

Lebanon Law Violates the Rights of Syrian Refugees

A Renewed Appeal

April 2, 2019

It is well known why millions of Syrians have fled their country. This is due to the armed conflict, arbitrary arrests and systematic torture, particularly in the prisons of the Government of Syria (GoS), as well as violations committed by opposition armed groups against civilians. All these violations have prompted millions of Syrians to leave their homes and property and move to safer places.

The Syrian Civic Platform (SCP) attempts in this report to shed light on the situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Lebanon lacks laws that protect Syrians' rights, which opens the door to violations against them by everyone, including the Lebanese security services and government institutions, as well as political parties.

The SCP confirms that this report is not the first regarding the situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. It was preceded by many reports calling on the Lebanese government, the United Nations and international actors to take action to support laws that protect the Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

Unfortunately, the SCP has not seen any measures to improve the situation of Syrian refugees. On the contrary, the monitoring carried out by the SCP has revealed that the abusive practices against Syrian refugees are still taking place. In addition, some Lebanese official institutions and some parties in Lebanon have been attempting - through intermediaries - to persuade the refugees to return to Syria, without taking into account the risks that may result from their return. This has already led to the arrest of some refugees who returned from Lebanon to Syria as mentioned in a previous report of the SCP entitled: *Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Between Repatriation and Discrimination*.¹

The SCP reiterates that the main reason for violations against Syrian refugees is primarily due to the legal status of refugees on the Lebanese territory, and in particular legal provisions adopted by Lebanese governmental institutions regarding those that secretly enter Lebanese territory (i.e. do not legally cross the border at checkpoints).

Although this law does not make sense in the context of asylum, it is still being adopted in Lebanon, and this entails many violations against hundreds of thousands of Syrians in Lebanese territory, including:

- Frequent checks at the checkpoints of the Lebanese army and intelligence services, and the arrest of those who do not have legal documents. In this regard, the SCP has documented the following:
 - o On March 12, 2019, the Syrian refugee (A.S.) was arrested at a security checkpoint in the Deir Ammar area in northern Lebanon because he did not have residency papers. The refugee was subjected to various kinds of verbal insults as well as beatings, and was taken to several security branches where he was questioned over three days. During the interrogation he was again subjected to insults, beatings and

<https://www.scplatform.net/en/syrian-refugees-in-lebanon-between-repatriation-and-discrimination/>¹

humiliation. After his release, his identity papers were kept at the Lebanese General Security and he is now without any identification papers.

- The inability of Syrian refugees to file complaints to the Lebanese judicial authorities regarding the various abuses they suffer from is contributing to widespread violations. In this regard, the SCP documented the following:
 - o The Syrian refugee (M.K.) demanded his employer pay his agreed salaries. However, the employer refused to pay the amount due and expelled the refugee from his work. What prompted the employer to act in this way was the refugee's inability to file a complaint to government institutions because he has no legal residency papers.
- Racism is rampant in some Lebanese municipalities and among Lebanese citizens. It is prominent as well in the speeches of some Lebanese politicians, in addition to racism in the education sector.

We can state that the Lebanese government did not respect the minimum rights of refugees on its territory, as stipulated in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees,² which is a United Nations multilateral treaty that defines who is a refugee, and sets out the rights of individuals who are granted asylum and the responsibilities of nations that grant asylum. One of the main provisions of this Convention, Article 33 “prohibition of expulsion or return (Refoulement)”, states the following:

“No Contracting State shall expel or return (“refouler”) a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.”

Therefore, the SCP renews its demands for the following:

1. Refugees must be granted the right of humanitarian asylum or the right of temporary protection in Lebanon.
2. Refugees are exempted from the financial penalty of residence which amounts to US \$ 200.
3. Donors should increase their support for economic empowerment projects to help refugees live with dignity.
4. Refugees who do not receive any humanitarian support from the United Nations should be allowed to work and earn their living.
5. Grant residency papers to refugees who did not enter Lebanese territory legally across the border.
6. Arbitrary arrests of refugees without residency permits should be stopped, and refugees shouldn't be arrested without court orders.
7. Stop media incitement of racism and hostility against refugees.
8. In addition, we reiterate our call for establishing an international committee under the auspices of the United Nations to monitor the situation of refugees, both in countries of asylum and during their return, in order to ensure the safe and voluntary return of refugees.

Below is a series of reports issued by the SCP on the situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon:

<https://bit.ly/2JjZVmo>²



- *Syrian Refugees Camps in Lebanon “Urgent Appeal” –January 11, 2019*
<https://bit.ly/2UHkCBt>
- *Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: New measures threaten livelihoods –October 18, 2018*
<https://bit.ly/2FYNDzf>
- *Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Between Repatriation and Discrimination –October 5, 2018*
<https://bit.ly/2UaseZa>
- *Syrian Refugees in Lebanon –October 21, 2017*
<https://bit.ly/2D73E5s>
- *Syrian refugees in Arsal refugee camps, Lebanon –July 9, 2017*
<https://bit.ly/2P0lmeu>
- *Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) A Continuous Crisis –October 11, 2018*
<https://bit.ly/2G4rDCX>