمة السورية..

ليك هلق يس
تخلصوا قراية المقال
شو بدنا نلعب؟

تركي جابلق
الخبطة - بانيه
ناصر الخيسان

أحمد رشما
والجيشية 4
وسنكون في
الطوارق والدا
وتكلمت الله
الطبعة حيد
الجمالية
شبابا ودمع
وطوية الله
عبره القبر
أفرا إسحاقيا
براني رشما
أبيلن الحبس
والعقوب
الخطبة عسر
علي الله
حاديوية
الاستخبارات
والعقوب
في لبنان
عبدالله
السجل
الإسامة
والجيشية



السرير العائلي

الخطبة التي أعلمت أسس من سوريا الحكومية بعد على سفرون ولتخدم اللاجئين والمجتمعات المحلية

التي ستقوى التنسيق الرسمي وتلعبه الخطة الوطنية بالتعاون مع منظمة الأمم المتحدة بظهور إلى أن 30 في المئة من الهادئ لخطوة...
للتاريخ الغير الحكومية الخدمية والصحية والتعليمية...
الإسكانية للاجئين واليتيميين في المناطق المحاذية...
البيروت ترفض إلى أيضا الخطة الأولى التي يمددنا ليقول بغيره ف...
هي الخطة الرسمية الأولى التي تعان من الصعوبات وبالشراكة مع منظمات الأمم المتحدة...
الأموال التي تعمل إلى القومية وتذهب إلى مشاريع يتم تنفيذها مع شركاء...
دوليين ومحليين... فيما لا يعمل إلى المؤسسات الرسمية وبشأنها شيء...

مدفوعا أعدادا كبيرة من اللاجئين الفلسطينيين إلى الأجزاء في وهم تحقيق أن...
يعد أفضل غير البواج طريق المفضل...
البحر الإنساني

يقول وزير الشؤون الاجتماعية رفيد مريهس لـ "المستقبل" إن وزارته هي...
السكان والمحتاجون... والخيسان

التي ستقوى التنسيق الرسمي وتلعبه الخطة الوطنية بالتعاون مع منظمة الأمم المتحدة بظهور إلى أن 30 في المئة من الهادئ لخطوة...
للتاريخ الغير الحكومية الخدمية والصحية والتعليمية...
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دوليين ومحليين... فيما لا يعمل إلى المؤسسات الرسمية وبشأنها شيء...

تدخل الأزمة السورية حيزها الخامس مع وصول عدد السوريين المقيمين في لبنان إلى نحو مليون ونصف المليون نسمة، بينهم مليون و200 ألف لاجئ مسجل في القومية العليا لسفرون اللاجئين. وقد أعلنت في السرايا الحكومية أمس خطة لبنان لاستجابة الأزمة، بالشراكة مع منظمة الأمم المتحدة في لبنان، بحضور رئيس الحكومة ناهي صلا، ووزير الأمن العام أحمد الخليل، ووزير الداخلية غازي العياش، ورئيس السلطة الأم المتحدة في لبنان والشؤون الإنسانية ريس مارتين.
تشاد الخطباء بتعاونهم وبجهودهم الفعالة، باستثناء، الإشارة إلى ضعف استجابة المجتمع المدني في المجال لتلبية حاجات اللاجئين حيث لم يتأخر في 40 في المئة من مجمل الجائل التي تخدمها القومية وتشرطها من عدم التعاون. لم يتعدت أحد من الإحاطة في إدارة الأزمة والاستجابة لتحتج المجتمعات اللاجئين والمضيفين سواء نتيجة التحفظ الرسمي الجبتي وعدم وقته استراتيجيا وخطة بعد ابتداء الأحداث في سوريا من جهة وعلى طلبة التنظيم السياسي الحد في البلاد من جهة ثانية، وعدم التزام الدول المتحفة الدولية والعربية بالإبقاء، بالترابعا اللية الطولية وعدم تفاعلها مع لبنان غير العدة المعتاد للاجئين المتدفقين إلى لبنان عازمة المأزوم أصلا. الأثران القائل أمدأ إلى العسر وتكسب كثرين في الخدمات القومية لتجنيبين اللاجئين والتضييق وحميم القدرة على إخراج أكثر من عشرين في المئة من الطلبة السوريين إلى المدارس وسط مشاغل كثيرة، ولتفادي ترك المدارس والفتيات السوريين عرضة لمخاطر تتصل إلى حد الأثران بالمشتر. هذا ولم تتحدث من خطبة عسرف التناول والعقد المفضل وسجيم الجائل التي تعمل إلى القومية أنفسهم.

المفرد اللغوي

هي الخطة الرسمية الأولى التي تعان من الصعوبات وبالشراكة مع منظمات الأمم المتحدة...
الأموال التي تعمل إلى القومية وتذهب إلى مشاريع يتم تنفيذها مع شركاء...
دوليين ومحليين... فيما لا يعمل إلى المؤسسات الرسمية وبشأنها شيء...
بعض الأموال التي تعمل إلى القومية وتذهب إلى مشاريع يتم تنفيذها مع شركاء...
دوليين ومحليين... فيما لا يعمل إلى المؤسسات الرسمية وبشأنها شيء...
فقد تبحر بعضنا في ملفات ما زالت تحتاج تحقيق في القضاء الوطني...
وإن كان لبنان قد نجح أخيرا في تغيير السياسة اللبنانية المتبعة في الاستجابة...
لولا أن...
الخطبة عسر...
يقول وزير الشؤون الاجتماعية رفيد مريهس لـ "المستقبل" إن وزارته هي...
السكان والمحتاجون... والخيسان

Hey, when you finish reading this article, what are we going to play? Visual Artwork by: Amal Kaawash

Syrian testimonies from the Bekaa

Life in Lebanon is very difficult but despite this in this camp we pull together, everyone helps each other. Everyone shares the difficulties and the task of helping those who are weak and need help.
We always try to forget our ongoing tragedies and leave behind the bitterness of our lives. This is why we would have dance parties from time to time. I remember my sister's wedding; she married a Lebanese and would receive Lebanese citizenship; this was something very nice and it made me very happy.
Despite everything we suffer from in this camp, I feel very happy because I've met a number of people here who have entered my heart. I'm very happy about my relationships with them.
I hope that I can return to my studies, like I was in my beloved Syria. Thank you to all of you.
Asmaa Mohammad al-Karim al-Marj, central Bekaa

I came to Lebanon last year and everything was turned upside down. Nothing here is like in my country, Syria, where my life was much better. Nothing has changed this feeling for me since my arrival in this camp. It's the same feeling that children have here, naturally. They've been deprived of going to school and learning, and the pleasures of life.
The days are harsh, especially with the bitterly-cold weather in a place that's not equipped to withstand the winter, the rain and the snow which is falling heavily. We had it tough, my family and I, made up of ten children, because there isn't enough heating or clothing or any other means to keep warm.
We're in dire need of the simplest requirements of life. These are certainly the most difficult days of my life. But on the other hand, I should point out that there are some positive aspects here, which are the primary reason that we've been able to survive. If not for some good Samaritans in this area, and the diverse types of assistance that we receive from associations, I don't know what would have happened to us.
Abdo Jassem al-Khalaf, Jub Jennin, western Bekaa

We came to Lebanon in 2013, fleeing from the war in our beloved country, and from the destruction that was experienced by most parts of Syria.
The positive thing in this camp is the feeling of safety and security, which we lacked, and this is something very good.
We met new people here; they are good people and I have come to like them very much. Our relations are so close that I feel like we're part of the same family.
My father is the "head man" of the camp, which makes me very happy and proud, since he helps out the new arrivals and tries to secure their basic needs (tents, blankets, clothes and some food), naturally, to the best of his ability.
I'm happy because I help him in this noble work.
Despite all of the poor conditions, some positive things have happened, such as working in agriculture in the Bekaa Valley, to earn an "honest living" for me and my family under the difficult conditions that everyone is facing, and especially with the rise in the number of refugees. In addition, I've met a number of Lebanese and I've spent some of the best times with them.
I'd also like to point out some negative things, however, which refugees complain about. For example, there's the residency permit given to us by General Security. It requires us to pay a fee of LL 300,000 every month, not to mention the paperwork to get the permit and the required waiting in line for long periods of time - sometimes two days in front of General Security to get the paperwork done, because it's so crowded.
But, to be honest, we've been treated well by the Lebanese, even though they're in dire straits because of their own fundamental problems.
Abdullah Shalash, Jub Jennin, western Bekaa

Logo of the Japanese People's Aid Project: A red circle on a white background, with the text "من الشعب الياباني From the People of Japan" below it.

The UNDP "Peace Building in Lebanon" project aimed since 2007 at enhancing mutual understanding and social cohesion in a participatory approach with youth, educators, media, NGOs, municipal council members and mukhtars and local leaders.
In response to the repercussions of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon and in order to alleviate the growing tensions in the country, the project works on enhancing the capacities of different society groups from local leaders to educators, media and civil society, on crisis management, peace building and conflict resolution.
The project supports these groups in developing both medium- and long-term strategies for peace building.

Logo of UNDP: The United Nations emblem with "UNDP" below it.

Designed by: Omar Harkous, Hassan Youssef

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