

INTRODUCTION

This Stakeholder report covers Lebanese youth and young Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon, being the focus of the association's work.¹ It puts special emphasis on their economic and social rights, which have been the main engine of the recent youth-led uprising around the country. Youth took to the streets to protest unfair economic measures and lack of justice in carrying the burden of austerity, in a country where 1% of the population controls more than 50% of the wealth². The report also reposes the question of civil and political rights, in light of the recent involvement of young people in shaping their destiny, faced by unchecked state violence, and looks into the issue of protection. It provides specific suggestions to improve the current situation in line with the Committee and Stakeholder 2015 UPR comments.

On 3 April 2012, Lebanon's Council of Ministers endorsed a National Youth Policy,³ a result of years of bottom up participatory youth led work. However, it is yet to be implemented, in part or in full.

The overall situation of human rights as applied to young people suffers from the hold of the clientelist, confessional and quota- based political system, which hinders their political, social, and economic independence and initiative, in addition to equitable and tailored access to services.

The report also discusses the situation of young Palestinian refugees in some details. Although about 480,000 Palestinian refugees are registered by UNRWA⁴, the latest census conducted by the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee (Under the Presidency of the Council of Ministers) "enumerated 224,901 people including 183,255 Palestinian refugees in 168 localities."⁵ They endure the continuous violation of their human rights. Officially, there is a chronic lack of clarity of the various duty bearers and their responsibilities before the refugee population, which compounds the absence of human rights, as they fall outside the Refugee Convention and are under the mandate of a services agency (UNRWA).

While the report presents a concise description of the status of each right, recommendations addressed to the Lebanese government are mentioned in annex 3.

¹ The category of youth in Lebanon covers those between 15 and 29 years as defined by the Lebanese state based on the country's socioeconomic characteristics.

² In 2014, Credit Suisse bank in its Global Wealth Report estimated that 0.3% of Lebanese own 50% of the wealth.

³ Youth Forum for Youth Policy, "The Document of the Youth Policy in Lebanon," Endorsed by the Lebanese Council of Ministers on 3 April 2012, available at:

https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Lebanon_2012_National_Youth_Policy.pdf.

⁴ Website of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees, accessible at: <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>

⁵ Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, Central Administration of statistics, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2019). *The Population and Housing Census in Palestinian Camps and Gatherings - 2017, Detailed Analytical Report*, Beirut, Lebanon.

I. ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RIGHTS

1. Right to Education

Based on World Bank statistics and government budgets in the past several years, total government expenditure on education is about US\$1.2 billion annually (approximately 6.4% of total public expenditure⁶). However, a major part of the educational budget goes to subsidizing private schools (usually semi-free and controlled by religious institutions and politicians), attended by 70% of the student population.

Access to Education

Recent statistics have shown that "of residents aged between 3 and 24 years, 71.7% were enrolled in an educational institution (74.4% of females and 69.1% of males). The raw enrolment rate at the elementary level was 98.9% and 76.8% at the secondary level. The net enrolment rate at the elementary level was 87.2% and 54.9% at the secondary level. Net enrolment rates of Lebanese at intermediate level were 78.5% and 64.9% at secondary."⁷

As for Palestinian refugees, secondary school has the lowest enrolment rate among all school levels averaging at 61.2% for PRL,⁸ despite high enrolment rates in primary schools. Some of the reasons behind this drop could be attributed to the fact that Palestinians are not admitted into public schools unless there remains a "place for them," noting that they cannot afford private school tuition, on one hand, and that UNRWA schools (especially secondary level) are not available in all areas. However, "Palestine refugees are required to study under the Lebanese curriculum in order to obtain educational certificates recognized by the Government of Lebanon."⁹

Quality of Education

Public schools and educational facilities face chronic neglect and some lack even the most basic services, such as heating or hygiene. Classrooms suffer from crowding and neglected infrastructure. Educational resources, especially modern technology, are lacking. The educational staff, especially in public schools, is not well trained, negatively impacting student performance. This is in addition to long educational hours and exhausting daily homework, without regard to other needs.¹⁰

At the university level, although Lebanon boasts a number of regionally renowned private institutions, the Lebanese University suffers from numerous problems related to corruption, added to the lack of

⁶ World Bank. *Lebanon - Education Public Expenditure Review 2017 (English)*. Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group, 2018, available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/513651529680033141/Lebanon-Education-Public-Expenditure-Review-2017>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ UNRWA/UNICEF, 2018, op. cit.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Lebanon_2012_National_Youth_Policy.pdf.

equipment and facilities. Although it boasts around 80,000 students, the annual budget is around USD250,000,000.¹¹

Integration of Sex Education in School Curricula

In 2009, the sex education curriculum was acknowledged by the Center of Educational Research and Development under the title “Life skills applied to education in reproductive health from a gender perspective” and integrated into cycle one at schools. CERD endorsed 2 manuals on sex education but has not yet conducted training on their use or introduced them in the curriculum.

2. Right to Work

Based on the latest Labor Force and Household Living Conditions Survey, "the youth (15–24 years old) unemployment rate (23.3%) was more than double the general unemployment rate (11.4%), and was even higher among youth with a university degree (35.7%). The percentage of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) was about 22%, but significantly higher among young women (26.8%) than young men (16.7%)."¹²

In terms of formality, "the majority of the employed population hold informal jobs at their main job (54.9%) and more than a third of the employed population were working in the informal sector at their main job (35.2%)."¹³ An earlier study had indicated that "young workers (15-24 years) have the highest rates of informality (69%) compared with other age groups. It is remarkable that two-thirds of informal workers are under 34 years of age, and one-third of them are under the age of 24. Self-employed workers are also relatively younger than formal workers, with %33 of them under the age of 34."¹⁴

In terms of Palestinian refugees, "about 35.3%...are employed... Another 8.5% were also in the labor force, but unemployed. Thus, the Labor Force Participation Rate is 43.8%. Remaining 56.2% were economically inactive. The large percentage of ‘inactive’ population is due to the very low percentage of employed among females (11.9%) compared to that of males (59.0%). Percentage of unemployed is also lower among females (4.5%) compared to males (12.5%).

According to UNRWA, "among all age categories of PRL, youth (15-24 years old) experience the highest rates of unemployment (36.4%)."¹⁵ Furthermore, "unemployment among PRL has a strong gender dimension, where the female unemployment rate – considering the population aged 15 and above - registers 32.4%, while that of males is 20.8%.¹⁶

¹¹ World Bank, 2018, op. cit.

¹² CAS, LFHLCs 2020, op. cit.

¹³ CAS, LFHLCs 2020, op. cit.

¹⁴ Fakhri, Rabih, "Informal Employment in Lebanon," in *Arab Watch Report on Informal Employment*, Arab NGO Network for Development, 2016, available at: <http://www.annd.org/cd/arabwatch2016/#english>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Barred from over 30 professions¹⁷, including those organized into unions, and facing numerous restrictions on work permits by the Lebanese Ministry of Labor, young Palestinian refugees do not seem to have any prospects. Even if they happen to be employed, they pay social security fees but are not entitled to all the benefits of the NSSF. In the summer of 2019, Palestinian camps rose against a decision by the Ministry of Labor to restrict illegal foreign labor, including the Palestinian refugee community.

3. Right to Quality Health

Lebanon has one of the highest health expenditures in the region; however, 37% of health expenditures are out of pocket, due to very low insurance rates (around one third benefiting from public insurance and another third from private insurance). A big proportion of the public expenditure on health (already only around 3.3% of the public budget)¹⁸ goes to the private sector. Despite the availability of technology and the latest cures in the country, they are almost confined to prohibitively costly private facilities (for example, a visit to a private doctor costs 25% of the minimum wage). Young people are especially susceptible to this discrepancy, due to long job-search periods and high informality rates, not to mention the rampant abuse of the social security system (NSSF) by employers (declaring reduced wages, delay in registration, and abusing probation periods).

Furthermore, "around 17% of PRL aged 15-24 years suffer from a chronic illness, and over 6% are disabled. In 2016, UNRWA amended its hospitalization policy "according to which the percentage of the Agency's coverage for secondary care will be adjusted to 90 percent for government hospitals, 90 percent for private hospitals and 100 percent for Palestine Red Crescent hospitals."¹⁹

4. Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Law 220/2000 guarantees the rights of PwDs to access public services and integrate into society and the labor market by specifying a quota of 3% in employment. However, implementation mechanisms are yet to be issued, despite the law's approval by Parliament in 2000.

¹⁷ The number of professions varies according to estimate and ministerial decisions; for example, please see International Labour Organization, *Palestinian Employment in Lebanon: Facts and Challenges*, ILO, 2012, available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_236502.pdf.

¹⁸ Lebanese Republic, Ministry of Finance, 2020 Budget, available at: <https://www.lbcgroup.tv/ExtImages/images1/machrou.pdf>.

¹⁹ UNRWA, "UNRWA Strengthening Hospitalization Support in Lebanon," UNRWA Press Release, 1 June 2016, available at: <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/unrwa-strengthens-hospitalization-support-lebanon>.

²⁰ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, "Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Lebanon (Concluding observations No. E/C.12/LBN/CO/2). UN, Economic and Social Council, 2016, available at: <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=4sIQ6QSmIBEDzFEovLCuW%2bqI9EVGtH59rb%2f5qYCKL9EJN1b6cd380Vay5v9yoUJhyrQK06cMIJwD15gpkbzbvjRlrOYI2CrCaFiz1cOLXSmsc2%2bQhz0DzttVRFaDGNc5a>.

Furthermore, 80% of PwDs in Lebanon are not or have never been employed.²⁰ Among Palestinian refugees with disabilities, unemployment is estimated at 90%.²¹ "As a result of multiple adverse factors, refugee women, children, and youth with disabilities, as well as their caregivers, face a range of risks that affect their Mental Health and Psychological Wellbeing. This includes risks that are distinct from those faced by other persons with disabilities in Lebanon."²²

5. Right to the City

Young people in Lebanon are deprived of public space in the cities, due to a lack of green spaces or non-commercial/non-partisan facilities offering opportunities to network and develop. For example, public beaches are occupied by private resources in violation of the law and accessibility is limited and prohibitive. The recent uprising has provided an opportunity for youth to reclaim some of the public space and provide alternatives for its use by the general population.

²⁰ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, "Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Lebanon (Concluding observations No. E/C.12/LBN/CO/2). UN, Economic and Social Council, 2016, available at: <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=4sIQ6QSmIBEDzFEovLCuW%2bqI9EVGtH59rb%2f5qYCKL9EJN1b6cd380Vay5v9yoUJhyrQK06cMIJwD15gpkbvjRlrOYI2CrCaFiz1cOLXSmsc2%2bQhz0DzttVRFaDGnC5a>.

²¹ Joint stakeholders 15 [JS15]. (n.d.). Joint Submission 15. A common presentation by several PWD Associations, to 'the High Commissioner of Human Rights' on the occasion of the 10th session of the 'Universal Periodic Review 2015', available at: <https://uprdoc.ohchr.org/uprweb/downloadfile.aspx?filename=2061&file=EnglishTranslation>.

²² Women's Refugee Commission & UNICEF. "Disability Inclusion in Child Protection and Gender-based Violence Programs. Disability Inclusion in Psychosocial Support Programs in Lebanon: Guidance for Psychosocial Support Facilitators," 2018, available at <https://wrc.ms/2pIEVND>.

II. CIVIL & POLITICAL RIGHTS

1. Participation in Public Life

Despite years of campaigning by civil society, the voting age remains at 21 and that of candidacy to elections at 25. The age of majority on all legal matters being 18, the current law leads to inequality between adult citizens. Similarly, young Lebanese cannot form or join associations before the age of 20, according to Law 1909 at the Ministry of Interior and the age of 18 according to Law 629/2004 at the Ministry of Youth & Sports.

Recent events during the 2019 uprising highlighted the increasing use of repression by the state against protestors, both on the streets and on social media.²³

2. Access to Information

Despite taking effect in February 2017, the authorities have largely failed to comply with the Right to Access to Information Law, which obligates all government bodies, public institutions, and institutions that perform public functions to publish key legal, organizational, and financial documents. It also gives citizens the right to request information, including decisions, statistics, and contracts, from those administrations and to receive a response within 15 days. However, the government has not established the body designated to oversee its implementation nearly three years after its passage.

3. Right to a Nationality

Lebanese women married to non-Lebanese men are not allowed to pass on their nationality to their children and husbands. Consequently, their children are stripped of their rights as citizens. This blatant discrimination against women leads to several repercussions on their children at the social, psychological and economic levels, especially in terms of access to education, services, and employment, in addition to security risks and a having a residence permit.

4. Personal and Individual Freedoms

Laws regulating national identity and personal status (relegated to religious courts) impede young people's ability to build families freely and without coercion, and breach the principle of equality among all citizens, enshrined in the Lebanese constitution. Unmarried young people are required to submit family registers in all legal procedures and are forced to identify the religious sect they were born into, regardless of actual belief or affiliation.

²³ See for example, Amnesty International, "MENA: Renewed wave of mass uprisings met with brutality and repression during 'year of defiance'," 18 February 2020, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/02/mena-renewed-wave-of-mass-uprisings-met-with-brutality-and-repression-during-year-of-defiance/>.

III. PROTECTION

1. Young People in Contact with the Law

Law 422 of 2002 guarantees the protection of juveniles who break the law or are at risk, including how security forces should approach and deal with juveniles and the availability of adequate and well-equipped facilities. Despite some developments, juveniles in the penal system remain subject to violence, humiliation, and deteriorating health conditions, added to the stigma they face in society.

2. Girls Forced into Early Marriage

Marriage procedures in Lebanon are bound by religious laws, where each sect sets the legal age for marriage. Some religious sects allow girls to be married off as early as the age of 9. According to UNICEF, 4.1% of Lebanese girls between 15 and 19 are married today, and 6% of those between the ages of 20 and 24 were married before the age of 18.

3. Gender-Based and Domestic Violence

The Law on the Protection of Women and other Family Members from Domestic Violence was passed in early April 2014 but fell short in many key areas, according to women's and human rights organizations. Although it establishes important protection measures and related policing and court reforms, the Law left women at risk of marital rape and other abuse, in addition to leaving the question of child custody to religious courts.

4. SOGI/E-Based Discrimination

Article 534 of the Lebanese Penal Code criminalizes "sexual intercourse contrary to nature" by up to 1 year in prison. The article is used to criminalize homosexuality and transgenderism. In general, LGBTIQ individuals face harassment and bullying on all levels, without access to state justice, this includes the use of infamous anal examinations and arbitrary arrest and exploitation by the police.

IV. PALESTINIAN REFUGEES

In addition to the rights illustrated above and the lack of access to public services in Lebanon in general, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon face a complex set of discriminatory measures, which impedes their development, including the right to housing through the ban on the import of construction materials into the camps. The right to movement is also impeded, especially through the military checkpoints located at the entrance of Camps and the wall erected around Ain el Helweh Camp, which reflects a xenophobic and security-based attitude adopted by the Lebanese government. This is not to mention the slow pace of reconstruction of Nahr el-Bared camp in North Lebanon, leaving many families displaced since 2007. The situation in the camps is that of over crowdedness and collapsing infrastructure. Unattended electrical wiring causes several fatal accidents during the rainy season, reaching 86 victims in Bourj Barajneh camp alone since 2000.²⁴

Additionally, Palestinians are not allowed to form associations. Also, more than 35,000²⁵ are not registered at the Refugees Department at the Ministry of Interior (non-R) and others (between 3,000 and 5,000)²⁶ do not have any identification documents (non-ID). The multilayered siege imposed on Palestinian refugee camps is an obstacle to the achievement of Rights.

²⁴ Dunya al-Watan, "Electricity kills 86 in Burj al-Barajneh," 18/1/2020, available at: <http://bit.ly/2tlzpq5>.

²⁵ No recent estimates are available; earlier estimates put the number at around 35,000; for example, please see: Frontiers Center, *Falling Through the Cracks: Legal and Practical Gaps in Refugee Status (A case study of unrecognized refugees in Lebanon)*, Frontiers Center, 2005, available at: https://prn.mcgill.ca/research/papers/050815_fallingthroughthecracks.pdf.

²⁶ UNRWA, "Protection Brief: Palestine Refugees Living in Lebanon," October 2017, available at: https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/lebanon_protection_brief_october_2017.pdf.