

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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> Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment please email Basesdedonnees.DatabaseUnit@irb-cisr.gc.ca.

19 February 2014

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Lebanon: Ability of the police to arrest a Palestinian refugee inside Beddawi refugee camp under court order
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Security Enforcement in Palestinian Refugee Camps

1.1 Camps in General

In correspondence sent to the Research Directorate, a professor of sociology at the American University of Beirut, who focuses his research on the situation of Palestinian refugees, stated that security in the camps is enforced by Lebanese military intelligence and the Internal Security Forces (ISF) (Professor of sociology 5 Feb. 2014). Interpol describes the ISF as "Lebanon's national police and security force" (n.d.). The sociology Professor added that "[t]hey are extremely harsh against any violation of law[s] by Palestinians," but that laws are enforced to different degrees depending on the particular camp, with the strictest enforcement in Ain Helweh [variations of spelling include Ain al-Hilweh, Ayn al-Hilweh and Ein al-Hilweh] and Borg Alshemali [also spelled Burj el-Shemali, Borj El Shemali, Bourj El Shemal] refugee camps [both located in southern Lebanon] (Professor of sociology 5 Feb. 2014).

However, in correspondence sent to the Research Directorate, a professor of political science at McGill University, who studies the Middle East, including Lebanon, and who has published research on the situation of Palestinian refugees, stated that "[e]ffectively, the camps have no police force," although he also noted that "[i]n some camps the various (armed) Palestinian factions may agree on some sort of cooperative security procedures" (Professor of political science 4 Feb. 2014).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a professor of Middle East politics at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) of the University of London, whose research interests include Lebanon and the status of Palestinians, likewise stated that

[m]ost camps have had an arrangement with the Lebanese state since 1970 which gives camp committees the right and obligation to police the camps. As such, each camp has its own specific arrangements for policing (which also depends on which faction or party dominates the camp). There are differences in the extent and capability of internal policing, but in most instances the Lebanese security forces stay out of the camps. (4 Feb. 2014)

Likewise, in correspondence with the Research Directorate, a visiting lecturer on human rights at Saint Joseph University in Beirut, who has also worked for several international organizations in the Arab region, explained that "in general, local committees (called popular committees - PC) control security inside Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon" (Visiting Lecturer 10 Feb. 2014). According to the Visiting Lecturer, the compositions of such committees

usually reflect the political landscape in a given camp. As such, the PC in camps mainly maintained by Fateh /PLO would see a great influence of this latter in decision making; whereas in the case of the camps controlled by pro-Syrian Palestinian factions (mainly Northern Lebanon), the PC would consist mainly of these factions. (ibid.)

1.2 Northern Camps, Including Beddawi

The Visiting Lecturer stated that

the situation in the camps situated in Northern Lebanon - including Al-Beddawi- changed dramatically after the 2007 war between the Lebanese Army and Fateh Al-Islam in the Nahr El-Bared [also spelled Nahr al-Barid] camp. The rise of radical Islam within these camps in the last years that preceded the Nahr El-Bared war has ended after 2007. The inability of the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security forces to go inside the camp has been reversed as well. (ibid.)

The Professor of political science from McGill also stated that the Nahr El-Bared camp is controlled by the Lebanese Army (4 Feb. 2014).

The Professor of Middle East politics stated that it "is less and less the case" that Lebanese forces stay out of refugee camps in northern Lebanon, including the Beddawi camp, following the 2007 events in Nahr El-Bared camp (4 Feb. 2014). Sources note that these events resulted in the displacement of refugees from Nahr al-Bared camp to Beddawi camp (Al-Monitor 26 Dec. 2012; International Crisis Group 19 Feb. 2009, 3). The Professor of sociology likewise stated that the situation in Beddawi camp has become "harsher," as Lebanese security forces want to control the Nahr el-Bared population now present in Beddawi (5 Feb. 2014).

2. Ability of Security Forces to Make Arrests Within Refugee Camps

According to the Professor of political science, "[t]he Lebanese authorities are generally unable to arrest individuals inside the refugee camps," although authorities may use checkpoints to control access to them (4 Feb. 2014). However, according to the Professor of Middle East politics, although authorities are not supposed to be able to make arrests, "they are known to do so," and "they do not necessarily need court orders to arrest people. Arrests can happen rather arbitrarily, and people can be kept in jail before being charged for months" (4 Feb. 2014).

The Professor of sociology also stated that Lebanese police are able to arrest individuals within Palestinian refugee camps (Professor of sociology 5 Feb. 2014). According to the Professor of sociology, police enter the camps or ask the Palestinian security committee to make an arrest, "often without court orders at the discretion of [the] chief of military intelligence in the area" (ibid.). The Professor of political science also stated being aware of "Palestinian groups handing individuals over to the Lebanese authorities" (4 Feb. 2014)

The Visiting Lecturer stated that

[t]he ability of the Lebanese police to arrest individuals within Palestinian refugee camps differ[s] from one camp to another. While the police ha[ve] the ability to arrest people in some camp[s] provided they hold prior coordination with the PC, other camps (i.e., Ain El-Helweh) are almost sealed. (Visiting Lecturer 10 Feb. 2014)

He added that the practice of producing an arrest warrant was not common in Lebanon, both in general as well as in Palestinian refugee camps (ibid.).

2.1 Ability of Authorities to Make Arrests in Beddawi Camp

According to the Visiting Lecturer,

[t]he case of Beddawi is slightly different after 2007. The Nahr El-Bared war provided an opportunity for the Lebanese armed forces (LAF) to exercise a much higher authority in security matters including the ability to arrest people inside the camp.

To do this with minimal damage, it was agreed to have a joint PC-LAF coordination committee that would oversee security matters, including arrests, inside the Beddawi camp. The extent to which this mechanism allows the police to arrest individuals is to be questioned. The scope of the PC-LAF coordination remains limited to security matters mostly that technically fall within the LAF mandate and does not include the usual crimes and felonies that fall under the ISF [internal security forces] mandate.

The coordination between ISF and LAF is also weak and therefore, the capacity for the ISF (police) to arrest individuals within Al-Beddawi camp remains insignificant. In case such a possibility exists, ISF are required to produce an arrest warrant. (Visiting Lecturer 10 Feb. 2014)

He also stated that "arrests in Al-Beddawi are mainly done by the LAF (army) and for security matters in general. Arrests by the ISF for criminal matters are not very frequent in Al-Beddawi camps" (ibid.). Information corroborating the details provided by the Visiting Lecturer could not 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 sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Al-Monitor. 26 December 2012. Mohammad Harfoush. "Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon." <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2012/al-monitor/refugee-camps-lebanon.html>> [Accessed 3 Feb. 2014]

International Crisis Group. 19 February 2009. *Nurturing Instability: Lebanon's Palestinian Refugee Camps*. Middle East Report No. 84. <<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/israel-palestine/084-nurturing-instability-lebanons-palestinian-refugee-camps.aspx>> [Accessed 10 Feb. 2014]

Interpol. N.d. "Lebanon." <<http://www.interpol.int/Member-countries/Asia-South-Pacific/Lebanon>> [Accessed 14 Feb. 2014]

Professor of political science, McGill University. 4 February 2014. Correspondence with the Research Directorate.

Professor of Middle East politics, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. 4 February 2014. Correspondence sent to the Research Directorate.

Professor of sociology, American University of Beirut. 5 February 2014. Correspondence sent to the Research Directorate.

Visiting lecturer, Saint Joseph University, Beirut. 10 February 2014. Correspondence sent to the Research Directorate.

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: A representative of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the North East (UNRWA) was unable to provide information for this Response. Attempts to reach a Lebanese NGO that works in the Palestinian refugee camps were unsuccessful.

Internet Sites, including: Al-Akhbar; Al Jazeera; Al-Shabaka; Amnesty International; *The Daily Star*; ecoi.net; Eurostep; Factiva; Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme; Freedom House; *l'Hebdo Magazine*; Human Rights Watch; Lebanon – Internal Security Forces; *Le Monde*; *L'Orient le Jour*; *La Revue du Liban*; TV5 Monde; United Kingdom – Home Office; United Nations – Integrated Regional Information Networks, Refworld; United States – Department of State; Ya Libnan.

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