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Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: the Humanitarian Approach under Political Divisions

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MPC Research Report 2012/13



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**EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, FLORENCE
ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES
MIGRATION POLICY CENTRE (MPC)**

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**MIGRATION POLICY CENTRE (MPC)
RESEARCH REPORT, MPC RESEARCH REPORT 2012/13
BADIA FIESOLANA, SAN DOMENICO DI FIESOLE (FI)**

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The Migration Policy Centre at the European University Institute, Florence, conducts advanced research on global migration to serve migration governance needs at European level, from developing, implementing and monitoring migration-related policies to assessing their impact on the wider economy and society.

Rationale

Migration represents both an opportunity and a challenge. While well-managed migration may foster progress and welfare in origin- as well as destination countries, its mismanagement may put social cohesion, security and national sovereignty at risk. Sound policy-making on migration and related matters must be based on knowledge, but the construction of knowledge must in turn address policy priorities. Because migration is rapidly evolving, knowledge thereof needs to be constantly updated. Given that migration links each individual country with the rest of the world, its study requires innovative cooperation between scholars around the world.

The MPC conducts field as well as archival research, both of which are scientifically robust and policy-relevant, not only at European level, but also globally, targeting policy-makers as well as politicians. This research provides tools for addressing migration challenges, by: 1) producing policy-oriented research on aspects of migration, asylum and mobility in Europe and in countries located along migration routes to Europe, that are regarded as priorities; 2) bridging research with action by providing policy-makers and other stakeholders with results required by evidence-based policy-making, as well as necessary methodologies that address migration governance needs; 3) pooling scholars, experts, policy makers, and influential thinkers in order to identify problems, research their causes and consequences, and devise policy solutions.

The MPC's research includes a core programme and several projects, most of them co-financed by the European Union.

Results of the above activities are made available for public consultation through the website of the project: www.migrationpolicycentre.eu

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I. Introduction

Since the beginning of the revolt in Syria in March 2011, the number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has significantly gone up with the escalating violence, spreading all over the country, particularly in Homs, Deir ez-Zor, Hama, Damascus, Idleb and Aleppo. Estimates vary from 5 000 individuals at the beginning of December 2011¹, to 15,800 individuals by the beginning of April 2012 according to the Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA)², 30,000 individuals in mid-May 2012 according to Caritas³, and 33,142 individuals according to the Coalition of charitable organisations for the aid of displaced Syrians to Lebanon⁴. In its most recent report on displaced Syrians in Lebanon, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) underlined that, in collaboration with the Lebanese government and the local authorities along with international and local partners, it brings aid to over 67,000 Syrian refugees who settled in different regions in Lebanon⁵. Before this, UNHCR had noted the exodus of some 18,000 Syrians to Lebanon through the border post at Masnaa, following the explosion that shook Damas 18 July 2012⁶.

This study covers the Syrian refugee problem in Lebanon, following the popular uprisings which developed into an armed conflict in November 2011. It aims to understand the reasons for their growing numbers; their main characteristics; the assistance structure; the political framework. It will analyze also the official position regarding the conditions of the refugees; the repercussions of the refugees' arrival on the delicate balance of the Lebanese political system; and the mobilisation of the institutions of the country and the international community.

The collection of information was carried out from early May to 30 September 2012. Focus group discussions with refugee families and interviews with managers of the organisations concerned, representatives of political parties and experts, were conducted. Press and internet sites have equally been used.

II. The Evolution of the number of registered refugees

The number of registered Syrian refugees according to UNHCR and the High Relief Committee in Lebanon (HRC) has increased from 3 798 individuals at the end of November 2011⁷, to 6 374 at the end of January 2012⁸, shooting up to 56,947 individuals 27 September 2012⁹ (see annex-table 1). A

¹ Hala Naufal, La situation des réfugiés et travailleurs syriens au Liban suite aux soulèvements populaires en Syrie (« The situation of Syrian refugees and workers in Lebanon following the popular uprisings in Syria »), CARIM Notes d'analyse et de synthèse 2011/73, Module socio-politique. Robert Schuman Center for Advanced Studies, San Domenico di Fiesole, Institut Universitaire Europeen, p. 3.

² "Les réfugiés syriens:une véritable bombe à retardement" (« Syrian refugees : a true time- bomb »), Jeanine Jalah, L'Orient-Le Jour, April 2012.

³ Interview with Hessen Sayah, Project Manager, Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center, Sin el Fil. 18 May 2012

⁴ Interview with Mamdouh Zakariah, Director of the database, Akkar, Al-Abdeh, 1 May 2012. The Coalition regroups 28 charitable organisations, the Secretary General of the Coalition, Sheikh Zeid Zakariah, estimated them at 50,000 individuals on 10 June 2012: <http://www.lebanonfiles.com/news/393089>

⁵ UNHCR, UN Inter-Agency Update On Syria Situation Response in Lebanon, 13-20 July 2012: www.unhcr.org/500972289.html

⁶ This explosion caused the death of four high level security managers of the Syrian regime. The UNHCR then declared that 30,000 refugees had crossed the border in 48 hours, while estimations varied between 20,000 and 40,000 refugees according to other sources (L'Orient-Le Jour, 20 July 2012: An-Nahar, 20 July 2012: L'Hebdo Magazine, 27 July 2012).

⁷ UNHCR, Lebanon Update, Situation in North Lebanon, 11-17 February 2012.

⁸ Idem

large number of the refugees currently present is not officially registered because they fear their names to be transmitted to the Lebanese authorities, and thereafter to the Syrian authorities¹⁰. The increase in the number of registered refugees corresponds to the new arrivals on top of the registration of refugees that have already been present but who had not registered beforehand with UNHCR and MSA centres. As the MSA Minister has already specified: “several Syrian citizens fleeing to Lebanon over the course of the last weeks have not registered themselves beforehand with the centres of the HRC and the MSA, but they are now doing so”¹¹. Those citizens who have seen their financial resources peter out, register themselves in order to access food aid and medical services, which are only supplied to registered refugees. The registration of a certain number of Syrian manual workers in northern Lebanon, who had been forced to move following the escalating troubles, whether individuals or with their families, should also be noted¹². In this regard, and recalling the question of the number of refugees present in the north, the Secretary General of the HRC declared: “next week, the HRC will proceed with a census of the displaced families in order to differentiate between the displaced as such, those who have come to Lebanon with their families with the aim of working, and the workers already present in the different Lebanese regions, who register their names (on HRC’s list)”¹³.

III. Bekaa: the second refugee destination

In 2011, refugees settled mostly in northern Lebanon, more specifically Wadi Khaled and Tripoli¹⁴. But, since March 2012, another region, the Bekaa valley, closer to Syria has become a refuge for Syrians seeking to flee troubles in nearby Homs, Quseir, Zabadani and Hama, The movement was initially slow and limited to one or two families *per* day. It then accelerated in a parallel fashion with the escalating troubles in the Governorate of Damascus-rural region, which had signed a twinning agreement with the *mohafaza* of Bekaa¹⁵.

1 April 2012, the number of refugee families in western and central Bekaa was estimated at up to 825, that is some 5 000 individuals. Two thirds of these families were established in semiurban regions such as Saadnayel, Al Faour, Majdal Anjar and Birr Elias. The rest were distributed across the villages of the two regions. Only 14% were hosted by Lebanese families. This is worth comparing with the more welcoming families in Wadi Khaled in Akkar where this percentage is estimated at 90%. In Aarsal and Baalback, in the north of Bekaa, 70% of refugees were hosted by families and assisted by the local community despite the limited jobopportunities in the north compared to other western and central regions where the income possibilities are higher and the refugees, in general, are better educated . It has been estimated that 50% of refugees were living in rented housing, 26% in nomadic camps, and the rest (24%) hosted with families or living in shelter provided by the local community¹⁶.

(Contd.) _____

⁹ UNHRC, UN Inter-Agency Update on Syria Situation Response in Lebanon, 13-20 July 2012 <http://www.unhrc.org/500972289.html>

¹⁰ Interview with Georges Khoury, Director General of Caritas, Sin el Fil, 10 September 2012; and Kamel Mohanna, President of Amelassociation International, Beirut, 17 September 2012

¹¹ « Mikati préside une réunion consacrée à la situation humanitaire des réfugiés syriens » (“Mikati chairs a meeting devoted to the humanitarian situation of Syrian refugees”), L’Orient-Le Jour, February 2012

¹² « Les réfugiés syriens entre le HCR et la situation au Nord » (“The Syrian refugees between UNHCR and the situation in the north”), Ghassan Rifi, As-Safir, January 2012

¹³ As-Safir, March 2012.

¹⁴ See the subject of our study *La situation des réfugiés et travailleurs syriens au Liban ...* (“The situation of Syrian refugees and n workers in Lebanon...”), op. cit. It should be noted that Northern Lebanon is a region that is politically favourable to the Syrian opposition and where economic and family links with Syria are numerous.

¹⁵ As-Safir, February 2012

¹⁶ Danish Refugee Council, Shelter Assessment, West and Middle Bekaa, Jens Christian Christensen, April 2012.

1 May 2012, the number of refugee families increased again to 1 370. The size of the families ranged from 5 to 15 individuals, with the number of refugees being estimated at between 7 000 and 8 000 individuals. The majority of refugee families originated from Homs, Quseir, Jussieh, Rastane, Hama and the Governorate of Hama-rural region , Idleb, the Governorate of Damascus-rural region (Zabadani, Madaya) and Damascus. The families distributed themselves according to the destination towns as follows: Aarsal (460), Baalback (323), Saadnayel (280), Birr Elias (170), Al Faqiha (90), Brital (22) and Hermel (25).

A large number of families have crossed this mountainous and snowy region by foot, others have crossed the border at the two points of Al-Qaa and Masnaa, while others have crossed illegally or with assistance from smugglers¹⁷. The following stories give an idea of the conditions of these refugees before and after their escape:

Um Karim, mother of seven children, is one of the latest arrivals in Al Faqiha. She had decided to flee through the mountains in a moment of panic, when her district was suddenly devastated by the conflict. "I gathered my children and I fled, she explained. We didn't have time to take anything, not even our identity papers. We passed through the plains and we arrived here". Her husband, a taxi driver, couldn't leave with the rest of the family. Um Karim has not had any news from him since their departure.

When she and her children, two babies and her daughter aged 12 years reached Al Faqiha, a local family gave her a single bedroom. The room is sparsely furnished and it does not have heating to protect against the cold wind that sweeps closely across the mountain sides.

"There is not much to eat either". Um Karim points to some plastic containers in a corner, containing rice, lentils, jam and other basic foods.

"We are missing a lot of things", she says. "We have the chance to get ourselves out, but it is not the life we had in Syria. We carry on thanks to God and we try to overcome the difficulties".

Even though the Lebanese authorities proposed to accommodate Syrian children in the local schools, Um Karim's children still do not attend school.

For some, like Ameerah, 24 years old, the scars of past experiences are visible. Her face bears the trace of serious injuries sustained whilst she was thrown from a lorry when she attempted, with others, to escape from shellfire that struck their home village.

For those who have been here for some time, there is the struggle to make ends meet.

"Here, my husband doesn't have a job", explains Salwa, mother of three children. "We receive aid, such as conserved food. Close friends and family have given me some furniture, but the rent remains very high and the house is humid. I managed to find work for my son. He earns 10 dollars *per* day, which helps me to pay the rent".

Um Hashem, 60 years old, has lived in Lebanon for over a year and is part of a support group for relocated Syrian families. Although she realises how difficult life is, she worries about her son and the men of the family who have stayed in Syria. "We thank the Lebanese for having accommodated us and having given us rice, oil and other commodities", she says. "But, not a day goes by where I don't worry about my country"¹⁸.

According to UNHCR, the number of Syrian refugees in Bekaa increased to 9 000 individuals by mid-May 2012, and to more than 35,000 individuals by September 2012¹⁹. Despite the influx of refugees in this region, where assistance needs are all the more evident, the HRC did not receive

¹⁷ Interview with Zaki Rifaii, Coordinator of "Sawa Group – Bekaa region", Beirut, 20 May 2012.

¹⁸ http://www.unicef.org/french/infobycountry/lebanon_62396.html

¹⁹ UNHCR: Registration Trends for Syrians May 17th 2012:

data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=266.pdf&name=20120517_LEB_Stats.pdf

authorisation to work in this area until a week ago²⁰, when it was given the responsibility of managing the aid interventions for the Syrian refugees in the north of the country in May 2011.

According to the Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation: “this is due to the history of the situation’s development and the fact that the first displaced people effectively arrived in the north”. But, behind this attitude there is equally: “government concern to contain this situation in the north of the country. It must be understood that Lebanon, with its denominational puzzle, is very sensitive. We have a region that is mostly Sunni and, therefore, communities that can receive these displaced people much more easily than in Bekaa”. He adds “I believe that their reaction (the Lebanese authorities) to mandate the HRC (only in the north) and their willingness to leave the ICRC and the Lebanese Red Cross to work, along with completely different humanitarian working associations in favour of displaced people, demonstrates that there is a willingness to assist these people, without forgetting the fact that the borders remain open for all displaced people”²¹.

IV. The characteristics of the refugees

1. Geographical characteristics

The distribution of Syrian refugees according to their place of origin

The statistics published by UNHCR on refugee registration trends allow us to follow the evolving distribution of registered refugees according to their place of origin. On the two dates, the vast majority of refugees come from Homs (80.9% and 73.4% successively). In June, Hama came far behind in second before Idleb. But after the armed conflict touched Damascus and Aleppo, the percentage of refugees originating from these two regions increased, from 2% to 4% for Aleppo and from 1.8% and 6% for Damascus.

Distribution of Syrian refugees registered in Lebanon according to place of origin (%):

Place of origin	21 June	5 september
Homs	80.9	73.4
Hama	6.7	6.0
Idleb	4.2	5.6
Aleppo	2.1	4.0
Damascus	1.8	6.0
Deraa	1.6	2.8
Hasakeh	1.1	0.6
Lattakiah	0.9	0.6
Tartous	0.3	0.2
Deir ez-Zor	0.3	0.6
Raqqa	0.2	0.2

Source: UNHCR: Registration Trends for Syrians:

21 June 2012: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/partner.php?OrgId=130>

5 September 2012: <http://reliefweb.int/map/lebanon-unhcr-registration-trends-syrians-sep-5-2012>

²⁰ Interview with Oliver Smith, UNHCR, Manager of the coordination on the north Lebanese terrain, Tripoli, June 2012.

²¹ “Le CICR: une mission subsidiaire à celle de l’Etat auprès des réfugiés syriens au Liban” (“The ICRC, a subsidiary mission to that of the State regarding Syrian refugees in Lebanon”), Jeanine Jalkh, L’Orient-Le jour, April 2012 : http://www.lorientlejour.com/category/Liban/article/754592/Le_CICR+%3A_une_mission_subsidiaire_a_celle_de_l%27Etat_auprès_des_réfugiés_syriens_au_Liban.html

The regions of origin and of refugee destination

The majority of refugees established in northern Lebanon fled Tal Kalakh and Homs in order to seek refuge in Wadi Khaled, Akroom, Halba, Old Akkar, Tall Bire, Tripoli and their surroundings (Minieh, Dennieh) and Bire.

The majority of refugees established in the Bekaa have fled Baba Amr and Quseir to seek refuge in Aarsal, Al Faqiha, Macharii al-Qaa and Hermeil²².

The Syrian refugee population is concentrated in the north of the country (where 30,550 are registered and where 4,390 await registration), the Bekaa region (where 22,417 have registered and where 12,642 await registration) and in Beirut and its suburbs (where 1,489 have registered and 5,616 await registration)²³. (See annex - map of the distribution of Syrian refugees in Lebanon).

On the other hand, the number of Palestinian refugees from Syria has notably increased within the Palestinian camps in Lebanon. It is estimated that more than 5000 Palestinians from camp Yarmouk – the largest camp situated in Damascus – have moved towards the camps of Rachidiyyeh, Bass, Al-Jaleed, Ain al-Heloueh, Miyeh Miyeh, Chatila, Nahr al-Bared and Beddaoui. Some have also moved to Palestinian gathering places²⁴.

With regard to the registered population, the following table shows the distribution of household and individual refugees and registrants by Mohafaza:

Distribution of household and individual refugees registered in Lebanon by Mohafaza

Mohafaza	Number of households June September	Number of individuals June September	% of total June September
Beirut	153 225	344 513	1.5 1.1
Mount Lebanon	219 309	457 734	2.03 1.59
North	3263 5535	15672 25739	69.56 55.74
Bekaa	1319 4129	6030 19136	26.56 41.44
South	12 23	27 55	0.12 0.12
Total	4966 10221	22530 46177	100.00 100.00

Source: UNHCR: Registration Trends for Syrians:

21 June 2012: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/partner.php?OrgId=130>

5 September 2012: <http://reliefweb.int/map/lebanon-unhcr-registration-trends-syrians-sep-5-2012>

Most registered refugees are concentrated in the north. But since refugees have moved towards the Bekaa region, the percentage of registered refugees in this region has increased significantly from 27% in June 2012 to 41% in September 2012.

Speaking of the geographical distribution of Syrian refugees in Lebanon: “One of the features of the Syrian exodus towards Lebanon lies in the distance of the poorer refugees from the two regions of Beirut and Mount Lebanon, and more generally from the Lebanese coast, due to the high cost of living and the price of accommodation. This is how the other Lebanese regions carry the new social transformations”²⁵.

²²UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response - Information Sharing Portal:
<http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>

²³UNHCR Registration Trends for Syrians –24 September 2012, <http://reliefweb.int/map/lebanon-unhcr-registration-trends-syrians-sep-24-2012>

²⁴ « L'ONG Naba'a au secours des déplacés palestiniens » (« The NGO Naba'a, for the rescue of displaced palestinians »), l'Orient-Le Jour, 18 Août 2012.

²⁵Madona Semaan, « Les Syriens déplacés temporairement vers le Liban :les pauvres dans l'inconnu et les riches en « transit » (“The displaced Syrians temporarily in Lebanon: the poor in the unknown and the rich in “transit””), As-Safir, 4/2/2012.

Wealthy Syrian families chose Beirut and Mount Lebanon. A young Syrian mother of three children says: "contrarily to our past habits, this time we are looking for a furnished flat rather than staying in a hotel. The crisis seems to be here for the long run and the future seems very uncertain". The better off classes look for apartments to rent or they pounce on the town's hotels. The President of the Lebanese hotel syndicate, declared that the hotels had seen an increase in the number of guests, though without giving precise figures²⁶.

But, since the fighting reached large cities such as Damascus and Aleppo, a new category of refugees with high purchasing power has begun to flock into Lebanon. This is why some transactions in the rich areas of Beirut have been noted. As the Director of Real Estate Lebanon, has already specified: "Several Syrian millionaires have recently bought property in Beirut city centre, even though the numbers remain rather insignificant"²⁷.

2. Distribution of registered refugees by age and gender

The first flows of refugees, towards the north of the country, were, for the most part, constituted of women and children. However, with the revolt gaining momentum, large number of men joined the flows²⁸. The following table shows that the percentage of men has increased to 49%. The detailed distribution by age shows that 18.3% are children below 5 years of age, 19.1% were between 5 and 11 years, 34.3% between 12 and 29, and 28.7% are 30 years and over.

Distribution of Syrian refugees registered in Lebanon by age and gender (%)

Age	Males	Females
0-4	9.5	8.8
5-11	9.9	9.2
12-17	6.5	6.4
18-29	9.6	11.8
30-39	6.2	7.1
40-49	4.0	4.1
50-59	2.1	2.0
60+	1.6	1.6
Total	49.4	51.0

Source: UNHCR: Registration Trends for Syrians, june 21, 2012: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/partner.php?OrgId=130>

Following the last statistics published by UNHCR on the registered refugees, the allocation by Mohafaza shows that in the north, 77% are women and children compared to 23% men. In the Bekaa, these percentages are 82% and 18%, while in Beirut the percentage of men increases to 46% and that of women and children to 54%²⁹.

²⁶ « Les réfugiés, où sont-ils » ("The refugees, where are they?") L'Hebdo Magazine, 27 July 2012, p.25

²⁷ « Les réfugiés syriens affluent, les appartements meublés en plein boom » ("Syrian refugees flock, boom in furnished apartments") by Soraya Hamdan, L'Orient-Le Jour, 11 August 2012

²⁸ La situation des réfugiés et travailleurs syriens au Liban... ("The situation of Syrian refugees and workers in Lebanon..."), op.cit.p. 3.

²⁹ UNHCR: Registration Trends for Syrians, june 21, 2012: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/partner.php?OrgId=130>

V. The assistance framework

Several aid networks for Syrian refugees have been built up, including above all an official network, the HRC, which is an emergency organism that, depending, in this instance, on the Lebanese Prime Minister, works in strict collaboration with UNHCR and that must play a coordinating role between the other entreaties concerned (NGO, MSA, international organisations and others)³⁰ (see annex-table 2). At the same time, from the outset, civil society played a crucial role. Some twenty-eight charitable Lebanese non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – mainly Islamic – have regrouped in the north of Lebanon to optimise their aid to refugees³¹. It regards the aforementioned “Coalition of charitable organisations for the aid of displaced Syrians to Lebanon”. “In fact, the stakes are above all political. Hezbollah and its allies in the government refuse the installation of camps in order to avoid strain on the Bachar al Assad regime. As a result, a large part of the refugees are hosted by the Lebanese in the region of Wadi Khaled, bordering Syria. Often, they have distant family in the Cedar country. But in Tripoli, the second largest town in Lebanon, 20 kilometres from the border, they arrive in unknown territory. It is the Lebanese charitable associations – mainly Islamic – that in the first instance helped to finance their stay. Since April 2011, they have regrouped in a coalition of 28 NGOs”³².

As the crisis prolonged, certain Syrian organisations intervened as well. This is why, since December 2011, the Syrian High Relief Committee (SHRC), founded by the Syrians of the Diaspora and based in Istanbul, stated that it would bring humanitarian aid to 3,000 people in Lebanon³³. It provides food aid, takes responsibility for the repatriation of injured Syrians to Lebanon and funds their recovery³⁴.

In Abou Samra, a suburban town close to Tripoli, the Syrian High Relief Committee established one of its headquarters in Lebanon. The organisation, founded by a Syrian expatriate in Saudi Arabia, hired two floors of a physiotherapy centre in the Dar El Zahra complex. The seventeen rooms are basic with yellowed walls, some wooden beds, a few televisions, invisible medical personnel and three or four injured persons *per* floor. Here, we get by with what is available. “We have received 300 injured refugees in four months. We have a team of twenty people along the border, who bring in the refugees injured from Lebanon by means of the free Syrian army. We also allow medical material to pass into Syria”, a young man stated. The most seriously injured are first of all driven to the governmental hospital in Tripoli, where the intensive care is covered by the Lebanese High Relief Committee. They are then looked after free of charge in Dar Al Zahra³⁵.

Since the beginning of the crisis, Lebanon has received several hundred injured refugees, who have transferred to the hospitals. The ICRC intensified its assistance and adopted all the forms of support that seemed vitally necessary. More specifically, the ICRC helps the Lebanese Red Cross to transfer injured Syrian refugees to the hospitals. To this end, it contributed in setting up a temporary aid point near the border, which allowed national society ambulances to reach the injured more quickly. The aid provided to the Syrian refugees by the ICRC was combined with that brought by the HRC and its partners, such as UNHCR. In January and February 2012, when the first Syrian refugees arrived in the Bekaa region, where the HRC and UNHCR were not present, the ICRC took the initiative in distributing supplies and other goods in the region.

³⁰ Interview with Oliver Smith, *op.cit.*

³¹ “Au Liban, les réfugiés invisibles” (“In Lebanon, the invisible refugees”), Abgrall Thomas: <http://www.grotius.fr/au-liban-les-refugiés-invisibles/>, consulté le 22/5/2012

³², “Liban. Voyage au bout de l’enfer” (“Lebanon. Voyage to the bottom of hell”), Thomas Abgrall, 23 April 2012. TELQUEL, <http://www.telquel-online.com/Actualites/Monde/Voyage-au-bout-de-l-enfer>, consulted 24/6/2012

³³ *Idem*

³⁴ Au Liban, les réfugiés invisibles (« In Lebanon, the invisible refugees »), *op.cit.*

³⁵ Liban. Voyage au bout de l’enfer (« Lebanon. Voyage to the bottom of hell”), *op.cit.*

Since September 2011, the ICRC has provided support to the Lebanese Red Cross in order to facilitate the evacuation of more than 500 injured individuals. They have also financed the creation of a temporary point for the Lebanese Red Cross's emergency medical services in Ras Baalback, in the north-east of the Bekaa plain, in order to facilitate the evacuation of the injured and their transfer to a hospital. They have distributed medical material to three hospitals in northern Lebanon to care for 400 seriously injured Syrians. They have assisted in covering the costs of post-operation care spent on Syrian refugees in several medical structures in Tripoli. They have taken responsibility for treatment expenses in two hospitals in the Bekaa plain for the most seriously injured Syrians prior to their transfer to the north. They have distributed monthly food rations, mattresses, blankets, hygiene goods, kitchen utensils and other goods to some 1,000 Syrian refugees in the Bekaa plain and they have supplied material to local organisations coming to help new refugees arriving in Syria. They have also organised a workshop on wartime surgery for Lebanese surgeons and nursing personnel looking after injured Syrians in the northern Lebanese hospitals³⁶.

UNHCR and its partners set up important programmes to help refugees and to support the hosting communities. These programmes include those for the identification of the most vulnerable people, as well as the renovation of houses, schools and community centres³⁷. UNHCR supplies food and domestic goods, and aims to reinforce the role of the Social Development Centres (SDC) of the MSA so that they can ensure services to the refugees³⁸. Since November 2011, UNHCR has asked the Lebanese authorities to issue Syrian refugees with registration certificates allowing them to move freely throughout Lebanon³⁹. The Lebanese authorities have begun to deliver this certificate to all refugees registered with the HRC and UNHCR: to date 260 families have obtained said certificate⁴⁰.

The Lebanese government actively encourages schooling for children. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) finances education programmes, psychosocial support and play spaces for refugee children. It also ensures vaccinations and health care. The World Food Programme (WFP) concluded an agreement to provide food aid⁴¹.

Numerous NGOs, such as Caritas and the International Medical Corps, also ensure health care. Equally, the NGOs play an important role in communicating with the Lebanese community⁴².

Caritas⁴³ works in coordination with UNHCR in Wadi Khaled. According to Caritas, the number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has reached 30,000, most in Akkar, Wadi Khaled, Baalback, Qaa, Aarsal and Saadnayel. Since June 2011, Caritas has looked after 3,300 Syrian families. It offers assistance in kind: good food, blankets and hygiene kits. It has already provided assistance to 60 refugee families established in the suburbs of Beirut: Nahr el Mot, Bourj Hammoud and Nabaa. The Caritas centre in Taalabaya has enlarged its programme entitled "The Love and Charity Center for the Support of Elderly Palestinian Refugees" to integrate the elderly among Syrian refugees. It offers medical services and health advice, and provides home services. Caritas possesses a mobile clinic that offers medical services and free medication. A paediatrician looks after children. This clinic is now heading

³⁶ CICR, Liban/Syrie :répondre aux besoins médicaux des réfugiés syriens (« Lebanon/Syria: respond to the medical needs of Syrian refugees »):<http://www.icrc.org/fre/resources/documents/update/2012/lebanon-syria-update-2012-04-26.htm>, consulted on 22/5/2012

³⁷ United Nations information service, "Syria: a ONU forum judges a humanitarian operation necessary":<http://www.un.org/apps/newsFr/printnews.asp?nid=28034>, consulted on 5/21/2012

³⁸ Interview with Oliver Smith, op.cit.

³⁹ <http://www.grotius.fr/au-liban-les-réfugiés-invisibles/>, consulted on 5/22/2012

⁴⁰ UNHCR, UN Inter-Agency Update On Syria Situation Response in Lebanon, 1-8 June 2012.

⁴¹ Syria: an ONU forum...op.cit

⁴² UNHCR, Le HCR lance l'alerte sur un manque de fonds pour aider les réfugiés syriens ("UNHCR launches an alert on the lack of funds to help the Syrian refugees"), 20th April 2012.

⁴³ Interview with Hessen Sayah, op.cit.

towards new Syrian refugee destination regions. According to the President of Caritas, Lebanon is facing an enormous problem, which is set to worsen. The figures are even more striking than those that are officially announced, as many refugees fear to register with the municipalities or the NGOs⁴⁴. Recalling conditions among the refugees, he declares: “The refugees are Christians and Muslims. They are exhausted and desperate. Our volunteers notice that they are terrified of retaliation, several on the side of the Syrian regime forces and others on the side of the opposition. They do not want to be photographed, they do not want to provide their names and they prefer to abide *incognito* (...). The situation worsened over the course of these last two months. Each day, new refugees arrive. A humanitarian emergency is already a fact, but we currently manage to deal with it. If the exodus has to continue, the situation could rapidly spin out of control”⁴⁵.

The charitable organisation Al Bachaer⁴⁶ is one of the associations of the “Coalition of the charitable organisations for the aid of displaced Syrians to Lebanon”. It is established in Tripoli and looks after 2,300-2,500 Syrian refugee families. The average size of a family is five individuals. The majority of families fled Tall Kalakh, Homs and the Governorate of Damascus-rural region, Lattakiah and the border region with Iraq. Refugee families have been hosted by relatives, that is to say placed in flimsy shelters. Some families rented houses (the rent varies from 300 to 500 dollars a month). Accommodation constitutes a major problem for Syrian refugees.

“The majority of Syrian refugees are women and children since most of the opponents to the Syrian regime are men. Following the pressure exerted by the local community, civil society and the religious Ulama, the HRC began to help them by offering monthly assistance (food, mattresses...), but this assistance was insufficient and was, in any case, then stopped. The pressure exerted by the region’s deputies led to only injured refugees being helped. Therefore, the refugee is deprived of his/her rights as a refugee: the refugees have not been provided with refugee cards, which allow them to obtain their essentials (housing, food, medicine, circulation rights...)”.

Certain families have been able to register their children in schools, but others have not succeeded in doing so due to a lack of places.

In general, refugees have been well received by the local community, but attitudes among people differ. Some consider them close friends, supporting their cause and helping them, while others show signs of fear and think their presence will lead to civil war in Lebanon. The latter believe that even the refugee presence reinforces the economic crisis (the rise in prices is caused by an increase in demand).

The organisation is financed by local shopkeepers and external donations. The help provided to refugees includes food aid, mattresses, rent for 1200 families for a period of three months (rent varies from 250 to 400 dollars *per* month), medicine, medical visits, tests and radiology in the Dar al Chifa and Al Hanan hospitals, and physiotherapy at the Al Rahma hospital.

The Al Wifaq al Khayri⁴⁷ organisation is established in Tripoli in the Abi Samra region. A computing manager in the organisation considers the number of refugees that have entered northern Lebanon since the beginning of 2012, to be 25,000- 30,000. The number of Syrian refugees registered in Tripoli with the organisation varies between 2,500 and 3,000 individuals. The number of women and children is the greater– due to deaths among men in military confrontations and because opponents to the Syrian regime are predominantly males. They have fled Homs, Idleb, the Governorate of Damascus-rural region, the governorate of Aleppo rural region and Deraa empty-

⁴⁴ "Les réfugiés syriens: une véritable bombe à retardement" (« Syrian refugees : a true time- bomb »), op.cit

⁴⁵ Asie/Syrie-Plus de 20000 réfugiés au Liban, pour la Caritas, il s’agit d’une situation d’urgence humanitaire (Asia/Syria – more than 20,000 refugees in Lebanon, for Caritas, it regards an urgent humanitarian situation): <http://www.fides.org/aree/news/newsdet.php?idnews=32660&mode=print&lan=fra>, consulted on 20/5/2012.

⁴⁶ Interview with the Director of the organisation, Ahmad Mostafa Mohammad, Tripoli, Abi Samra, May 2012

⁴⁷ Interview with a Computing Manager, who requested to remain anonymous in this study, Tripoli, June 2012

handed, some even without their identity cards. The assistance offered by charitable organisations is only provided to those with identification papers because they are able to register themselves. The majority of refugees have been living in flimsy shelters or in temporary accommodation with Lebanese families due to a lack of financial resources: they cannot rent houses. The organisation provides housing, education and employment, as well as other services because “the Lebanese State does not help refugees. The latter constitute a subject of disagreement because they need continuous aid and their conditions are very precarious”.

The organisation Beit All Zakat Wa Al Khayrat⁴⁸ is also found in Tripoli. The number of Syrian refugee families in Tripoli and its surroundings since the beginning of 2012 is estimated at 3,000. The number of families registered with the organisation rises to 1800, keeping in mind that some are registered with other organisations too. These families have fled what is called “the devil’s triangle”, Tall Kalakh, Kalaat Al Hosn and Idleb, and there is currently a flow from the coast and from Lattakiah after the most recent fighting.

In the first months after their arrival, hoping the situation was temporary, the majority of refugees had financial resources that allowed them to rent houses at reasonable prices, close to 250 dollars *per* month. However, with the lengthening revolt, their resources dwindled and they have been forced to knock on the door of associations and Lebanese families. Now, they form a poverty belt around the town: Chouka in Abi Samra, Al Kouloud in the Al Kobbah region, the boundaries of camp Beddawi, Mankoubine, Wadi Al Nahle, the HLM in Al Mina. Men constitute 30% of refugees.

“The Lebanese authorities do not recognise Syrian refugees as such; they consider them as displaced people⁴⁹ and they have assigned the HRC to provide them with assistance in the areas of health and education. Given that it is very difficult to find them community housing, they look towards Lebanese families and NGOs to ensure housing”.

Despite the security situation and the economic difficulties in Tripoli, the refugees have been welcomed and supported by the local community. The HRC provides them with food rations, beds and milk for babies, medical cover at the Al Hanan hospital in Tripoli, as well as medicine where possible.

The organisation prepares projects and proposes them to donors abroad. The current projects are mainly centred on building renovation to ensure housing for Syrian refugees. As the month of Ramadan approaches, the HRC is getting ready to provide clothing for the women (500) and children (2000). Meals for a thousand Syrian refugee families will also be provided each day.

The organisation also comes to the aid of Lebanese families. After the most recent events in Tripoli, the organisation distributed food aid to 500 families from Tripoli.

The association Amel⁵⁰ launched a humanitarian appeal in March 2012 in order to raise funds for its emergency programme which aims to respond to the urgent needs of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. With the support of local and international organisations, and in collaboration with the two ministries of Public Health and of Social Affairs, through its community centres in the Bekaa region it provides diverse services to more than 3000 beneficiaries: medical assistance (free consultations for primary health and medication), remedial classes to children and emergency supplies (food and hygiene kits).

⁴⁸ Interview with the Director of charitable and aid activities, Rifaat Aref Houla, Tripoli, Abi Samra, June 2012.

⁴⁹ The refugees have their own juridical status, which rests on the international law of refugees and, in particular on the Geneva Convention of 1951 relative to refugee statute. Contrarily to the latter, the displaced people do not benefit from any specific legal regime even though they benefit from certain clauses of international humanitarian law. It is, in the first instance, the governments concerned and the local authorities that must bring them aid and protect them, although the international community often intervenes in order to compensate for the lack of means or goodwill of the States. <http://www.iomdakar.org/droit-migrations-ao/page.php?pg=3&c=47&lib=Module+6%3A+La+protection+des+r%E9fugi%E9s+et+des+personnes+d%E9plac%E9es+internes>

⁵⁰ Interview with Kamel Mohanna, President of Amelassociation International, Beirut, 17 September 2012

Since the end of July 2012, and following a significant increase in the number of refugees, it began to extend its field of assistance to 10,000 beneficiaries, through its 23 centres established on the southern suburbs of Beirut, in the South and in the Bekaa region.

The President of the association believes that the Syrian refugees present in Lebanon are often not registered with UNHCR and the HRC. This is due to fears of legal proceedings, but also to the lack of registration offices. In the south of Lebanon, for example, UNHCR has still not begun to register Syrian refugees, and those who wish to register have to go to Beirut. The number of refugees registered with the local municipalities reaches at least 5000 individuals, but the true number is much higher.

The challenges that confront the association are on all levels of the services provided. First of all, with regard to the setting up of health services, the challenges come down to access and transport as the refugees live in faraway regions. Furthermore, the needs regarding treatment for chronic diseases are not sufficiently taken into account. There is a great need for hygiene maintenance in the collective shelters in order to prevent transmitted diseases. On the level of pedagogical programmes, the differences between Syrian and Lebanese school programmes cause an obstacle for the integration of refugee children in Lebanese schools. Food distribution remains a challenge in relation to the number of beneficiaries. It is short term support and must be renewed periodically. With the continual influx of refugees, essential needs are always difficult to satisfy. As for accommodation, numerous families gather in collective shelters, such as incomplete constructions, abandoned buildings or holiday chalets, which are not equipped to host numerous people for a long period. These places often lack showers, garbage collection, kitchens and purification systems.

VI. The Political framework

Lebanon is increasingly affected by the Syrian crisis. After thirty years of Syrian hegemony⁵¹, it remains profoundly divided between adversaries⁵² and partisans⁵³ of the Syrian regime. Many times Lebanese, UN and European officials have expressed their concern at attempts to drag Lebanon into the Syrian conflict⁵⁴. Since the beginning of the revolt against the Syrian regime in March 2011, denominational conflicts have broken out in Tripoli several times, but the last to date were the most fatal and have seen the participation of Sunni fundamentalists⁵⁵. The last confrontations between inhabitants of the Tripoli districts of Bab al-Tabbaneh - mainly Sunni and hostile towards the Syrian regime - and Jabal Mohsen - Alawi and in favour of the Syrian regime – witnessed several deaths, before the army could intervene and re-established order. These conflicts highlight the profound divisions between the Lebanese political parties with regard to the Syrian crisis and suggest that the aforementioned violence might spread like wildfire to Lebanon⁵⁶.

⁵¹ Syrian control in Lebanon has been strong since the end of the 1970s and Syria has still been influential since the effective withdrawal of the Syrian army from the country in April 2005.

⁵² The bloc of 14 March is a Lebanese political coalition grouping political figures and movements which have taken part in the Cedar Revolution following the assassination of the former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri on 14 February 2005. The main parties and movements that belong to this bloc are: the Al Mustaqbal Movement, the Lebanese forces, the Kataeb forces, the Cornet Chehwan meeting.

⁵³ The bloc of 8 March groups the parties of Amal, Hezbollah, Al Marada, the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party and the Free Patriotic Movement.

⁵⁴ Due to the multiplication of the Syrian army's incursions in the Lebanese territory by aerial and land means, the shooting and bombing from villages and border regions on the Syrian territory, which have caused deaths.

⁵⁵ Small armed and determined fanatical groups, which depend, like their Syrian friends, on deprived young men and women that are ready for holy war. <http://www.infosyrie.fr/actualite/enlevement-de-chiiteslibanais-la-derniere-et-plus-grosse-provocation-de-lasl/>

⁵⁶ L'Orient-Le Jour, May 2012

Despite political divisions, “the position of the Lebanese government with respect to the Syrian refugees, subscribes to the custom international humanitarian law framework, and more precisely the *Jus Cogens*⁵⁷. If it is true that Lebanon has not ratified the Geneva Convention of 1951 relative to the statute of refugees, it has nevertheless signed the International pact on civil and political rights and the Convention against torture and other punishments or cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment not to mention the convention relative to children's rights. From this point of view, Lebanon acquitted itself with these responsibilities regarding this vulnerable group, without establishing a distinction between civil asylum seekers and militants. Elsewhere, if the Lebanese authorities prefer the use of the term “displaced people” instead of “refugees”, the first does not exist in Lebanese law. What exists is the statute of asylum seeker, which comes under the competence of UNHCR in coordination with the General Security⁵⁸. Therefore, official Lebanon has committed itself to respecting the principle of humanitarian assistance without refoulement. As the head of the ICRC delegation in Lebanon specified: “Since last May, we have had dialogue with the Lebanese authorities on the principle of non-refoulement. The Lebanese authorities have committed to respecting this principle, whoever the people concerned”⁵⁹. The Lebanese government has also maintained an open border policy to receive refugees fleeing the bombing and violence. The majority of refugees that have arrived in the north over the last months have crossed the official border posts, expressing their fear in passing through illegally. They have also expressed their fear at the presence of mines on the Syrian side of the border between the two countries. In Bekaa, the majority of refugees crossed the border legally at Masnaa, while some others entered illegally in order to avoid the Syrian army roadblock⁶⁰.

The Lebanese government reunite both partisans and adversaries of the Syrian regime⁶¹. As Prime Minister has already noted: “It is in Lebanon’s interest to avoid mixing conflicts that turn Syrians against each other. Yet even if the Lebanese and their government pronounce themselves in favour of the Syrian regime or, on the contrary, in favour of its opponents, Lebanon, where society is divided regarding events in Syria, does not have the capacity to change the course of events. Taking a stand would be detrimental to Lebanese society and I will not allow that”⁶². To the question of whether he believes that this policy loses its value if military intervention against the Syrian regime were decided upon, his response was: “our policy currently comes down to supporting Kofi Annan’s crisis exit plan for which several protocols have been signed. Other stands will be taken according to the results of this plan’s application”⁶³.

⁵⁷ The Jus-Cogens group the imperative norms of general international law. This notion is defined by the Vienna Convention of 23 May 1969 in article 53: “For the purpose of this present convention, an imperative norm of general international law is a norm accepted and recognised by the international community of the States in its unity as a norm to which no infringement is permitted and which can only be modified by a second norm of international law having the same character”.

⁵⁸ Interview with the Deputy Sami Mukhayber, Beyt Miri, 23 June 2012.

⁵⁹ Le CICR: une mission subsidiaire à celle de l’Etat (The ICRC: a subsidiary mission to that of the State) op.cit. It should be noted that there have been several expulsion cases of Syrians, the last to date is that of 14 nationals including four opponents of the Syrian regime, on 1 August 2012. This incident sparked protests by the bloc of 14 March and international NGOs. But the most virulent condemnation was that of the Head of the Socialist Progressive Party, Walid Joumblat, who called for disciplinary measures to be taken against the Director of the General Security, continuing until his resignation if necessary. (L’Orient-Le Jour, 8/4/2012)

⁶⁰ Interview with Zaki Rifaii, op.cit.

⁶¹ The partisans are represented by the bloc of 8 March, and the adversaries are represented by the ministers affiliated to the Socialist Progressive Party, led by Walid Joumblat.

⁶² <http://fr.euronews.com/2012/05/04/sauvegarder-la-paix-au-liban/>

⁶³ Idem

Affirming his position towards the Syrian refugee dossier, he indicated to the daily newspaper *As-Safir* that his position is clear since it regards a humanitarian cause that has nothing to do with politics⁶⁴.

For his part, the mufti of the Republic, launched an aid campaign for Syrian refugees during his meeting with the senior members of the Humanitarian Aid Committee affiliated to Dar al-Fatwa. His campaign “follows the efforts of Dar al-Fatwa in this direction”. He called for the Lebanese to “help and support Syrian refugees in Lebanon by offering them the necessary assistance in the difficult circumstances they face”⁶⁵. During his preaching in Ramadan, he declared that he had been outraged by the management of the question of Syrian refugees: “There has been enough injustice in Syria. Many do not know what is happening on the borders of Bekaa. On the side of Aarsal, the Lebanese have strategically placed themselves in order to stop the Syrian refugees, fleeing from injustice and carnage, from entering Lebanon. Even on the border post of Masnaa, the security forces have cut the road off to thousands of men and women trying to reach Lebanon. When superiors are interrogated on this subject, one of them responds saying that only people moving by car are admitted, the others are too “poor”. I ask the President of the Republic, the President of the Parliament and the Prime Minister to open the large borders to Lebanon, in the north such as in Bekaa, in front of our Syrian brothers”⁶⁶.

With regard to the material assistance supplied by the Lebanese government, the Minister of Social Affairs asked the Minister Council (of 4/4/2012), for a 100 million dollars advance for Syrian refugee assistance. This was rejected. All this indicates, he said, that “we are facing an accomplished fact that no-one has chosen”, the Minister insisted so that this dossier remains far away from political tensions even if it gives rise to demographic⁶⁷, and political fears: “the state is responsible and must discharge its duty towards the refugees”. In his opinion, it is not supplies, nor medicine, even essentials day-to-day supplies that are missing. The only problem is housing, which becomes more and more pressing, not only to receive new arrivals, but also to re-house the refugees that have been hosted by family members so far, particularly in Wadi Khaled. Indeed this solution will not be possible any longer in the coming months, particularly because these families have only limited resources to begin with⁶⁸.

In this region, housing is still under control: most refugees are hosted by Lebanese families, as, on both sides of the border, strong family links exist. But in Tripoli, the Lebanese charitable associations are the ones that initially helped to find housing and to finance rent. However, they cannot continue to do so now. As the Director of Al Bachaer, has already highlighted: “A year ago, there were only a few families, but now there are a dozen that come to register each week at our premises. We have counted over 1000 refugees in Tripoli and its surroundings; we are overwhelmed”⁶⁹.

The Lebanese government refuses to set up refugee camps, as has been done in Turkey. The issues are, above all, political. Hezbollah – close to the Syrian regime – and its allies refuse to set up tents in order to avoid making the refugees visible. But they make no objections over the assistance provided to Syrian refugees⁷⁰. As the UNHCR’s Communication Manager, already highlighted: “we do not want to stigmatise them. Setting up camps also poses a security question that reinforces the risks of

⁶⁴ “Le Hezbollah et le HCR examinent la situation des réfugiés syriens au Liban” (“Hezbollah and UNHCR examining the Syrian refugee situation in Lebanon”), l’Orient-Le jour, 6/4/2012 :[http://www.lorientlejour.com/category/Derni%C3%A8res+Infos/article/753409/Le Hezbollah et le HCR examinent la situation des réfugiés syriens au Liban.html](http://www.lorientlejour.com/category/Derni%C3%A8res+Infos/article/753409/Le_Hezbollah_et_le_HCR_examinent_la_situation_des_r%C3%A9fugi%C3%A9s_syriens_au_Liban.html)

⁶⁵ L’Orient-Le Jour, 10/05/2012

⁶⁶ « Les réfugiés, où sont-ils » (“The refugees, where are they?”), op.cit.

⁶⁷ Given that the majority of Syrian refugees is Sunni and they have tended towards Sunni regions.

⁶⁸ Les réfugiés syriens:une véritable bombe à retardement (“Syrian refugees: a true time-bomb”), op. cit.

⁶⁹ <http://www.grotius.fr/au-liban-les-r%C3%A9fugi%C3%A9s-invisibles/>

⁷⁰ Le Hezbollah et le HCR examinant la situation des réfugiés syriens au Liban (“Hezbollah and UNHCR examining the Syrian refugee situation in Lebanon”), op.cit

sexual abuse”⁷¹. In this respect, the Manager of the ICRC notes the aversion demonstrated by the official authorities with regard to “displaced people camps” justified by an explanation of the humanitarian operational plan that is as political as it is practical. But he also notes that as long as communities take responsibility for displaced people “it is a plus; a situation where they feel less expatriated because they are integrated in a more normal circle, which systematically trains the hosting community to take responsibility. It is up to the organisations to adapt their assistance accordingly”⁷².

A northern deputy who is active on the ground on a personal basis and in the name of Al Mostaqbal, states that the census of people who have entered Lebanon is fundamental, not only for the Lebanese state, for security, but also to carry out follow-ups on the ground, getting to know the needs of each and streamlining the medical aid process. The deputy was especially surprised by the fact that the Ministry of Public Health has not yet taken the initiative of putting a medical team in place that can enquire into the state of refugees’ health⁷³.

On the other hand, addressing the apple farmers who have faced a real catastrophe this year with their crops, the Minister of Energy⁷⁴ said that: “The State must directly help the farmers. All the help they have been deprived of, if it goes to any other man, under any slogan, humanitarian or otherwise, will not be accepted. The Lebanese have just as much of a right to be helped as the Syrians. We will not accept that money is paid to a displaced Syrian, whether they are for or against the regime. Opposition, loyalist, army, free army: that is not our jurisdiction. We are concerned first and foremost for the Lebanese and all the money that goes to the Syrians, will be detrimental to the Lebanese farmers, and that will lead to problems.”⁷⁵

VII. The conditions of Syrian refugees

There follow some stories told by refugee families about their conditions before and after their arrival in Lebanon.

Before they hastily fled, the situation for families who had fled Baba Amr and Al Khaldiyyeh⁷⁶ had become intolerable. Their districts were devastated by bombing and shells which fell on their houses. Many houses had been completely destroyed. For some time already, men had not been able to work and children had been unable to go to school. All their essential needs were missing: food, water, milk for the children, electricity, telephones... Some close relatives had died along with their children.

They fled without taking anything with them and they crossed the border at their risk and peril. It was not easy to cross the border because the Syrian army prevented people from leaving and it was for this reason that families found themselves dismembered. Not all members of the same family were able to flee at the same time, neither by the same crossing point at the border. They had to divide up; the women and children left first, the men found themselves forced to stay for some time before following, if they were able to.

The refugee families have been welcomed by the local community. They have been received and hosted for several days by families in Tripoli until the moment when someone wealthy offers them the house in which they can live.

⁷¹ Idem

⁷² Le CICR: une mission subsidiaire à celle de l’Etat (The ICRC: a subsidiary mission to that of the State)...op.cit

⁷³ Les réfugiés syriens: une véritable bombe à retardement (“Syrian refugees: a true time-bomb”), op. cit.

⁷⁴ Affiliated to the Free Patriotic Movement.

⁷⁵ L’Orient-Le Jour, 30/4/2012: <http://www.lorientlejour.com/news/print.php?id=756856>, consulted on 6/18/2012

⁷⁶ Focus group discussion with a group of six families established in the town of Tripoli, in Abi Samra, 21 May 2012

In Tripoli, the local families and organisations have responded to urgent needs, but given the increase in the number of refugees day after day, the essential daily requests (milk for the children, vegetables, meat...) are insufficient. Some local organisations provide food and domestic goods of absolute necessity, others limit their contribution to rent, and others still have only just begun to provide financial assistance. Urgent health care is ensured by the HRC through the charitable association Al Bachaer. But non-urgent health care is not supplied.

They fled conflict and violence in their country towards a place that was supposedly calmer and safer, but the security situation in Tripoli does not reassure them: there have been successive confrontations between JabalMohsen and Bab al-Tabbaneh⁷⁷.

For the families who have fled Tall Kalakh⁷⁸, the tanks had surrounded their district and the Chabbiha (the governmental militia) had broken down the doors of their houses, destroyed their goods and stolen their provisions. The Chabbiha are aggressive to women: they rape them and very often they cut their throats if they believe that the women's brothers, husbands or even their close relatives are opponents of the Syrian regime.

They attacked a man who fled with his son, beat his son until he was completely paralysed and took everything that the father had taken with him. Many families were forced to give everything they owned, including financial resources, to intermediaries to ensure their safe arrival at the border without being attacked by the Chabbiha.

On the other side of the border, Syrian families continue to flee; certain towns in the region of Homs are deserted, just as in Tall-Kalakh and Quseir. Families took themselves towards the nearby towns on the Syrian-Lebanese border or towards the calmer regions inside Syria, such as Tartous and its suburbs, or the region of Al Hosn and its suburbs. The priority was to flee outside the country for fear of being followed by the armed forces.

These families have crossed the border by Nahr al Kabir in the south or across Mount Akroum, in collaboration with relatives living in the region of Wadi Khaled-Machta Hassan-Machta Hammoud-Aydamoun-Akroum. The Lebanese security forces have helped families to cross the border.

Lebanese families in the destination region have helped refugees. They have opened the doors of their homes and they offered all kinds of assistance. Some families have had to erect tents or even build shelters for lack of accommodation (see photo-annex 1).

Mayors, in collaboration with the local community, have contributed to hosting refugee families. They also opened the official school of Al Rama where they host 20 families, who are all from Tall Kalakh and Arida, or in one case from Deraa (see photo-annex 2). The HRC, several NGOs as well as the common people have offered assistance.

⁷⁷ For more than a generation, the town of Tripoli, has been divided: this bastion of Sunni denomination in effect had to accept the Alawite community - the most important in the country. Jabal Mohsen, which is mostly Alawite, and Bab al-Tabbaneh, which is mostly Sunni, have been in conflict since the beginning of the Lebanese civil war in 1975, a conflict that saw hundreds of victims in 1986. The road that separates the two well-established zones - fittingly named the road to Syria - is the last line of demarcation that exists in Lebanon since the end of the war 22 years ago. The outbreak of conflict in Syria and the arrival of thousands of Syrian refugees in Lebanon in recent months has revived and increased the tensions between the Alawites, who generally support the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and the Sunni sympathisers of the Syrian free army (SFA) and the opposition. Since the beginning of the Syrian uprising in March 2011, more than 30 Lebanese have encountered death over the course of the battles between the two communities. Tripoli's fragile cease-fire, declared at the beginning of June - is generally respected, but sporadic battles are signalled each day and it is not rare to come across civil armies" <http://www.irinews.org/printreport.aspx?reportid=95736>

⁷⁸ Focus group discussion with a group of three families established in Wadi Khaled, in the official school of Al Rama, which has been renovated by UNHCR (1 June 2012).

Families fled without any of their possessions. The Lebanese families offered clothes; the HRC and the “Coalition of charitable organisations for the aid of displaced Syrians to Lebanon” supplied food rations, water, mattresses and blankets.

The Lebanese Red Cross and the Islamic Medical Committee, which is in Machta Hammoud, are always ready to care for the injured, and if necessary, to transfer them to the hospital. The public and private clinics are available in the region. However, given the large number of refugees, it has proved impossible to satisfy demand.

The major problem remains that of living conditions: families live confined in rooms that are only a few metres square, often lacking water, and at times they were forced to drink unclean water, which made the children ill. They only benefitted from a few hours of electricity *per* day and spent some evenings in candlelight.

The refugees have been greatly affected by the crisis in Syria. It is very difficult to leave your home, family and friends in a rush. They live in uncertainty and in waiting; they have lost hope of returning home in the near future. Furthermore, if news arrives, it is only bad news. They run many risks, among others from being attacked for their political position, and sometimes abused. The host community is not able to satisfy all their needs and, consequently, if the situation continues, they will be obliged to find work or leave Lebanon for another destination⁷⁹.

The refugee families do not want to stay in Lebanon. They hope they will be able to return to their country, but not before the fall of the Syrian regime. Even if their houses have been completely destroyed, they are ready to live in tents in their own country because life is very expensive in Lebanon and there is a notable difference in purchasing power between the two countries⁸⁰.

VIII. The implications of the refugees' arrival on the political and social balances in Lebanon

As already mentioned the number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has grown significantly. The statistics are not very trustworthy due to the fluidity of the situation, and because Syrians can cross the border between Lebanon and Syria without visa⁸¹. Given the geographical proximity and the political, economic and social relations between the two countries, it is hardly surprising that Syrians have chosen Lebanon, which has always received hundreds of thousands of Syrian workers, most often with their families. They work in different sectors and their work is indispensable to the country's economy. A Syrian in Lebanon cannot be really a refugee because he is able to work. But Syrian refugees constitute families composed essentially of women and children, and these require assistance⁸².

But to distinguish post March-2011 Syrian refugees from other Syrians present in Lebanon is difficult. Criteria need to be established such as the Syrian departure towns, the circumstances of departure, the head of the family's type of activity and the political and community affiliations of the displaced individuals⁸³.

⁷⁹ Interview with Bashir Osmat, Researcher and Director of the Development Management Institution, Badaro, 30 May 2012

⁸⁰ Focus group discussions with two groups of refugee families, op.cit.

⁸¹ Interview with Riad Tabbara, former Ambassador of Lebanon in the US, Director of the Centre for Development Studies and Projects (MADMA), Beirut, 18 May 2012

⁸² Interview with Abdallah Bou Habib, former Ambassador of Lebanon in the US, Director-General of Isaam Fares Center for Lebanon, Sin el Fil, 18 May 2012

⁸³ Bashir Osmat, op.cit.

Syrian refugees are victims of political divisions in Lebanon, and they suffer their consequences. Some locals want to help them, while others believe Lebanon should be kept out of Syrian matters⁸⁴. “We must also distinguish between civilian refugees and militant refugees, who have come to create military bases. Therefore, the question seems very ambiguous”⁸⁵. The exact proportion of civil refugees and militant refugees is not known, though the foreign press has published interviews with the latter. This overlapping complicates the situation considerably both at the level of services supplied, at the level of assistance, and also at the level of security. It is for this reason that assistance has been offered, above all, by the local community while governmental assistance has been influenced by internal political divisions, on the one hand, and by the refusal to help groups of armed refugees in Lebanon⁸⁶. In this context, goals hide behind humanitarian pretexts. Consequently, the position of the “Free Patriotic Movement” comes down to remaining isolated and stimulating dialogue between Syrian parties⁸⁷.

The office manager of the Syrian National Socialist Party in Tripoli⁸⁸ thinks that “the refugees in northern Lebanon, which amounts to about 30,000 individuals, are concentrated in Akkar, in the Islamist regions, which are hostile to the Syrian regime, as well as in Dinnieh, in places where Salafist and Islamist groups are concentrated, such as Aasoun and Sir”. He specifies that in Tripoli, “there are 10,000 refugees of whom 3,000 to 4,000 are manipulated by Islamist organisations to cause trouble in the region and come together as great Islamic political forces. They have come from calm regions such as Tall Kalakh and Hama to create troubles, they are armed, and sometimes members of secret services⁸⁹. They are charged with crimes and flee justice; the opportunity has presented itself to come to Lebanon under cover as poor refugees”. Those who came from Baba Amr and Homs, where their houses have been destroyed, are not helped by the organisations but rather by people, “these are respectable families who look for work after having sold their gold and possessions. They knocked on the doors of charitable associations to obtain assistance. Of course, the Lebanese State does not grant them rights because they do not even do so for nationals, so how can they do it for others? The poor refugees are marginalised in Tripoli, but those who work for the secret services obtain aid from the political parties and the Islamist forces present in the area.”

Government assistance remains controversial for many Lebanese citizens, therefore it is limited. Aid to refugees is essentially provided by civil society, especially by people who have opened up their homes, and by the municipalities of the villages and towns, which opened their public institutions to refugees. Consequently, physical needs are barely met and the specific needs of children (schools, books...) are only partially covered. Psychological needs are low on the list of priorities⁹⁰. Lebanon does not possess a structure to receive and support refugees, especially over the longer term. The ever increasing number of refugees, weighs on the capabilities of host communities, which are poor and lack the resources and adequate economic, educational and sanitary infrastructures⁹¹. The host communities’ economic situation is difficult and the refugees constitute a heavy burden. The regions of Akkar, Hermel and the majority of northern and western Bekaa, where most refugees are concentrated, are deprived in every respect particularly though their economic conditions: low income, high unemployment, especially seasonal workers, weak physical, health and education infrastructure.

⁸⁴ Interview with Talal Atrissi, Researcher and Professor of Sociology at the Lebanese University, Beirut , 17 May 2012

⁸⁵ Interview with Bassam Al Hashem, Member of the Founding Committee and Spokesman for the Free Patriotic Movement , Beirut, 6 June 2012

⁸⁶ Talal Atrissi, op.cit.

⁸⁷ Basam Al Hasam, op.cit.

⁸⁸ He requested to remain anonymous (interview 26 May 2012)

⁸⁹ Implied by the secret agents of the political parties and forces hostile to the Syrian regime

⁹⁰ Riad Tabbara, op.cit.

⁹¹ Interviews with Bashir Osmat, op.cit. and Antoine Haddad, Secretary General of the ” Democratic Renewal Movement’ founded by Nasib Lahoud, Beirut, 14 May 2012.

Substantial increase in the number of refugees, which is very likely, will surpass the capacity of local communities⁹². The Lebanese State is, therefore, called upon to establish a legal framework for the regulation of the Syrian refugee situation⁹³.

Furthermore, the assistance offered to Syrian refugees is not viewed positively by the Syrian authorities, who have destabilised the security situation in the Lebanese border region. The burden of refugees must, therefore, be lifted from the host community and taken up by the national and international authorities, who must be responsible to protect the Lebanese side of the border with Syria⁹⁴.

It is difficult to predict the evolution of the situation in Syria, especially while everything there remains so tense. Therefore, the number of refugees will probably increase. We have seen how the security situation exploded in mid-April 2012 between the Lebanese army and the Lebanese Islamists groups. If the reasons for the military confrontations remain ambiguous, the fact is that the presence of Syrian refugees and their position with respect to the Syrian crisis constitute a factor in what is occurring in Tripoli⁹⁵.

Moreover, the situation in Syria is becoming more and more complicated. At the beginning there were the official authorities and pacifist protestors. But since then it has evolved into a multi-faceted confrontation. There is now an armed opposition and maybe extremist factions as suicide attacks and booby-trapped cars attest. None of these groups are centrally controlled. Opposition is also divided between those in exile and the militants on the territory, Within each group, the military uprising is often *ad hoc* and local with weak central coordination. The extremist group also lacks coordination. In such a chaotic situation, reaching an agreement between opposing groups is difficult, and therefore, it is difficult to be optimistic regarding a solution⁹⁶.

IX. The mobilisation of Lebanese and International institutions

Since the outbreak of conflict, the international community has produced “too little, too late”. The international community, therefore, needs to multiply its efforts, as the conflict is unlikely to be resolved in the near future⁹⁷.

Further to the assistance that should be provided to refugees inside and outside Syrian territory, the main mission of the international community lies in the United Nations Security Council’s attempts to find an adequate solution to the conflict. The more time lost, the more difficult the solution will be. Annan’s, then Brahimi’s missions flounders despite the oral support of all the international parties, because there is no rescue plan that has been accepted at the highest levels. National interests pull in different directions and still no compromise has been found⁹⁸.

Elsewhere, Lebanese newspapers (*As-Safir* 16/4/2012) have signalled complaints from refugees in the north, regarding their transformation into “merchandise” through attempts to create material profits for influential people. Therefore, if the international, but more importantly the European community wants to help, it needs to know who is getting the money and who the intermediaries are. It should also distinguish between civilians and militants, in order that assistance to civilians does not bring

⁹² Idem

⁹³ Antoine Haddad, *op.cit.*

⁹⁴ Riad Tabbara, *op.cit.*

⁹⁵ Talal Atrissi, *op.cit.*

⁹⁶ Riad Tabbara, *op.cit.* Opinion shared with Abdallah Bou Habib, *op.cit.*

⁹⁷ Riad Tabbara, *op.cit.*

⁹⁸ Idem

about internal conflict. Whereas assistance offered to militants, who heighten the divide in Lebanon itself, will have a negative impact on civilian refugees⁹⁹.

X. Conclusion

Since the beginning of the popular uprisings in Syria, the number of Syrian refugees to Lebanon has steadily increased. According to sources, the estimates vary from 80,000 to 100,000 individuals, while 27 September 2012 the number of registered refugees reached almost 57,000.

Despite the efficient network that has been created to provide assistance, reception and hospitality from Lebanese families and civil society, official Lebanon needs to step in to tackle the situation more systematically.

Most refugees live in precarious conditions, with few or no financial resources to meet their needs. The main challenges are those of access to accommodation, food, water, sanitation, health care and security. The challenges faced by the aid networks include the significant increase in the number of refugees and the lack of registration offices; the lack of access to accommodation and the difficult socio-economic conditions of families that host refugees; the differences between Syrian and Lebanese school programmes, though the Lebanese government has allowed refugee children to access the official Lebanese schools; the economic situation in Lebanon and the lack of work opportunities; and finally the safety issue¹⁰⁰.

Given the refugees' current conditions, the limited resources of the local communities and the urgent call from civil society to not only expand the assistance provided but also to improve its planning, the Lebanese government and civil society will not be able to cope under the pressure of ever-increasing numbers of refugees. Consequently, it is imperative for the international community and the European Union to mobilise themselves to raise funds in order to provide the assistance required.

⁹⁹ Talal Atrissi, op.cit.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Batoul Ahmad, Coordinator of Information and Public Relations at UNHCR, Tripoli, 20 September 2012.

Table 1. Evolution of the number of registered Syrian refugees and those who receive assistance from UNHCR and partners in Lebanon

Date	Registered with UNHCR and HCS Total North Bekaa	Estimated by UNHCR and its partners Bekaa	Registered with the UNHCR office in Beirut	Assisted by UNHCR And its partners	Source
7-13 January	5238				UNHCR, Lebanon Update Situation in North Lebanon
14-20 January	5663				
21-27 January	6290				
28 Jan.-3 Feb.	6375				
4-10 Feb	6133				
11-17 Feb	6522				
18-24 Feb	6916				UNHCR, Lebanon Update Support to Displaced Syrians
24 Feb -2 March	7058				
3 – 9 March	7088	4000			
9-16 March	7913	5000	413 (since March 2011)		
16-23 March	8148	5000			
6-13 April	9666*	7500		+20000	
13-20 April	9940	8500		+ 22000	
20-27 April	11518	9000		24000	
27 Apr.-4 May	13405	9250		24000	
4 Apr.-11 May	13672	9000***	801 817	+26000	
31 May	17041 13557 2571			+26000	UNHCR, UN Inter- Agency Update on Syrian Situation Response in Lebanon
1-8 June	19068 13960 4254		913	+26000	
8-15 June	20702 14727 5299			+27000	
30 June	25024 16484 7647			+29000	
6-13 July	28477 18198 9529			+30000	
13-20 July	29986			+30000	
27 July-3 Aug	33664 19319 13194			+35000	
7-14 Sept	49653 27655 20574			+67960	
27 Sept	56947				UNHCR, Syria Regional Refugee Response

Table 2. Aid agencies to Syrian refugees in Lebanon

Organism	Type of aid	Source
<p>Caritas Lebanon: part of the World Confederation Caritas Internationalis, one of the largest humanitarian networks in the world</p>	<p>Distribution Food and NFIs, *protection : - shelter for the victims of gender-based violence and victims of trafficking, - Child protection - legal assistance *health, *assistance in prisons *Home visits *Social counseling</p>	<p>UNHCR list of all partners</p>
<p>The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has operated in Lebanon for 50 years. The office has a dual responsibility, regionally and nationally. Before the influx of Syrian refugees in spring 2011, the office was primarily directed at assisting and protecting about 10,000 refugees and asylum seekers, mostly from Iraq. Since then, in addition to his office in Beirut, UNHCR established a presence in the North and the Bekaa, to ensure all the needs of Syrian refugees in these regions are met. Alongside the Lebanese government, including the High Relief Committee (HCS), the Ministry of Social Affairs and municipalities, UNHCR has worked to ensure inter-agency response and coordinated solid, engaging fellow UN agencies and local and international non-governmental partners. . UNHCR teams in the North and the Bekaa, with support from the Beirut Office , cooperate with teams of more than 30 partners on the ground to receive refugees, assess needs, provide protection, and help with food, shelter, education, health and psychological needs. A coordinated response is one that also aims to support host families and communities that have opened their doors to refugees since the beginning of the influx. With the technical and material support, and the implementation of local projects for refugees and host communities, the office has invested in strengthening the capacity of government and partners and local communities.</p>	<p>Child welfare, community service, coordination, basic relief items, education, food, shelter, registration, health, gender-based violence, food, protection.</p>	<p>UNHCR</p>

Organism	Type of aid	Source
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)	food kits, medical supplies, fuel coupons, rehabilitation of abandoned school Freidis in Halba, installation of electricity, plumbing, water pumps, and proper kitchen facilities	UNHCR weeklyreports
Wash group	shelter maintenance, ensuring that collective shelters have sufficient clean water for residents	UNHCR weeklyreports
Al-Bashaer Islamic	Renovation of the Al Ibra school, food kits, medical supplies, fuel coupons	UNHCR weeklyreports
Beit al Zakat	The charitable hospital Al Hanan ,affiliated with Beit al Zakat: ensures health coverage for all displaced families with hospital insurance, surgery and drugs	As-Safir, 7/3/2012
Coalition of charitable organisations for the aid of displaced Syrians toLebanon	Spends about three and a half million dollars: housing, food and health care	As-Safir, 3/4/2012
Amel: an international organisation that aims to strengthen the capacity and improve the well-being of refugees. It was founded in Lebanon.	Primary health care and secondary education, reproductive health services and vaccination.	UNHCR list of all partners
World Vision International, is a Christian relief, development and advocacy, working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty. It is present in Lebanon, in Bekaa	Education and health activities for children	UNHCR list of all partners
Action Contre la Faim (ACF)	Currently implements water, sanitation activities and evaluations of emergency food security in northern Lebanon	UNHCR list of all partners
Haut Comité de Secours (HCS): is a Lebanese governmental agency which aims to improve the living conditions of displaced Syrians through the provision of food, health services and registration	Basic rescue tools, food, health, registration	UNHCR list of all partners

Organism	Type of aid	Source
The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC): is a humanitarian institution that is part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement along with the ICRC and 186 distinct National Societies	Present in the North and the Bekaa, it provides health services and non-food items.	UNHCR list of all partners
International Medical Corps (IMC): started its operations in Lebanon during the 2006 war	Primary, secondary and tertiary health care in the North and the Bekaa	UNHCR list of all partners
International Organization for Migration (IOM): acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the growing operational challenges of migration management, advance understanding of migration issues, encourage social and economic development through migration, support human dignity and the well-being of migrants	Shelter rehabilitation and construction of pre-fabricated houses in Bekaa	UNHCR list of all partners
Islamic Relief (IR)	Food, non-food items and health services.	UNHCR list of all partners
Layan : established in 2012 with the objective of providing humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees in north Lebanon	Supply and shelter rehabilitation, health services, and food	UNHCR list of all partners
Lebanese Red Cross (LRC): member of the International Red Cross established in 1946	voluntary service, and health and first aid centers	UNHCR list of all partners
Muslim Aid (MA): is a British agency for Muslim relief and development, guided by the teachings of Islam, established to fight against poverty	Food and non-food items	UNHCR list of all partners
Mercy Corps (MC): is a global agency that is committed to help in situations of transition after “shocks”: natural disaster, economic collapse or conflict	Development of a psychosocial assistance for refugee children in the Bekaa.	UNHCR list of all partners
Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC): has played an active role in Lebanon since July 2006, providing protection and humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons.	Rehabilitation and construction of shelters for Syrian refugees in the North and the Bekaa. The NRC has also set up a community center in the area of Wadi Khaled.	UNHCR list of all partners

Organism	Type of aid	Source
Première Urgence : is a non-profit, non-political and non-religious NGO. Founded in April 2011 after the merger of two French NGOs (PU AMI), its aim is to provide a comprehensive response to the basic needs of people suffering from acute humanitarian crisis, and allow them to regain their independence and dignity.	Rehabilitation of shelters and distribution of non-food items in the Bekaa.	UNHCR list of all partners
Save the Children Sweden (SCS)	Supports education, including remedial courses, counseling, recreation and other support Syrian refugees in northern Lebanon and the Bekaa.	UNHCR list of all partners
Terre Des Hommes (TdH): an international federation of humanitarian charity focuses on children's rights.	Focuses on education through the provision of remedial and recreational activities in the Bekaa. In addition, Tdh also implements protection activities through home visits in Aarsal.	UNHCR list of all partners
The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF): provides developmental and humanitarian assistance to children and mothers in developing countries	1- Present in the North and the Bekaa to distribute non-food items and bring the capacity of the community to promote extracurricular activities.	1. UNHCR list of all partners
	2- Education	2- UNHCR weeklyreports
War Child Holland (WCH): aspires to a healthy mental development for children who have experienced war	Aids Syrian children by providing remedial courses, a program of psychosocial support and recreational activities in the North and around Beirut.	UNHCR list of all partners
World Food Programme (WFP)	Intends to provide food in the form of food vouchers, targeting Syrian refugees and host families	UNHCR weekly reports
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)	Education	UNHCR weeklyreports
Médecins sans Frontières (MSF)	Health	UNHCR : Lebanon update support to displaced Syrians: situational overview

Sources:

-UNHCR : <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/partner.php?OrgId=130>

-UNHCR list of all partners: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/partnerlist.php>

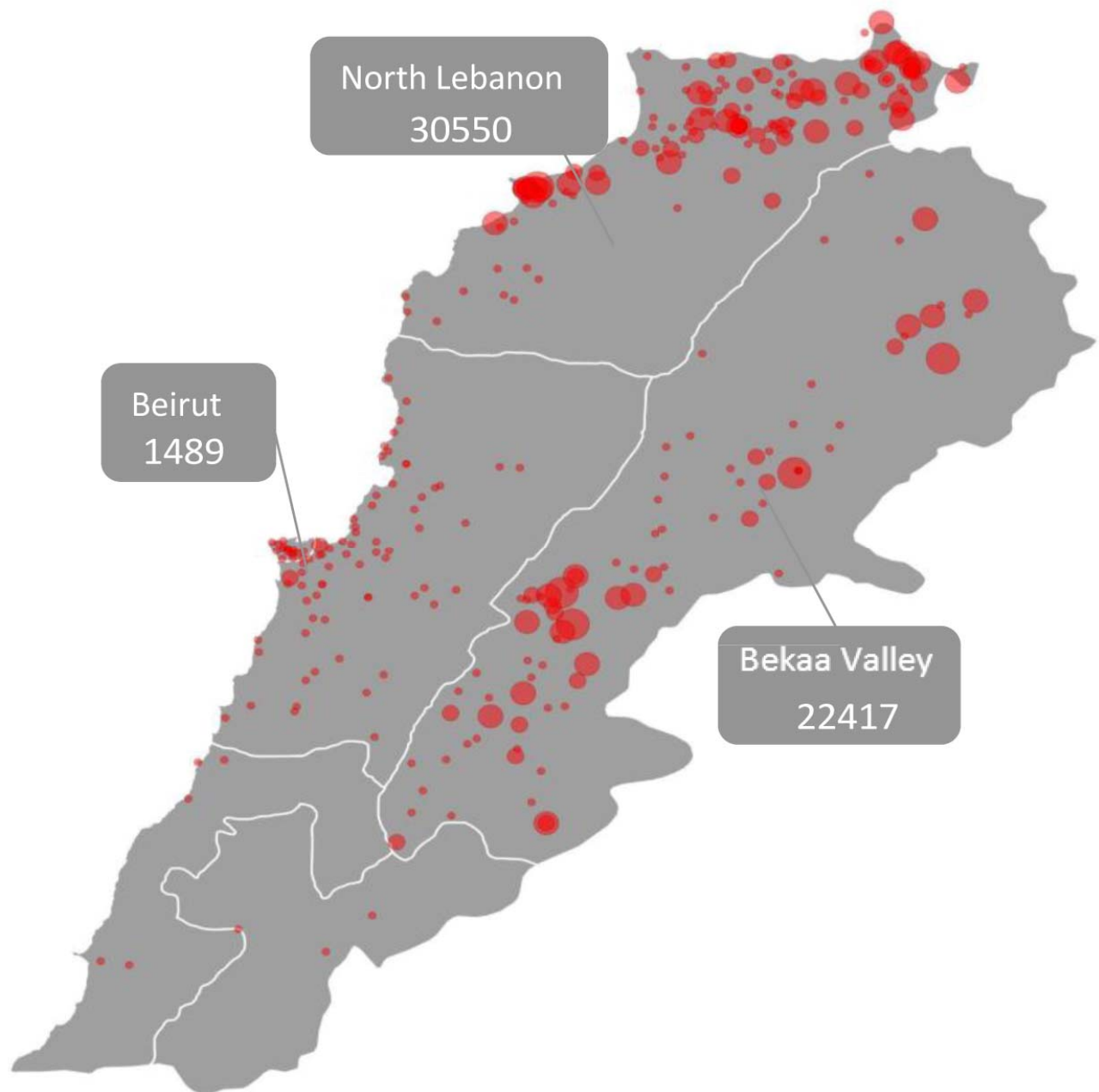
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Geographic Distribution of the Syrian Refugees in Lebanon 24 September 2012



Source: UNHCR Registration Trends for Syrians, 24 september 2012