



# The conflict context in Beirut: the social question, mobilisations cycles, and the city's securitisation

*Conflict Analysis Report, November 2015*



Aerial view of Beirut. Photographer unknown, source: <http://www.gtreview.com/wp-content/uploads...>



Lebanon Support would like to thank the team working on the Conflict Mapping & Analysis project for its efforts and dedication:

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Published by **Lebanon Support**,  
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## About the Conflict Mapping and Analysis Project

The Conflict Mapping and Analysis project is an initiative by Lebanon Support in collaboration with the Peace Building Project at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This project, implemented and developed by Lebanon Support, aims at providing different partners involved in peace-building, humanitarian and stabilisation activities in the country with accurate data and relevant information on areas or actors of involved in conflicts. It provides a sophisticated, impartial and pragmatic understanding of the inner workings of tracked conflicts, the specific underlying social fabric, the political minefields, as well as the opportunities for positive action. It has two main components:

1. The conflict map, which tracks incidents – whether between armed groups, government entities, or on individual levels – protests and mobilisation, as well as conflicts at the borders, and maps their location throughout Lebanon. It is continuously updated by a team of experts and researchers cross-checking and triangulating data. The incidents are categorised following a conflict typology (classification), which, together with a number of additional filters (for example, the categories of incidents), enables users to access the information most relevant to their respective programmes/research.
2. The conflict analysis adds a more qualitative element to the project, analysing conflict dynamics and particular trends, with different outputs produced regularly, focusing on a specific geographic location or conflict type every time.

While conflict modeling still cannot be considered an accurate science, this project relies on a multidisciplinary team that goes beyond mere quantifiable factors and statistical data (which have proved over the last decades, and other experiences in other contexts, their limits when it comes to identifying, for instance, a potential tipping point into violence). It provides, based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork, an in-depth look into the social, economic and political dynamics in Lebanon today, which may account as factors in creating auspicious conditions for conflict.

Over time, this information and analysis system allows one to define trends in tensions and conflicts. It also allows one to understand underlying causes of tensions and conflicts so as to better tailor interventions and enhance coordination between humanitarian and development actors in Lebanon. And ultimately, it constitutes a tool for reflection for policy makers, researchers, and other experts, to better inform the process of policymaking and public action in Lebanon.

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## **Abstract**

This report provides an analysis of the history and current situation of the conflict context, actors and dynamics in Beirut, Lebanon. The report seeks to shed light on the main actors, topics of contestation, conflict and mobilisation in its historical becoming as well as current expressions. The report includes a special focus on the social question, subsequent political and social mobilisation, gender issues, the securitisation of the city, as well as the interactions between the Lebanese host community and Syrian refugees and their unfolding within the last four years (since 2011).

## **1. Introduction: Beirut as a site of intersecting conflicts**

With an estimate number of 1,5 million inhabitants, the Lebanese capital Beirut represents the biggest city in the country in which around one third of the country's total population resides. Beirut is also the seat of the Lebanese government, as well as the centre of economic and cultural activity in the country.

In July 2015, the total number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon who are registered at UNHCR amounts to 1,172,753. Of these, 31,923 have been registered in Beirut by the end of June 2015, the areas with the highest numbers being Ras Beirut (2,326), Mazraa (12,918), Msaytbeh (3,724) and Ashrafieh (3,342). Additionally, there is a considerably large number registered in the southern and eastern suburbs of the capital like Shiyah (54,041), Bourj Barajneh (25,159), Choueifat El-Amrousiyeh (20,980) and Bourj Hammoud (20,177).<sup>1</sup>

Despite a reputation as a vibrant, cosmopolitan, “open”<sup>2</sup> city in the Arab world, Beirut has a multi-layered and diverse history of dynamics and dimensions of conflict, cycles of violence and reconciliation ranging from different “un”-civil wars in the city itself and the surrounding mountains, to multiple foreign interventions and attacks in the course of the civil wars, to different conflicts emerging from periods of political mobilisation<sup>3</sup>, economic decline and demographic changes. Accompanied by those different cycles of conflicts and violence are different processes of destruction and re-construction of the city itself.

There is a lot of literature dealing with the city's history of conflict, violence, and likewise resilience and reconciliation but - to some surprise - there has been hardly any research addressing the capital's latest challenges since the outbreak of the uprising in neighbouring Syria and its concomitant arrival of refugees into Lebanon in general, and into Beirut in particular. The developments within the capital have been rather neglected to the credit of areas seen as especially problematic in the last three years like North-Lebanon (Akkar) and the Bekaa plain.

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1 UNHCR, Syria Refugee Response, Beirut and Mount Lebanon Governorate, Distribution of the Registered Syrian Refugees at the Cadastral Level, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=9198> [Last accessed 31.07.15]; UNHRC, Syria Refugee Response, Lebanon Syrian Refugees Registered, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=9145> [Last accessed 31.07.15].

2 See for instance Jacques Beauchard, “Beyrouth, ville ouverte et fermée”, *Hermès, La Revue*, No. 63, 2012, pp. 109-115.

3 Literature on social movements in Lebanon has shown how historically the Lebanese capital has been an activist space, starting with mobilisation within its universities campuses in the sixties and seventies (Agnès Favier, *Logiques de l'engagement et modes de contestation au Liban. Genèse et éclatement d'une génération de militants intellectuels (1958-1975)*, thèse de Doctorat, Institut d'Etudes Politiques d'Aix en Provence, 2004), its “civil” cycle of mobilisations in the nineties (Karam Karam, *Revendiquer, mobiliser, participer: Les associations civiles dans le Liban de l'après-guerre*, Thèse de doctorat, IEP d'Aix-en-Provence, 2004), or more “radical and alternative” cycle of protest in the early 2000 years (Marie-Noëlle AbiYaghi, *L'altermondialisme au Liban: un militantisme de passage. Logiques d'engagement et reconfiguration de l'espace militant (de gauche) au Liban*, PhD thesis, Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2013).

This report seeks to fill this literature gap by giving a contextual and analytical summary of the diverse conflict dynamics in Beirut since 2011 and relates those developments to the historical processes of conflict, violence, reconciliation and resilience within the city's history.

### ***Methodology***

In this report we have relied on a multi-type data collection method that combined desk research with fieldwork inside Beirut. The fieldwork consisted of interviews with 45 informants, including Lebanese and Syrian workers and business owners, key figures in state institutions (schools, ministries), as well as trade unions and NGO representatives working in Beirut. There were two types of individual extended conversations, and organised consenting focus groups, both of which followed a semi-structured interview guide. Interviews were conducted between June 4th and July 16th 2015, they were all transcribed and analysed. The emerging common themes were placed at the centre of this report, thereby constituting its core. All interviews were fully anonymous unless the interviewee explicitly mentioned they agreed to the public use of their name, or were interviewed as representatives of key actors and organisations. The desk research was used to check the perceptions and arguments made by our informants, and compare them against available data, reports, expert analysis, and public discourses. The comparison has proved helpful in delineating gaps between policies, perceptions, and actual practices and effects from the ground.

## **2. Beirut – a history of multiple conflict dynamics, demographic changes and urban re-construction and reconciliation processes**

### **2.1. The story of success?**

Since the declaration of the French Mandate over Lebanon and the proclamation of the state of Greater Lebanon in September 1920, Beirut was selected as the seat of the head-quarter of the French High Commission and the capital of French Mandate Syria. Although the city had already previously experienced a peak of cultural, economic and technological developments in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Mandate period meant the intensified launching of different construction and developments projects within the city in order to adapt it to the needs of the Mandate's governance and administration infrastructure. This entailed an improved infrastructure, especially regarding transportation and communication. Next to those rather basic improvements, the city was exposed to architectural modernisation projects that mainly led to the construction of a new business district in the city centre.<sup>4</sup>

Despite those processes of modernisation and the accompanying fast demographic changes (see 2.3.), Beirut remained a manageable city whose size and population density was very modest compared to other metropolises in the region like Cairo and Damascus.

Beirut's often retold "success story" is mainly ascribed to two dimensions: 1) its cultural, intellectual and academic importance within the region and 2) its economic heyday expressing itself in construction enterprises as well as the establishment of banks and companies in the capital.<sup>5</sup>

The establishment of private universities, schools, and hospitals before and during the Mandate, often initiated by missionaries, as well as the gradual development of Beirut as a hub of publishing and journalistic activities in the Arab world, the flourishing scene of

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4 Samir Kassir, *Beirut*, Berkeley, University of California Press 2011, pp. 280-287.

5 Ibid., pp. 8-12; 364.



cinema, theatre and art, and the influx of intellectuals fleeing the neighboring authoritarian regimes since the 1950s, all led to building the reputation of Beirut as a cosmopolitan intellectual and cultural metropolis in the Mediterranean and Arab world. Likewise, Beirut established itself as the Arab city for banking, interregional trade, foreign economic enterprises, as well as a general meeting point for economic and commercial activities – “from the most ordinary to the most dubious”.<sup>6</sup>

The outbreak of the civil war in 1975 and its 15-year long, violent and complex persistence wrecked this image. Still, after the war and throughout the 1990s and 2000s – despite its frequently recurring and diverse cycles of violence and conflict – Beirut regained some of its former fame mainly related to its entertainment scene, but also due to its ability to overcome its history of violence and conflict towards a prevailingly peaceful city. This picture of Beirut as a city overcoming its turbulent history and maintaining its charm despite “all of the Middle East’s turmoil”<sup>7</sup> today is mainly advocated by foreign press articles in the last couple of years, reproducing the picture of fame and glory.<sup>8</sup> And yet, the recovery and reconstructions processes have, to a large extent, left, according to observers, “too many questions unanswered and given too many unsatisfactory replies to others.”<sup>9</sup>

## **2.2. (Neo-)liberal laissez-faire and urban (re-)construction**

The beginning of the Mandate period witnessed several construction and development projects for the new capital changing the city’s outward experiences and extended its size beyond its old borders. While those enterprises have still been rather state-driven, and therefore followed some kind of centralised urban planning, they nevertheless laid the foundation of a growing construction boom since the 1950s that increasingly escaped any attempts of urban planning and government control.

From the 1960s on, the mixture of a statist laissez-faire politics approach<sup>10</sup> and the municipality’s focus on central areas led, on the one hand, to the development of a city that distinguished itself by the uncontrolled erection of expensive apartment and office towers patched together in a disordered way mainly within the central (business) district<sup>11</sup>, and on the other, the constructing of cheap, quickly-built shanties in the capital’s suburbs neglected by central government and municipalities.

The short interventionist intermezzo to the lack of urban planning from the state side under the presidency of Fuad Chehab (1958-1964) was very quickly set aside with the inauguration of Charles Helou’s presidential mandate.<sup>12</sup>

In the early 1970s, the inhabitants of Beirut exceeded one million and the city continued in

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6 Ibid., p. 8; Dona J. Stewart, “Economic recovery and Reconstruction in Postwar Beirut”, *Geographical Review*, Vol. 86, No. 4, 1996, pp. 487-504.

7 Peter Economy, “Visiting These 7 Cities will change your life”, *Inc.* 02.07.15, <http://www.inc.com/peter-economy/7-cities-you-must-visit-for-remarkable-personal-growth.html> [Last accessed 29.07.15].

8 Carole Cadwalladr, “Beirut is back...and it’s beautiful. How the Lebanese capital went from warzone to 2010s most glamorous tourist destination”, *The Guardian*, No. 8 November 2009, pp. 1-8, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/travel/2009/nov/08/carole-cadwalladr-beirut-lebanon> [Last accessed 29.07.15]; The 44 places to go in 2009, *The New York Times*, [http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/01/11travel/20090111\\_DESTINATIONS.html](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/01/11travel/20090111_DESTINATIONS.html) [Last accessed 29.07.15]; Peter Economy, 2015, *op.cit.*

9 Samir Kassir, *op.cit.*, p. 529.

10 Reinoud Leenders, “Nobody Having too Much to Answer for : Laissez-faire, Networks and Postwar Reconstruction in Lebanon”, in Heydemann, Steven (ed.), *Networks of Privilege: The Politics of Economic Reform in the Middle East*, New York, Palgrave-Mac Millan, 2004, pp. 169-200.

11 Samir Kassir, *op.cit.*, pp. 280-297.

12 Ibid., pp. 419-426.

its expansion upward (by the construction of towers) and sideward (by the establishment of shanty towns and suburbs).

Despite the often precarious conditions in which the people in those shanty towns and suburbs of the capital were forced to live, the Lebanese pre-war economy left room for the development of an informal economy sector, which incorporated most of the newly arrived migrants of the suburbs, giving them employment opportunities. These opportunities helped those migrants establish some kind of self-organisation and self-regulation within the urban and economic developments of those shantytowns, a process that can be described as “a form of spatial appropriation and production that defies those dictated by state capitalism.”<sup>13</sup>

These developments were altered with the outbreak and 15-year long continuation of the Lebanese civil war from 1975 until 1990.

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**The question of the reconstruction of Beirut after the end of the war was, therefore, not only a question of the high cost of reconstruction, but posed anew the question of the city's identity, its centre and public spaces, and the different actors' role in actualising this identity.**

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The diverse conflicts were in many instances urban conflicts, given that they were fought and staged in the streets, squares, and corners of Beirut. Not only did the image of the city change according to its residential segregation related to the placing of conflicting parties, the diverse fights and conflicts also destroyed a big part of the capital. Moreover, the city's infrastructure (airport, sewage and electricity systems, telephone lines) sustained considerable damage. The cost of the city's destruction after the war was estimated to be at least 25 billion USD, not to mention the high number of displaced and homeless people in the city due to the destruction. Beirut was especially hit in areas that were – in pre-war times – known for their social dimensions: common spaces sought for social gatherings, business transactions, and everyday performances. The whole city centre was destroyed including the old souq surrounding it. Similarly, a big part of the Hamra commercial district was severely damaged.<sup>14</sup>

The question of the reconstruction of Beirut after the end of the war was, therefore, not only a question of the high cost of reconstruction, but posed anew the question of the city's identity, its centre and public spaces, and the different actors' role in actualising this identity.

The inauguration of Rafiq al-Hariri as prime minister in 1992, initiated a policy centered on the reconstruction of the old city centre and adopted a rather liberal orientation<sup>15</sup> that left little room for the “social state” and subsequent “shy” social rights.<sup>16</sup> The economic and urban politics adopted by the successive governments in the 1990s more or less carried on in this direction until today, through the diverse crises shaking the country's and the world's economy. They have surely brought the country some fame regarding its construction boom, but have equally contributed to the many question marks that followed the post-war process of Lebanon and Beirut, starting from the ambivalently perceived re-construction of the city centre. This evoked a lot of criticism for widening the already existing gap between

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13 Mona Fawaz, “Neoliberal Urbanity and the Right to the City: A view from Beirut's periphery”, *Development and Change* Vol. 40, No. 5, 2009, pp. 827-852, here 827.

14 Dona J. Stewart, *op.cit.*, pp. 487-504.

15 Myriam Catusse, Karam Karam, *Le Liban de Taëf en panne de réforme*, Arab Initiative Reform, janvier 2010. [http://www.arab-reform.net/sites/default/files/Karam\\_Catusse\\_Le\\_Liban\\_en\\_panne\\_de\\_reforme\\_28\\_juillet\\_2009.pdf](http://www.arab-reform.net/sites/default/files/Karam_Catusse_Le_Liban_en_panne_de_reforme_28_juillet_2009.pdf), [Last accessed on 15. 09. 2015] ; George Corm, *Le Liban Contemporain. Histoire et Société*, Paris, La Découverte, 2003.

16 Marie-Noëlle AbiYaghi, Myriam Catusse, “Non à l'Etat holding, oui à l'Etat providence. Logiques et contraintes des mobilisations sociales dans le Liban de l'après-guerre”, *Tiers-Monde*, avril, n°206, 2011, pp. 67-93.

the poor and the rich in the city, for not addressing the basic needs of poorer and deprived sectors of the society (for example in the realm of healthcare, education, and housing), for destroying old buildings and public spaces in favour of large-scale construction projects,<sup>17</sup> and for contributing to the prevalence of “underground solidarities” around kin, confession or clientele relations<sup>18</sup>.

### **2.3. Processes of migration and demographic changes in Beirut**

The change of the urban outer appearance of Beirut since Lebanese independence was paralleled with and partly caused by multiple waves of migration into the city within the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Lebanese capital Beirut grew very fast and integrated a big part of the country’s population.<sup>19</sup>

The declaration of Beirut as the capital of the Mandate led to a first wave of mainly Maronite migrants coming from the mountains to settle in the new capital. Following independence, a second wave brought mainly Shi’ite migrants from the neglected peripheral rural areas (South, Bekaa) into the capital’s proximity where they started to settle in areas around the city, acquiring land, and setting up affordable buildings and shanties on those lands. These processes favoured the city to the disadvantage of rural areas. In the decades following independence, the repercussions of the Arab-Israeli conflict in Lebanon and especially in the South led to further rural exodus into Beirut.

In addition to the processes of internal migration, Lebanon, in general, and Beirut, in particular, was also affected by different waves of migrants coming from outside the country especially between and following the two World Wars. While the First World War brought a wave of Armenian migrants to Lebanon, the interwar years mainly brought waves of Kurds from Turkey as well as Christian Syrians and Assyrians from Iraq. In the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli war, Palestinians also sought refuge in the country. Similarly, especially the 1950s experienced a smaller wave of economic migrants and political refugees from Syria and Egypt. Within this wave the first economic migrants came from Syria to Lebanon to mainly work as agricultural labourers in the rural areas of the Bekaa, Akkar and the south.<sup>20</sup>

Similar to the internal migrants from the rural Lebanese areas, migrants coming from outside settled within the new suburbs of the capital and therefore also produced their own “spaces in alternative forms to those imagined/dictated by the market and state codes”.<sup>21</sup>

Those spaces created the above-mentioned rather autonomous processes of social, economic, and later increasingly political self-regulation and organisation. They nevertheless have to be mentioned in respect to their demographic pressures, rising poverty tendencies, and insufficient social and public services that dominated the suburbs of Beirut. The poverty belt prospering around the capital also proved itself to be a ground for social and political mobilisation visible in the years preceding and during the civil war.<sup>22</sup>

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17 Ibid., p. 696; Marieke Krijnen, “Filling Every Gap: Real Estate Development in Beirut”, *Jadaliyya*, 05.11.2013. [http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/14880/filling-every-gap\\_real-estate-development-in-beiru](http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/14880/filling-every-gap_real-estate-development-in-beiru) [Last accessed 31.07.15].

18 Kochuyt Thierry, “La misère du Liban: une population appauvrie, peu d’état et plusieurs solidarités souterraines”, *Revue Tiers Monde*, Vol, 3, No. 179, 2004, pp. 515-537.

19 Samir Kassir, *op.cit*, p. 427.

20 John Chalcraft, *The Invisible Cage. Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon*, Stanford: Stanford University Press 2009, p. 15.

21 Mona Fawaz, *op.cit*, p. 836.

22 Samir Kassir, *op.cit*, p. 429.

As a migrants' city in a country whose political system was primarily based on confessional/proportional representation, as well as clientelistic patronage patterns, newcomers' arrival during the 20<sup>th</sup> century decades simultaneously led to different layers of affiliations and allegiances following the often congruent divisions on religious, national, and social bases, and reflected in the city's geographical divisions.<sup>23</sup>

These divisions led to a rather strict segregation in the course of the civil war when the city was divided into two belligerent sections parted by the "Green Line". Within the two sections, political leaders and their respective militias attempted to re-organise the different neighbourhood along sectarian lines. These tendencies of homogenisation during the civil war were also subverted by further and intensified migration movements due to different displacement processes evoked by the dynamics of the war itself. Additionally, these processes led to further impoverishment, economic decline, and/or demotion in the course of the war, manifested until today in post-war dynamics and further aggravated by the economic political orientation adopted after the end of the war.<sup>24</sup>

Syrian migration to Lebanon - mainly as workforce in the industrial and agricultural sectors - had started in the 1950s and continuously expanded in the decades following so that

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**Services of health care, social welfare, education/schooling, as well as infrastructure were in principle available in the capital and constantly expanded, but mainly privately owned and funded and not provided by the state.**

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"in the early 2000s, Syrian workers comprised between 20 and 40 percent of the Lebanese employers, and their remittances made up as much as 8 percent of the Syrian GDP."<sup>25</sup>

## **2.4. Poverty and public services: the reverse of the medal**

The above mentioned orientation of the Lebanese economic and urban policy in the decades after independence, characterised by a laissez-faire state giving space to the dominance of foreign capital, speculation operations in banking and construction, in addition to the growing encroachment by the financial/commercial oligarchy on industry and agriculture led to a rising social disparity between a small upper class and a lower class sector consisting of workers and low-level employees. Processes of emigration and often re-migration of many Lebanese led to a rather stable establishment of a middle class especially in Beirut since approximately the 1950s.<sup>26</sup>

This social disparity was aggravated by rather weak standards of public and social services offered by the state since its independence: Services of health care, social welfare, education/schooling, as well as infrastructure were in principle available in the capital and constantly expanded, but mainly privately owned and funded and not provided by the state.<sup>27</sup>

The Lebanese state left those rather basic needs mainly patronised and brought forward by

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23 Ibid., p. 429.

24 Souad Joseph, "Working-Class Woman's Networks in a Sectarian State: A Political Paradox", *American Ethnologist* Vol. 10, No. 1, 1983, 1-22.

25 John Chalcraft, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

26 Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, London, 2007, pp. 157-159; 162.

27 Myriam Catusse, "La décharge à l'épreuve : les chemins de traverse de la réforme de la caisse nationale de la sécurité sociale au Liban, intervention dans le cadre de la section thématique "Les politiques sociales : mutations, enjeux, théories" dirigée par F. X. Merrien et M. Steffen au 10<sup>ème</sup> congrès de l'Association française de science politique (2009); Marie-Noëlle AbiYaghi, "Social Protection in Lebanon between charity and politics", in: Arab Watch 2014, Arab NGO Network for Development, December 2014.

“non-state actors, predominantly religious authorities and institutions that respond to their own constituencies’ needs.”<sup>28</sup>

While this outsourcing of basic social needs and provisions from the state to non-state actors prevented a further widening of the gap between upper and lower class to a certain extent, it nevertheless reinforced the segregation along sectarian and clientelistic lines by mainly relying on the respective religious/confessional authorities.

In the years preceding the outbreak of the civil war, the orientation of the Lebanese economy with its outward-looking nature and its humble state interventions led to a rising gap between a small benefiting oligarchy and a growing sector of poor and deprived inhabitants located in Beirut’s “poverty belt” stretching from Karantina in the east to Raml al-’Ali and Laylaki neighbourhood in the west.”<sup>29</sup>

The 15 year long civil war led itself to reinforced dynamics of displacement, pauperisation, devaluation of the currency and a general stagnant economy affecting the country’s population heavily.

In the after-war years, the country’s economic alignment to the “Washington consensus” clearly abiding by the dominant liberal paradigm<sup>30</sup> have led to the aggravation of a divided society in terms of social classes, enhanced by the pauperisation of Beirut’s middle class<sup>31</sup>.

To a certain extent, the clientelistic model of religious/confessional non-state actors providing basic services (health care, schooling) to their followers continued. Social and public infrastructure in the city improved but was still only available for those who can afford it. The state itself increasingly dismantled its already humble role in the provision of basic social services in the realm of labour market, welfare, health service, housing and education/schooling. In the private sector, the increasing abolition of labour regulations brought about the growing hiring of daily workers, often foreign migrants (mainly from Syria, Egypt, and South/East Asia) who did not benefit from any welfare services, therefore adding to the large category of deprived inhabitants within the capital.<sup>32</sup>

## **2.5. The political mobilisation continuum between armed and non-armed conflict**

As mentioned above, Beirut has been a centre of social and political activism in Lebanon, as well as in the Arab world, since approximately the outgoing 19<sup>th</sup> century. The emergence, from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century on, of three new parties organised around the European model and mainly designed for a labour class (the Communist Party LCP, founded in 1924, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, SSNP, founded in 1932 and the Lebanese Phalanges Party/Kata’eb Party founded in 1936) accompanied the development of a new political and social subjectivity.

The 1960s and early 1970s were characterised by an increasing climate of political and social contestations, tensions, and polarisation revolving around the social and confessional segregation of the city, state politics towards labour, social welfare and education, as well as the Palestinian liberation struggle.

28 Mona Fawaz, *op.cit.*, p. 839.

29 Fawaz Traboulsi, *op.cit.*, p. 161.

30 Myriam Catusse, *op.cit.*, 2009.

31 Ibid. See also Elisabeth Longuenesse, *Professions et société au Proche-Orient, Déclin des élites, crise des classes moyennes*, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, coll. Res Publica, 2007, 228 p.

32 Mona Fawaz, *op.cit.*, p. 840; Saree Makdisi, “Laying Claim to Beirut: Urban Narratives and Spatial Identity in the Age of Solidere”, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 1997, pp. 696-697.

Those contestations mainly expressed themselves in workers' and students' movements<sup>33</sup>, demonstrations and strikes, a rising mobilisation on the political left (including the LCP) strongly solidarising with the Palestinian liberation movement and its involvement on Lebanese ground. Increasingly also religious-political actors like Musa Sadr's "Movement of the Deprived" and the Phalange Party for the Christian part became active in mobilisation dynamics.

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The different rather isolated areas of the capital like the Palestinian camps in the poor suburbs, the Christian Eastern parts as well as the intellectual-leftist areas around Hamra, all served as different "political compost[s] in which ideas could be translated into action."<sup>34</sup>

The transition from mainly peaceful pre-war dynamics to armed conflicts being carried out by the same actors in the streets of Beirut proceeded creepingly. Still, the 15 year long civil war was typified not only by different forms of violence and conflict and the intervention of different non-Lebanese actors within the war, but also by "the most improbable reversals of alliances"<sup>35</sup>. Also, the war meant the reshaping of the capital's geography around the "green" line of opposing factions/blocs. The demarcation line divided Beirut into "West Beirut" depicted as pro-Palestinian "Muslim" and mainly composed of leftist militias and "East Beirut" represented as pro-west, Christian and comprised of right wing militias.

Beirut emerged out of the war destroyed to a large extent but additionally, seemingly void of its pre-war political and social grassroot movements, although not void of the factors that had caused those movements to emerge in the first place.

Post-war Lebanon, despite being "much more peaceful than anyone would have dared to predict"<sup>36</sup>, mainly shows four features of interactions/contestations between political/social movements and state entities expressing themselves in different forms of political unrest/uprising:

- 1) From the state side, Beirut is subjected to increased police, army and secret service presence, expressing itself in street patrolling, police abuses and human right violations by those entities. Such incidents are rather overlooked in the clientelistic and increasingly corrupt system of political and legal performance and implementation. The rising militarisation and securitisation of Lebanon and Beirut was further intensified by the presence of the Syrian army and secret service in the country until its withdrawal in 2005.<sup>37</sup>

- 2) Especially in the 1990s, a period known as the "civil peace" period a growing number of international and national civil society organisations and NGOs established themselves in Lebanon and sought to implement development, peace-building, conflict prevention and democratisation programs in the country while adopting tasks of welfare and social services. Most of these organisations are until today based in Beirut.<sup>38</sup>

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33 Agnès Favier, *op.cit*, 2004.

34 Samir Kassir, *op.cit*, p. 464.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid., pp. 541.

37 Ibid.

38 Anne Marie Baylouny, *Privatizing Welfare in the Middle East. Kin Mutual Aid Associations in Jordan and Lebanon*, 2010; Karam Karam, *op.cit*, 2004.

3) Since the 2005 protest movements, the country is faced with a long-lasting political stalemate resulting from the division of the country's political camps in the two alliances of March-8<sup>th</sup> and March-14<sup>th</sup>. In the years following, Beirut experienced some political mobilisation along those dividing lines, leading exemplarily to a short-timed return of street violence in May 2008 when Hezbollah forces occupied streets of Beirut and the Shuf area, strongholds of the 14<sup>th</sup> March-Future movement, and protested against the government's decision to shut down its telecommunication network, a conflict that was staged in heavy street battles in Beirut lasting for a couple of days.

4) Beirut until today experiences different forms of youth mobilisation and social movements dealing with different issues from rather general urban and environmental politics, to national topics of corruption and confessionism, and regional developments in Palestine, Iraq and Syria. Those different movements had a recent peak in the "Isqat al-Nizam al-Ta'ifi" movement, calling for the downfall of the confessional system in Lebanon in early 2011 and following similar uprisings within the Arab world.<sup>39</sup> The past two years witnessed a significant mobilization by women's groups against domestic violence laws, and most recently in summer 2015, Beirut is witnessing a mass popular reaction to the government's mishandling of effective trash removal and management (see section 4.5).

5) Beirut has historically served as the launching ground for several vibrant movements and initiatives calling for women's rights, sexual liberties, and gender equality. The history of women's political activism and movements in Lebanon offers a complex tale of roughly four feminist waves corresponding to the conditions shaping the country's politics at every turn.<sup>40</sup>

Recently important shifts occurred in the shaping of women's activism and movements: on the one hand their increased institutionalisation through NGOs that heavily depend on foreign funding<sup>41</sup> and, on the other and since the early years 2000, the resurgence of the sexual rights and liberties question presented by several newly formed groups of queer men and women.<sup>42</sup> These groups continue to fight against the criminalisation of same-sex acts and discrimination as based on a non-normative gender and sexual identity, presentation, or behavior. Queer and radical feminists presented critiques of patriarchy as a system and pointed to the persistence of discrimination against women<sup>43</sup> and the policing of their sexual behavior both under the law as well as in the activities of state-affiliated and donor-based organisations. They also put forth agendas aiming to challenge the patriarchal state and its institutions, such as the "Take Back the Parliament" movement<sup>44</sup>, or more recently

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39 Marie-Noelle AbiYaghi, Myriam Catusse, "Liban: Le mouvement pour 'la chute du système confessionnel' et ses limites", in Michel Camau and Frédéric Vairel (eds.), *Soulèvements et recompositions politiques dans le monde arabe*, Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2014; Sami Hermez, "Activism as 'Part-Time' Activity: Searching for Commitment and Solidarity in Lebanon", *Cultural Dynamics*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2011, pp. 41-55.

40 Bernadette Daou, "Feminist Waves in Lebanon: After Loyalty to the Nation, Will the Body Revolt in the Arab Spring?", *Civil Society Review*, Lebanon Support, January 2015.

41 For more on this see Dalya Mitri, "From Public Space to the Office: the Shift in Feminist Movements Towards Non-Governmental Organisation and its Consequences for Mobilizing Women and Achieving Social Change", *Civil Society Review*, Lebanon Support, January 2015.

42 For a brief history of the sexual-rights movement in Beirut see: Anthony Rizk and Ghassan Makarem, "Masculinity in Danger: Sexual Rights Organisations and the Masculinist State in Lebanon", *Civil Society Review*, Lebanon Support, January 2015.

43 Ibid.

44 For more information see the group's Facebook Page. <https://www.facebook.com/vote2013> [Last Accessed 02.08.2015].

within the summer 2015 protest movement and more specifically in the “feminist bloc”. Overall, sexual rights activists continue to grapple with the movement’s mushrooming NGOisation, its de-politicisation and the compartmentalising of its causes into single-issues, the need for safer spaces to build a strong movement and its own subsequent practices of sexism and/or exclusion, and finally, managing the politics of the global LGBT rights movement that affect these organisations’ priorities and their perception as either underdeveloped activists or “western agents”.

A second issue that the fourth wave of feminism is concerned with is the question of foreign women workers’ rights, namely those migrating to Lebanon for domestic work from Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, India, Bangladesh, and other states. While these women are finding support in some feminist and anti-racism groups and movements in Beirut, they are also facing a backlash from the state which is refusing their unionisation, as well as from some women’s groups that are newly organising in opposition to these workers’ demands.<sup>45</sup> This issue will continue to mark the way that women’s political activism and social movement develop.

### **3. Beirut today: conflict actors**

#### **3.1. Lebanese citizens, migrants, refugees – new dynamics in a divided city**

Beirut today represents itself as a city of approximately 1,5 million inhabitants, exceeding two millions when integrating its surrounding suburbs. The capital of Beirut is home not only to Lebanese citizens but - as stated before - 31,923 Syrians registered as refugees with UNHCR live in the capital while the number of Syrians living in the suburbs amounts to approximately 120.357 as registered by UNHCR in July 2015. Prior to the arrival of Syrian refugees, Lebanon experienced several arrivals of different refugee waves (among them Kurds and Armenians<sup>46</sup>). The biggest group among those refugees is the Palestinians whose influxes to the country happened in different waves and periods since 1948. Today, Beirut has an approximate number of 28.500 Palestinian living in the three camps in Beirut (Shatila, Mar Elias and Burj Barajneh) and registered with UNRWA.<sup>47</sup> A considerable number of Palestinians also lives outside the camps.

Due to its different waves of migration and its outward oriented labour market, Beirut is home to a big number of migrant workers partly overlapping with the refugee population since many Palestinians and Syrians work under the migrant workers’ conditions in the low-paid sectors of the Lebanese labour market. Lebanon additionally hosts about a quarter of million of migrant domestic workers mainly coming from East Asian and African countries who work and live under special conditions imposed by the Ministry of Labour.<sup>48</sup> The majority of those migrant domestic workers live in Beirut.<sup>49</sup>

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45 Human Rights Watch, “Lebanon: Recognize Domestic Workers Union”, 10.03.2015. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/03/10/lebanon-recognize-domestic-workers-union> [last accessed 02.08.2015].

46 Their overall number in the country being 156,000 Armenians and 25.000 Kurds in June 2008. See Minority Rights Group International, Lebanon Overview, Updated June 2008. <http://www.minorityrights.org/5058/lebanon/lebanon-overview.html> [Last accessed 01.08.15].

47 UNRWA, Camp Profiles Lebanon. <http://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon/camp-profiles?field=15> [last accessed 01.08.15].

48 See on those conditions, International Labour Organisation, For a fee: The business of recruiting Bangladeshi women for domestic work in Jordan and Lebanon, 24th June 2015. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_377806.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_377806.pdf) [Last accessed 01.08.15].

49 International Labour Organisation, Lebanon. <http://www.ilo.org/beirut/countries/lebanon/lang-en/index.htm> [Last accessed 01.08.15].



Although post-war Beirut is still a city often mentioned in respect to its geographical segregations and divisions in which every economic, social and/or political group finds its own niche this has increasingly been challenged in the last three years by processes of migration and changing housing and working circumstances. Especially within the last years, some media reports focused on the changing face of Beirut following the arrival of Syrian refugees, often linking those changes to negative implications mainly playing on an emotional, identity-politics discourse.<sup>50</sup> In our interviews, most Lebanese interlocutors mentioned the presence of Syrians in their areas (especially in Hamra, Ashrafieh, Bourj Hammoud, the Palestinians camps and the Southern suburbs) but also emphasised that there have always been Syrians in their neighbourhoods .

Several Syrians interlocutors confirmed to us their preferences to those areas and usually described their choices of residence according to the proximity of their workplace, the amount of rent and sometimes their political, religious or cultural affiliation. In contrast to above cited media reports, rarely have dogmatic, “racist”, or political/identity-related tones been adopted in our interviews, while rather practical consequences - negatively or positively - were highlighted.

One of our interlocutors, owner of a bar/restaurant in Hamra, mentioned the positive impact the arrival of Syrians had for his business<sup>51</sup> while another, a safety officer in a big construction company in Beirut, mentioned tensions between Palestinian and Syrian workers on the building site due to job competition:

“There is no racism in our company, and politics does not play a role, only sometimes when they joke among each other. And Lebanese are curious, they ask ‘with who are you’ but it is more curiosity [...] The Palestinians and the Syrians have some problems with each other, the Palestinian feels that the Syrian took his job while he thinks he has older rights, he used to be here before and he cannot leave to anywhere else.”<sup>52</sup>

Most of our interviewees from different social classes and in different areas of Beirut mentioned friendships and/or acquaintances with “the other” - Syrian or Lebanese - although they usually highlighted that it took some time to establish those friendships.

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**In contrast to above cited media reports, rarely have dogmatic, “racist”, or political/identity-related tones been adopted in our interviews, while rather practical consequences – negatively or positively – were highlighted.**

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Far-reaching consequences have usually been mentioned in relation to the new visa regulations implemented since January 2015. Since many of our Syrian interlocutors have expired residence permits in Lebanon, their

perceived radius of mobility has limited drastically in the last couple of months. Most do not leave the area they work and live in anymore and try to limit their time in the public drastically.

### **3.2. Beirut as the centre of government and state institutions**

The capital Beirut is the Lebanese centre of government as well as the seat of state institutions, ministries and the directorate of the General Security. In this function, Beirut is the centre of state services for the Lebanese “citizen”, and/or the refugee/resident of Lebanon, as well the centre of state decisions and negotiations between those citizens/residents and

50 Husayn Hazuri, “Al-Hamra ma ‘adet Lubnaniyah...at-tawasu’ as-Suri ghayyara hawiyatuha”, *An-Nahar*, 06.01.15. <http://newspaper.annahar.com/article/203070-...> [Last accessed 01.08.15].

51 Interview with the owner of a bar/restaurant in Hamra, July 2015.

52 Interview with a safety officer in a construction company in Beirut, July 2015.

the state. Therefore, most processes of social and political mobilisation, demonstrations, strikes and sit-in take place in the city.

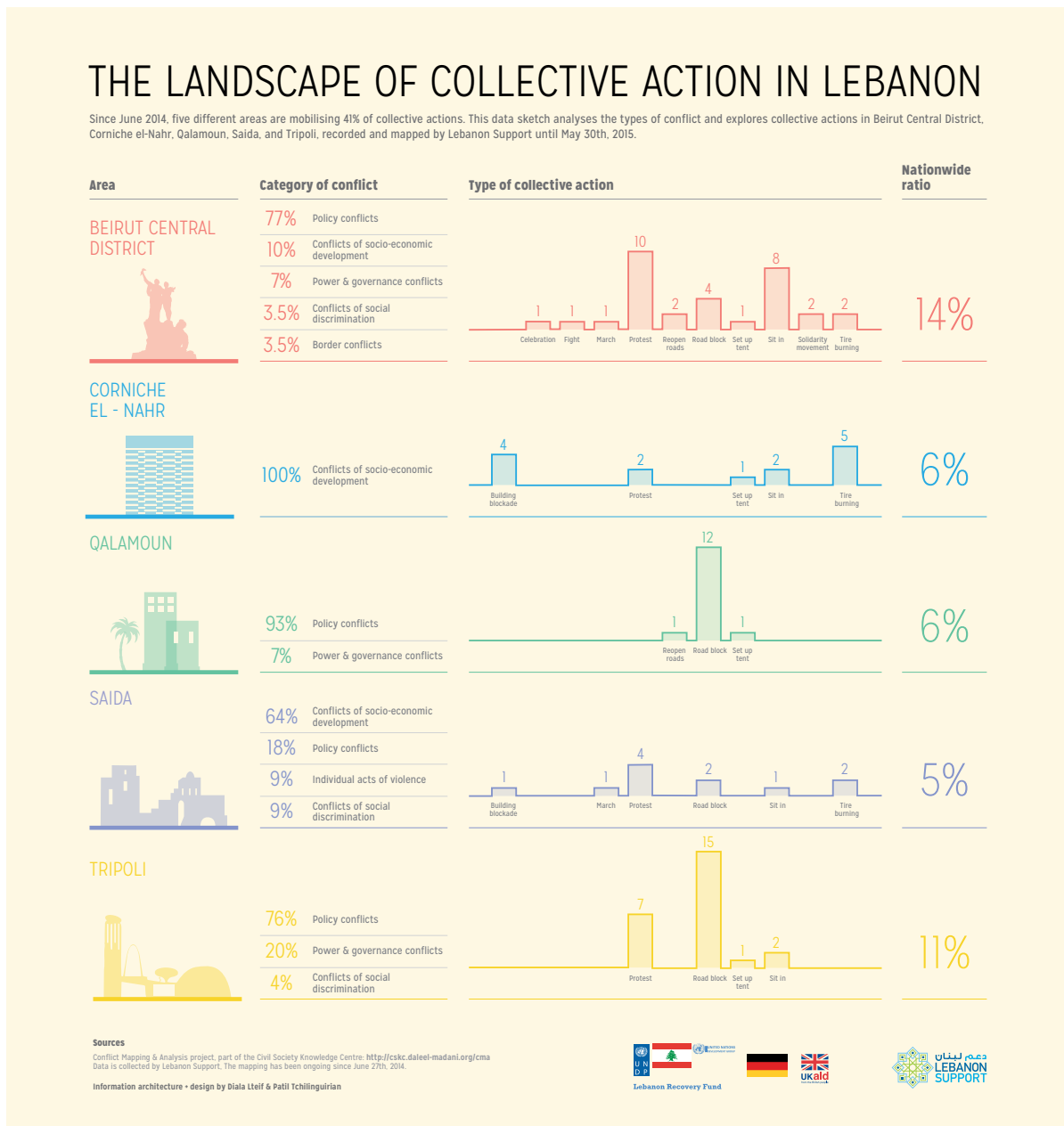


fig.1: The landscape of Lebanese conflict and collective action<sup>53</sup>. The biggest part of all collective actions and mobilisations in Lebanon, between June 2014 and May 2015, have taken place in Beirut.

For most of our Syrian interlocutors, the state institutions are usually approached in connection to different claims for social services (often in cooperation with the UNHCR or other NGOs) for example from the Ministry of Health (coverage of medical treatment), or the Ministry of Education (schooling), or in relation to residence permit applications or renewal at the Directorate of the General Security, in the Adlieh area.<sup>54</sup> As further elaborated below, these procedures often go along with a seemingly haphazard, uncoordinated decision-making process concerning the demand of the Syrian. This creates certain avoidance strate-

53 Information architecture and design by Diala Lteif and Patil Tchilinguirian

54 Based on interviews with Syrian interlocutors and representatives of NGO's working in the field of education and health. They mostly liaise with those state institutions for any service not provided by the UNHCR (medical care not covered by UNHCR, residence permits procedures, schooling in remote areas)

gies among many of our interlocutors who try to sidestep any contact with state institutions especially in the last couple of months and in light of the new residency permit regulations. Likewise, the powerlessness of Syrian refugees/residents in Beirut in the face of Lebanese state institutions shows the general vulnerable situation of those refugees/residents, who are mainly left without any institutional representation in their host country. Although UNHCR acts as the institutional representative for registered Syrian refugees, being registered is not a guarantee of stability for the refugees, who now have to provide additional documents such as official housing leases, pledge not to work, and certified attestation from the mukhtar, etc, in order to process their admission to Lebanon<sup>55</sup>.

### **3.3. Policing and Securitisation: State and non-state security forces, police and army in Beirut**

As will be elaborated later, Beirut is characterised by a rising presence of different state and non-state security forces in the last couple of years partly in a permanent fashion of erected army and ISF checkpoints and partly in a rather ad-hoc mode as a response to any kind of assumed situation of threat/insecurity and unrest/mobilisation (army/police raids, car inspections, blocking of roads, detentions). This tendency of rising security presence in the city began after the end of the civil war as an attempt to replace the presence of militias with different state security organs and private security companies. In an article from September 2012, Maya Mikdashi expressed this shift in the following way:

“Perhaps the most obvious change in regimes of security and surveillance that I have witnessed is the shift from the presence of multiple armed militias (often tethered to that terrifying symbol of civil war, the checkpoint) to that of the Lebanese army and private security contractors. Men with guns are still everywhere, but now they purport to protect ‘the people’ and ‘the state’ (the army/internal security forces) and ‘the rich’ and ‘the privileged’ (private security contractors aka militias).”<sup>56</sup>

The increase in state and non-state security providers and agents has sometimes been attributed to the changing policy orientation after the civil war towards more privatisations, neoliberal reforms, and cutback of social services accompanied by a strengthening of the repressive state apparatus.<sup>57</sup>

The outbreak of the Syrian war, together with its “spill-over” effects, as well as the influx of refugees into the country made way for a couple of new security measurements that will be elaborated in more detail later. In most of our interviews, the presence of different security and policing organs in general and the new measurements in particular have been looked at with skepticism and rejection. Most of our interlocutors were rather puzzled when asked if they feel safe in Beirut, admitting that they tried “not to think about it”, but - as one of our interlocutors commuting daily between Hamra and the Southern suburbs expressed:

“No, I do not feel safe, I get stopped nearly every day at the checkpoint, I have a beard, I carry a backpack, and I use the van. How can I feel safe? I also fear for my mother and my sister, they don’t go out alone anymore. But usually when they (at the checkpoint) see that I am Lebanese, they let me go.”<sup>58</sup>

The quote shows the vulnerable position of certain segments of the capital’s population in

55 “Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Quarterly Snapshot”, UNHCR, January-March 2015

56 Maya Mikdashi, Beirut: Security, Surveillance, Navigation, *Jadaliyya*, 24.09.12. [http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/7500/beirut\\_security-surveillance-navigation-](http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/7500/beirut_security-surveillance-navigation-) [Last accessed 01.08.15].

57 Saree Makdasi, *op.cit.* p. 697.

58 Interview with a safety officer in a construction company in Beirut, July 2015.

light of the security measurements: mainly targeted are lower-class men, seemingly non-Lebanese who, mainly due to media and different political actors' discourses, have been suspected to be the main cause of the deteriorating security situation in the country.

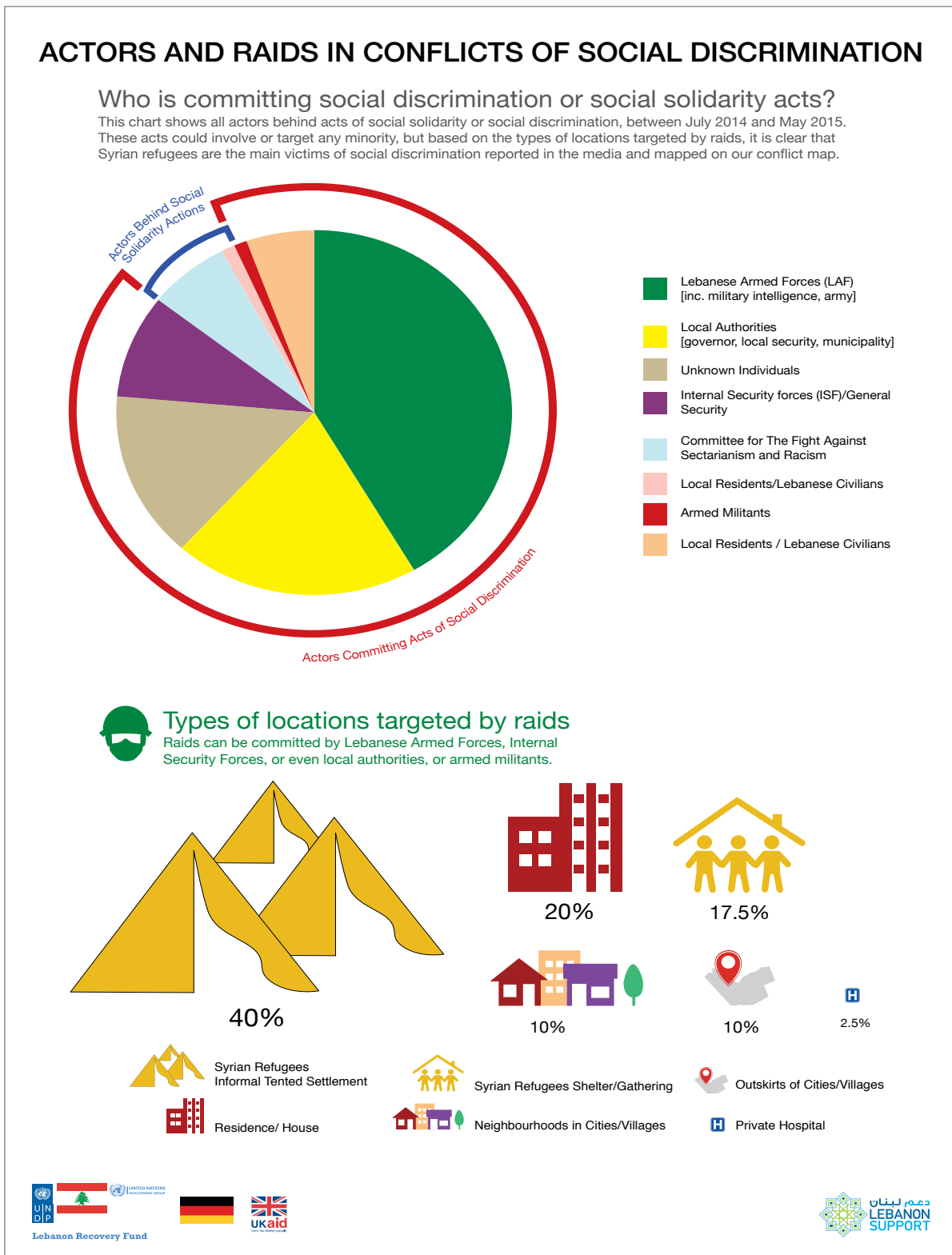


fig.2: Actors and raids in conflicts of social discrimination<sup>59</sup>. This visual shows how the majority of incidents classified as social discrimination are done by security actors (whether the LAF, ISF, or local authorities). Raids by those actors targeting mostly Syrian refugees clearly shows how security measures affect vulnerable populations.

59 Visualisations produced by Marwa Boustani

### **3.4. Attempts of relief and representation: Non-Governmental organisations in Beirut**

Although many aid and development programs of national and international NGOs are targeted towards the rather rural and poor areas of North-Lebanon (Akkar) and the Bekaa-plain where also the highest number of refugees reside, Beirut is still in many cases the headquarter of those NGOs. Hence, especially in the poorer areas like the Palestinian refugee camps as well as the Southern suburbs and Bourj Hammoud some programs of schooling, aid provision and health care have been established.

For most of the poorer segments of the Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian and other migrants' population, those different organisations are the only resort for addressing their needs and problems. The main challenge of those organisations is therefore to fulfill the double role of providing basic relief and aid, as well as representing the needs of those vulnerable segments of the society in front of the state and donor community.

In two interviews with representatives of Lebanese organisations, Makhzoumi Foundation and Basmeh & Zeitooneh, which both benefit from international funding and concentrate a big part of their work in Beirut, assured to us that problems - designated as racism, violence and security violations - in Beirut are generally less prevalent than in other areas of the country, despite the fact that the population density is very high in the rather poor areas and the camps. Both representatives stressed the prevailing welcoming attitudes of the different communities in Beirut.<sup>60</sup> Still, both assured rising problems in the last couple of months mainly due to two reasons:

- 1) Since the refugee crisis in Lebanon and its neighbouring countries is persisting in its fourth year now, international funding has decreased also due to "new" conflict areas like Yemen and Ukraine. Within Lebanon, Beirut has been rather neglected by international donors since social and economic problems are seen there as less pressing. Therefore it is difficult for the organisations to address the rising needs in Beirut.
- 2) The lack of funding, accompanied by the new policy orientation adopted by the Lebanese government since the end of 2014 aggravated the life of the refugee and host community, as well as the work of those NGOs. Therefore, both representatives assured to us a rather negative trend in Beirut expressing itself in rising violence, abuse, and poverty, in addition to bad coping mechanisms by society with those problems in general. Likewise, NGO policies as well as lack of coordination among the different institutions prevent a strong answer to those challenges.

### **3.5. Invisible street forces - political parties and "the strong-arms of the neighbourhood"**

Although the majority of the civil war militias of the different (war-) parties in Lebanon have lost their dominant (armed) street presence in favour of parliamentary and government presence, some political parties do not only exercise considerable influence in Beirut but have until today maintained an influential street presence in the capital. This presence corresponds mainly to the confessional/religious allocations within the city. While Hezbollah has maintained its stronghold in the Southern suburbs, the Phalange Party, the Lebanese Forces and the Free Patriotic Movement developed a loyal following in the Christian areas of Ashrafieh and some of the Eastern suburbs. Harakat Amal is dominant in Zoqaq al-Blat, Khandaq

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<sup>60</sup> Interviews with representatives of Basmeh & Zeitooneh and Makhzoumi Foundation, June and July 2015.

al-Ghamiq, Sanayeh and Zareef while the SSNP asserted its influence in the Hamra area.

Asked about the presence/influence of those parties in the streets of Beirut, most interlocutors were not able to detect it clearly although they assured the street presence of the party's following on a daily basis. Mostly, this street presence is expressed in informal party headquarters on the street or in certain coffee shops as well as in the proximity of formal headquarters. In some areas, certain parties have erected informal checkpoints watching and possibly controlling persons entering the neighbourhood (as in Khandaq al-Ghamiq and Basta). Some interlocutors mentioned police/watchmen from parties who took up the task of securing the area next to the official ISF or army organs.

Moreover, the parties have been mentioned in relation to reactions to certain political or security incidents in Beirut when so-called "strong-arms of the neighbourhood" ("qabadayat al-hay") adopted mechanisms of self-policing in reaction to those incidents. Many of our interlocutors in Ashrafiyeh mentioned the raiding of the area by these young guys, for example after the beheading of Lebanese soldiers by ISIS and the Nusra Front, threatening and eventually beating up Syrians in the area. Others mentioned the brutal bashing of peaceful protesters against the Assad Regime in August 2011 in Hamra. Those incidents of rather violent self-policing are usually attributed to the respective political parties dominant within the area and in control of those "strong-arms of the neighbourhood".

## 4. Conflict Dynamics in Beirut

### 4.1. Decreased mobility, less interactions – the new residency restrictions for Syrians

Citing mounting pressures on the infrastructure, looming security threats, and overall draining of Lebanon's services and resources, several state actors including General Security forces, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Social Affairs moved to implement new restrictions and systemic practices limiting the entry of Syrians and Syrian refugees to Lebanon throughout 2014 and early 2015.

Restricting Syrians' movement into Lebanon was implemented in several stages. In 2014, Human Rights Watch pointed to incidents of Syrian-Palestinian refugees' entry denial and deportations without trial<sup>61</sup>. Later in 2014, the Lebanese government took further concrete steps to limit the influx of Syrian refugees through a set of new restrictions and policies. Specifically, in October 2014, the Lebanese Cabinet agreed to adopt measures that would halt the refugee inflow. The October 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting of ministers published the decision under the heading "reducing numbers" and described the steps to do so as follows:

Stop the refugee influx on the borders excluding "exceptional humanitarian cases", registering those who enter on the basis of the reasons of entry, requesting the UNHCR to commit to ending the registration of refugees, and doing so only after receiving approval from the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Encourage the return of Syrian refugees to their country or to other countries "in all possible ways", tightening the implementation of Lebanese law on them, and stripping away the

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61 See the following report from Human Rights Watch: "Palestinians Barred: Sent to Syria", Human Rights Watch, Published 04.05.2015. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/05/05/lebanon-palestinians-barred-sent-syria> [Last accessed 17.09.2015].

See also the following news report: Moe Ali Nayel, "Lebanon Deports Palestinians Back to Syria", *Aljazeera*, 09.05.14. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/05/lebanon-deports-palestinian-refugees-20145855043308813.html> [Last accessed 01.10.15].

label of “refugee” from any person who returns to Syria or violates Lebanese law and the entry conditions.

**Nearly all Syrian citizens who were interviewed as part of this research expressed great anxiety about their residency conditions, regardless of their class status, or whether they were already registered with the UNHCR, or entered Lebanon prior to the implementation of the new entry and residency requirements.**

Obtaining all information on the registered refugees to study their files and evaluate their conditions regularly “in order to decrease their numbers” on the basis of legal criteria and in order to “secure the needs of the refugees who deserve them”.<sup>62</sup>

Following the decisions taken in the above meeting, new entry regulations for Syrians were released by the Lebanese Security Forces on December 31<sup>st</sup> 2014. The new regulations divided Syrian entries into six categories taking effect on January 5<sup>th</sup> 2015, and were followed by a more precise document outlining the required papers and conditions for each entry. The six categories include: 1) Tourists (stay period set in accordance with the number of days of hotel reservations), work visits (maximum one month), property owners, (six month residency); 2) Students (seven days followed by studying residency); 3) transit entries (24-48 hours); 4) medical treatment visits (72 hours renewable once); 5) Appointments with embassies (48 hours); and 6) Entries under “pledge of responsibility” by a Lebanese citizen (five day entry renewable twice for a period of six months).<sup>63</sup>

Each category included a list of different required documents necessary for granting permission to entry and/or regularising one’s status. The more sought after category of entry would be the sixth, in which a Syrian citizen who can no longer register with the UNHCR can agree with a Lebanese citizen or a Lebanese employer to be “bailed” by them. For Lebanese citizens, becoming someone’s “kafeel” (bail) requires that they provide legal proof of rented residence (which requires them to tax their property; many of whom prefer to avoid doing so) and a pledge to be held responsible for the Syrian person’s legal acts (including criminal acts) among other documents. This is clearly a deterrent for many Lebanese citizens.

Nearly all Syrian citizens who were interviewed as part of this research expressed great anxiety about their residency conditions, regardless of their class status, or whether they were already registered with the UNHCR, or entered Lebanon prior to the implementation of the new entry and residency requirements.

Several interviewees were already “illegal” as their residency permits had expired. Most interlocutors that we interviewed could not find a bail - neither in their private nor in their work environment. Of twenty-four interviewed Syrians, sixteen - all exposed to different social, economic and work conditions - do not have legal papers anymore. They all described the reluctance and/or impotence of their employers to bail for them - eleven of those 16 work in low-paid service jobs like restaurants and supermarkets while four work with international aid organisations and one as an expert in a high-ranking computer company. Eight of the interviewed Syrians still have legal papers - three of them because of a Lebanese mother, four were bailed by their employer, one got her paper because her husband is a businessman and one still has legal papers but only valid for another month.<sup>64</sup>

62 The Lebanese Republic, The Council of Ministers, “Jalsat 23 Tishreen al-Awwal 2014”, 23.10.2014. <http://www.pcm.gov.lb/arabic/subpg.aspx?pageid=6118> [Last accessed 20.09.2015] (Author’s own translation).

63 All categories can be found in a document on the General Security Forces’ webpage: General Security, “Untitled”. <http://www.general-security.gov.lb/getattachment/e1e76fe0-181e-4fe7-a19c-9b175759ad49/Rules.pdf.aspx?chset=f247bae1-d485-42fa-8a33-079df973a536> [Last accessed 03.07.15].

64 Interviews with Syrians residing in Beirut, June and July 2015.

Likewise, Lebanese employers and employees mostly confirmed to us either their reluctance and impotence to bail their Syrian employees or, in case they succeeded in the procedure, the trouble it had caused in managing them.<sup>65</sup>

This development is leading many to limit their movement further even in daytime and pushing them to remain in the neighborhoods they are familiar with, thereby limiting their access to services that they need and centres that provide them. For example, one interviewee<sup>66</sup> mentioned a change in gendered behaviours among the refugees wherein men no longer go to collect food assistance from the relevant organisations out of fear of being checked, and women do so instead as they are perceived to be less likely to be stopped and have their documents inspected. Similarly, another interviewee<sup>67</sup> mentioned no longer taking part in an organisation's evening activities and lessons out of fear of arrest on the way.

One of our interlocutors described the impact on the Syrian workers on a construction site as followed:

“They are very much under pressure and frustrated because of the new measurements. Our working time is from 7 am till 4:30 pm but when there is additional work they have stay overtime, but the Syrians try not to stay late and at night because they are afraid of the security situation. And this is always their excuse because at the checkpoints they will get in trouble. And usually, the Syrian employee likes to stay additional time because he does not get a monthly salary but is paid per hour so he likes to stay longer to get more money but now they try to leave on time. Even the ones who have papers complain that they get stopped and ransacked, sometimes for two or three hours, investigations and visitations.”<sup>68</sup>

Importantly, all interviewees stressed the incoherence of the administrative process and inconsistency in the documents required of them. Although all required documents are listed on the General Security's page, in practice, each station conducts the paperwork differently and requires different sets of documents.

Further, our interlocutors underlined that the process of residency renewal (when the person is already in Beirut) often changes depending on the available officer. The accumulated incoherency functions as a policy which has the repeated effect of either pushing Syrians into an illegal status, or deterring them from renewing their status and thus from remaining in Lebanon. In addition, the difficulty to find a bail and to handle the rather haphazard administrative process of the General Security is contributing, according to interviewees to the development of a “black market” to renew the papers, and to obtain the required rental contract. One of our interlocutors was sent by a friend to a Lebanese man who would be able to obtain renewed papers for him within two days. The said Lebanese turned out to entertain a “vivid black market business” relying on his “connections” within state institutions.<sup>69</sup> Another interlocutor, a Lebanese business man, described that he used to help his Syrian employees to get a rental contract but did not do so anymore because he is aware of the black market in which those contracts are sold and therefore easily available.<sup>70</sup>

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65 Interviews with Lebanese residing in Beirut, June and July 2015.

66 Interview with Syrian young woman in Hamra, June 2015.

67 Interview in a focus group with middle class Syrian residing in Beirut, June 2015.

68 Interview with a safety officer in a construction company in Beirut, July 2015.

69 Interview with a Syrian residing in Beirut, July 2015.

70 Interview with owner of a bar/restaurant in Hamra, July 2015.



For the middle class interviewees, the new residency changes are also perceived as challenging and negative. Those interviewed argued that the Syrian middle class present in Lebanon has been central to supporting the Syrian refugees through the creation of smaller community groups or even NGOs that complement the state in dealing with the influx and in providing services. They remarked that the policies have forced their friends and relatives to relocate to Turkey if they could, and expressed concerns that Turkey will also soon limit its refugee intake. The same view was shared by interviewed Lebanese activists who argued that the outflow of middle class Syrians is an obstacle to community organising and community support.<sup>71</sup>

The new entry and residency restrictions clearly mark a significant change in previous methods of managing Syrians' movement in and out of Lebanon, which was facilitated significantly in comparison to the entry and residency of other non-nationals<sup>72</sup>. What these changes effectively accomplish is:

Lebanon has not ratified the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Palestinians and Syrians in Lebanon do not have official "refugee" status. Thus, the absence of an adequate or operational humanitarian exception category forces refugees to try to qualify under the other two administrative categories which for most is impossible. This leads to the non-admission and denial of entry to any Syrian who does not qualify. Thus the entry and residency renewal policies tend to favour Syrians with financial means which constitutes burden on refugees, whether registered with the UNHCR or not. Also, the large problematic for refugees registered with UNHCR is the requirement to sign a pledge not to work.

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**Importantly, all interviewees stressed the incoherence of the administrative process and inconsistency in the documents required of them. Although all required documents are listed on the General Security's page, in practice, each station conducts the paperwork differently and requires different sets of documents.**

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The non-recognition of an official refugee status, together with the new entry restrictions and the pledge not to work create mainly two administrative categories of Syrians in Lebanon the "tourist" (upper class) or the "migrant" (lower class). Both are inadequate administrative categories for a Syrian person fleeing unrest and war. Therefore, the policies as implemented will result in more Syrians becoming illegal. Although, until now, the Lebanese government has affirmed its commitment to non-refoulement and non implementation of deportation orders.

Given that Syrians can no longer register with the UNHCR as refugees, the new regulations amount to effectively adopting a discriminatory class policy wherein Syrian nationals who can afford to prove hotel reservations and provide bank account statements that demonstrate their income are given temporary access to Lebanon as "tourists". The classed policy is also evident in the amount of finances required of refugees to renew their residency status at the General Security even if registered with the UNHCR. The registration fee amounts to \$200 excluding additional fees for the additional required documents, which is simply unaffordable for most refugees. Thus, this policy, alongside the requirement to sign a pledge not to work, very problematically favors persons with financial means.

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71 Interview with feminist Lebanese activist engaged in movement against racial discrimination against Syrians and foreign workers, June 2015. Same view also echoed by two Syrian women activists interviewed separately as well as a representative from Basmeh & Zeitooneh, June 2015.

72 Gida Frangieh, "Lebanon Places Discriminatory Entry restrictions on Syrians", *The Legal Agenda*, 22.01.2015. <http://english.legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=679&folder=articles&lang=en> [Last accessed: 20.9.2015].

Ensuring that refugees who are registered with the UNHCR remain in a continuous state of uncertainty in regards to their access to safety given their inability to afford renewing their residencies. This is supported not only through practices such as waves of arrest and night curfews, but also through these new restrictions which ensure that at some point a refugee has to choose between becoming an illegal resident or returning to Syria. Despite the Lebanese government's confirmation of its commitment to the principle of non refoulement<sup>73</sup> these policies push Syrian refugees and Syrians residing in Lebanon without UNHCR registration into choosing to risk illegal residency and deportation.

In summary, the effect of the new residency laws is multi-faceted as it intervenes not only in the physical and legal stay of refugees, but also plays a central role in reshaping and reducing their mobility, as well as in limiting the building of ties among local Syrians in Lebanon. For many of our Lebanese interlocutors the new regulations were also seen with ambiguities: Most businessmen described the difficulties to renew residence permits for their Syrian employees and decided either to leave them in an illegal status or managed to solve the issue with legal advice and some bribery actions towards the state institutions. Likewise businessmen - especially in the Hamra area - lamented that their business was negatively affected by the fact that many high and middle class Syrians left the country after the new regulations were imposed. Some interlocutors admitted that the imposed regulations are rather "brutal" but they work in creating fear and insecurity among Syrian refugees so that their number decreased in the last couple of months.

#### **4.2. Employment and the "pledge to not work" – Syrian and Lebanese dynamics of (un-)employment**

One of the significant changes within the residency requirements for Syrians in Lebanon is the introduction of a notarized "pledge to not work" required from Syrians registered with the UNHCR as proof of having no intention to seek employment while in Lebanon. Syrian refugees who did not register with the UNHCR prior to January 2015 or new Syrians attempting to enter Lebanon, depending on the category of their entry, are also asked to sign this pledge unless they are sponsored by their employer. The pledge restricts access to informal employment<sup>74</sup> and, according to our interviews, those who break it can risk the termination of their refugee status, and can be given a few days to secure a sponsor or are threatened with deportation.<sup>75</sup>

The pledge was introduced alongside the new residency regulations outlined above and in the context of rising concerns about the numbers of Syrian refugees and fears that they are contributing to raising Lebanese citizens' unemployment rates. While the presence of more than 1.2 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon is certainly exerting pressure on the labour market, the fear that Syrians are replacing the Lebanese workforce must be met with a contextualisation of the long migration-for-employment trajectories between Syria and Lebanon.

The Lebanese economy has strongly relied on the presence of foreign labour in its growth. A World Bank report estimates that the number of Syrians working in Lebanon prior to the crisis was at least 300 000<sup>76</sup>, while other sources indicate the number can be much higher if

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73 Karim El-Mufti, "Official Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon: The Disastrous Policy of no-Policy", *Civil Society Knowledge Center*, January 2015. [http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/paper/official-response-syrian-refugee-crisis-lebanon-disastrous-policy-no-policy#\\_ftn13](http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/paper/official-response-syrian-refugee-crisis-lebanon-disastrous-policy-no-policy#_ftn13) [Last accessed 30.09.2015].

74 Interview with a Lebanese cafe-owner in Mar Mkhayel, June 2015.

75 Focus group interview with a group of 9 interlocutors, June 2015.

76 World Bank, "Economic and Social Impact assessment of the Syrian Conflict", 20.09.13, p. 83. <http://>

checked against the history of Syrians entering and exiting Lebanon prior to 2011.<sup>77</sup>

In measuring the crisis' impact on the Lebanese economy, some sources estimate that the Syrian crisis increased labor supply to the Lebanese market anywhere between 30-50%.<sup>78</sup> At the same time, and using UNHCR data for (only) registered refugees in Lebanon, the ILO suggests that "the Syrian refugee labour force 15 years and above is estimated at about 239,700 in mid-2014, accounting for about 14 per cent of Lebanon's total labour force. Of these, an estimated 160,500 were employed, equal to about one in ten of all employed persons in the country".<sup>79</sup>

In light of debates about Syrian workers replacing Lebanese citizens, the World Bank and the ILO agree that rates of unemployment were already rising prior to 2011, with unemployment reaching as high as 34% among Lebanese youth (15-24 years old) in 2010<sup>80</sup>, and percentages of unemployment among Palestinians living in Lebanon were even higher. This is in comparison to the high rates of unemployment among registered Syrian refugees which according to the ILO are estimated to be "about four times the average rate for Lebanon".<sup>81</sup> These estimates, as well as the history of Syrian employment in Lebanon, complicate the narrative on the exact impact of the Syrian refugee influx on Lebanese' (un)employment rates.

Limiting access to the informal economy through the "pledge to not work" has special significance for the dynamics of (un)employment of Syrian refugees in Beirut. For example, sectors such as agriculture, services, and construction have functioned with a strong dependency on informal employment.

The ILO finds that the informality rate in the construction sector is estimated to be as high as 80.74% (topped only by the agriculture sector which stands at a 92.47%) making it completely unlikely that a Syrian refugee who is not registered with the UNHCR and is able to work in these sectors would obtain sponsorship from their employer and thus be employed "formally" and in line with the new residency requirements.<sup>82</sup> It has to be noted that while providing flexibility to the employer and employee, informality has a larger impact on the worker who is left without access to any safety nets. The restrictions on informal work will only push those who rely on it further into marginalisation, which clearly affects Syrian refugees seeking work negatively.

Further, the construction sector is particularly vibrant in Beirut and has seen extensive booms since the beginning of the post-civil war rebuilding efforts, and in particular, under Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri who consolidated several reconstruction plans for the city. The sector is traditionally dominated by male Syrian labor force, with a significant presence of Palestinian labour – for example, Palestinians living in Lebanon formed 24% of the total labor force in construction in 2010-2011.<sup>83</sup> Further, an estimate suggests that during 2013-

[www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2013/09/24/000333037\\_20130924111238/Rendered/PDF/810980LB0box379831B00P14754500PUBLIC0.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2013/09/24/000333037_20130924111238/Rendered/PDF/810980LB0box379831B00P14754500PUBLIC0.pdf) [Last accessed 02.08.15].

77 John Chalcraft, *op.cit.*, 2009.

78 World Bank, "Economic and Social Impact assessment of the Syrian Conflict", 20.09.13, p. 4. [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2013/09/24/000333037\\_20130924111238/Rendered/PDF/810980LB0box379831B00P14754500PUBLIC0.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2013/09/24/000333037_20130924111238/Rendered/PDF/810980LB0box379831B00P14754500PUBLIC0.pdf) [Last accessed 02.08.15].

79 International Labour Organisation, "Towards Decent Work in Lebanon: Issues and Challenges in Light of the Syrian Refugee Crisis", 10.06.15, pp. 35-36. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms\\_374826.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_374826.pdf) [Last accessed 02.08.15].

80 Ibid, p. 21.

81 Ibid, p. 36.

82 Ibid, pp. 35-36.

83 Ibid, p. 32.

2014 out of all employed Syrians in Lebanon, 12% worked in the construction sector alone, topped by the services sector at a high 36%<sup>84</sup>. Although the Lebanese government has facilitated Syrians' access to labour in some of these sectors, namely in agriculture<sup>85</sup>, the pledge constitutes another worry to the Syrian refugee-worker attempting to make ends meet through seeking informal arrangements. Such persons will not only increasingly fear arrest and loss of status if caught working, but will also continue to be pushed into exploitation and accepting more difficult and precarious working conditions. At the same time, pressure and dependency on international aid organisations will continue to rise, as refugees will face increasing hardship in securing formal or informal employment.

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Interviews with both Syrian and Lebanese workers as well as business owners in Beirut revealed that they are concerned about the impact of the new restrictions imposed on the employment of Syrians. Lebanese business owners explicitly mentioned that it is difficult to find and hire Lebanese labor, and that they expect their businesses to be affected negatively by the restrictions imposed on Syrians. In an interview with the head of the Hamra Traders' Association Mr. Zuheir Itani, he stated that Syrian labour is necessary for the Lebanese economy and that there is very little supply of Lebanese labour for low-income positions such as cleaning or providing basic services in stores, etc.<sup>86</sup> This, despite his public criticism of the presence of shoe-shiners, gum and flower sellers, homeless beggars, and street children in Hamra, which he claimed multiple times have negatively affected Hamra's reputation as a touristic street, and allegedly contributed to the slowing down of business in it.

Some of the interviewed employers mentioned they are hiring Syrian labor regardless of the restriction, even if it subjects them to the risk of receiving a fine. For example, one small business owner in Mar Mkhayel mentioned that he was forced to lower the working hours for his Syrian employee to decrease the risk of either of them being caught for informal employment. To make up for the lost hours and to avoid sponsorship fees which he claims he cannot afford, he is now increasingly relying on employing foreign labor already present in Lebanon such as Sri Lankan and Ethiopian workers who already have a sponsor and are willing to work in this sector.<sup>87</sup>

Thus, while the measures to introduce restrictions on informal labor can technically be in favour of Syrian workers who can now theoretically apply for days off and receive benefits, on the ground, these restrictions do not force employers to adhere to the new employment regulations and provide full employment. In addition, while the Lebanese government's solution is for the worker to be sponsored by the employer, many Syrian workers and Lebanese employers reported that their applications for sponsorship were rejected without proper justification, a trend they see as representative of the larger policies to turn Syrians

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84 Ibid, p. 37.

85 In the agricultural industry, a Syrian national is allowed seasonal entry with his family for a period of six months to perform agricultural labor, and his Lebanese employer must provide several documents to the General Security including a “pledge of responsibility” for the hired worker. The General Security outlines these documents in a separate section on its page. General Security, “Al-Iqamat Al-Ra'ya al-Suriyoun”. <http://www.general-security.gov.lb/residence/%D8%A7...> [Last accessed 05.07.15].

86 Interview with Mr. Zuheir Itani, Hamra, June 2015.

87 Interview with a Lebanese small business owner in Mar Mkhayel, June 2015.

away from the Lebanese labour economy, and from Lebanon itself. Informal talks with several employees and officials at the Ministry of Labour described bribery activities in getting work permits for Syrians.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, the overall effect is that these workers, many of whom are refugees seeking to earn a living, are pushed to accept further irregular and unsafe working conditions that place them at legal risks.

A prevalent phenomenon among Syrian persons (interviewed in Hamra, Mar Mkhayel, Sabra and Shatila, Sin el-Fil, and Sid el-Bouchrieh) who do not work in the construction and agriculture sectors, is that those who worked – whether they were registered refugees, middle class Syrians, or bailed by their employer – were generally employed in positions that were below their qualifications or outside their fields of specialisation. The phenomenon can be conceptualised as “demotion”, or the loss of social and economic capital which has several socio-economic effects, not only on the local communities, but also on the labour market in general, including stagnation in social and economic mobility.

A member of a local Syrian non-governmental support group explained that middle class Syrians who were unable to find employment relied on building relations in local Syrian communities and securing informal jobs through them. This includes for example doctors, lawyers, and teachers, who begin by volunteering in Syrian groups or organisations and then manage to secure payment for certain tasks or small jobs.<sup>89</sup> Often, the tasks are not a direct use of their skills and are positions for which they are overqualified.

Other interlocutors usually with a university degree from Syria were employed in the rather low-paid service sector like bars, restaurants and shops mostly in Hamra. In addition to the lack of state social services, their salary is usually very low and – as described by our interlocutors – ranges between 500 and 700 \$ per months which usually hardly covers the monthly rent. Most interlocutors were therefore forced to live in precarious conditions or borrow money from friends and relatives on a regular basis.

Middle class Syrian women also look for performing labour in Syrian organisations or support groups. Among the sectors that employ Syrian women in Beirut are clothing stores and bars, both of which usually make specific feminine gendered demands. An interviewee explained: “the Syrian woman who works at these stores and bars is expected to be beautiful, to have a pleasant manner, and to always have a smile on her face”.<sup>90</sup> Such discriminatory demands feed into a sense of insecurity at the workplace as they translate into expectations of full compliance and tolerance of harassment from employers and customers. While similar sexist treatment can certainly be found against Lebanese women, it is important to bear in mind the intersection of fears of illegality and illegal employment alongside the shortage of employment possibilities which exacerbate Syrian women’s vulnerability in such situations and decreases their ability to seek help in situations of discrimination.

At the same time, not being employed in one’s line of specialisation and/or below one’s

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88 As per informal talk with employees and officials at the Ministry of Labour, July 2015. Syrians who are applying for the renewal of their residency permit have been usually divided by the Lebanese authorities into those registered with the UNHCR and those who are not registered. While the registered refugees have to present their registration card together with the signed pledge not to work the one who are not registered have to bring a “pledge of responsibility” made by a Lebanese citizen who commits to obtain a work permit for the Syrian individual from or group of Syrians from the Ministry of Labour, or to sponsor and host a family. See Amnesty International, *Pushed to the Edge: Syrian Refugees face increased restrictions in Lebanon*. [https://www.amnesty.nl/sites/default/files/public/pushed\\_to\\_the\\_edge\\_syrian\\_refugees\\_face\\_increased\\_restrictions\\_in\\_lebanon.pdf](https://www.amnesty.nl/sites/default/files/public/pushed_to_the_edge_syrian_refugees_face_increased_restrictions_in_lebanon.pdf) [Last accessed 01.10.15].

89 Interview with middle-aged and middle class Syrian resident in Beirut, June 2015.

90 Interview with Syrian woman active in civil society and working in Beirut, June 2015.

education level is prevalent even among older generations of Syrians who resided in Beirut before 2011. For example, an interviewed Syrian shop-owner who has been a legal resident in Lebanon for 30 years emphasised he was never able to secure a position in his field despite obtaining education abroad.<sup>91</sup> While the phenomenon is related to rising unemployment rates which force highly skilled persons to try temporary employment in low-skilled positions (or emigrate if they can), the restrictions on the type of labour that Syrians are allowed to perform in Lebanon are also a key player in perpetuating “demotion” among Syrians.

Work environment was, in many instances, described as rather unpleasant and exploitative. The salary was low, but additionally, most of our interlocutors described long working hours, no days off and abusing/discriminating behaviour from their employer - a situation that some of them related to their being Syrian, while others described similar situations for Lebanese and/or Palestinians. For many of our interlocutors, these precarious working conditions mean that they change their workplace frequently in order to look for better conditions and treatment:

“I left my work because the boss used to decrease my salary and excuse his behaviour in front of the company owner that there was money missing in the cash box although he knew that I handed over the cash box not missing a single lira. But no one could say anything to him.”<sup>92</sup>

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**All interviewed Syrians spoke of violent, degrading, and overall negative experiences both at checkpoints and in the General Security quarters. The rise and new placement of checkpoints meant that they felt increasingly unsafe in navigating the city especially if their papers were out of order.**

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Within the informal working sectors there is also a considerable and increasing amount of child labour<sup>93</sup> and sex work<sup>94</sup> among Syrians in Beirut, which a representative of Makhzoumi Foundation described as examples of the bad coping mechanisms of the refugees to their economic hardships: “The

World Food Programme decreased their food assistance from 19\$ to 13\$ per Syrian refugee per month in July 2015, in Ramadan, when prices go up especially in Beirut. So what do people do? They withdraw their children from school so that they work. Very bad coping mechanisms. Child labour increases, prostitution, crime rates are going up, cases of sexual abuse as well.”<sup>95</sup>

### **4.3. Securitisation and Renewing Policing Dynamics in the City**

A central aspect driving the new residency policies towards Syrian refugees in Lebanon in general and in Beirut in specific are fears of a security “breakdown” due to real and perceived security threats and instability. “Real” security-breaking incidents such as a series of car bombings in Beirut in 2013, armed conflict and unrest in Tripoli, and various armed clashes inside and across the country as well as in Beirut and its suburbs, have pushed the Internal Security Forces (ISF) and army to reorganise their daily operations and security plans.

91 Interview with Syrian business owner in Furn el-Chebak, June 2015.

92 Interview with a Syrian residing in Beirut, July 2015.

93 “Syrian refugee children in Lebanon forced to seek work - in pictures”, The Guardian, 12.06.14. <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/jun/12/-sp-syrian-refugee-children-in-lebanon-forced-to-seek-work-in-pictures> [Last accessed 02.08.15].

94 Ashley Gallagher, “Syrian Refugees are turning to Prostitutions at ‘Super Nightclubs’”, Vice News, 11.06.14. <https://news.vice.com/article/syrian-refugees-are-turning-to-prostitution-at-super-nightclubs> [Last accessed 02.08.15].

95 Interview with a representative of al-Makhzoumi Foundation, July 2015.

In Beirut, the military alongside ISF adopted a new “Security Plan” beginning April 28<sup>th</sup> 2015 mirroring previous similar plans implemented in the city, as well as in Bekaa, Tripoli, and Akkar among others. The plan mainly included the reorganisation of military and ISF presence in the southern suburbs of Beirut (Dahiyeh) with cooperation from Hezbollah, as well as a wider spread of security forces and checkpoints in various spots across Beirut’s streets. According to a communiqué issued by the army, the security plan’s aims were as follows:

In the framework of strengthening security and stability in the capital city Beirut and its suburbs, fighting organised crime, and pursuing suspects and those wanted for justice; several military units in cooperation with the Internal Security Forces (ISF) and the General Security began the execution of a wide security plan to span several days. The implemented procedures will entail: increased set-up of permanent and temporary roadblocks, car inspections, verifying the identities of those who cross the roads, conducting patrols in main roads and side streets, and conducting raids in search for suspects and the wanted, and in order to confiscate contrabands of all kinds.<sup>96</sup>

The actual effect of such security measures is unclear. On the one hand, the ISF reports the success of such operations through periodically announcing the types of arrests and confiscations made. The minister of interior Nohad Mashnouq insisted several times on the plan’s success in Beirut and its role in restoring order as well as bringing wanted persons to justice.<sup>97</sup> On the other hand, such a plan is only a temporary restructuring and does not alter insecurity dynamics in the city or engage with their root causes. Unfortunately, the ISF declined repeated requests for interviews on the topic.

On the ground, perceptions of these security measures were met with skepticism. Our interviewees expressed great dissatisfaction with the security apparatus and personnel, in line with the general mistrust of security apparatus across Lebanon.<sup>98</sup> For example, a Lebanese bar-owner in Mar Mkhayel complained that if there ever was a local security incident and he would call the “darak”, he is certain they would not show up, and thus felt they were unreliable and unable to sustain security overall<sup>99</sup>. This was particularly frustrating to him because only a week before the interview security forces instructed all bars and cafes in Gemmayze and Mar Mkhayel to remove their outdoor seating, which the interviewee sees as absolutely detrimental to business over the summer. In his view, these kinds of security measures are not only unnecessary intervention in people’s lives, but also harmful ones that exacerbate animosity rather than maintain security.

All interviewed Syrians spoke of violent, degrading, and overall negative experiences both at checkpoints and in the General Security quarters. The rise and new placement of checkpoints meant that they felt increasingly unsafe in navigating the city especially if their papers were out of order.

For example, an interviewee described the story of a friend who was traveling in a public van from Dahiyeh and was surprised by a new checkpoint. Fearing that he will be arrested

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96 The exact text in Arabic can be found in the following article: “Al-Jaish: al-Khuta al-Amniyyeh Fi Beirut wa Dawahiha Mustamira”, *An-Nahar*, 28.04.15. <https://news.vice.com/article/syrian-refugees-are-turning-to-prostitution-at-super-nightclubs> [Last accessed 14.07.15].

97 See for example: “Al-Mashnuq Athna Min al-Dahyeh ‘ala Ta’wun al-Baladiyat: Haqaqna Fi Fatra Qaseera Juz’an Kabeeran Min al-Najah”, *An Nahar*, 30.04.15. <http://newspaper.annahar.com/article//233083-...id=233083> [Last accessed 16.07.16].

98 See for example the following infographic: “What Do You Think of the Security Providers?”, *International Alert*, November 2014. <http://www.international-alert.org/resources/publications/lebanon-people-security-infographics>, [Last accessed 25.07.15].

99 Interview with bar-owner in Mar Mkhayel, June 2015.

for having overstayed his visa, he jumped out of the moving car to avoid the checkpoint.<sup>100</sup> Another interviewee<sup>101</sup>, a Syrian transwoman refugee, explained that despite the fact that her papers are in order and that her registration with UNHCR is valid, she still fears being stopped on the street or checked due to the fact that her gender does not match her ID papers.<sup>102</sup>

Several interviewees also shared stories of degrading treatment during their required visits to the General Security, including being forced to wait for hours in the heat with their children standing up, being mocked and screamed at, and being purposefully misinformed about their papers.<sup>103</sup> During one of our group interviews, several interviewees described an incident of fighting wherein a Syrian man was attacked by a Lebanese man inside the UNHCR. They used the example to say that “if such a [physical] fight breaks out inside the UNHCR quarters then imagine what the security situation is like outside”. In their words, such incidents reflect their immense vulnerability towards experiencing insecurity not only in the public sphere but specifically when interacting with authorities.

Commenting on the rampant disrespectful treatment towards Syrians in general, two female Syrian interviewees who are active in the Syrian civil society in Beirut expressed their personal concern over backlash from Syrian men towards this mistreatment. As one interviewee noted: “the state is creating exactly what it is afraid of”.<sup>104</sup> In her view, the degrading treatment of Syrian men by the security forces, coupled with new restrictions on their movement, employment, and residency, is unsustainable structural and personal violence that risks hardening attitudes from Syrians living in Lebanon and could cause the very unsettlement it is trying to prevent. Another interviewee summarised her concerns as follows: “you have an increased number of Syrians, young Syrians, who are being mistreated. I’m afraid that they won’t be able to tolerate this humiliation much longer. You have so many Syrian men now around, it can blow up”.<sup>105</sup> Although their concerns coincide with anti-Syrian discourses in Lebanon that portray Syrian men as violent and as a threat to security, it is important to highlight this perception from these Syrian women of the dynamics in their surroundings.

What our interviews and on ground research point to is that general security measures and campaigns, increase tensions and violence against persons who are on social and economic margins. Therefore, these measures push them towards more vulnerability rather than actually ensuring their security and personal safety. Ultimately, these measures initially undertaken to enhance the country’s stability, are constituting counterproductive measures that are further exacerbating feelings of frustrations among the refugees.

Securitisation mechanisms in Beirut practically translate into all residents (citizens, workers, refugees) resorting to self-policing behavior in order to negotiate the state’s security systems which often constitute unpleasant experiences of questioning and being searched, to risks of harassment, physical violence from the security agents, arrest and/or detention. In this sense, navigating Beirut is premised upon negotiating several old and new, solid and

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100 Personal Interview, June 2015.

101 Focus Group Interview in Beirut, June 2015.

102 Trans\* persons (Syrian and Lebanese) generally face this obstacle which affects not only their navigation of the city but also their access to any spaces and services that require the presentation of an ID card. For more see Ahmad J. Saleh/Adriana Qubaia, “Transwomen’s Navigation of Arrest and Detention in Beirut: A Case study”, *Civil Society Review*, Lebanon Support, January 2015.

103 Focus group interview with Syrian refugees in Beirut, June 2015.

104 Personal Interview, June 2015.

105 Personal Interview, June 2015.



temporary checkpoints, and entry and exit into different neighborhoods marked by sectarian control and territorialisation.<sup>106</sup>

While Lebanese citizens also choose to avoid certain checkpoints and restructure their navigation in accordance to their knowledge of the city security grid, this negotiation dynamic was significantly different for Syrians and Syrian refugees' movement in the city, especially in the context of

renewed security measures implemented by the ISF. As was already noted, new curfews for Syrians – whether implemented by local municipalities or upheld by local mobs – severely restrict Syrians' movement in the evening and at night.<sup>107</sup> If Syrian men are caught breaking the curfew they are harassed, sometimes beaten, and sometimes arrested. The fact they are increasingly pushed towards illegality through the residency restrictions exacerbates their experiences of violence with security implementers.

The fear of these incidents occurring leads many to self-limit their daily and nightly movement. For example, a Syrian upper class interviewee mentioned that, despite having legal status in Lebanon, he still fears maltreatment from security personnel. Given that security officers are known to search the phones of those they stop and question (in spite of not having the legal right to do so) he fears that they may find something that offends them or reveals details about his private sexual life. To illustrate his point, he described that his friend was stopped by the darak in the street and was punished for having criticism of security officers in his phone chat history. Since hearing his friend's story, the interviewee deletes all messages from his phone and does not communicate for long over written texts. In addition, he mentioned he avoids mentioning any events or organisations that are known as gay-rights organisations out of fear for being accused of and subsequently questioned over his sexuality.<sup>108</sup>

Syrians residing in Hamra mentioned that they feel relatively safe in the neighborhood. A Syrian cell phone business co-owner who arrived to the city only a few months ago on a tourist visa mentioned that having other Syrian businesses open in his street makes him feel more secure. When asked about raids that clear the streets from beggars and street children, he mentioned he was not aware of any and did not see reason to be worried even though his papers were not in order. However, moving outside of Hamra is a risk that he avoids: "everyone knows that cell phone business is best in Dahyeh, but I cannot take my business there, it is not [safe] for someone like me. So I have a mediator who takes things in and out for me [...], but I myself don't dare to go".<sup>109</sup> In this sense, the interviewee restricts and polices his own movement out of fear for his own safety while negotiating ways around the security structures in place.

Women who reside in Beirut are familiar with self-policing practices and employ different measures regularly in relation to real and perceived insecurity in public and private spaces.

106 Sectarian territorialization, which refers to the decrease in diversity in various neighborhoods in the city and the increased presence and control of territory by one dominant sect, is a rising phenomenon in Beirut and is interlinked with neoliberal housing policies in the city, Meeting with a representative from International Alert, June 2015.

107 By 2014, over 45 curfews were implemented by various Lebanese municipalities across Lebanon, see Maya El-Helou, "Refugees Under Curfew: the War of Lebanese Municipalities Against the Poor", *Legal Agenda*, 22.12.14. <http://english.legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=674&lang=en> [Last accessed 28.07.15].

108 Focus group Interview, June 2015.

109 Personal Interview, June 2015.

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**These measures push them towards more vulnerability rather than actually ensuring their security and personal safety. Ultimately, these measures initially undertaken to enhance the country's stability, are constituting counterproductive measures that are further exacerbating feelings of frustrations among the refugees.**

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As such, self-policing is not a practice limited to men who navigate the city's checkpoints, but also to women whose definitions of "safe areas" include areas that are free of harassment and violence from men. One interviewee described her strategies for creating a sense of security as a single young Syrian woman in a new city. She described feeling very insecure and unsafe in Hamra in her first year, which she actively worked to transform in her second year: "in order to feel secure, you have to create the security and its atmosphere. You have to impose your power".<sup>110</sup> When asked how, she gave examples in her daily life of being an active resident who takes care of the neighborhood and is involved in community service, as well as in the affairs in her building. All these examples point to residents' various gendered, classed, and "raced" methods in adjusting to security dynamics in the city and employing individual tactics in creating a sense of personal and communal security.

#### 4.4. Housing, public space and everyday life in Beirut

Precarious working condition and tightened security measurements have in the above sections mainly been described in relation to their implications for Syrian refugees/residents in Beirut. Likewise, as shown in the paragraphs of section 2 these conditions have a long history within Lebanon and Beirut especially after the civil war and therefore affect

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**The scarcity of public space in general in Beirut, together with the high costs of housing, food products, transport, nightlife/entertainment, as well as the high securitisation within the city also affect interactions among residents of the city.**

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the city's everyday life and interactions among its different residents for some time now.

In addition to low wages and precarious working conditions, rental prices in Beirut are extremely high; nationally, compared to the average income of its residents on

the one hand, and globally, compared to the prices in other European and Middle Eastern capitals on the other hand.<sup>111</sup> The high rents can be attributed to the above described developments of big real estate construction projects which follow the logic of the "rent-gap", meaning the gap between mainly old buildings worth little and the lands on which they are built which are worth significant amounts of money. On the one hand, this leads to the demolition of old buildings and the construction of new "expensive" buildings, while on the other hand, rents are in general very high in the capital. The new rent law from June 2014 which was set to liberalise old rent contracts and is acting on legally ambiguous grounds<sup>112</sup> has further consolidated this trend.<sup>113</sup>

For most of our interlocutors, the high cost of living and especially housing in Beirut was a recurring topic and, for many, determined the area in which they choose to live. For many lower and middle income Syrians, Ashrafieh, especially Geitaoui and Karm al-Zaytoun was preferred to living in Hamra due to the fact that relatively decent housing can still be afforded in those areas. For lower income Syrian families, the Eastern suburbs (Bourj Hammoud, Naba'a) as well the Southern suburbs (Shwayfat, Shatila) were preferably

110 Personal interview, June 2015.

111 Adam Rasmi, "Unaffordable Beirut", Now., 22.08.13. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reports/features/unaffordable-beirut> [last accessed 02.08.15]; "2015 Cost of Living Ranking, Newsroom", 17.06.15. <http://www.mercer.com/newsroom/cost-of-living-survey.html> [Last accessed 02.08.15].

112 Hussein Khalife, "Housing as a Right: Contesting the Constitutionality of Lebanon's Rent Law", *Legal Agenda*, 07.07.14. <http://english.legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=627&folder=articles&lang=en> [Last accessed 02.08.15].

113 Jadaliyya Reports, Lebanon: Rejecting the New Rent Law: An Open Letter to the Parliament", *Jadaliyya*, 09.12.14. [http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/20231/lebanon\\_rejecting-the-new-rent-law\\_an-open-letter-](http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/20231/lebanon_rejecting-the-new-rent-law_an-open-letter-) [Last accessed 02.08.15]; See also Interview with Nathalie Bedkache, senior programme officer International Alert, Lebanon, June 2015.

chosen, also depending on the proximity to their workplace. These preferences show that in most cases religious and/or political affiliations do not play a big role in the choice of the living place. Most interlocutors, Syrians as well as Lebanese, described the city's quarters as welcoming and open towards new residents. Therefore, the influx of refugees and migrants in the last four years can also be said to have caused a certain dissolution of existing dividing lines in the city after the end of the war.

The high cost of living in general posed for most of our poorer interlocutors difficulties in their everyday lives. As a young Syrian woman living in Hamra told us:

“I used to cook a lot, but since I am unemployed, we try to save money. My fiance eats at his workplace, a Manoushe or a Sandwich. I have a labneh sandwich for breakfast and then nothing the whole day. Sometimes I visit my neighbour and ask her to make me another sandwich in the evening.”<sup>114</sup>

The tight budget of many Syrians in Beirut, together with the new residency restrictions, causes many Syrians to drastically limit their presence in the public space of Beirut. Many interlocutors also mentioned the scarcity of public spaces available and affordable in Beirut. One of our interlocutors, a young Syrian man working in an International aid organisation explained the different challenges he is facing in the following way:

“I often do not know where to go, so I stay home (in Geitaoui). My girlfriend and I used to go running at the Corniche, but since she left I do not go anymore because I am afraid to be asked for my papers that I don't have. It was easier when I had European woman next to me. I do not have the budget to go to restaurants that are very expensive in Beirut so I only do it once in a while. And some of the popular bars in Hamra for example are avoided by us because they have a bad reputation as being monitored by the qaumeyen (SSNP) or the secret service. Sometimes I visit friends but I also have to be careful. I was stopped at Badaro the other day by the army and at Sodeco and I cannot go to Dahiye. So what else can I do than stay home.”<sup>115</sup>

The scarcity of public space in general in Beirut, together with the high costs of housing, food products, transport, nightlife/entertainment, as well as the high securitisation within the city also affect interactions among residents of the city. Not only are niche existences among different groups fostered by those developments but also practical considerations - as the quote above demonstrates - prevent people from regularly interacting or meeting in the last few months. Likewise, Beirut is seen as a transit city in which one lives only when there is no other option. Most of our Syrian and many of the Lebanese interlocutors assured us that they are looking for opportunities to leave the country and make a fresh start in a European or Western country. For some Syrians this was even the main reason to register with UNHCR who are responsible for resettlement programs.

#### **4.5. “Downfall of the Confessional System”, “Revisiting Daliyeh” and “You stink” – examples of social and political mobilisation in Beirut**

In the last years, the above described conflict dynamics in Beirut led to numerous movements of protest and contestations. The number of those grassroots movements usually initiated by the rather urbanised and educated youth of Beirut has been abundant and this section only serves as a broad overview dealing with the 2011 movement calling for the “Downfall of the Confessional System” to the “Civil campaign to protect the Dalieh

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114 Interview with a young Syrian woman, July 2015.

115 Interview with a Syrian man residing in Beirut, July 2015.

of Raouche” since March 2013 and the “You stink” movement in relation to the recent garbage crisis in July 2015. These movements are looked at in the responses to and contestation of local and national sets of problems and likewise in their negotiation with regional developments and issues.

The movement of the “Downfall of the Confessional System” in Lebanon emerged in February 2011 and included several demonstrations and manifestation, in addition to sit-ins and internal discussion rounds in the two months of February and March. Although the movement had a clear transnational dimension and was inspired by the uprisings for the “Downfall of the Regime” in Egypt and Tunisia it was still also a reflection and to a certain extent continuation of a Lebanese “local militant history”<sup>116</sup> addressing problems and topics of contestation inherent to the Lebanese political system and its shortcomings. The rather short-lived movement is - despite its relative failure and quick dissolution - remarkable in Lebanon’s history because of its 1) peaceful nature, 2) its positioning beyond the dominant and rather fixed political and confessional division in the March 8<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> camps, and 3) the heterogeneity of its participating actors. It was within this heterogeneity of actors and ideologies/ideas featuring the movement that it was also increasingly difficult within the movement’s development to find a common denominator and a common enemy that was sought to be toppled.<sup>117</sup> The movement, likewise, was not able to incorporate the internal ambiguities emerging with the uprisings in Syria due to the fact that the uprising 1) deeply divided the Lebanese political society due to the strong alliances between some Lebanese political actors and the Syrian regime as well as the interwoven historical relations between the two countries and 2) the growing fear of a spillover-effect of the Syrian conflict into Lebanon or a comparable development of the Syrian conflict to the Lebanese civil war (proxy war and confessionalisation of the war).<sup>118</sup>

Within its developments the movement shows some positive and negative features of Lebanese social and political movements in the last four years:

On the one hand, a heterogeneous mixture of a mainly educated, urbanised, rather young and predominantly leftist/secular group of political/social activists emerged and exists on the political scene and cannot be captured in the mainly confessionalised and rigid division of the country since 2005. On the other hand, these movements often tend to wear themselves out due to internal division and contradictions, an alleged powerlessness and a seemingly insoluble unease with regional and Lebanese topics of contestations.

The Syrian crisis (and Hezbollah’s armed involvement in it) has in many aspects paralysed Lebanese political and secular grassroots movements also due to the fact that some movements of solidarity and positioning with the Syrian uprising have been rather unpleasantly silenced, like the sit-in in front of the Syrian embassy on August 2nd, 2011.<sup>119</sup> Specifically, the positions of some fractions on the Lebanese left have been rather ambiguous towards the Syrian uprising.<sup>120</sup>

Social and political movements in the last four years have therefore been more focused

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116 Marie-Noelle AbiYaghi/Myriam Catusse, *op.cit.*, 2014, p. 251.

117 Ibid, p. 263.

118 Ibid, p. 257-259.

119 Mu’tasimeen wa Mu’tasomat amam safara al-nizam as-Suri, “Muwalun lil-nizam as-Suri ya’tiduna ‘ala i’tisam silmi amam as-safara as-suriya fi Beirut”, *Al-Manshur al-Muntada al-Ishtiraki*, 04.08.11. <http://al-manshour.org/node/307> [Last accessed 02.08.11].

120 Khalil Issa, “The Lebanese Left fails in Syria”, *Jadaliyya*, 07.06.11. <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/1786/the-lebanese-left-fails-in-syria> [Last accessed 02.08.15]; Maya Mikdashi, “What is [the] Left”, *Jadaliyya*, 29.06.11. [http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/2012/what-is\\_the\\_left](http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/2012/what-is_the_left) [Last accessed 02.08.15].

on social problems as well as the problems of the neoliberal tendencies within the urban developments of Beirut. Within these movements, the ones against the new rent law and the “Civil campaign to protect the Dalieh of Raouche” can be listed, as they focus in their frames of protest on a more broader political discourse (neoliberalism, global capitalism, public space/right to the city) than current regional developments.<sup>121</sup> Still, it is the similar segment of society that was mobilised in the “Downfall of the Confessional System” movement who launched and pursues those campaigns and movements.

A very recent example of social uprising was the series of demonstrations, sit-ins and different forms of activism initiated by the “you stink” campaign in reaction to the garbage crisis after the landfill of Na’meh was closed in July 2015 and garbage piled up in the streets of Beirut for consecutive 10 days. The campaign managed a considerable fast and strong degree of mobilisation and participation especially among young political and environmental activists. From the beginning, the garbage crisis was directly related to the assumed failure and corruption of the Lebanese political system, whose representatives were mainly addressed with the slogan “you stink”. On several demonstrations in Beirut already in July, the protesters called for “Revolution” or, again, the “downfall of the regime”

The movement gained a surprisingly very quick following which led to a series of demonstrations with large scale participation from August, 8th on. The immense mobilisation among the population was especially striking due to the fact that it seemed for the first time that many people were mobilised beyond the established March 8 and 14 political bifurcation. The initial “you stink” movement was soon followed by the emergence of other movements and groups that were partially related to established rather leftist or secular political parties or alignments who soon called for an overarching downfall of the system. Until today, the different movements are active partly in solo action partly in cooperation and are developing/elaborating their different demands ranging from environmental solutions to the garbage crisis to other more structural political demands like the resignation of the Ministers of Interior and Environment to the overarching downfall of the confessional political system.

#### **4.6. Women’s Rights and Shifts in Gender Dynamics since 2011**

On the socio-legal front, Beirut has witnessed several major developments in women’s rights and sexuality policing. Significantly, in 2011, and after years of pressure from feminist activists, Lebanon repealed article 562 from the Penal Code known as the “Honor Crime” article. The article was last amended in 1999 to exclude “premeditated acts”<sup>122</sup> of violence, but overall it had offered a minimal prison sentence for men who killed female relatives suspected for performing a sexual act outside of marriage and thus shaming the family’s “honor”. This repeal was widely praised and constituted one step in the right direction in terms of ensuring women’s access to the basic right of life under law.

However, the Lebanese law overall remains disproportionately discriminatory against women and continues to police and punish sexual behaviours through the Penal Code. Problematic aspects include for example not allowing women to pass on their citizenship to their children, a topic that had also re-gained significant attention in the women’s move-

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121 <http://dalieh.org/#>, [Last accessed 02.08.15]; Jadaliyya Reports, Lebanon: Rejecting the New Rent Law: An Open Letter to the Parliament”, *Jadaliyya*, 09.12.14. [http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/20231/lebanon\\_rejecting-the-new-rent-law\\_an-open-letter-](http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/20231/lebanon_rejecting-the-new-rent-law_an-open-letter-) [Last accessed 02.08.15].

122 Human Rights Watch, “Lebanon: Law Reform Targets ‘Honor Crimes’”, 11.08.2011. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/08/11/lebanon-law-reform-targets-honor-crimes> [Last accessed 02.08.2015]

ment recently<sup>123</sup>. Other problematic articles include the banning of abortion and punishing those who seek to facilitate it (articles 439-545), punishing consensual nonmarital acts outside of marriage (articles 487 and 488), and punishing “unnatural sexual intercourse” which is often used to refer to same-sex sexual relations between men (article 534) among others<sup>124</sup>. Several articles also specifically police gender appearance and are explicitly discriminatory against trans\* bodies and gender nonconforming persons, including for example article 521 which explicitly punishes crossdressing in public through imprisonment for 6 months<sup>125</sup>.

Another significant gain for women was the passing of a law against domestic violence in April 2014. Spearheaded by KAFA, a local Beirut-based NGO fighting against violence against women, the proposed law was first drafted in 2007 and its adoption faced significant delays as the parliament went through political stagnation<sup>126</sup>. The law includes several crucial provisions such as the ability to file for a restraining order against the abusive partner and providing safe houses for abused women which were thus far limited in number and only provided through personal initiatives or a small number of NGOs.<sup>127</sup>

Critiques of the law pointed to the fact that it was heavily altered from its draft version and included new worrisome aspects such as the introduction of “marital right to intercourse” previously unconstituted in Lebanese law. This “right” was largely a response from religious leaders opposing the criminalisation of marital rape in the law’s earlier drafts<sup>128</sup>. KAFA alongside several women’s groups, formal and informal, continue to bring attention to the high rates of domestic violence in Lebanon (KAFA alone receives over 2600 calls on its hotline annually)<sup>129</sup> as well as the ways in which the law is being implemented. Thanks to on-ground mobilisation and medialization<sup>130</sup>, domestic violence has gained increased local and international attention as women continue to participate in street protests calling for justice for women murdered by their husbands and subjected to years of domestic abuse.

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**Public attitudes and perceptions are quick to blame issues such as sexual harassment on Syrian men and create a narrative that overshadows these dynamics’ history before 2011 and ignores the fact that harassment is a long standing issue in Beirut as well as in Lebanon.**

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The arrival of Syrian refugees to the city constitutes, as well, a crucial socio-political event shaping gendered relations and politics. As was noticed in our interviews, gendered relations

123 See for example Mazin Sidahmed, “Women Demand Right to Pass On Citizenship to Their Children”, *The Daily Star*, 28.03.2015. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Mar-23/291778-women-demand-right-to-pass-on-citizenship-to-their-children.ashx> [Last accessed 02.08.2015].

124 Maya Mikdashi, “A Legal Guide to Being a Lebanese Woman: part 1”, *Jadaliyya*, 03.12.2010. [http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/376/a-legal-guide-to-being-a-lebanese-woman-\(part-1\)](http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/376/a-legal-guide-to-being-a-lebanese-woman-(part-1)) [Last accessed 02.08.2015].

125 For more on the articles which target trans\* individuals specifically see: Ahmad J. Saleh/Adriana Qubaia, *op.cit.*, January 2015.

126 Human Rights Watch, “Lebanon: Domestic Violence Law Good But Incomplete”, 03.04.2014. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/04/03/lebanon-domestic-violence-law-good-incomplete> [Last accessed 02.08.2015].

127 See KAFA’s complete guide to the law: KAFA, “Zalfa’s Questions on the Law to Protect Women and Other Family Members from Family Violence”. <http://www.kafa.org.lb/zalfafaq.pdf> [Last accessed 02.08.2015].

128 Human Rights Watch, “Lebanon: Domestic Violence Law Good But Incomplete”, 03.04.2014. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/04/03/lebanon-domestic-violence-law-good-incomplete> [Last accessed 02.08.2015]

129 Ibid.

130 For analysis of NGOs politics of mobilisation see Riwa Salameh, Gender Politics in Lebanon and the Limits of Legal Reformism, *Civil Society Knowledge Centre*, 16.09.2014. <http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/paper/gender-politics-lebanon-and-limits-legal-reformism> [Last accessed 02.08.2015].

and attitudes among Syrian refugees are not only affected by new policing dynamics, but also show shifts in gender roles wherein women assume different responsibilities than before which include increased interaction in public space, for example, through collecting aid<sup>131</sup>.

Such gendered shifts can be experienced as turbulent for both men and women. A representative from International Alert argued that what is occurring is a shift in gender roles, and not necessarily in gender norms.<sup>132</sup> This shift increases feelings of vulnerability and insecurity for men who feel they can no longer adhere to their social role and provide for their families, and for women who also experience added responsibilities and anxiety in a new environment.<sup>133</sup>

Yet, several interviewed single Syrian women who work in Beirut mentioned that what was uncomfortable and difficult to get used to upon arriving was rather not having access to a network of support and simply navigating a new change by themselves; a hardship also experienced by interviewed Syrian men. Many of the interviewed women had experience working in Syria before the crisis, therefore, their anxiety revolved around navigating discriminatory attitudes from Lebanese employers or colleagues, finding affordable and safe housing, etc. Some who began working in Beirut also reported feeling positive about being able to sustain themselves and their family members<sup>134</sup>.

Public attitudes towards the socio-gendered consequences of the Syrian refugee crisis are a central element in shaping the perceived shifts in gendered roles and sexual behaviours in Beirut. Public attitudes and perceptions are quick to blame issues such as sexual harassment on Syrian men and create a narrative that overshadows these dynamics' history before 2011 and ignores the fact that harassment is a long standing issue in Beirut as well as in Lebanon. While it is difficult to discern the exact shift (several organisations attempt to record instances and reports of harassments and conduct public campaigns<sup>135</sup>), women continue to complain of sexual harassment by men in public space, which significantly shapes their definitions of geographically secure areas to navigate.

For example, when asked about this national-gendered dynamic and that a stereotype of Syrians harassing women more frequently exists, one Syrian woman residing in Hamra mentioned she specifically avoids visiting Rawsheh as she finds that harassment from men, she identifies as Syrian, frequent there. However, she also compared this occurrence with harassment she received at ISF offices when applying for papers, "there's a certain boldness" she commented while explaining that she often receives unsolicited proposals for marriage or proposals for kafaleh from Lebanese men.<sup>136</sup> The perception that Syrian men harass more than Lebanese men is impossible to prove, but this discourse has an effect on further demonising Syrian men and subsequently rendering Lebanese men's harassment invisible from public discourse<sup>137</sup>.

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131 Interview with Syrian woman active in civil society and working in Beirut, June 2015.

132 Interview with Lana Khattab, International Alert Programme Officer - Gender and Peacebuilding, June 2015.

133 Oxfam, "Shifting Sands: Changing Gender Roles Among Refugees in Lebanon", September 2013. [https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file\\_attachments/rr-shifting-sands-lebanon-syria-refugees-gender-030913-en\\_3.pdf](https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/rr-shifting-sands-lebanon-syria-refugees-gender-030913-en_3.pdf) [Last accessed 02.08.2015].

134 Interview with Syrian woman working as cashier in Hamra, July 2015. Interview with Syrian woman working in journalism in Achrafiyeh, July 2015.

135 See for example: YouTube, The Adventures of Salwa YouTube Channel. <https://www.youtube.com/user/adventuresofsalwa> [Last accessed 02.08.2015].

136 Interview with Syrian single working woman, June 2015.

137 Adriana Qubaia/ Mathew Gagné, Sexualizing and Villainizing Male Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, *Muftah*, 15.12.2014. <http://muftah.org/sexualizing-and-villainizing-syrian-refugees/> [Last accessed 03.08.2015].

Public gendered and sexualised perceptions of Syrian women can also depict them as agents of moral decay due to their perceived (or real) engagement in sex work. One Syrian interviewee mentioned a heated conversation she had with a Lebanese taxi driver in Hamra, wherein the man expressed frustration that the neighborhood is allegedly filled with women who perform sex work. He confronted her saying “do you think I don’t know what these women are selling? The ones with flowers? They don’t sell flowers. Everyone knows that”.<sup>138</sup> The interviewee mentioned she felt she could not reply, as she was aware that Syrian women may resort to sex work.

These perceptions miss the various conditions under which various groups of women and men perform sex work, and which are sometimes contradictory, whether they are economic conditions, legal entry under the “artist” visa, trafficking, or choice. Such public perceptions of sexual dynamics in the city place blame on a specific category of women and men while ignoring the long and varied history of sex-work, trafficking and economic conditions in Beirut. The result is intensified calls for moral panics and policing<sup>139</sup> which in turn push vulnerable group further into marginalisation and risks of arrest<sup>140</sup>. As such, these perceptions form a central part of the gendered and sexual conflict dynamics in the city.

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138 Interview with Syrian single working woman in Hamra, June 2015.

139 See for example Maya Mikdashi, “Moral Panics, Sex Panics, and the Production of a Lebanese Nation”, *Jadaliyya*, 22.02.2014. <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/16570/-moral-panics-sex-panics-and-the-production-of-a-l> [Last accessed 03.08.2015].

140 Ahmad J. Saleh/ Adriana Qubaia, *op.cit.*, January 2015.



## Conclusion

This detailed report gives a contextual and analytical summary of the diverse conflict dynamics in Beirut since 2011 and relates those developments to the historical processes of conflict, violence, reconciliation and resilience within the city's history.

Specifically, the report provides a historical overview of the social question, cycles of political and social mobilisation, and migration movements within the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in a city constantly meandering between cycles of violent conflict, and a reputation of fame, glory and cultural/economic heydays. Importantly, the report showed that the developments of the last four years within the city are characterised by: a renewed arrival of migrants/refugees from Syria, further construction booms, and a cutback of social state services and liberalisation of housing and the labour market. These dynamics are causing an intensification of the social question, a rising securitisation, and various types of social mobilisations that must always be studied in relation to the city's past.

At the same time, the report goes beyond using the mainstream framework of identity politics and confessionalised discourses as a limited lens of analysis often applied to conflict analysis in Lebanon, and rather centralises socio-economic tensions and the state's policies of securitisation, segregation and neoliberal intervention which are currently affecting the lives of already-vulnerable residents (Syrian and Palestinian refugee, poor Lebanese) and are the main reasons for the renewed cycles of social and political mobilisation and unrest.

Finally, the report specifically demonstrates that the new regulations imposed by the state on working conditions and residence permits for Syrians constitute an incisive rupture altering the lives of Syrians in Lebanon in a considerable way. These new policies are not only pushing poor Syrian refugees towards informal and illegal statuses and further vulnerability, but they are also pushing Syrian middle class refugees to leave Lebanon, thereby causing a widening gap in humanitarian and relief work in which the middle class has been a key player.

## **Recommendations for action:**

### **At the State level:**

Advocate for the development of policy measures that place serious and realistic emphasis on the economic, social and legal challenges affecting the country with special attention to vulnerable groups and existing patterns of social and economic marginalisation.

Within those policy measures, place a special emphasis on the situation of Syrian residents/refugees of the city, and therein advocate for reviewing the new foreign labour regulations and residency restrictions in such a way that makes it possible for these persons to live without fear of arrest and detention solely due to their status.

Advocate for the ratification of the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of Refugees.

Advocate for better coordination between the different security and administrative entities and focus on better awareness campaign not only among the population about respective responsibilities/duties of those entities but also among the entities themselves on their legal limits and obligations under law.

### **At the judiciary level:**

Support legal mechanisms and processes that address issues of corruption, bribery and exploitation as well as abuse, violence (including domestic violence) and harassment towards any resident on Lebanese ground (refugee, migrant, foreigner or Lebanese citizen).

Support the unionisation of foreign, migrant and domestic workers.

### **At the associative level:**

Strengthen coordination and transparency mechanisms among humanitarian and development organisations and their cooperation with local and state actors.

Coordinate with, and consult young actors of social and political activism and mobilisation in Beirut to focus on the diverse challenges and needs of the city's population.

### **At the grassroots community level:**

Reinforce the resilience potential among the Lebanese and Syrian community by integrating the potential of interaction, relationships, and cooperation within the community into an encompassing discourse. This might be done through coordinated awareness campaigns as already conducted by several NGOs, but also through resource sharing, and involving community organizers more directly in such efforts.

Strengthening the existing different movements of social and political mobilisation, by giving them platforms of discussion and negotiations, trainings in knowing their legal rights, and centralising women's rights and gender issues in the debates and workings of these movements.