

BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights



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Oral statement submitted by BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights -a non-governmental organization with special consultative status

As the ongoing Syrian crisis intensifies, so too does the forcible displacement of thousands of civilians. Syria's half-million Palestinian refugee population is among those forced to flee to neighboring countries, namely Jordan and Lebanon. Moreover, those Palestinians displaced from Iraq and now residing within Syria are still to have their status determined and as such lack the minimal levels of protection which they should be afforded.

In Jordan these Palestinian refugees are particularly vulnerable because many of them previously held Jordanian citizenship that was later revoked. They have either been detained at the Jordanian border and denied entry, or simply existing in limbo, facing the perpetual threat of deportation. The Jordanian Interior Minister has explicitly stated that Jordan will not deal with Palestinians who come from Syria as refugees, “[they] will only treat them as guests.”

In Lebanon, displaced Palestinians granted entry are placed into overcrowded refugee camps in which Palestinian refugees have resided for decades. Lebanese authorities have invoked discriminatory laws which differentiate between Syrian and Palestinian refugees, favoring the former and thus exacerbating hardship endured by the Palestinian refugee population. For example, whereas Syrian refugees can remain in Lebanon for up to six months, Palestinian refugees from Syria receive only a one-week residency permit that they must pay to renew on a monthly basis.

Palestinian refugees fleeing Syria for Jordan or Lebanon face poor, inadequate facilities, cramped living conditions, and "prisoner-like" conditions that prohibit full freedom of movement and/or employment.

The principle of non-refoulement has been defined in a number of international instruments relating to refugees, both at the universal and regional levels and most importantly in Article 33 (1) of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of refugees. It prohibits the expulsion of a refugee where there is a likelihood of serious bodily injury or death.

The instability and violence that has engulfed Syria leaves Palestinian refugees at great risk should they remain or return to that country. Lebanon and Jordan's stringent policies toward Palestinians fleeing Syria violate the customary norm of non-refoulement, thus greatly jeopardizing the basic human security that should be afforded to all.

BADIL urges the Human Right Council to:

- 1) Condemn the refolement of Palestinian refugees fleeing Syria;
- 2) Call for Jordan and Lebanon to cease the refolement of Palestinian refugees fleeing Syria;
- 3) Urge the Jordanian and Lebanese governments to afford those Palestinian refugees fleeing Syria protection equal to that granted to all other refugees;
- 4) Ask all States to increase their financial and humanitarian support for refugees fleeing Syria without discrimination.