

## The Policy of Pressuring Syrian Refugees in Lebanon Continues

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### Introduction

The campaign against the presence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon continues alongside an ongoing crackdown on them. This crackdown has been accompanied by security raids on the camps and the demolition of tents and concrete structures providing shelter to Syrian refugees. This report follows a series of reports issued by the Syrian Civic Platform to monitor the ongoing violations against Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

### I. Important Incidents

The most important incidents monitored by the Syrian Civic Platform during the reporting period are:

- Early in the morning on July 22, security forces raided the Al-Awda refugee camp in Bar Elias. The security forces arrested all the men, including the elderly. The elderly men were released the next day at noon, and the rest of the men were released later that same night.
- Five days later, security forces raided the same camp on July 27. This time, after being arrested, some of the men reported being subjected to violence, threats, and accusations of taking up arms before being released. Security forces spread false stories about concealed weapons in the camp and demanded their immediate removal, prompting some residents to flee. These residents were forced to rent houses, to temporarily move-in with relatives, or move to a different refugee camp. Some of the displaced residents moved to the neighboring Al Yasmin refugee camp at the request of the management of the camps, which refused to allow human rights activists and media to enter the camp. Additionally, residents were warned not to leak any information from the camp.

A refugee woman who moved to the camp told us, “The previous camp's management were waiting for the refugees in the camp to make any mistake, so they could throw us out of the camp. The security agencies harassed us badly, and the electricity and water were cut. So, we didn't have any choice other than to move to this camp; especially since we don't have residency and are not allowed to work. I am afraid for my husband and my children here; the security forces arrested them, took them to prison, and beat them”.

- Raids and arrests were monitored in the Syrian refugee camp in Bekaa. The Lebanese army intelligence raided the camp at 5 am on Wednesday, July 24, arresting 11 men. The men were released by the end of the day after being instructed that they had a month to settle their residences, as all of them possessed expired residence documents.
- During the raid, the army intelligence demolished two tents and gave residents a warning to demolish the concrete blocks in the tents because they could only keep one concrete block.



- Fires broke out in the Syrian refugee camps again. A fire broke out in a refugee camp in Saadnayel in Bekaa, on the evening of Thursday, July 25. The cause of the fire was determined to be the result of electricity damage and four tents were completely burned. The frequent fires in Syrian refugee camps are the result of a lack of minimum safety standards in the camp.

Ms. M., a refugee from the camp, says that during the raid, she was asked about the license of her son's bike. The officials wanted to arrest him, despite him being less than 13 years old. In order for her to convince them to let him go, she was forced to beg heavily and to tell them that her son was ill and had metal skewers in his leg.

## II. Recommendations

The SCP has repeatedly stressed that the Lebanese government's recent policies towards Syrian refugees, including: raids, arrests, deportations, and confiscation of vehicles without due process or laws protecting the ability of Syrian refugees to reside or work in Lebanon, are only a tool to pressure Syrian refugees to leave Lebanon and go back to Syria. These are policies are being pursued without consideration of the severe and personal threats Syrians living in Lebanon face returning to Syria, in addition to being a flagrant violations of international human rights laws that protect rights of refugees.

Therefore, we call on the Lebanese authorities to seriously reconsider the reasons why Syrian refugees have been forced to remain in Lebanon, despite the deteriorating conditions of the camps and the negative treatment they have been exposed to for years. We call on all relevant parties and decision-makers to:

1. Secure conditions for the return of refugees to their country, which begins with a genuine political transition and is accompanied by stopping the Government of Syria's practice of arresting of civilians, based on their political opinions.
2. Act immediately to protect refugees from deportation after their arrest.
3. Provide alternative housing for Syrian refugees that is readily available in case the Lebanese government affirms their decision to continue the demolition and removal of the refugee camps.
4. Provide immediate protection for children from arrest and torture, which has become a common sight and occurrence for everyone in refugee camps.
5. Work to find solutions to the residency problems of refugees and to negotiate with the Lebanese government to alleviate unfair decisions against refugees or increase the sympathies of the Lebanese government to refugees.
6. Work with Lebanese municipalities and camp management to prepare camps for the winter after the insistence of the Lebanese government that the refugees destroy concrete blocks that they were using as a buffer against the floods during the winter. This constitutes an early warning for humanitarian agencies to move in before the arrival of winter.