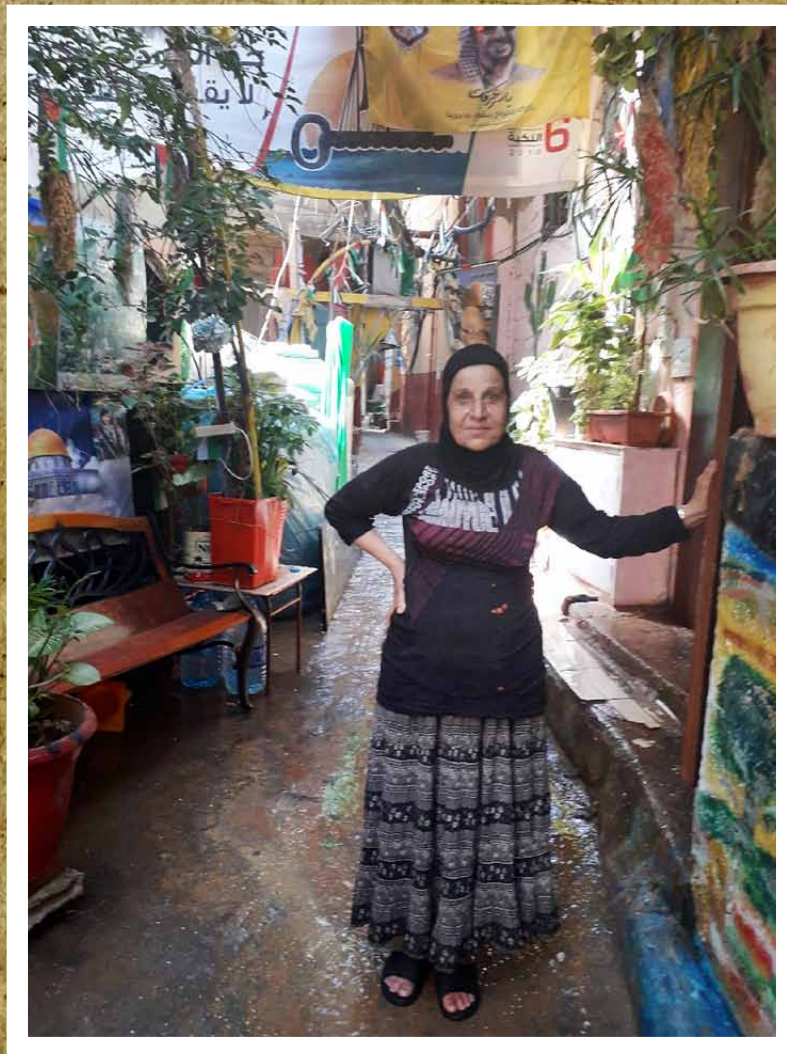


# PALESTINE'S FORGOTTEN REFUGEES in LEBANON

A REPORT ON A VISIT TO BEIRUT, 22-29 JUNE 2018



**STEPHEN McCLOSKEY**



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Cover photograph: Fatima Salem, a Palestinian refugee and former resident of the Tal Al-Zaatar camp which was destroyed in August 1976 during the Lebanese civil war. Fatima is now a resident of the Mar Elias refugee camp in central Beirut. (Stephen McCloskey, all rights reserved).

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Citation: McCloskey, S (2018) 'Palestine's Forgotten Refugees in Lebanon: A Report on a Visit to Beirut, 22-29 June 2018', September, Belfast: Centre for Global Education.

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## Introduction

In 2015, the UK government agreed to accept [20,000](#) Syrian refugees over a five year period to 2020. In the same year as the UK's pledge, Lebanon had already accepted [1.1 million](#) Syrian refugees representing one quarter of the entire Lebanese population. Lebanon is [fourth](#) on the list of refugee hosting countries and facing a humanitarian crisis of 'staggering proportions' which perhaps puts in some context the [fears](#) about migration which appeared to sway the UK referendum toward exiting the European Union (EU) in June 2016. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), [80 percent](#) of the world's refugees are hosted by countries in the global South and many, like Lebanon, are wrestling with internal social, economic and political problems in a highly unstable region.

the number of refugees through take-up of its services including schools, clinics, vocational training centres, health centres and women's organisations. The difference in the number of registered refugees and users is likely to result from migration during and after the upheaval of the Lebanese [civil war](#) and Palestinians becoming absorbed into Lebanese society.

The majority of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are resident in 12 refugee camps, although one of these camps, Nahr el-Bared, is currently under reconstruction. Nahr el-Bared was virtually [destroyed](#) in 2007 when the Lebanese army started shelling the camp to oust the Palestinian militant group Fatah al-Islam. The camp's population of 27,000 people was redistributed to surrounding Palestinian camps with the cost of reconstruction estimated at [\\$345 million](#), of which \$188 million has been secured to date. This leaves a shortfall of



A wall mural in Mar Elias refugee camp, Beirut. (Stephen McCloskey, all rights reserved).

Lebanon is one of five regions that host a total of 5 million Palestinian refugees which include Jordan, Syria, the Gaza Strip and West Bank. According to the United Nations (UN) there are [504,000](#) registered Palestinian refugees in Lebanon but only between 260,000 and 280,000 remain in-country. While there has been no official census carried out to confirm these numbers, the UN can monitor

\$157 million in a very challenging financial environment for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the UN Mission for Palestinian refugees established in 1949. UNRWA has been subjected to severe cuts from the Trump administration in the United States which normally provides one-third of its total annual budget of [\\$1.2 billion](#).



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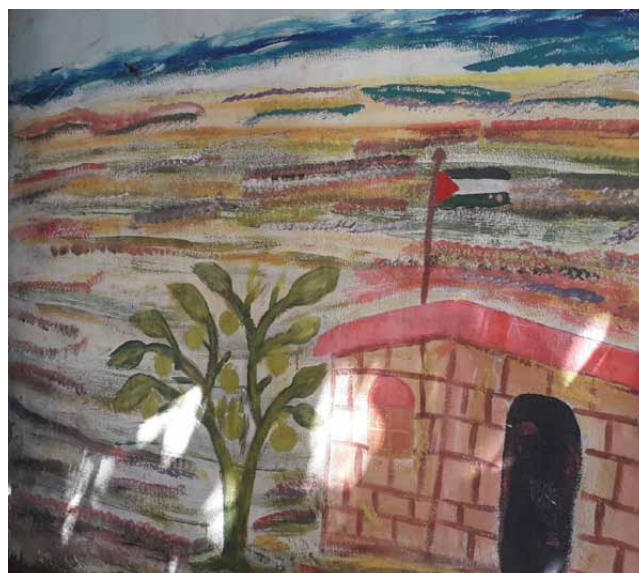


A wall mural in Burj Barajneh refugee camp, Beirut. (Stephen McCloskey, all rights reserved).

This report is based on a short visit to Lebanon in June 2018 to assess the living conditions of Palestinian refugees and the impact of their marginalised status within Lebanon. It is based on visits to three of the 12 UNRWA refugee camps in Lebanon: Burj Barajneh, Mar Elias and Shatila, and two UNRWA schools, Haifa Preparatory School and Galilee Secondary School in Bir Hassan, central Beirut. The report is titled Palestine's 'Forgotten Refugees' because most mainstream media attention on Palestine is focused, for very good reasons, on the Occupied Palestinian Territories of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Gaza has been subjected to [three wars and an economic blockade](#) since 2007 and [130](#) Gazans have been killed to date by Israeli live fire while participating in protests along Israel's perimeter fence with Gaza since 20 March 2018. The West Bank is surrounded and divided by a [Separation Barrier](#), and more than [500](#) checkpoints and road closures. It is also subjected to regular land annexations for the construction of more than 200 illegal Israeli colonies which are now populated by an estimated [600,000 settlers](#).

In the context of these human rights abuses, the plight of the Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon is often overlooked and yet according to [UNRWA](#), 'Lebanon has the highest percentage of Palestine refugees living in abject poverty' among the five regions in which it works. Despite having a presence in Lebanon since the ethnic cleansing of Palestine during the [Nakba](#) (Catastrophe) of 1948, Palestinian refugees continue to live on the

margins of Lebanese society, denied full citizenship and a life of dignity. As a socio-Economic survey of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon found in 2010, 'the surface area of the camps has not increased with population and many have become cramped shantytowns, offering little privacy to residents and exposing them to health hazards' (AUB, 2010: ix). The appalling living conditions to which refugees are exposed in the camps combined with limited education and employment opportunities has created a demoralising inertia which needs to change. This requires a fuller integration of Palestinians into social, economic and political life in Lebanon on the basis of equality and the removal of barriers to employment, property rights and education which prevent this.



A wall mural in Shatila refugee camp, Beirut. (Stephen McCloskey, all rights reserved).

I would like to thank the staff of UNRWA in Beirut for their assistance and flexibility in organising meetings at short notice and for patiently responding to requests for information. The views expressed in this report can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of UNRWA and any errors in this report are those of the author only.

## Refugee Crisis in Lebanon

Since the start of the Syrian war in 2011, 6.6 million Syrians have been internally displaced and [5.6 million](#) more have sought refuge outside their country. An overwhelming majority of Syria's refugees are hosted by other countries in the Middle-East, most notably Turkey (3.5 million and 63 percent) and Lebanon ([976,002](#) and 17.4 percent). Among the refugees forced to flee Syria are Palestinians which an American University of Beirut (AUB) [report](#) estimated to number 40,000 in 2015. Many of these newly arriving Palestinian refugees from Syria have taken refuge in UNRWA camps and are adding to the already considerable burden on the UN Mission's overstretched services.

Palestine Refugees from Syria (PRS) are often competing with Palestine Refugees from Lebanon (PRL) for employment, often in low-paid, manual jobs which perpetuate poverty. The AUB report found unemployment levels at 23.2 percent for PRL and 52.5 percent for PRS which make it 'challenging for many families to afford basic needs and to access services in times of need such as hospitalization and specialist care' (Chaaban et al., 2016: 2). The report also worryingly flagged that PRS are 'almost completely reliant on UNRWA to cover their health needs' (ibid) reflecting the concerning level of dependence among PRS on the UN, NGOs and other international agencies working in Lebanon.

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are categorised into four groups:

- "Registered" Palestinian refugees, which are registered with UNRWA and the Lebanese authorities;
- "Non-registered" Palestinian refugees, which are not registered with UNRWA, but are registered with the Lebanese authorities;
- "Non-ID" Palestinian refugees, who are neither registered with UNRWA nor with the Lebanese authorities; and

- Palestine refugees from Syria, who have arrived in Lebanon since 2011 (UNHCR, 2016: 2)

These designations can make the difference between accessing vital UN services or not. As the UNHCR suggests:

*"Non-ID" Palestinians, as well as the majority of Palestine refugees from Syria, are reported to lack legal status in Lebanon, with wide-reaching implications for their ability to exercise their human rights and access basic services" (ibid).*

Unsurprisingly, the arrival of large numbers of refugees in camps with restricted ground areas and capacity for expansion has sometimes negatively impacted on community relations within camps and created competing factions. As UNHCR suggests:

*"The influx of Syrian and Palestine refugees from Syria into Lebanon are reported to have further compromised already limited living space, resources, services and job opportunities available to Palestine refugees in Lebanon and contributed to heightened community tensions" (2016: 3).*

## Marginal status in Lebanon

The surge in refugee arrivals from Syria has exacerbated a marginal existence for Palestinians in Lebanon where the majority of refugees and their descendants have not been naturalised despite fleeing to the country in 1948. According to UNHCR, Palestinians are reportedly denied access to 36 professions including medicine, farming, fishery and public transportation which forces them into 'menial, low-paying jobs in the informal sector' (UNHCR, 2016: 6). They are also prohibited from owning property which contributes to their exclusion from key aspects of social, political and economic life (Chaaban et al., 2016: 7).

In terms of employment, Palestinians are reported to receive lower salaries than Lebanese nationals in the same occupations suggesting discrimination in the workplace and exploitation by employers of the high unemployment rate among refugees (ibid). With Palestinians subjected to a perpetual 'foreigner' status in Lebanon despite their lengthy residency, a 2010 AUB [survey](#) of Palestinian refugees found that just 37 percent



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of the working-age population was employed and just 6 percent of the labour force in university training (2010: xi). The same survey reported that two-thirds of the Palestinian refugee population was poor (living on less than \$6 a day) (ibid), one-third had a chronic illness and four percent had a 'functional disability' (2010: xiv).

High levels of unemployment in a socially deprived environment has resulted in severe mental health problems with the AUB survey finding that 21 percent of respondents had experienced 'depression, anxiety or distress' (2010: xiv). AUB argued that if UNRWA was not present in Lebanon, overall poverty among refugees would increase by 14 percent and extreme poverty would increase threefold' (2010: xv), findings which have added resonance given the severe cuts to UNRWA's budget recently announced by the Trump administration.

## Education

The exclusion of Palestinians from most professional occupations and high levels of unemployment among

refugees can reduce expectations among young people from pursuing a full education. UNHCR reports that Palestinian children are denied access to Lebanese public schools which means they are either taught in one of UNRWA's 69 primary and post-primary schools or in private schools which are likely to be beyond the means of most refugee families (UNHCR, 2016: 9). UNRWA has 32,350 pupils registered in its 69 schools although these numbers may have been swollen by refugees from Syria. UNHCR suggests that for many "Non-ID" Palestinians and Syrian refugees, secondary school is inaccessible because they are ineligible for the intermediate schooling exam (ibid).

Through the good offices of Iman Nasriyeh, UNRWA's Area Education Officer for central Lebanon, I had the opportunity to visit two schools sharing the same site. The first was Haifa Preparatory School (12-15 years) which has a total student population of 750 and an average class size of 35-45. The school is a prefab which traps the heat in summer and cold in winter. I was taken on a tour of the school by the principal, Souad Sreij, and found classrooms, store-rooms, laboratories, computer



Iman Nasriyeh, UNRWA's Area Education Officer for central Lebanon on the left and Souad Sreij, Principal, Haifa Preparatory School, Bir Hassan, central Beirut on the right. (Stephen McCloskey, all rights reserved).

facilities all in dire need of repair or replenishment. I saw ceilings that were collapsing and floors giving way under foot given the flimsy construction materials and lack of repairs owing to a shortage of funds. Teaching resources, I was told, are in short supply including text books, IT equipment, science laboratory equipment and physical education facilities. There is just one playground to accommodate such a large student population and the close proximity to the adjoining secondary school means there are constant problems in keeping children concentrated on work when other children are outside playing outside.



**The ceiling of a classroom in Haifa Preparatory School, Beirut. (Stephen McCloskey, all rights reserved).**

Soud Sreij explained that her students are drawn from surrounding Palestinian camps and most of them are desperately poor with one or both parents unemployed. Children often arrive at school hungry or with a 'Nescafé' rather than a healthy breakfast. The school doesn't provide meals as the children start school at 7.30am and finish at 2.00pm. Many students exhibit mental health problems through aggressive behaviour in school or poor academic performance due to difficulties in concentration and application. The poor living conditions and diet in the camps also mean that students often present health problems such as asthma, malnourishment and brittle bones. Within school, the pupils lack facilities for extra-curricular activities, play and sports, and need greater investment in stationery, textbooks, IT and science equipment and school furniture. The school has recently seen an intake from Palestine Refugees from Syria which has added to class sizes and pressure on staff and resources.

Galilee secondary school has 730 students aged 15-18 years and only a few of these students will progress to higher education with the assistance of a scholarship. The economic pressures of life in the camps mean that many children do not complete secondary school in order to financially support their families. The school walls of Galilee Secondary have a big focus on gender, equality, human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals.



**A wall display on the Sustainable Development Goals in Galilee Secondary School, Beirut. (Stephen McCloskey, all rights reserved).**

The grading system in the schooling system in Lebanon is as follows:

Grade 1 - Grade 5 (6 – 12 years) is Elementary School

Grade 7 - Grade 9 (12 – 15 years) is Preparatory School

Grade 10 - Grade 12 (15 – 18 years) is Secondary School

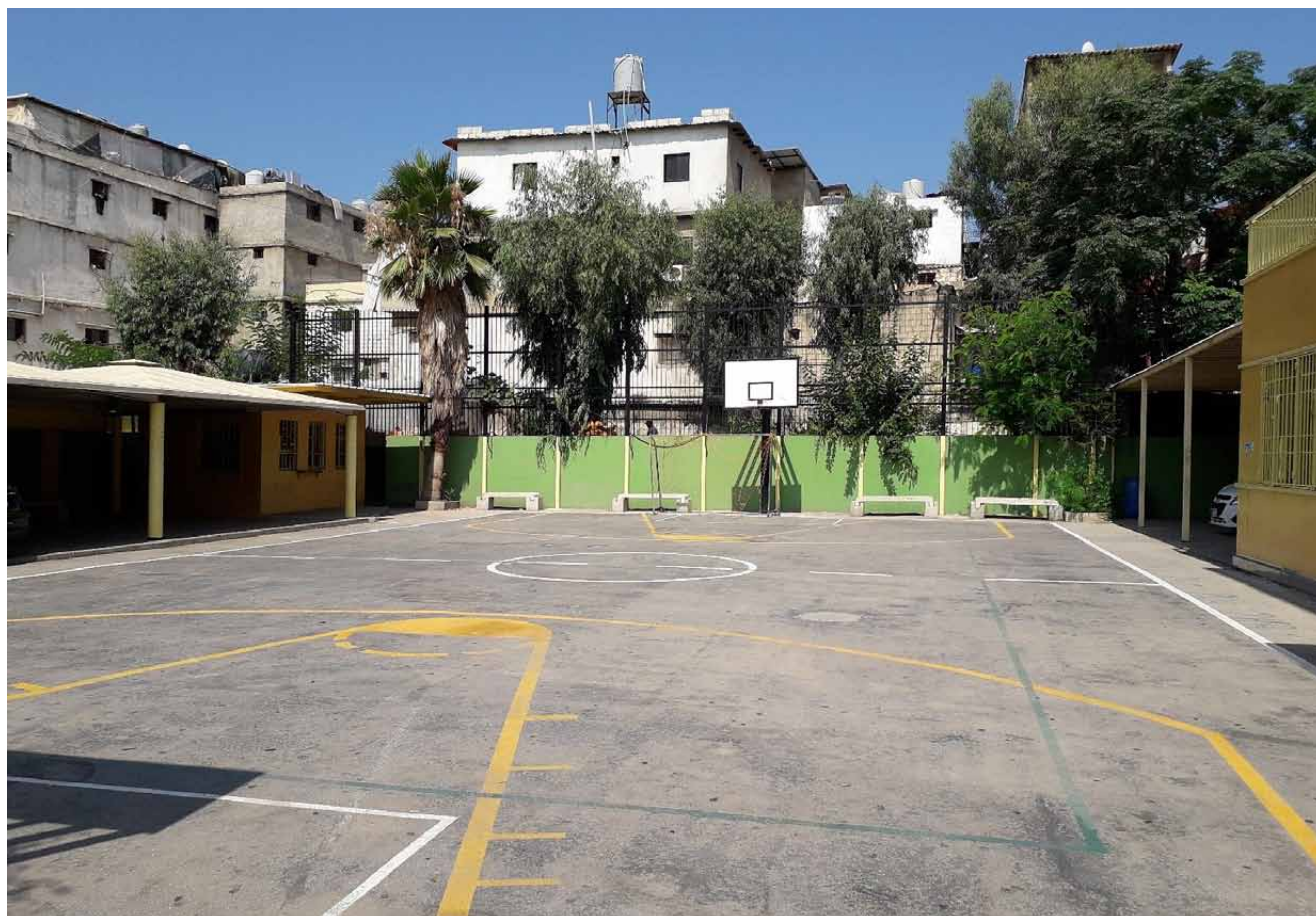
There is no pre-school provision in the UNRWA school system.



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The playground between Haifa Preparatory School and Galilee Secondary School. (Stephen McCloskey, all rights reserved).

## REFUGEE CAMP VISITS

### Mar Alias Camp

Mar Elias is located in southwest Beirut and is the smallest of UNRWA's twelve camps. It was founded in 1952 by the Congregation of St. Elias to house Orthodox Palestinian refugees coming from Galilee, northern Palestine. The camp has an area of 5,000 square metres and is inhabited by 330 families, or approximately 1,650 people. The camp is bordered by the Wata Musaytbeh area to the east, the Habib Abi Shahla highway from the west, the Church of St. Elias from the north and the Bir Hassan district from the south.

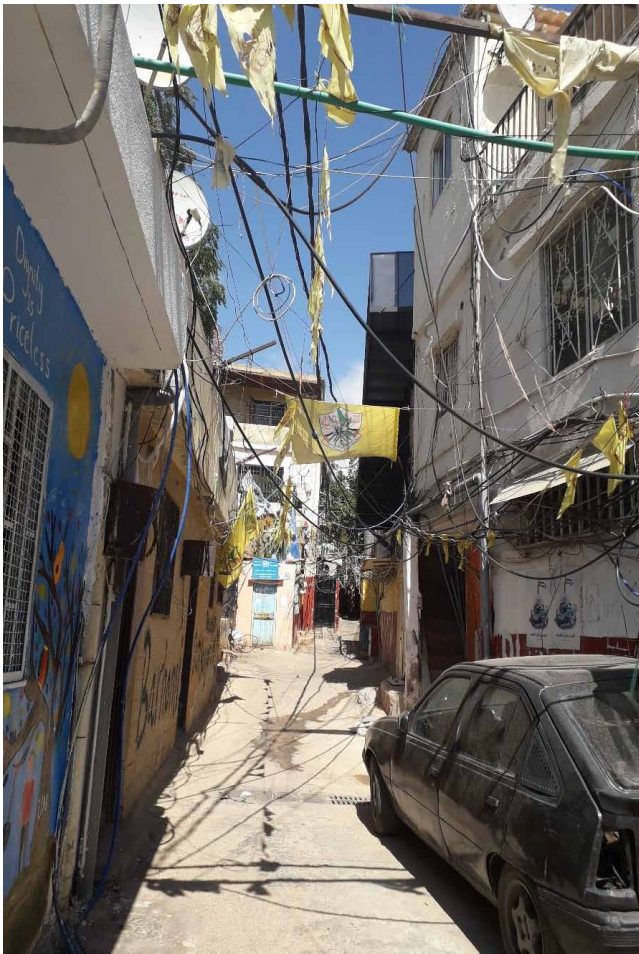
The camp is described as the political and media capital for the Palestinians in Beirut because of the presence of centres and headquarters of most political factions including: the Popular Front, the Democratic Front, Fatah al-Intifada, Fatah Revolutionary Council, Fatah Arafat, Al Saeqa, General Command, Nidal Front and the Revolutionary Council. The camp is dominated by

a national leftist orientation, and Chief Services Officer, Nasser Saleh suggests there is no trace of any Islamic extremist movements.

What sets Mar Elias apart from other refugee camps is its approach to security; there are no arms in the camp and there is no Lebanese military cordon around it. The camp has several positives, including the power grid, which was overhauled in 1999, and the availability of water from two boreholes, a sewer network and repaired telephone lines. The unemployment rate in Mar Elias is similar to the rest of the camps where it reaches up to more than 50 percent.

The Camp is home to a large number of social movements including Aidoun, the Center for Refugee Rights, which is an independent non-governmental organization with whom I met in Mar Elias. Aidoun is a resource centre focusing on the basic human rights of Palestinian refugees, mainly the Right to Return. It is affiliated to Aidoun Group, a civil society movement established in Lebanon and Syria in the late 1990s for the





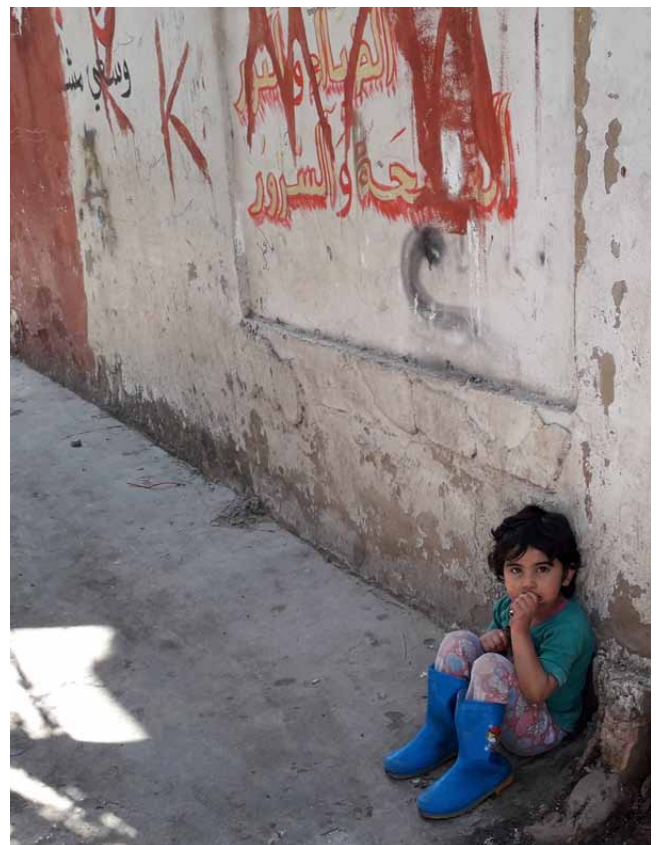
**Mar Elias Refugee Camp, Beirut.**  
(Stephen McCloskey, all rights reserved)

defence of Palestinian Refugees' Right of Return. Aidoun's strategy is based on the principals of international law and relevant UN resolutions which affirm three integrated rights: the right to return, to compensation and restitution. Its objectives include providing temporary protection for Palestinian refugees in all their locations, and securing their economic, social and cultural rights. Aidoun also works toward the objectives of Palestinian national unity and reconciliation. For more information on Aidoun please visit: [www.aidoun.org](http://www.aidoun.org).

## Burj Barajneh Camp

The League of Red Cross Societies established the Burj Barajneh camp in 1948 to accommodate refugees who fled from Galilee in northern Palestine. The camp is in the southern suburbs of Beirut, near Beirut International Airport. Burj Barajneh suffered heavily throughout the Lebanese civil war when nearly a quarter of the camp's population was displaced. Men from the camp generally

work as casual labourers in construction, and women mostly work in sewing factories or as cleaners. Burj Barajneh is the most overpopulated camp around Beirut and living conditions are extremely poor. The UNRWA Chief Services Officer, Bahaa Hassoun, estimates the camp population at 50,000 broken down as follows: 26,000 PRL, 20,000 Syrian refugees, 2,000 PRS and 2,000 people of mixed nationalities. There are two Popular Committees which administer the camp: the Pro-Syrian Alliance and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). The Chief Services Officer said that the two main communities in the camp, Syrian and Palestinian, were living amicably together but there was inevitably increased pressure on UNRWA services. There is a Security Committee in the camp comprising representatives of the main communities and responsible for dealing with the Lebanese authorities. The Lebanese military does not enter the camps, apart from Nahr el-Bared, and defers to the camps' leadership on matters of security.



**Burj Barajneh Refugee Camp** (Stephen McCloskey, all rights reserved).

On a tour of the camp with Ahmed Falah (Chief Sanitation Officer, Burj Barajneh), he drew attention to increased addiction issues and efforts made to provide treatment on site. He also spoke of the main threats in the camp environment to residents; an extensive network of criss-



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crossing electricity wires, which hang low between the narrow alleys of the camp, intertwine with water pipes. He said that there had been a total of 42 deaths from electrocution over the previous two years, most of the victims being children. These deaths can result from innocuously touching a wall where water and electricity wires collided. The camp, like many others, is a warren of narrow streets lacking any kind of meaningful sewage system, which means that they are regularly flooded during winter. Additional problems in the camp for some residents include food insecurity, chronic diseases caused by poverty, inadequate housing and a poor diet, and anaemia caused in some cases by lack of access to sunlight. The arrival of new refugees from Syria has enabled landlords to increase rents given the size of the market and rents on property will vary depending on location and factors such as access to natural light. It is unsurprising, given these conditions, that the AUB survey in 2010 found that 'there are twice as many poor among Palestine refugees and occurrence of extreme poverty is four times higher as compared with the Lebanese population' (2010: xii).

## Shatila Camp

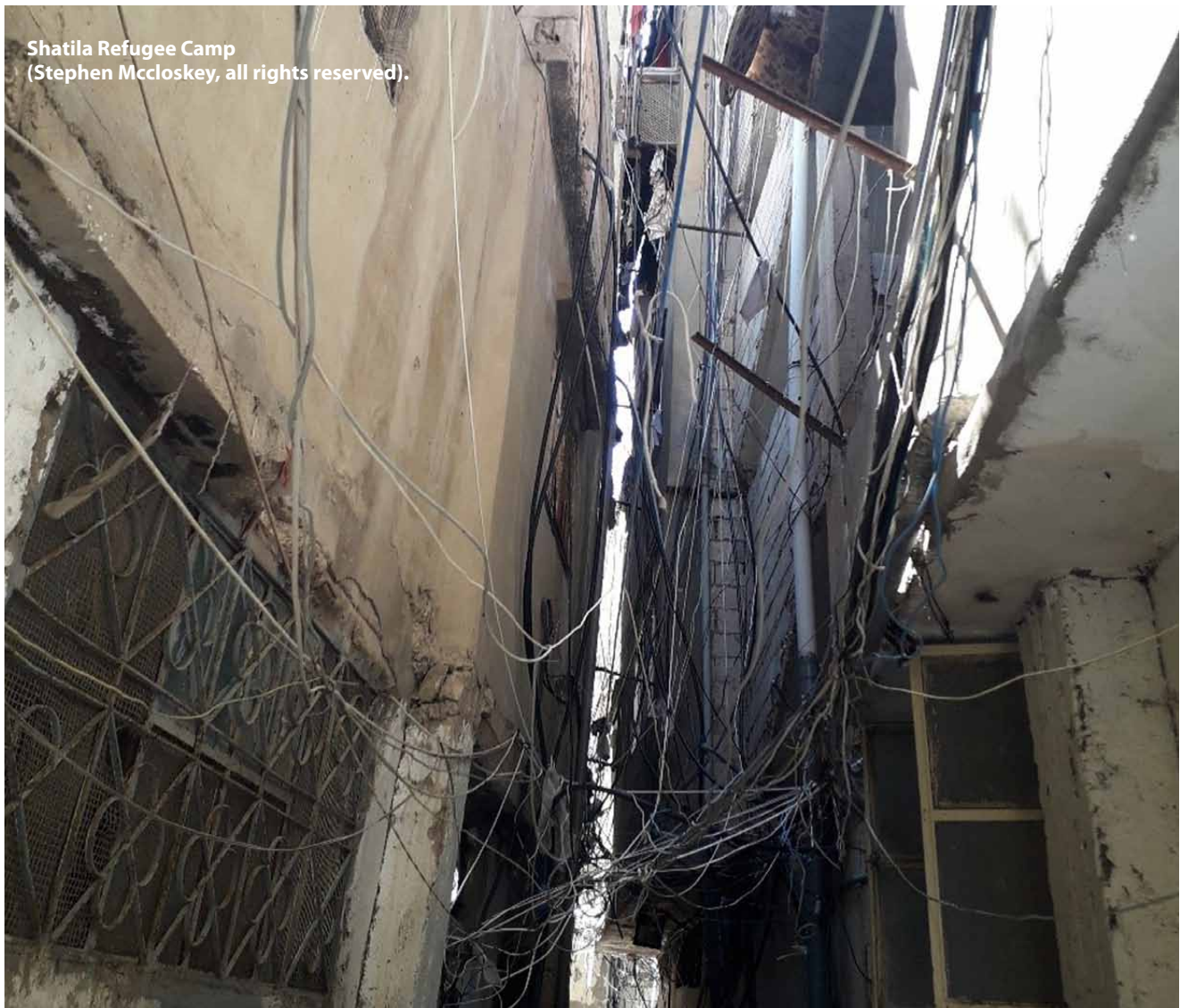
The Shatila camp in southern Beirut was established in 1949 by the International Committee of the Red Cross to accommodate the hundreds of Palestinian refugees who poured into the area from villages in northern Palestine after 1948. Environmental health conditions in Shatila are extremely poor due to poor sanitation, dampness, open drains and over-crowding. The sewerage system needs considerable expansion and an infrastructure project is currently being implemented to upgrade the sewage, the storm water system and the water network. There is an intermittent electricity supply in the camp and the salt water in the pipes is not drinkable.

I met with Mahmoud M. Abbas, Director of the Children and Youth Centre (CYC) in Shatila who estimated the camp inhabitants at 22,500 living in a camp originally built for 3,000. The CYC provides remedial learning for the camp's poorest children and a safe space to play. The anonymous white building which houses the CYC is



Children playing in Shatila Refugee Camp (Stephen McCloskey, all rights reserved).





**Shatila Refugee Camp**  
(Stephen McCloskey, all rights reserved).

**Low hanging wires in Shatila Camp represent a serious health hazard to residents. An extensive network of criss-crossing electricity wires, which hang low between the narrow alleys of the camp, intertwine with water pipes. These wires regularly cause electrocution in Shatila and other camps, and are a particular threat to children playing in streets that are often over-run with sewage and flooding in winter.**

bristling with activity and children's voices as workshops and play activities take place. Mahmoud Abbas is nicknamed 'The President' as he shares the same name as the Palestinian president and is old enough to recall the Sabra and Shatila massacres in 1982 when 1,700 Palestinians were killed by Israel's Phalangist allies during the Lebanese civil war.

According to reporter Robert Fisk, who entered the camps on the third and final day of the massacre, 18 September 1982, 'the Israeli army sent the killers into the camps and then watched – and did nothing – while the atrocity took place' (Fisk, 2012). An Israeli investigation into the massacres held the then Defence Minister, Ariel

Sharon, responsible since he sent the Phalangists into the camps. While he lost his job at the time, he was later to become Prime Minister and 'no-one was tried or sentenced for the slaughter' (ibid). Mahmoud Abbas described many of those who visited Shatila as 'tragedy hunters', filing stories about poverty and the massacres which ultimately do little to alter the reality of life in the camp. *Aljazeera's* Amanda Fisher in 2015 reported a mix of reactions when visiting Shatila in 2015 including: 'You think this is a tourist attraction ... a picnic?'. One can understand the frustration and, perhaps, anger of residents living in extremely poor conditions and having their poverty paraded to outsiders.



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## Museum of Memories

Tucked away down one of the maze of narrow streets in the Palestinian refugee camp of Shatila is the Museum of Memories, a treasure trove of artefacts collected by Dr Mohammed al-Khatebi since 2004. The museum aims to retain the cultural heritage of Palestinian communities dispossessed of their land in 1948. It includes cooking utensils, agricultural tools and the keys of Palestinian houses signifying the right to return. There are other similar museums in southern Lebanon, Gaza, the West Bank and Moscow. These museums are part of the collective history of the Palestinians and are important in preserving their identity when their status in Lebanon remains that of the 'foreigner'.

The museum was tended on the day of my visit by Mohammed's brother, Mr Ali al-Khatebi, who in his youth had moved with his family from one refugee camp to another as they were targeted and destroyed in the 1970s during the Lebanese civil war. Like many Palestinian refugees he was displaced many times over during the conflict and in 1979 he went to Cuba to study electrical engineering, married a Cuban and now has three children

studying medicine there. Between 1985 and 1989, he became displaced again during what became known as the 'War of the Camps', when Pro-Syrian militiamen from Amal, a Lebanese Shia movement, and anti-Arafat factions laid siege to Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut and southern Lebanon. This was another period when atrocities and human rights abuses were visited on Palestinian communities. Ali, like his brother Mohammed (a medical doctor), worked for UNRWA and is now retired. Mohammed opened the Museum of Memories in 2005 with precious artefacts that included passports and the deeds to land that families left behind. Mohammed said his museum 'is about more than just preserving memories of Palestinians; it also marks the decades of suffering since their displacement'.

## Cuts to UNRWA's budget

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) plays an important front-line role in providing key services and support to Palestinian refugees. These services include: primary health centres, schools, women's centres, vocational and training centres, and community rehabilitation centres. It also provides jobs,



Mr Ali al-Khatebi outside the Museum of Memories that he curates with his brother Mohammed in Shatila refugee camp. (Stephen McCloskey, all rights reserved).



cash support and food aid to refugee camps that are also hosting refugees from Syria, which is considerably adding to pressure on services and resources.

Given the extreme levels of poverty outlined in this report and the high level of dependence of Palestinian refugees on UNRWA, it is of the greatest concern that the Trump administration in the United States (US) announced that it is to withdraw [\\$300m](#) (£228m) in funding from the UN agency, which is around one-third of its total annual budget. This trenchant cut has forced UNRWA to axe 250 jobs in the West Bank and Gaza and, represents an 'existential threat' to the future of the agency which is operating with a deficit of \$256 million.

US disengagement from UNRWA followed the decision of the Trump administration to move the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem thereby reversing a longstanding US commitment to have the status of the contested Holy City agreed as part of a negotiated Middle-East settlement. By recognising Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, President Trump seemingly dashed Palestinian aspirations for recognition of East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state. Trump [said](#) this move was 'a long overdue step to advance the peace process', but this view was overwhelmingly [rejected](#) by the United Nations General Assembly when it voted 128-9 in favour of a resolution condemning Washington's policy shift. In the wake of the US decision to move its embassy to Jerusalem, the Palestinian Authority broke off diplomatic relations with Washington since the capital of a Palestinian state in East Jerusalem had been taken 'off the agenda'. By way of riposte, President Trump, in one of his legendary bad-tempered tweets, [said](#) 'we pay the Palestinians HUNDRED OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS a year and get no appreciation or respect'. The disrespectful Palestinians were subsequently made to suffer through UNRWA cuts but what is really afoot here?

President Trump's son-in-law and advisor, Jared Kushner, has been engaged in shuttle diplomacy around the Middle-East trying to sell the 'deal of the century' which is an economic development plan for Gaza and the West Bank. In return for forfeiting their right to return and abandoning their refugee status, Palestinians are being asked to accept what Robert Fisk [describes](#) as 'cash for peace instead of a land for peace' deal. At a stroke, the 'deal of the century' would remove the need for UNRWA as there would be no more Palestinian refugees, now benefiting from economic incentives from Washington and its regional neighbours such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

It seems a grave misconception to presume that Palestinians who have suffered for generations the life of the refugee would trade their right to return and their claim to a Palestinian state with a capital in East Jerusalem, for 'economic regeneration'. It seems doubtful, too, that there would be much enthusiasm for such a deal among Washington's allies with Saad El Gammal, head of the Egyptian parliament's Arab Affairs Committee [suggesting](#) that 'Most of the Arab world – including Egypt and Saudi Arabia – have rejected the U.S.-proposed Deal of the Century'.

In the context of the 'deal of the century', it is difficult to view the cuts to UNRWA as anything more than the cynical use of aid for political ends. This was made clear when *Foreign Policy* magazine released e-mails which showed that Jared Kushner 'had [pressed](#) Jordan to strip its more than 2 million registered Palestinians of their refugee status so that UNRWA would no longer need to operate in the Middle Eastern country'. What is particularly scabrous about this endeavour to downsize UNRWA is the fact that the five million Palestinians under its care are being put at risk of even graver humanitarian suffering.



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## Conclusion

As a small state with a delicate political balance and unfinished business from a long civil war, Lebanon has been overwhelmed by the influx of over one million refugees from Syria. It should be commended for accepting such a large number of refugees which comprise one quarter of its population that makes a mockery of the Syrian refugee intakes by many wealthier European states with a greater capacity to be more generous. Lebanon should be supported to a greater level by multilateral bodies to help manage its refugee population, many of whom have been subjected to trauma and human rights abuses during the Syrian conflict. However, Lebanon could itself be more supportive of the Palestinian refugee community resident in the country since 1948 by offering them full citizenship and removing barriers to over 30 professions which deny them full integration into Lebanese society. By refusing

Palestinians permission to own property they are denied a foothold in society and a legacy for their children. Palestinians make a significant economic contribution to the Lebanese economy despite their economic disadvantages and this needs to be reciprocated with greater equality and dignity for Palestinians living in Lebanon. This is particularly needed in the area of education so that Palestinians have greater access to all levels of the education system, particularly third level where they currently hold a tiny minority of places. The recently announced US cuts to the UN Mission for Palestinian refugees places this vulnerable population at even greater risk of humanitarian suffering and social marginalisation. By lifting the barriers to their social and economic integration, Lebanon can assist the Palestinian community to greater agency, independence and equality.





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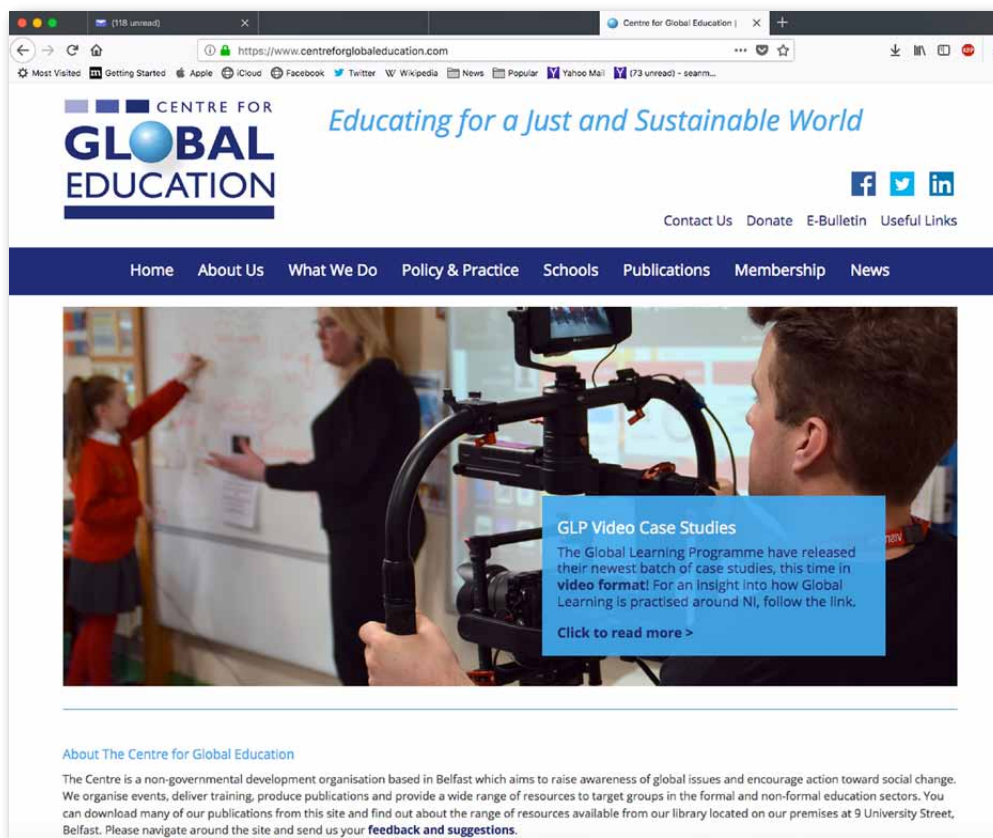
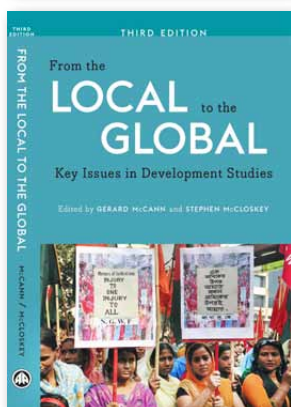
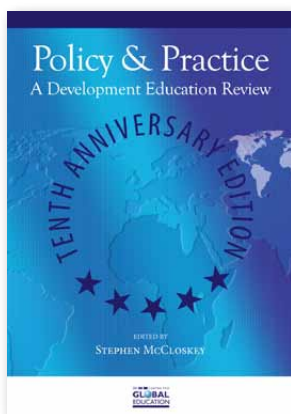


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