Lebanon: Whether Bedouins born in Lebanon are entitled to Lebanese citizenship and are able to obtain identity documents; information on decree 5247, including whether it enabled naturalization of stateless Bedouins and information on the time before it was in effect; consequences of illegal entry to or exit from Lebanon

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In a 15 January 2007 telephone interview, the President of the Institute for Middle East Peace and Development (IMEPD), a non-profit organization established in 1979 to work towards peace and development in the region (IMEPD n.d.), stated that Bedouins are primarily found in Jordan and Israel and that there is a small concentration of them living in Lebanon. The President also stated that it is very difficult for Bedouins to obtain identity documents (ibid. 15 Jan. 2007). In a 2006 paper from the European University Institute (EUI) entitled Lebanese Politics of Nationality and Emigration, it is reported that some Bedouins living in Lebanon have been granted nationality (Sept. 2006, 8).

Additional information to that found in LBN38078.E of 5 March 2002, which is provided below, could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

The Director of a human rights organization in Lebanon called Multi-Initiative on Rights: Search, Assist and Defend (MIRSAD) stated in 28 February 2002 correspondence that Bedouins born in Lebanon are not entitled to Lebanese citizenship and secure official identity documents. Regarding who was eligible to become Lebanese citizens under the June 1994 Decree 5247 and whether the Decree allowed stateless Bedouins to become Lebanese citizens, the Director stated that there were no eligibility standards [under Decree 5247]. The government considers naturalization as a gift by the state, not as a right. The names [of those who were granted Lebanese citizenship] were chosen without any defined requirements and prerequisites. The document [the Decree] consists of 1300 pages.

As for the consequences faced by stateless Bedouins who enter or exit Lebanon illegally, the Director stated that they would risk arrest and deportation. Bedouins are treated like any foreigner: they are required to "carry valid travel documents bearing Lebanese visas or residence permits" (ibid.).

With respect to Decree 5247, an article entitled "Lebanon: The Dreadful Age and the Martyred Nation" published on the Lebanese Forces official Web site states...
whilst the Lebanese were emigrating, the government issued a decree (No. 5247) in 1994 allowing the naturalization of around four hundred and fifty thousand (450,000) individuals including twenty seven thousand (27,000) Palestinians, claiming that they belonged to seven Lebanese villages annexed by Israel in 1948, as well as twelve thousand (12,000) Arab gypsies (Study prepared by Nemat Allah Abi Nasr). This decree increased, in one round, the population of Lebanon by 10%. (Apr. 2000)

The Lebanese Forces came into being in August 1976 with the merging of four Christian organizations, the Phalangists, the National Liberal Party, Al-Tanzeem Party and the Guardians of the Cedars, in order to "consolidate the war efforts and to establish a unified resistance military council under the command of the late Lebanese president 'Bashir Gemayel'." (Lebanese Forces n.d.)

The author of an article in the British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies on the census of 1932 in Lebanon states that

the 1932 census played a fundamental role in the ongoing state-building process of the Lebanese state in two ways: it was the basis for the personal registration of the population residing in Lebanon as well as Lebanese emigrants, and it formed one of the cornerstones of citizenship legislation in the Lebanese state ....

The census was finally officially announced on 15 January 1932 through Decree 8837 lining up rules for the enumerating process of Lebanese residents and emigrants ....

The census adopted over time a "legal character" because some of the articles of Decree 8837 that drew up the guidelines for the conducting of the census were later interpreted by the judicial system as decisive specifications for the granting or denying of Lebanese citizenship ....

One important result of the 1932 census was that an unknown number of persons who had resided in Lebanon for generations, were not counted as Lebanese, and were denied citizenship as a result of the enumeration process ....

Article 12 stipulated that only Bedouin who "normally" reside on Lebanese territories more than 6 months were to be counted as Lebanese, an instruction which resulted in the exclusion of Sunni Muslim Bedouin partly because they could not prove the length of their period of residence on Lebanese territories. (Nov. 1999)

No further or corroborating information on the status of Bedouins born in Lebanon could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References


Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Attempts to contact the Center for Bedouin Studies and Development and a Middle East expert from the University of Oslo were unsuccessful. A Middle East expert from San Diego State University did not provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International (AI), Center for Bedouin Studies and Development, European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Freedom House, Human Rights Watch (HRW), IRB databases, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Palestinian Refugee and Diaspora Centre (SHAML), Refugees International, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).
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