

# Palestinian Refugees

*Access to registration and  
UNRWA services, documents,  
and entry to Jordan*



Ministry of Immigration  
and Integration

The Danish  
Immigration Service

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Front page map: UNRWA, *Where We Work*, n.d., [url](#)

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## Disclaimer

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This report was written according to the EASO COI Report Methodology.<sup>1</sup> The report is primarily based on approved minutes from meetings with carefully selected sources; however, written material is used as well. Statements from sources are used in the report, and all statements are referenced.

This report is not, and does not purport to be a detailed or comprehensive survey of all aspects of the issues addressed in the report and should be weighed against other available country of origin information relevant when addressing issues concerning Palestinians.

The report at hand does not include any policy recommendations or analysis. The information in the report does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Danish Immigration Service.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

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<sup>1</sup> EASO, *Country of Origin Information (COI), Report Methodology*, June 2019, [url](#)

## Introduction and methodology

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The present report focuses on topics related to eligibility to registration and to receive services from UNRWA as well as the availability of services in UNRWA's five fields of operations. The report also addresses the recent funding shortfall of UNRWA and the implications hereof, as well as external factors impacting UNRWA's ability to deliver services. In addition, the report addresses the topics of UNRWA documents and the possibility for Palestinians to enter Jordan. These topics have been chosen as they are relevant for asylum cases in Denmark.

This report is a product of a mission conducted by the Country of Origin Information Division, Danish Immigration Service (DIS), to Amman, Jordan, from 1 March 2020 to 6 March 2020, as well as written sources of relevance.

The terms of reference (ToR) for the mission were drawn up by DIS in consultation with the Secretariat of the Danish Refugee Appeals Board as well as an advisory group on COI ('Referencegruppen').<sup>2</sup> The ToR are included at the end of the report (see Appendix 2).

UNRWA has been the main source of the report as the issues relating to eligibility, registration and services are under the responsibility of UNRWA. The purpose of the report has been to provide detailed information on these topics. Additional sources have been chosen by the delegation in order to get an external perspective on issues related to access and availability to UNRWA's services as well as to provide information on access to Jordan.

The delegation consulted nine sources in total, comprising UNRWA, four Western embassies and one Jordanian governmental authority. The meeting with the Western embassies was held as a joint meeting with all four embassies present. Additionally, two academic sources were consulted via Skype and one academic source answered questions in writing.

All sources agreed to be quoted by name and organisation, except for the embassies that all requested to be anonymous for the sake of discretion and therefore are referred to as Western embassy (A), Western embassy (B) etc.

The sources consulted were informed about the purpose of the mission and that their statements would be included in a public report.

Minutes were written from each interview. Care was taken to present the views of the sources as accurately and transparently as possible. The minutes were then forwarded to the sources for approval, giving them a chance to amend, comment or correct their statements. All sources approved their statements. The approved minutes are included as an annex to this report (see Appendix 1).

During the interviews, sources also touched upon topics that are not addressed in ToR. Since these issues could be relevant to asylum cases, they have been included in the minutes (see Appendix 1) but are not addressed in the report. Among these topics is the difference between the mandates of UNRWA and UNHCR.

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<sup>2</sup> The group consists of the Danish Refugee Council, Amnesty International in Denmark, Danish Institute for Human Rights, Dignity, representatives of two Christian organisations (Danish European Mission and Open Doors), the National Commissioner of the Police and the Danish Bar and Law Society (representing asylum lawyers).

For the sake of reader-friendliness, transparency and accuracy, paragraphs in the meeting minutes in Appendix 1 have been given consecutive numbers, which are used in the report when referring to the statements of the sources in the footnotes.

Due to the critical financial situation that UNRWA is currently facing, some of the issues addressed in this report might change and should thus be monitored periodically and brought up to date accordingly.

The research and editing of the report was finalised by June 2020.

The report can be accessed from the website of DIS, [www.newtodenmark.dk](http://www.newtodenmark.dk), and is thus available to all stakeholders in the asylum processing chain and to the general public.

## Abbreviations and acronyms

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<b>CERI</b>	Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions
<b>COI</b>	Country of Origin Information
<b>DIS</b>	Danish Immigration Service
<b>DPA</b>	Department of Palestinian Affairs
<b>DPAR</b>	Department of Political Affairs and Refugees
<b>EASO</b>	European Asylum Support Office
<b>GAPAR</b>	General Authority for Palestinian Arab Refugees
<b>MNR</b>	Married to Non-Refugee
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>RRIS</b>	Refugee Registration Information System
<b>PLO</b>	Palestine Liberation Organisation
<b>PRJ</b>	Palestinian Refugees from Jordan
<b>PRL</b>	Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon
<b>PRS</b>	Palestinian Refugees from Syria
<b>RSS</b>	Relief and Social Services
<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>UNCCP</b>	United Nations Conciliation Commission on Palestine
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNGA</b>	United Nations General Assembly
<b>UNRWA</b>	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East



## Terminology

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The terminology list is for the purpose of clarifying terms used in this report only. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

<b>Field:</b>	Any one of UNRWA's five fields of operation, which are Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan, the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza. <sup>3</sup>
<b>Palestine refugee:</b>	UNRWA defines 'Palestine refugee' as any person whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948 and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict, and descendants of such persons, including legally adopted children, through the male line.
<b>1948-refugee:</b>	Same definition as 'Palestine refugee', see above.
<b>Registered refugee:</b>	Any Palestine refugee who is registered in UNRWA's registration system.
<b>Palestinian refugee:</b>	The term Palestinian refugees commonly comprises all persons of Arab origin who were displaced from the territory of the former British Mandate Palestine, but also from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank including East Jerusalem, which Israel occupied in 1967, as well as their descendants. <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In Danish: Mandatlande

<sup>4</sup> Albanese, F.: 218

## Executive summary

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The eligibility to register and receive UNRWA's services differs between various groups of Palestinians, which is outlined in UNRWA's Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI).

Palestinians displaced in 1948 were registered with UNRWA as 'Palestine Refugees'. UNRWA's core mandate is to serve the Palestine refugee population. Their descendants through the male line all have the right to be registered and receive services. Today, this group totals approximately 5.6 million people.

The group of '1967 displaced persons' are not registered with UNRWA and their ability to receive services changes over time and between UNRWA's fields of operations.

Other groups may also be eligible to register and receive services; however, their eligibility varies over time and between fields. For example, descendants of women who do not marry a Palestine refugee do not inherit the right to be registered as Palestine refugees, however, they may receive services.

Registration of Palestine refugees and their descendants can take place in all UNRWA's fields by the respective individual or by proxy. Registration can also be done from outside of UNRWA's fields by proxy (e.g. family members who are already registered). Registration as well as any changes to individual registration information is voluntary. Registration with UNRWA does not imply nor provide legal stay in the country.

Palestinians registered with UNRWA obtain a family registration card, which is the most central document issued by UNRWA, since it serves as proof of registration. It contains a family registration number as well as individual registration numbers of each family member. While most Palestinians registered with UNRWA hold or can obtain this document, the registration number is more important than the document itself, as any registered person can be traced with this number in UNRWA's online Refugee Registration Information System (RRIS).

A Palestinian registered with UNRWA may change his/her physical address from one UNRWA field to another in the RRIS. However, updates in UNRWA's registration database are voluntary, so the stored information might not necessarily reflect the actual situation of a person or family. Therefore, the registration address often remains the address where the ancestor was first registered.

In recent years, UNRWA has faced a continuous budget shortfall. In 2018, UNRWA's largest bilateral donor, the US, withdrew its funding. UNRWA's financial crisis may affect its operational stability. The quality of services is deteriorating and the universality of UNRWA's education and health services may be at risk. UNRWA's relief and social services (RSS) had already been curtailed. Today, RSS only addresses the poorest of the poor.

UNRWA does not provide physical protection to the Palestinian refugee population. UNRWA does not manage the refugee camps and has no role in ensuring personal safety in the camps. It is solely operating from a service-delivery mandate.

External factors, such as regional security-related issues and population growth, as well as relations with host governments and donors, also have an impact on UNRWA's ability to deliver its services. The security

factor is particularly relevant in those UNRWA fields that are currently faced with various levels of conflict, namely the occupied Palestinian territory and Syria.

Finally, as the fact-finding mission was conducted in Jordan, the report also addresses entry and re-entry of Palestinians to Jordan. The majority of Palestinians in Jordan hold Jordanian citizenship. However, some withdrawals of citizenships have occurred over the years. Generally, the Jordanian authorities do not accept forced returns of Palestinians without citizenship to Jordan.

## Background

### Displacement of Palestinians

On 29 November 1947, the UN passed Resolution 181<sup>5</sup> that recommended partitioning the British Mandate of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state. This led to hostilities and the beginning of the forced displacement of Palestinians.<sup>6</sup>



In the aftermath of the establishment of the State of Israel on 15 May 1948, 700-800,000 of the approximately 1.2 million pre-war Palestinian population were expelled or had fled the fighting, sheltering in encampments in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria.

Another wave of displacement took place following the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict. As a consequence of the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza, the Syrian Golan Heights and the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula, another 350-400,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced. In addition to those who were displaced, approximately 60,000 Palestinians who were outside the area during the conflict were prevented from returning.<sup>7</sup>

Map 1: Southeastern Mediterranean<sup>8</sup>

### The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)

In accordance with United Nations resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established and began operating on 1 May 1950. When UNRWA began its operations, it was responding to the needs of about 750,000 Palestine refugees. Today, some 5.6 million registered Palestine refugees are eligible to UNRWA services.<sup>9</sup> In the

<sup>5</sup> UN General Assembly, *Resolution 181(II), Concerning the Future Government of Palestine*, A/RES/181, 29 November 1947, [url](#)

<sup>6</sup> Akram, S., *Palestinian Refugees*, [forthcoming]

<sup>7</sup> Akram, S., *Palestinian Refugees*, [forthcoming]

<sup>8</sup> UN, *Southeastern Mediterranean (Map No. 4013)*, 1 April 2012, [url](#)

<sup>9</sup> UNRWA, *Who We Are*, n.d., [url](#)

absence of a solution to the Palestine refugee issue, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) has repeatedly renewed UNRWA's mandate, most recently extending it until 30 June 2023.<sup>10</sup>

### *UNRWA's five fields and delivery of services*

UNRWA's mandate is to provide assistance to the approximately 5.6 million registered Palestinians currently living in its five fields of operation: Jordan (more than 2 million registered refugees); Lebanon (475,000 are registered, but with only 180,000 estimated to be residing in the country); Syria (550,000 registered refugees of which an estimated 438,000 remain in-country); the West Bank (800,000 registered refugees); and Gaza (1.4 million registered refugees out of a total population of 1.9 million). UNRWA services include education, healthcare, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and camp improvement, microfinance as well as emergency assistance, including in times of armed conflict.<sup>11</sup>

### *UNRWA funding and US budget cut in 2018*

UNRWA is almost entirely funded by voluntary contributions from UN member states and over time, financial support has been outpaced by the increasing needs of an ever growing refugee population. As a result, the UNRWA programme budget, which supports delivery of the core services, has been operating with a large shortfall in recent years (see chapter 4).<sup>12</sup>

Historically, the US has been the largest bilateral donor to UNRWA. When the US decided to stop its funding to UNRWA in 2018, UNRWA faced an unprecedented financial difficulty with a USD 300 million funding cut (see chapter 4).<sup>13</sup>

## Current figures of Palestinians

Due to the displacement of Palestinians around the world, no exact figures of the Palestinian population exist today. However, estimates have been made.<sup>14</sup>

By the end of 2018, Palestinians numbered approximately 13 million persons worldwide, of which about 9 million were forcibly displaced. The overall Palestinian displaced population includes 6.7 million 1948-refugees and their descendants. This figure includes around 5.6 million Palestine refugees who are registered with and eligible for assistance from UNRWA, and a further 1.16 million refugees who were also displaced in 1948, but who were not eligible or did not register for assistance with UNRWA.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, of the 9 million displaced Palestinians, 1.24 million are 1967 Palestinian displaced persons and their descendants; almost 350,000 are Palestinians internally displaced in Gaza and the West Bank.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> UN General Assembly, *Assistance to Palestine Refugees, A/RES/74/83*, 13 December 2019, [url](#)

<sup>11</sup> UNRWA, *Who We Are*, n.d., [url](#); UNRWA, *Where We Work*, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>12</sup> Norway, Landinfo, *Palestine: UNRWA Services*, 24 September 2018, [url](#), pp. 5-6; UNRWA, *UNRWA Launches 2019 Emergency Appeals and Budget Requirements of US \$1.2 billion*, 29 January 2019, [url](#)

<sup>13</sup> Albanese, F.: 219; UNRWA, *UNRWA Faces Greatest Financial Crisis in Its History Following 2018 Funding Cuts*, 9 November 2018, [url](#)

<sup>14</sup> BADIL, *Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons 2016-2018*, [2019], [url](#), p. 20

<sup>15</sup> UNRWA, *Who We Are*, n.d., [url](#); Akram, S., *Palestinian Refugees*, [forthcoming]

<sup>16</sup> BADIL, *Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons 2016-2018*, [2019], [url](#), p. 21

# 1. Persons eligible to receive UNRWA's services

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UNRWA operates with two forms of eligibility: 1) the eligibility to register with UNRWA; and 2) the eligibility to receive UNRWA services. While often overlapping, some persons will be eligible to receive services on an emergency basis without being eligible to register. The latter group is referred to as 'non-registered persons' or 'services only' and includes those displaced in 1967.<sup>17</sup>

Those eligible to both register and receive services can be further divided into two groups:

- 1) Persons who meet UNRWA's criteria to be described as a 'Palestine refugee'
- 2) Persons who do not meet these criteria<sup>18</sup>

This chapter provides information on the eligible groups, while the registration process and the documentation requirements for those who are eligible to register with UNRWA are described in chapter 2.

The actual availability of services offered to the different eligible groups has varied over time and between the five UNRWA fields. UNRWA's ability to deliver services depends on its budget as well as its operational instructions and rules (see chapter 4 for information on UNRWA's budget). The current operational definitions and criteria are outlined in UNRWA's Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI), which were last revised in 2009.<sup>19</sup>

## 1.1. Palestine refugees and their descendants

The largest category of persons eligible to both register and receive services is the Palestine refugees. They are defined as persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict.<sup>20</sup>

This category of Palestine refugees falls under the provisions in the UNGA Resolution 194.<sup>21</sup>

The definition of Palestine refugees used by UNRWA was firstly drafted by the United Nations Reconciliation Committee on Palestine (UNCCP).<sup>22</sup> In its operational definition, UNRWA added to the UNCCP definition: '*who lost their homes and livelihoods and were unable to return*'. This refugee category is different from that of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the UNHCR statute. Palestine refugees under UNGA Resolution 194 are not defined as persons with a fear of persecution who must individually fulfil a set of criteria to be so defined. Rather, Palestine refugees are defined as an entire population or category by virtue of fitting within the Lausanne Treaty definition of Palestine nationals.<sup>23, 24</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> UNRWA: 1, 2, 18

<sup>18</sup> UNRWA: 2

<sup>19</sup> UNRWA: 1, 3; UNRWA, *Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI)*, 2009, [url](#)

<sup>20</sup> UNRWA: 5

<sup>21</sup> Akram, S.: 166

<sup>22</sup> Akram, S.: 167

<sup>23</sup> The Treaty of Lausanne helped settle the status of Palestine and the nationality of its inhabitants from the perspective of public international law. In a report submitted to the League of Nations, the British government pointed out: 'The ratification of the Treaty of Lausanne in Aug., 1924, finally regularised the international status of Palestine.' Thereafter, 'Palestine could, at last, obtain a separate nationality.' (Qafisheh, M., *Genesis of Citizenship in Palestine and Israel*, 2010, [url](#))

<sup>24</sup> Akram, S.: 166-167

It is possible to submit an inscription application with UNRWA (i.e. applications from persons, whose ancestor(s) never registered, and who wish to register for the first time) for individuals who meet the Palestine refugee criteria.<sup>25</sup> However, very few applications have been submitted in recent years, and in 2019, less than ten new registrations were approved.<sup>26</sup>

Until 1993, a Palestine refugee woman Married to a Non-Refugee (MNR) man would become ineligible to receive services upon marriage. Even if she continued to be registered with UNRWA, she would become ineligible, as married someone who was not a Palestine refugee and therefore in most cases would have access to services through his citizenship. Today, she maintains her eligibility to receive services.<sup>27</sup>

In the West Bank, the number of MNRs is much higher than in other fields, and it remains challenging for UNRWA to provide services to this group.<sup>28</sup>

Descendants of Palestine refugee males, including legally adopted children, are also eligible to register as Palestine refugees. This right is continuous and passed on to all future generations. Children of an MNR cannot register as Palestine refugees, but fall under the category of MNR family members (see chapter 1.2.1.).<sup>29</sup>

Currently, fourth and fifth generations are being registered as Palestine refugees. The number of descendants keeps increasing. In 2019, approximately 100,000 descendants were registered as Palestine refugees.<sup>30</sup> At the end of 2019, UNRWA had 5,629,829 Palestine refugees in their registration database.<sup>31</sup>

Persons living outside of UNRWA's fields of operations are also eligible to register and receive services. However, the actual access to services is only available inside the UNRWA fields.<sup>32</sup>

## 1.2. Other groups eligible to registration and services

UNRWA has identified specific groups who do not fulfil the Palestine refugee criteria but were determined to have suffered significant loss and/or hardship for reasons related to the 1948 conflict. Therefore, they can be registered with UNRWA for the purpose of receiving services. At the end of 2019, these groups totalled 663,561 persons.<sup>33</sup>

Within this category, there are several sub-groups, among which the MNR family members is one of the largest. This chapter will address issues specific to this group (see Appendix 1 for information regarding other groups: Non-Refugee Wives, Jerusalem Poor and Gaza Poor, Frontier Villagers, Compromise Cases, Kafalah Children).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> UNRWA: 7

<sup>26</sup> UNRWA: 8

<sup>27</sup> UNRWA: 36

<sup>28</sup> UNRWA: 37

<sup>29</sup> Akram, S.: 176; El-Abed, O.: 215; UNRWA: 6, 8, 32

<sup>30</sup> UNRWA: 8

<sup>31</sup> UNRWA, *Registered Population Dashboard*, [2020], [url](#)

<sup>32</sup> UNRWA: 65, 67

<sup>33</sup> UNRWA: 9; UNRWA, *Registered Population Dashboard*, [2020], [url](#)

<sup>34</sup> UNRWA: 13-17

As far as this category is concerned, it is UNRWA's prerogative to decide what the urgent needs of specific populations are. As such, these groups have to be addressed separately, as they do not fall into the automatic registration categories of Palestine refugees and descendants, but are based on needs. Including these groups in UNRWA services entirely depends on whether UNRWA has the funds to provide for them (see chapter 4).<sup>35</sup>

### *1.2.1. Married to Non-Refugees (MNR) family members*

The MNR family members are husbands and descendants, including legally adopted children, of women who are Palestine refugees. In general, MNR family members are entitled to register and receive UNRWA services, e.g. education. However, in practice, there are some exceptions to this, which are elaborated on below.<sup>36</sup>

The UNRWA instructions related to MNR family members' eligibility has changed over time. UNRWA started registering husbands and children of Palestine refugee women in 2006. This was done retroactively, ensuring that marriages contracted before 2006, as well as children born before 2006, could be registered.<sup>37</sup>

Recently, it has become relevant to look at the registration of the children of MNR children (MNR grandchildren). While UNRWA is currently addressing the issue, there are no common guidelines at this point in time and therefore, registration of descendants of MNR children is addressed differently across UNRWA's five fields of operation.<sup>38</sup>

Services made available to MNR family members also differ across the five fields of operation. As previously noted, UNRWA's ability to deliver services depends on its budget as well as its operational instructions and rules.<sup>39</sup>

In Syria, children of MNRs are not registered, unless the husband is a Palestinian who is not a Palestine refugee. In case the father is a Syrian citizen, UNRWA does not register the children, and they will not be eligible to receive UNRWA services.<sup>40</sup>

In Jordan, MNR children are registered with UNRWA. Even though Palestine refugees in Jordan (PRJ) have access to public services, the request for UNRWA services continues to be very high - mainly due to free of charge services as well as proximity of the service locations.<sup>41</sup>

In the West Bank, as per field director's decision, MNR children do not receive services.<sup>42</sup>

In cases of divorce, the divorced husband loses the right to registration, however, the children remain eligible to register and receive services depending on the specific field.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Akram, S.: 168

<sup>36</sup> UNRWA: 10-11

<sup>37</sup> UNRWA: 12, 32, 36

<sup>38</sup> UNRWA: 12, 32, 33

<sup>39</sup> UNRWA: 3, 12

<sup>40</sup> UNRWA: 34

<sup>41</sup> UNRWA: 35

<sup>42</sup> UNRWA: 37

<sup>43</sup> UNRWA: 10



### 1.3. Persons eligible to receive UNRWA services without being registered

The category of non-registered persons who are eligible to receive UNRWA services consists of several subcategories of which the largest is the group of persons displaced due to the 1967 conflict or subsequent hostilities.<sup>44, 45</sup> Other subcategories include exceptional cases, UNRWA staff members and non-registered persons living in UNRWA camps (see CERI pp. 6-8 for more on these subcategories).<sup>46</sup>

The type of services that the unregistered groups are eligible to may vary over time and between fields.<sup>47</sup>

#### 1.3.1. 1967 displaced persons and their descendants

The background for UNRWA to provide services to the '1967 displaced' is found in UNGA Resolution 2252 of 4 July 1967 and in subsequent resolutions. In the resolution, UNGA endorsed UNRWA's efforts 'to continue to provide humanitarian assistance, as far as practicable, on an emergency basis, and as a temporary measure, to persons in the area who are currently displaced and in serious need of continued assistance as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities'. As this category is considered to be served on an emergency basis, it is not clearly outlined what the criteria are for descendants.<sup>48</sup>

While UNGA Resolution 2252 does not mention descendants of the 1967 displaced, it is intended to mean all subsequent generations, which is confirmed by UNRWA writings.<sup>49</sup>

Since UNRWA is not registering 1967 displaced and their descendants in its registration database, it is difficult to know the exact number of people in this group.<sup>50</sup>

UNRWA does not provide services to all 1967 displaced and persons displaced due to subsequent hostilities. The authority to serve other populations is delegated to the field directors by UNRWA's Commissioner-General and the actual provision of services has varied over time and between fields.<sup>51</sup> In practice however, in some instances it comes down to the staff on the ground deciding whether or not a 1967 displaced or descendant will receive services.<sup>52</sup>

The displaced Palestinians in Syria who are not Palestine refugees or descendants currently receive services because they are experiencing other hostilities. In Lebanon and Jordan, UNRWA is also serving the 1967 displaced and their descendants.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> With the exception of most 1967 displaced from Syria who left Syria because of the current conflict. They are registered with UNRWA to receive services in line with Resolution 2252, referring to 'subsequent hostilities'. This is the only time UNRWA started recording persons from the 1967 displaced persons in its registration system, under the 'services only' category (UNRWA: 30).

<sup>45</sup> Akram, S.: 168; UNRWA: 10

<sup>46</sup> UNRWA, *Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI)*, 2009, [url](#), pp. 6-8

<sup>47</sup> UNRWA: 20, 22, 98

<sup>48</sup> UNRWA: 19

<sup>49</sup> Akram, S.: 168

<sup>50</sup> UNRWA: 21

<sup>51</sup> UNRWA: 20

<sup>52</sup> UNRWA: 22

<sup>53</sup> Department of Palestinian Affairs: 138; UNRWA: 20

## 2. Registration and transfer of registration

Persons eligible to register with UNRWA (see chapter 1) can do so by approaching one of UNRWA’s more than 60 registration offices found in all five UNRWA fields of operation.

In most cases, people will have their registration address in the UNRWA field of operation where their paternal ancestors first registered. This does not connote legal residence in the field where the registration address is. Legal residency is under the jurisdiction of the respective authorities in each field.<sup>54</sup>

In 2010, UNRWA started operating the web-based Refugee Registration Information System (RRIS) that enabled live updates of data of a registered person or family. Updates of information can be made at all registration offices.<sup>55</sup>

The RRIS does not contain information about 1967 displaced. It is possible that some 1967 displaced are found in UNRWA’s education or health databases; however, their records are not based on verified identification documents.<sup>56</sup>

In 1996, UNRWA started scanning documents electronically. Many of these documents date back to before 1948.<sup>57</sup> In cases where the initial field of registration is unclear, UNRWA might assist asylum authorities with looking at the original documents in their database.<sup>58</sup>

### 2.1. Information stored in UNRWA’s registration system

UNRWA registers data on families and individuals. These are linked in the way that each individual is registered as belonging to a family.<sup>59</sup> For each family and individual, the following information might be available in the registration system:

Table 1: UNRWA registration data<sup>60</sup>

Family data	Individual data
Name of head of family (first name, father’s name, grandfather’s name and family surname)	First name
Place of birth	Father Name
Nationality of origin/birth	Grandfather Name
Religion	Family Name
District of origin in Palestine	Mother Name
Field, area and district of residence	Sex
Camp or non-camp resident	Place of Birth
	Date of birth (Day/Month/Year)
	Marital status and relationship to Head of Family
	Original Nationality
	Current Nationality
	Host Government ID
	Registration Status
	Registration Address
	Physical Address

<sup>54</sup> UNRWA: 41

<sup>55</sup> UNRWA: 38

<sup>56</sup> UNRWA: 21

<sup>57</sup> UNRWA, *What We Do – Eligibility & Registration*, n.d., [url](#); UNRWA, *Documenting Dispossession: UNRWA Launches New Refugee Registration Information System*, 9 December 2009, [url](#)

<sup>58</sup> UNRWA: 43, 57

<sup>59</sup> UNRWA: 39, 77

<sup>60</sup> EU and UN, *Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics – International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics*, March 2018, [url](#), p. 71

It is very important to note that not all of the categories in the table will have data attached, as it is not mandatory to provide all of the above information.

The registration system might contain information about the citizenship of a person (for both Palestine refugees and MNR husbands) if this information has been provided by the person herself/himself. However, UNRWA does not verify this information.<sup>61</sup>

Any registered family member can request to update the information in RRIS provided that he/she can provide original documents pertaining to the specific issue.<sup>62</sup>

Updates in UNRWA's registration database are voluntary, so the stored information might not necessarily reflect the actual situation of a person or family. Furthermore, there might be a difference between the addresses found in RRIS and the actual place of residence.<sup>63</sup>

UNRWA distinguishes between three types of addresses: 1) registration address; 2) physical address; and 3) emergency address. The differences between these are described below.

### *Registration address*

Registration address (or registration field) refers to the UNRWA field where the person is registered. In the vast majority of cases, the registration address would correspond to the field where their paternal ancestor originally registered.

Persons who were born and lived in Syria their entire life could have Jordan as their residential address if their father or grandfather originally registered with UNRWA in Jordan.<sup>64</sup>

It is important to note that a person might not have legal residence in the country where he/she is registered, and UNRWA registration does not in any way entail legal stay. Neither does UNRWA have information about the legal residence of a person.<sup>65</sup>

### *Physical address*

The physical address is the place of residence that UNRWA has registered on the basis of information provided by the person. It may or may not be the same as the registration address. The physical address can be changed if a person requests UNRWA to do so. However, in several cases, the physical address does not reflect the actual residence.<sup>66</sup>

### *Emergency address*

Following the crisis in Syria, UNRWA introduced the emergency address, which is only available in the registration system and thus does not appear on the family registration card. This reflects the person's presence during the emergency response (see chapter 4). A Palestinian refugee from Syria (PRS) would

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<sup>61</sup> UNRWA: 58-59

<sup>62</sup> UNRWA: 39; UNRWA, *What We Do – Eligibility & Registration*, n.d., [url](#); UNRWA, *Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI)*, 2009, [url](#), p. 16

<sup>63</sup> UNRWA: 40, 45

<sup>64</sup> UNRWA: 48

<sup>65</sup> UNRWA: 55-56

<sup>66</sup> UNRWA: 45

retain the registration and physical addresses in Syria even if that person is receiving emergency help in another UNRWA field.<sup>67</sup>

## 2.2. Registration requirements for Palestine refugees and their descendants

### *First-time registrations*<sup>68</sup>

The International Committee of the Red Cross and the American Friends Service Committee initially registered Palestinians who fled during the 1948 conflict. UNRWA inherited these records and rectified them after having conducted a survey of Palestinian refugees from 1950-1951. The initial registration process closed in June 1952.

In 1992, UNRWA opened for new registrations of Palestine refugees who did not register in the initial period despite being eligible to do so. Until then, only children of fathers who already had registered with UNRWA were able to register. New registrations of Palestine refugees have been possible since 1992.<sup>69</sup>

New registrations must be submitted in person at one of UNRWA's registration offices. According to the Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI), the following documents can be submitted to substantiate the claim of being a Palestine refugee:

- Palestine passport issued prior to 15 May 1948 indicating that the applicant was resident in Palestine during the period between 1 June 1946 and 15 May 1948
- Birth certificate issued in Palestine before 15 May 1948
- Marriage certificate issued in Palestine before 15 May 1948
- Identity card issued in Palestine before 15 May 1948
- Employment certificate issued in Palestine before 15 May 1948
- Receipts of water, electricity, telephone, radio, taxes or other official documents indicating residence in Palestine before 15 May 1948
- Land registry documents concerning property in Palestine ("tabbo") issued by the Department of Land in Palestine before 15 May 1948
- Documents showing registration of close relatives with UNRWA (paternal side only)
- Red-Cross registration card issued between 15 May 1948 and 1 May 1950
- UNRWA registration Fact Sheet
- UNRWA Punch Card (Ex-code)
- Any other documents endorsed by an official authority in Palestine before 15 May 1948<sup>70</sup>

Descendants of a male who meets UNRWA's definition of a Palestine refugee but chose not to register are also eligible to register as Palestine refugees. In addition to the above documentation requirements, these descendants would have to prove their relationship with the relevant ancestor through the paternal line.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> UNRWA: 46-47; Akram, S.: 181

<sup>68</sup> First-time registrations are here understood as the situation, where unregistered persons who meet UNRWA Palestine refugee criteria or the descendants of these unregistered persons (through the male line) approaches UNRWA to be registered.

<sup>69</sup> UNRWA: 7, 64; UNRWA, *What We Do – Eligibility & Registration*, n.d., [url](#); UNRWA, *Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI)*, 2009, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>70</sup> UNRWA, *Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI)*, 2009, [url](#), pp. 10-11

UNRWA also accepts new registrations if a person has documents from governmental authorities in Lebanon, Syria or Egypt (for Gaza<sup>72</sup>) that indicates that he/she would have been eligible to register during the initial registration period.<sup>73</sup>

In Lebanon, a person eligible to be registered as a Palestine refugee who wishes to register with UNRWA, and who did not register during the initial registration process, will need prior approval from the Lebanese authorities in order to register with UNRWA.<sup>74</sup>

### *Registration of descendants with an already registered paternal ancestor*

The documentation requirements for registering a descendant are contingent on age. If the descendant is less than one year old, a birth certificate or notification of birth (for the West Bank and Gaza) is sufficient. Older descendants who wish to register would need additional documentation such as personal identity documents or a parent's identity document having the descendant's name present.<sup>75</sup>

In case no birth or identity documents are available, registration might nonetheless take place if a written attestation explaining the lack of documents can be provided. The attestation should either be from: 1) an UNRWA camp service officer; 2) two UNRWA staff members; or 3) two 'credible' members of the local community.<sup>76</sup>

## 2.3. Registration requirements for other eligible groups

The documentation required to register an MNR family member is an official marriage certificate for a husband, an official birth certificate for a child as well as identity documents. In addition, the family registration card of the Palestine refugee woman should be provided.<sup>77</sup>

Special documentation requirements are also found for other registered groups: Non-Refugee Wives, Jerusalem Poor and Gaza Poor, Frontier Villagers, Compromise Cases, Kafalah Children (for more information on these, see CERI pp. 14-15).

## 2.4. Possibility of registration for persons living outside of UNRWA's fields of operation

A Palestinian outside of the five UNRWA fields who is the descendant of an unregistered person eligible to register as a Palestine Refugee can submit an application for a first-time registration with UNRWA. This very rarely happens, and it is both complicated and sensitive. In CERI, the rule is that first-time registrations should be submitted in person.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> UNRWA, *Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI)*, 2009, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>72</sup> Gaza was administered by Egypt until 1967 (Department of Palestinian Affairs: 131)

<sup>73</sup> UNRWA, *Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI)*, 2009, [url](#), pp. 11-12

<sup>74</sup> UNRWA: 64

<sup>75</sup> UNRWA, *Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI)*, 2009, [url](#), p. 13

<sup>76</sup> UNRWA, *Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI)*, 2009, [url](#), p. 14

<sup>77</sup> UNRWA, *Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI)*, 2009, [url](#), p. 15

<sup>78</sup> UNRWA: 66; UNRWA, *Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI)*, 2009, [url](#), p. 15

An eligible descendant (of an already registered Palestine refugee) living outside of UNRWA's fields of operation can register by proxy. The proxy can be a family members as well as a lawyer.<sup>79</sup>

The descendant must provide original documents that prove the relationship with the registered Palestine refugee through the paternal line. These documents could be birth certificates or identity cards of the parents. In addition, photocopies of the descendant's passport or residence permit should be submitted. If the descendant is found eligible to register, he/she can subsequently register his/her family.<sup>80</sup>

For UNRWA registration in Lebanon, a person outside of the country who is eligible to be registered as a Palestine refugee needs a prior approval from Lebanese authorities that can be obtained by approaching a Lebanese embassy.<sup>81</sup>

Registration with UNRWA in a country does not entail a right to enter or reside there. Therefore, it is possible to be registered with UNRWA without actually being able to receive its services. The registration could reflect a desire to a link to Palestine.<sup>82</sup>

## 2.5. Transfer of registration to another UNRWA field of operation

It is possible to make a transfer of registration to another UNRWA field. This process should be initiated by UNRWA in the receiving field.<sup>83</sup>

Authorities are in general unwilling to accept full transfers of registration into their countries.<sup>84</sup> The Syrian authorities also do not accept full transfers of registration from Syria to another country.<sup>85</sup>

As noted previously, registered persons can stay in a UNRWA field without having to make a full transfer of registration to that place (see section 2.1.)

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<sup>79</sup> UNRWA: 60, 61, 65; UNRWA, *Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI)*, 2009, [url](#), p. 13

<sup>80</sup> UNRWA: 60; UNRWA, *Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI)*, 2009, [url](#), p. 13

<sup>81</sup> UNRWA: 64

<sup>82</sup> UNRWA: 67

<sup>83</sup> UNRWA, *Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI)*, 2009, [url](#), p. 17

<sup>84</sup> UNRWA: 42

<sup>85</sup> UNRWA: 44; Akram, S.: 181

## 3. Documents

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### 3.1. UNRWA documents

UNRWA issues documents to registered refugees and other registered persons. Documents are issued upon request according to the information stored in RRIS.<sup>86</sup>

No UNRWA documents, including family registration cards, are issued to the group of 1967 displaced and persons displaced as a consequence of subsequent hostilities.<sup>87, 88</sup>

Although UNRWA issues different documents, this chapter will focus on the family registration card, as this is the most important document for a person registered with UNRWA.

#### 3.1.1. Family registration card

The family registration card is the central document for a Palestine refugee. The document is also known as an UNRWA Registration Card since it serves as a proof of registration.<sup>89</sup>

The family registration card contains, among other things, information about where a person is registered (registration field) as well as the physical address (residential address). Updating information in the registration card is done on a voluntary basis by the cardholder, and therefore, the information is not necessarily up-to-date. Furthermore, the information in the family registration card relating to the address does not imply that the person/family have legal residence in the given country. The emergency address does not appear on the family registration card (for an explanation of registration address, physical address and emergency address please see chapter 2.1.).<sup>90</sup>

The family registration card does not have an expiry date.<sup>91</sup>

#### Transfer or issuing of new family registration cards (e.g. in case of marriage or divorce)

Family registration cards are issued by UNRWA. They will be updated upon request from the individual, for example in cases of marriage, divorce, births or deaths. The person must provide original documents pertaining to the specific issue for UNRWA to reflect the change in the registration card.<sup>92</sup>

Persons residing illegally in a country, such as some PRS in Lebanon and Jordan, would have problems with obtaining official birth or marriage certificates. This makes it difficult to update these events with UNRWA and therefore to have such updates reflected in the family registration card.<sup>93</sup>

Normally, one registration card is issued to each family. However, it is possible to have an additional registration card issued upon request.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> UNRWA: 39, 77

<sup>87</sup> UNRWA: 21; UNRWA, *Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI)*, 2009, [url](#), p. 34;

<sup>88</sup> According to a report from Landinfo, an exception to this are unregistered Palestinians in Syria who will have registration cards from UNRWA with the inscription 'service only'. This group mainly consists of persons arriving in Syria from the West Bank in 1967 and from Jordan in 1970 (Norway, Landinfo, *Palestinske flyktninger i Syria: Identitetsdokumenter*, 23 November 2016, [url](#), p. 10)

<sup>89</sup> UNRWA: 4, 71; Norway, Landinfo, *Palestinske flyktninger i Syria: Identitetsdokumenter*, 23 November 2016, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>90</sup> UNRWA: 40, 47

<sup>91</sup> UNRWA: 71

<sup>92</sup> UNRWA: 39; UNRWA, *Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI)*, 2009, [url](#), p. 13-16;

<sup>93</sup> UNRWA: 54

In some cases, family registration cards can be issued to individuals who normally would not need his/her own family registration card, for example, if an unmarried son is living in another UNRWA field than where his parents live. In this case, the family registration card issued for the son would only contain his name. The physical address would correspond to the field where he had his family registration card issued.<sup>95</sup>

In case of divorce, children will be registered in the card of the parent with legal custody. A divorced woman can have her own family registration card issued; however, she might prefer being included in her parents' card instead. The divorced woman will be moved back to her father's family registration number. A divorced man will always have his own family registration card.<sup>96</sup>

### *3.1.2. Possibility of obtaining documents online or from abroad*

It is not possible to obtain documents online. However, a person can contact UNRWA from abroad in order to have a family registration card issued. UNRWA would then send the document by mail to that person.<sup>97</sup>

It is also possible to obtain family registration cards by proxy. Both family members and lawyers can act as proxies. There are no criteria for which family members can act as proxies. The proxy would then receive the family registration card.<sup>98</sup>

### *3.1.3. Possibility of re-obtaining documents in case they have been lost*

In case of lost documents, UNRWA can reissue these upon request. If a person without documents approaches UNRWA, new documents can be issued once the identity of that person has been established. This will be done by looking at any other documents the person might have, interviewing the individual and checking with UNRWA in the original field of registration.<sup>99</sup>

### *3.1.4. Meaning of numbers and codes on documents*

UNRWA's registration database operates with two types of registration numbers:

- *Family registration number.* This number starts with '1-'
- *Individual registration number.* This number starts with '2-'<sup>100</sup>

A man will retain his family registration number in case of divorce, while a divorced woman will be registered under her father's family registration number. A widowed woman will be registered under her deceased husband's family registration number.<sup>101</sup>

It is not possible to interpret anything from these numbers, e.g. which field and camp a person is from.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> UNRWA: 71

<sup>95</sup> UNRWA: 52

<sup>96</sup> UNRWA: 72-73

<sup>97</sup> UNRWA: 61, 75

<sup>98</sup> UNRWA: 61, 63, 75

<sup>99</sup> UNRWA: 54, 76

<sup>100</sup> UNRWA: 77

<sup>101</sup> UNRWA: 72

<sup>102</sup> UNRWA: 78



### 3.1.5. Prevalence of document fraud

UNRWA almost never encounters fraudulent UNRWA documents. The family registration cards have several security features that make them difficult to forge.<sup>103</sup> Professor Susan Akram and the Western embassies noted that they are unaware of any misuse of UNRWA documents.<sup>104</sup>

## 3.2. Other documents

Palestinians can be in possession of other documents than those issued by UNRWA (for a thorough overview of documents issued to Palestinians, see the report by Lifos on this topic<sup>105</sup>).

This chapter will provide information on documents issued to the group of 1967 displaced as well as those displaced as a consequence of subsequent hostilities in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria as UNRWA does not issue documents to this group. This is not and should not be seen as an exhaustive list of documents issued to these persons. In general, some persons among these groups of displaced have documents issued by the host governments while others do not.<sup>106</sup>

### Jordan

The largest group of 1967 displaced in Jordan arrived from the West Bank. They were Jordanian citizens at that time, and most of them continue to be citizens today. They have the same rights as any other Jordanian citizen, including the right to a passport.<sup>107</sup> However, there are examples of 1967 displaced Palestinians who lost their Jordanian citizenship for various reasons and consequently lost their right to having documents issued.<sup>108</sup>

After a period with few examples of citizenship withdrawals, recent years have seen an increase in the number of people who have had their citizenship revoked. The increase in withdrawals is in many cases related to people of Jordanian origin residing in Syria but who fled due to the conflict. Upon arrival to Jordan, they were confronted with the fact that their citizenship had been withdrawn.<sup>109</sup>

Among those who had their citizenship revoked were some PLO fighters who fled to Syria and Lebanon after the Black September conflict between PLO and Jordan in 1970 as well as the families of these fighters.<sup>110</sup>

The people displaced from Gaza in 1967 (ex-Gazans) might possess so-called T-passports that are issued by the Civil Status and Passport Department.<sup>111</sup> The T-passports are similar to ordinary Jordanian passports except for their serial number beginning with the letter T followed by a six-digit number instead of the

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<sup>103</sup> UNRWA: 80-81

<sup>104</sup> Akram, S. 187; Western embassies: 163

<sup>105</sup> Lifos, *Palestinier i Mellanöstern - uppehållsrätt och dokument (version 1.1)*, 15 October 2019, [url](#)

<sup>106</sup> UNRWA: 31

<sup>107</sup> Department of Palestinian Affairs: 131-133; El-Abed, O.: 195, 203; Lifos, *Palestinier i Mellanöstern - uppehållsrätt och dokument (version 1.1)*, 15 October 2019, [url](#), p. 48

<sup>108</sup> Department of Palestinian Affairs: 140; Akram, S.: 190; El-Abed, O.: 200; UNRWA: 26

<sup>109</sup> Akram, S.: 190; El-Abed, O.: 198-199

<sup>110</sup> UNRWA: 50; El-Abed, O.: 199

<sup>111</sup> Akram, S.: 177; US Department of State, *Jordan – Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan: Reciprocity Schedule*, n.d., [url](#)

Jordanian national number as seen in ordinary passports. Previously, the T-passports were valid for two years, which has now been changed to a validity period of five years.<sup>112</sup>

Until 1988, the Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA) in Jordan issued special cards for those displaced in 1967; however, they do not issue documents to this group anymore.<sup>113</sup>

## Lebanon

Some 1967 displaced are registered with the Lebanese Department of Political Affairs and Refugees (DPAR). Those registered with DPAR will have access to the same documents from the Lebanese authorities as the Palestine refugees, although their travel documents will have a shorter validity period.<sup>114</sup>

In addition, there is a group of Palestinians (an estimated 3-5,000 persons) in Lebanon who are neither registered with UNRWA nor DPAR and who are referred to as non-IDs. Some of the non-IDs are 1967 displaced. According to UNRWA, non-IDs are not recognised by the Lebanese government and thus do not hold any identification documents; nor do they have any valid legal stay in the country.<sup>115</sup> Other sources report that some non-IDs might have an identity document issued by the Lebanese General Directorate of General Security.<sup>116</sup>

## Syria

The group of 1967 displaced in Syria is generally not registered with the General Authority for Palestinian Arab Refugees (GAPAR). Instead, some will be registered with the Ministry of Interior that can issue residence permits to them.<sup>117</sup> According to UNRWA, GAPAR has issued a family certificate to some of the 1967 displaced, stating the date of when they or their ancestors entered Syria.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> El-Abed, O.: 204; Lifos, *Palestinier i Mellanöstern - uppehållsrätt och dokument (version 1.1)*, 15 October 2019, [url](#), p. 52

<sup>113</sup> Department of Palestinian Affairs: 142; UNRWA: 25

<sup>114</sup> Norway, Landinfo, *Palestinerne i Libanon: Registrering og identitetsdokumenter*, 22 September 2010, [url](#), p. 7; Sweden, Lifos, *Palestinier i Mellanöstern - uppehållsrätt och dokument (version 1.1)*, 15 October 2019, [url](#), pp. 61, 65

<sup>115</sup> UNRWA: 27; Norway, Landinfo, *Palestinerne i Libanon: Registrering og identitetsdokumenter*, 22 September 2010, [url](#), pp. 7-8; Sweden, Lifos, *Palestinier i Mellanöstern - uppehållsrätt och dokument (version 1.1)*, 15 October 2019, [url](#), pp. 61-62

<sup>116</sup> Norway, Landinfo, *Palestinerne i Libanon: Registrering og identitetsdokumenter*, 22 September 2010, [url](#), pp. 8-9; Sweden, Lifos, *Palestinier i Mellanöstern - uppehållsrätt och dokument (version 1.1)*, 15 October 2019, [url](#), p. 66; UNHCR, *The Situation of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*, February 2016, [url](#), pp. 11-12

<sup>117</sup> Norway, Landinfo, *Palestinske flyktninger i Syria: Identitetsdokumenter*, 23 November 2016, [url](#), p. 10; Sweden, Lifos, *Palestinier i Mellanöstern - uppehållsrätt och dokument (version 1.1)*, 15 October 2019, [url](#), pp. 61-62; Austria, BFA, *Country report – Syria*, 17 October 2019, p. 70

<sup>118</sup> UNRWA: 29. For more information on documents issued to 1967 displaced in Syria, see: Norway, Landinfo, *Palestinske flyktninger i Syria: Identitetsdokumenter*, 23 November 2016, [url](#), pp. 9-11

## 4. UNRWA services

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### 4.1. UNRWA's budget shortfall

#### 4.1.1. UNRWA's budget

UNRWA operates with two budgets: 1) the programme budget; and 2) the emergency budget.

The biggest budget is the programme budget (General Fund), which covers expenses for UNRWA's core programmes. Funds for the programme budget are mainly collected through voluntary contributions from UN member states as well as the EU.<sup>119</sup> To continue its services in 2020, UNRWA requires USD 1.4 billion in total of which UNRWA will use USD 806 million for its core services.<sup>120</sup>

The emergency budget is based on the collection of funds from the donor community through annual emergency appeals. Emergency operations have been conducted in the West Bank and Gaza since the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000 and in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan since June 2012 as part of the Syria Regional Humanitarian Response Plan.<sup>121</sup>

In addition to the planned budget, UNRWA receives earmarked funds from the donor community for specific projects that donors wish to implement.<sup>122</sup>

According to UNRWA, its financial crisis has become chronic since 2015. The budget shortfall has resulted in services being adjusted to a minimum and fear of not being able to deliver services in the future. However, UNRWA has funds to deliver its services up until May 2020.<sup>123</sup>

In recent months, a number of donors have increased their contributions to UNRWA. At the time of writing, UNRWA has not officially stated what this means for the remaining part of the year.<sup>124</sup>

#### 4.1.2. Consequences of the US budget cuts in 2018

The US has historically been the largest bilateral donor to UNRWA covering nearly a quarter of UNRWA's budget. In 2018, the US government decided to stop its funding resulting in a budget cut of around USD 300 million.<sup>125</sup> The US funding cuts accelerated a deterioration of services that have become difficult for UNRWA to fund.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> UNRWA, *Core Programme Budget*, n.d., [url](#); Norway, Landinfo, *Palestine: UNRWA Services*, 24 September 2018, [url](#), pp. 5-6

<sup>120</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA Launches 2020 Budget Appeal for US\$ 1.4 Billion*, 31 January 2020, [url](#)

<sup>121</sup> UNRWA, *How we spend funds*, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>122</sup> Norway, Landinfo, *Palestine: UNRWA Services*, 24 September 2018, [url](#), pp. 5-6

<sup>123</sup> UNRWA: 86

<sup>124</sup> UNRWA, *Major Increase in Denmark's Core Contribution to UNRWA: US\$ 15.5 Million in 2020*, 5 March 2020, [url](#); UNRWA, *Sweden Contributes US\$ 49.4 Million to UNRWA*, 6 March 2020, [url](#); UNRWA, *India Provides US\$ 2 Million for the Welfare of Palestine Refugees*, 18 May 2020, [url](#)

<sup>125</sup> Albanese, F.: 219; UNRWA, *UNRWA Faces Greatest Financial Crisis in Its History Following 2018 Funding Cuts*, 9 November 2018, [url](#)

<sup>126</sup> Albanese, F.: 219, 224

The US budget cuts have had a direct impact on UNRWA's capacity to serve its registered refugees in its fields of operations. The US contribution served to sustain UNRWA's core and emergency programmes that are essential, especially in the war-torn fields in which UNRWA operates where refugee dependency on assistance is particularly high.<sup>127</sup>

## 4.2. UNRWA's core services

UNRWA is the main provider of basic services – education, healthcare and relief and social services (RSS) – to a population of around 5.6 million registered refugees. Due to its financial crisis, however, UNRWA no longer has any working capital, which challenges its ability to ensure the continuity of services from one year to the next.<sup>128</sup>

Trying to maintain universal access to education and basic healthcare may come to an end. Some services are already curtailed, such as relief, which is now based on a needs assessment. Furthermore, delivering a high quality of services that meets the needs of beneficiaries rather than only being able to provide some sort of service is also an issue for UNRWA.<sup>129</sup> It remains challenging for UNRWA to implement required critical savings due to external and internal factors as will be addressed in this chapter. This may eventually lead to a point where services cannot continue.<sup>130</sup>

UNRWA is currently operating with a planned 10 % budget cut in 2020, and it will be very difficult to avoid a negative impact on the quality of services in all of UNRWA's programmes. This will be addressed in the chapters below.<sup>131</sup> In the report at hand, however, detailed information concerning the impact of the budget deficit on the RSS Programme has been provided for all fields, as this programme is no longer universal. As such, no detailed information has been provided on education and health services for each field, except for Syria where the conflict has had a severe impact on the service delivery, including education and health services.

### 4.2.1. Education Services

UNRWA's Education Programme serves more than 530,000 students in 709 schools across the five fields. It is UNRWA's largest programme, both in terms of staff and budget, and accounts for approximately 40 % of UNRWA's budget.<sup>132</sup> UNRWA currently makes its educational services available to all registered refugees. Other categories of Palestinians (1967 displaced and their descendants) can be accepted on an exceptional basis depending on the capacity during the specific school year.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Albanese, F.: 220

<sup>128</sup> UNRWA, *Programme Budget 2020-2021*, September 2019, [url](#), p. 31

<sup>129</sup> UNRWA: 87

<sup>130</sup> UNRWA: 84-85

<sup>131</sup> UNRWA: 85

<sup>132</sup> UNRWA: 98; Albanese, F.: 220

<sup>133</sup> UNRWA: 98

### Budgetary impact on educational services

After the US budget cuts in 2018, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA stated that UNRWA's schools were unable to open for the school year 2018/19. However, additional funding made it possible for UNRWA to open its schools and ensure that education services were upheld for that year.<sup>134</sup>

Because of the budget cuts, UNRWA is currently not hiring new teachers on long-term contracts, as the cost of this includes, for instance, pension and sick leave.<sup>135</sup> UNRWA is currently hiring daily paid staff but the number of daily paid teachers continues to increase as the budget shortfall continues. Daily paid teachers do not receive training or educational support, as they are not considered staff.<sup>136</sup>

Another challenge and consequence of budget shortfall is the overall class size. The top 10 % in terms of numbers of students per class was 45 students before the US budget cuts; this has now increased to 50 students.<sup>137</sup> Children are missing out on school as classes are cancelled due to lack of teachers and no funds to replace them.

With a continued budget shortfall, UNRWA predicts a reduction in school attendance rates, a decrease in the number of students passing their exams and an increase in dropout rates, with the consequence that the number of students completing basic education will decrease. Student achievement levels will stagnate or decrease.<sup>138</sup>

With the planned 10 % budget cut being implemented, it is evident that services will be impacted across all fields.<sup>139</sup>

### Availability of educational services in Syria

In Syria, the majority of UNRWA schools are located within the Palestinian refugee camps, which has resulted in many of UNRWA's schools being physically impacted by the conflict, and many have been closed. The Government of Syria lent UNRWA 43 schools between 2014 and 2019. According to information on UNRWA's website, UNRWA is beginning to resume its education services in areas which were previously inaccessible, including in Yalda, where UNRWA is now operating two government school buildings, and in Dera'a through make-shift classrooms supported by the local community. Major construction, maintenance and rehabilitation works are needed, however, to restore education services in the 20 severely damaged UNRWA schools in Ein el Tal, Yarmouk and Dera'a camps.<sup>140</sup>

#### 4.2.2. Relief and Social Services (RSS)

UNRWA's RSS Programme has historically focused its services on food assistance and was initially based on de facto universal provision of services to persons displaced and affected by the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict. Over the years, UNRWA has implemented a number of changes to its relief services to enable better targeting of the most vulnerable and has shifted towards a more needs-based approach.<sup>141</sup> UNRWA

<sup>134</sup> Department of Palestinian Affairs: 136

<sup>135</sup> UNRWA: 99

<sup>136</sup> UNRWA: 100

<sup>137</sup> UNRWA: 102

<sup>138</sup> UNRWA, *Programme Budget 2020-2021*, September 2019, [url](#), p. 31

<sup>139</sup> UNRWA: 85

<sup>140</sup> UNRWA, *Education in Syria*, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>141</sup> UNRWA: 88

implemented a poverty-based service delivery approach in all its fields and moved from food services to cash services – except for Gaza, where the food delivery services were maintained while cash contributions were also introduced.<sup>142</sup>

### Budgetary impact on Relief and Social Services (RSS)

Through its relief services UNRWA is providing a minimum lifeline. UNRWA stated that the cash assistance, which is currently provided, does not cover the actual need of the beneficiaries, however, and is insufficient for survival.<sup>143</sup>

### Availability of cash assistance across the five fields of operation

As a consequence of the budget shortfall, there is a freeze on the intake of individuals who meet the criteria to receive cash assistance from UNRWA.<sup>144</sup> Following the US decision to stop funding UNRWA in 2018, the cash assistance portfolio available covers two out of three payment rounds for 2020 only.<sup>145</sup>

Since 2013, the cash assistance programme in Jordan, the West Bank and Lebanon has been frozen for new intakes. In Jordan, 60,000 persons receive USD 125 per person per year in cash assistance. In the West Bank, 60,000 individuals yearly receive USD 130 per person, and in Lebanon, 60,000 people receive USD 130 per person per year.<sup>146</sup>

In Gaza, new intakes were accepted until February 2020 when a general freeze was announced. In Gaza, UNRWA provides a food basket with a value of USD 11-18 per person every three months. UNRWA covers 15 % of food imports into Gaza contributing to stabilising basic food commodity prices.<sup>147</sup>

In Syria, all eligible persons in the country are currently receiving cash assistance. UNRWA is assisting 130,000 persons (the most vulnerable, including female-headed households) with 14 USD per person per month addressing the particularly vulnerable people and to cover at least 50 % of their food requirements. An additional 280,000 persons receive USD 9 per person per month. UNRWA noted that this in itself is not sufficient for survival.<sup>148</sup>

The Syria cash assistance has been heavily reliant on US funds. While UNRWA covered the gap in 2019, it is difficult to do so for 2020 without additional funds. The objective is at least to maintain the 14 USD per month per person for the 130,000 most vulnerable.<sup>149</sup>

UNRWA conducted a survey in Syria from 2018-2019. The survey showed that 90 % of the refugees lived below the poverty line of USD 2 per person per day, without taking UNRWA's financial assistance into account. At that time, UNRWA still provided cash assistance to the poorest groups amounting to 28 USD per person per month, which now has been reduced to USD 14 and USD 9, as mentioned above. Taking into

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<sup>142</sup> UNRWA: 89

<sup>143</sup> UNRWA: 90-91

<sup>144</sup> UNRWA: 90

<sup>145</sup> UNRWA: 90

<sup>146</sup> UNRWA: 93-95

<sup>147</sup> UNRWA: 92

<sup>148</sup> UNRWA: 96

<sup>149</sup> UNRWA: 96

consideration the assistance provided by UNRWA at the time of the survey, 74 % still lived under the poverty line.<sup>150</sup>

### 4.2.3. Health Services

In 2019, UNRWA continued to deliver free of charge comprehensive primary healthcare services to the 5.6 million registered Palestine refugees while supporting their access to secondary and tertiary care.<sup>151</sup> Other groups may also have access to some level of healthcare in some fields (see chapter 2).

#### Budgetary impact on healthcare services

The budget deficit has also had an impact on healthcare services. Retired doctors are not necessarily replaced. In addition, it is currently not possible to hire any new full time doctors. Instead, UNRWA hires daily paid doctors, which has a negative impact on the quality of health services.<sup>152</sup> The doctor-patient ratios will increase and doctor-patient consultation times be reduced.<sup>153</sup> From 2017 to 2018, the number of medical consultations per doctor per day went up from 78 to 82. On average, the patient consultation time is three minutes, which include time for medical treatment and diagnosis. In most cases, 'quick fixes' are given in the form of medicine and/or antibiotics.<sup>154</sup>

With regards to secondary and tertiary treatment, UNRWA contracts certain hospitals across its fields where Palestine refugees can have part of the cost reimbursed. However, such reimbursement will also be at stake with a continuous financial deficit.<sup>155</sup>

As for procurement of medication, non-chronic medications have been procured. However medicine for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is at risk which would impact more than 270,000 patients receiving care for NCDs.<sup>156</sup>

#### Availability of healthcare services in Syria

The ongoing conflict in Syria has had a serious impact on the health of the Palestine refugee community. Access to UNRWA health centres has become increasingly difficult and dangerous; in some cases, violence, damage and insecurity forced some health centres to close entirely.<sup>157</sup>

However, according to the May 2020 COVID-19 Flash Appeal for Palestine Refugees, all 25 UNRWA health facilities remain operational and continue to provide essential primary health services.<sup>158</sup> While health services are thus available, this is in limited capacity, however, and not of a high level of quality.<sup>159</sup>

Although Palestine refugees in Syria benefit from many of the same rights as Syrian citizens, UNRWA became their sole healthcare provider, when the government stopped referring them to Ministry of Health hospitals.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> UNRWA: 123

<sup>151</sup> UNRWA: 105

<sup>152</sup> UNRWA: 107

<sup>153</sup> UNRWA, *Programme Budget 2020-2021*, September 2019, [url](#)

<sup>154</sup> UNRWA: 108-109

<sup>155</sup> UNRWA: 110

<sup>156</sup> UNRWA: 111

<sup>157</sup> UNRWA, *Health in Syria*, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>158</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA Launches COVID-19 Flash Appeal for Palestine Refugees*, 2 May 2020, [url](#)

<sup>159</sup> UNRWA: 112

#### 4.2.4. Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme

UNRWA's Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme is largely project-funded, and therefore overall not directly impacted by the budget shortfall.<sup>161</sup> UNRWA foresees, though, that as a consequence of the budget shortfall, fewer substandard shelters will be rehabilitated/reconstructed in the immediate/short term, and UNRWA installations and environmental infrastructure will be inadequately maintained and repaired and will become dangerous for refugees.<sup>162</sup>

In Syria, a number of camps have been destroyed, however, no camp reconstruction is currently being considered by UNRWA. Minor rehabilitation work has been concluded on schools in camps where access has been possible and where it has been meaningful to do so.<sup>163</sup>

#### 4.2.5. UNRWA's Protection Programme

UNRWA does not manage the refugee camps and has no role in ensuring personal safety in the camps. UNRWA cannot provide physical protection. UNRWA is operating from a service-delivery mandate and unless this is changed into a human rights-focused mandate, providing physical protection remains impossible.<sup>164</sup>

UNRWA's protection efforts are solely protection mainstreaming in its programmes and service delivery as well as small scale protection interventions in specific cases – e.g. addressing child abuse by referring the case to a protection provider about the case, when this is possible, and, in very limited cases of refoulement related to PRS, interventions with government. UNRWA stated that generally, host governments would not accept if UNRWA facilitated any sort of resettlement of a Palestine refugee to their countries. UNRWA does not conduct such protection interventions.<sup>165</sup>

According to Akram, protection work as well as service delivery is challenged due to lack of funds. Moreover, protection staff does not always have the clear legal authority to intervene. National authorities state that UNRWA's area of work is to provide services and not be involved with protection related efforts, such as deportation interventions where Palestinians have been detained and deportation is imminent.<sup>166</sup>

Researcher Francesca P. Albanese found that UNRWA's Protection Programme has been strongly impacted due to the funding cut, as 70 % of the protection budget was funded by the US. This resulted in the discontinuation of one-third of protection staff positions in 2018. While UNRWA 'restructured' its protection function within the available budget and 'refocused' strategic protection priorities, it is undisputable that protection has been reduced to the detriment of the refugees.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> UNRWA, *Health in Syria*, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>161</sup> UNRWA: 113

<sup>162</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA Programme Budget 2020-2021*, September 2019, [url](#), p. 31

<sup>163</sup> UNRWA: 115

<sup>164</sup> UNRWA: 116-117

<sup>165</sup> UNRWA: 116, 117, 120

<sup>166</sup> Akram, S.: 185

<sup>167</sup> Albanese, F.: 221



### 4.3. External factors impacting UNRWA's delivery of services

In addition to the budget cuts, there are several other factors external to UNRWA that affects its operations and possibility to deliver its services. These external factors also risk compromising UNRWA's ability to deliver its services.

#### 4.3.1. Security-related issues preventing delivery of services

Political and security circumstances in UNRWA's fields of operations increase the Palestinian refugees' demand for UNRWA, both for its core programmes (education, healthcare and RSS) and in terms of extra services needed to help the refugees cope with exceptional circumstances.<sup>168</sup>

In the occupied Palestinian territories (Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem), the Palestinian refugees are highly dependent on UNRWA. However, attacks by Israeli forces and settlers in the West Bank/East Jerusalem, and the 13-year-old blockade and frequent military operations by Israel in Gaza have harmed UNRWA's services.<sup>169</sup>

In the West Bank, the quality of UNRWA's services is negatively affected by the very nature of the occupation, together with the restrictions and limitations it imposes. Most UNRWA beneficiaries live in areas that are under Israeli military/security control, which are significantly impacted by Israeli policies, e.g. movement restrictions, home demolitions, and destruction of livelihood.<sup>170</sup>

In Gaza, the gravity of the occupation is compounded by the blockade, which restricts movement of goods in and out of Gaza, and prohibits movement of people across the border.<sup>171</sup> The recurrent hostilities (2008/2009, 2012 and 2014) have exacerbated the effects of the ongoing blockade, which entered its 13<sup>th</sup> year in the summer of 2019. The blockade continues to have a devastating impact on people's lives, crippling the economy and rendering the majority of the population dependent on humanitarian aid to meet their basic needs (see section 4.2.2.).<sup>172</sup>

In Syria, UNRWA cannot provide services in the middle of active hostilities, or in areas where access is severely restricted or prohibited. Even though the Syrian government has recaptured the vast majority of the country, many areas with significant Palestinian refugee population remain inaccessible to UNRWA.<sup>173</sup> About two-thirds of the PRS community is displaced, and the majority live in the Damascus area. Three camps have been completely destroyed and one informal camp (Yarmouk) is not accessible without permits.<sup>174</sup> The government exercises indirect controls over UNRWA's operations through staff members, and some UNRWA staff and their family members have disappeared.<sup>175</sup>

Akram stated that the Syrian crisis impacted the ability of UNRWA to deliver services also in neighbouring countries. Host states have been under pressure as the crisis has continued, and six million people have fled to neighbouring states. This has resulted in UNRWA coming under pressure from the host states not to

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<sup>168</sup> Albanese, F.: 230

<sup>169</sup> Albanese, F.: 225, 231

<sup>170</sup> Albanese, F.: 232

<sup>171</sup> Albanese, F.: 231

<sup>172</sup> UNRWA, *Education in the Gaza Strip*, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>173</sup> Albanese, F.: 234

<sup>174</sup> UNRWA: 122

<sup>175</sup> UNRWA: 124

expand its services or refugee population. Especially since January 2015, most of the neighbouring states began to limit the access on their borders. UNRWA then started recording PRS and as a result, they did not automatically have access to all services.<sup>176</sup>

In Lebanon, UNRWA is able to provide services inside Palestinian camps, except when internal fighting takes place between factions. UNRWA's inability to influence the Lebanese government's systems hinders its service delivery, according to Albanese. The Lebanese authorities do not exert any authority in the camps.<sup>177</sup> Akram stated that the camps in Lebanon are the most poverty-stricken of the ones UNRWA operates in, except for Gaza.<sup>178</sup>

#### 4.3.2. Population growth

As mentioned in the beginning to this report, when UNRWA began its operations, it was responding to the needs of about 750,000 Palestine refugees. Today, some 5.6 million registered Palestine refugees are eligible for UNRWA services. The population growth results in an increasing demand of services, which is not possible for UNRWA to meet without a continuously growing budget.<sup>179</sup>

Projections suggest that the total population registered by UNRWA will increase from more than 5.6 million in 2016 to 6.46 million in 2021.<sup>180</sup>

#### 4.3.3. Political dimensions

Actions of the host governments can also directly or indirectly impact UNRWA's ability to deliver services. For example, the Jordanian government decided to increase its salaries for teachers. In return, it is expected that UNRWA does the same for teachers in UNRWA schools, in accordance with its salary alignment policy across all fields. This will cost UNRWA USD 40 million a year from 2020 onwards of which USD 10 million are for Jordan alone.<sup>181</sup>

The withdrawal of US funds from UNRWA, and its direct and indirect criticism of UNRWA since 2018, has fostered a climate of uncertainty, which is damaging both to UNRWA and to Palestinian refugees globally, according to Albanese. Albanese argues that it diverts attention away from the protracted nature of the Palestinian refugee situation, and the conflict 'over Palestine', which require a political resolve.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Akram, S.: 181

<sup>177</sup> Albanese, F.: 226, 235

<sup>178</sup> Akram, S.: 183

<sup>179</sup> UNRWA: 130; UNRWA, *Who We Are*, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>180</sup> UNRWA, *Programme Budget 2020-2021*, September 2019, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>181</sup> UNRWA: 129

<sup>182</sup> Albanese, F.: 229

## 5. Access to Jordan for Palestinians

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### 5.1. Entry and re-entry requirements for Palestinians from Jordan

Generally, the Jordanian authorities do generally not accept forced returns of Palestinians without citizenship to Jordan.<sup>183</sup>

For a person who holds a temporary residence permit in Jordan, it will be difficult to return to the country, as she/he is not a Jordanian citizen. If the person is forcefully returned to Jordan, the person will not be allowed to enter.<sup>184</sup> A person who is being forced to return will be considered a foreigner and therefore not eligible for legal stay in the country. If the return is voluntary, and not supported by any foreign authorities, i.e. the person returning has bought his own return ticket, has a valid travel document and residence permit in Jordan, he/she can return. However, if a person with legal residence permit in Jordan has been abroad for a longer period, for instance six to eight months, he/she likely will face problems upon return. The possibility of returning a person from a European country depends on the relationship of the specific European embassy with the Jordanian authorities.<sup>185</sup>

If the residence permit of a Palestinian without Jordanian nationality is expired, the person cannot enter Jordan to apply for an extension of the residence permit in the country. Regarding a foreign woman married to a Jordanian husband, the husband would have to apply for a residence permit for his wife.<sup>186</sup>

One embassy stated, that the airlines are not obliged to ask the proper authorisations from the Jordanian authorities to ensure ensure who they returning to Jordan. This should be done weeks or months before by the Immigration Services of the country wanting to return back the Palestinian.<sup>187</sup>

A Western embassy mentioned that it also sees an increasing number of Jordanian citizens who are to be returned from its country, but the Jordanian authorities do not want them back, if it is a forced return.<sup>188</sup>

### 5.2. Entry and re-entry requirements for Palestinians from UNRWA's other fields of operation

Some embassies have experienced that the Jordanian authorities have accepted that Palestinians who hold a T-passport (see chapter 3.2.) can return, while others have experienced that it is not possible. The return of Palestinians with a T-passport would have to be a voluntary return without the involvement of foreign authorities. A person returning on a T-passport will be refused entry if she/he is deported. Such return needs approval from the Jordanian authorities.<sup>189</sup>

Previously, it happened on a case-by-case basis that some European countries obtained permission for Palestinians to transit Jordan and Israel to get access to the West Bank and Gaza. Some countries, i.e. Canada, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands and the USA, used to have a Memorandum of Understanding

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<sup>183</sup> Western embassies (A, B): 145

<sup>184</sup> Western embassies (B): 147

<sup>185</sup> Western embassies: 146

<sup>186</sup> Western embassies (A): 157

<sup>187</sup> Western embassies (B): 164

<sup>188</sup> Western embassies (C): 152

<sup>189</sup> Western embassies (A, B): 149

(MOU) with the Jordanian authorities, allowing assisted returns of Palestinians from the West Bank to transit through Jordan when returning to the West Bank. The Jordanian authorities cancelled the MOU in late 2018. Some of these countries are now trying to establish a new agreement, but have not succeeded so far.<sup>190</sup>

In September 2019, the Jordanian authorities issued a note verbale stating that all forced returns of Palestinians transiting Jordan to enter the West Bank have been stopped.<sup>191</sup> The note verbale also stated that all returns to the West Bank must go through Israeli airports. Since then, there have been no transits through Jordan. Whilst the Jordanian authorities have stated that it is a temporary measure, the Western embassies considered it to be continuing.<sup>192</sup>

Regarding voluntary return to the West Bank, see previous DIS report: 'Palestinians: Access and Residency for Palestinians in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem'.<sup>193</sup>

### Access for Palestinians from Syria

Palestinians from Syria (PRS) have not been allowed to enter Jordan, except for a few thousand persons who entered Jordan legally before 2013.<sup>194</sup> All the Western embassies confirmed that legal access to Jordan for PRS has been denied, at least since 2014-15.<sup>195</sup>

In September 2018, the Jaber/Nasib border crossing between Jordan and Syria was reopened to allow around 15-20,000 Syrians to enter Jordan for security reasons. However, these people were not PRS but people who held Syrian passports.<sup>196</sup>

Several cases of refoulement to Syria of Palestinian refugees fleeing the conflict without the necessary individualized procedures, including women and girls, have been documented in recent years.<sup>197</sup>

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, cases of citizenship revocation for those PRS who held Jordanian citizenship have been documented. In most cases, authorities provided no information regarding the reasons for the revocation.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Western embassies: 158

<sup>191</sup> Western embassies: 150-151

<sup>192</sup> Western embassies: 150

<sup>193</sup> Denmark, DIS, *Palestinians: Access and Residency for Palestinians in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem*, May 2019, [url](#)

<sup>194</sup> El-Abed, O.: 209

<sup>195</sup> Western embassies: 159

<sup>196</sup> Western embassies: 160

<sup>197</sup> UNHCR, *Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees For the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Compilation Report Universal Periodic Review: Jordan*, July 2018, [url](#)

<sup>198</sup> US Department of State, *2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Jordan*, 11 March 2020, [url](#)

### 5.3. Entry and re-entry requirements for Palestinians from outside of UNRWA's fields of operation (e.g. Algeria and Libya)

Palestinians from outside of UNRWA's fields of operation are not allowed to enter Jordan for registration purposes, regardless of their eligibility to register with UNRWA.<sup>199</sup>

A Palestinian who is living outside of UNRWA's fields of operation can be registered where his/her family lives, for instance in Jordan. However, this does not grant the person access to the country. UNRWA cannot facilitate access to any of its fields of operation.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Western embassies (A): 162

<sup>200</sup> UNRWA: 65

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## Appendix 1: Meeting minutes

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### Meeting with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), HQ/Amman

Amman, 3 March 2020

*The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established 70 years ago by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 302(IV). UNRWA provides essential services to Palestine Refugees based on a mandate given to it by the UNGA which is renewed every three years. In November 2019 the UNGA extended the mandate of UNRWA until 2023. UNRWA operates in five fields: Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza.*

#### **Persons eligible to be registered to receive UNRWA services**

##### Eligibility Criteria

1. The mandate of UNRWA has developed over time, as has the operational definitions and criteria for identifying those who are eligible to be registered in UNRWA's registration system and/or to receive UNRWA services. These criteria are outlined in UNRWA's Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI), which were last revised in 2009.
2. The eligible persons fall into two groups: those who meet UNRWA's criteria to be described as Palestine Refugees, and those who do not meet those criteria<sup>201</sup>.
3. It should be noted, that the actual availability of services is dependent on UNRWA's budget as well as other UNRWA instructions and rules. It therefore varies over time and between fields what services are available and to which groups.

##### *Persons who meet UNRWA's Palestine Refugee Criteria*

4. According to the CERI, the groups and persons listed below are eligible to be registered in UNRWA's registration system and to receive UNRWA services, as well as to obtain an UNRWA Registration Card as proof of registration.
5. These are persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict. Palestine Refugees, and descendants of Palestine Refugee males, including legally adopted children, are eligible to register for UNRWA services.

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<sup>201</sup> UNRWA, *Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI)*, 2009, [url](#), p. 3

6. The registration of descendants through the male line is unlimited as it is carried on through generations. Currently, the fourth and the fifth generations are being registered as refugees. Today there are approximately 5.6 million Palestine refugees and their descendants registered with UNRWA
7. UNRWA accepts new applications from persons who wish to be registered as Palestine Refugees. Once they are registered with UNRWA, persons in this category are referred to as Registered Refugees or as Registered Palestine Refugees.
8. Very few new inscription applications (i.e. applications from persons wishing to register for the first time) were received in recent years. In 2019, less than ten new registrations were approved. The number of descendants keeps increasing. Last year approximately 100,000 descendants were registered as Registered Refugees. The right to registration of descendants through the male line is continuous and passed on to all future generations.

*Persons who do not meet UNRWA's Palestine Refugee criteria but can be registered*

9. While registered for the purposes of receiving UNRWA services, these persons are not counted as part of the official Registered Refugee population of UNRWA. They consist of persons who at the time of original registration did not satisfy all of UNRWA's Palestine Refugee criteria, but who were determined to have suffered significant loss and/or hardship for reasons related to the 1948 conflict in Palestine; they also include persons who belong to the families of Registered Refugees. Approximately 600,000 persons are registered under one of these categories.
  - Married to Non-Refugee (MNR) Family Members
10. These are husbands and descendants of women who are Registered Refugees and are (or were) married to husbands who do not fall in any of the categories above. The husbands and descendants, including legally adopted children, of these women are eligible to register to receive UNRWA services. In cases of divorce, the divorced husband loses the right to registration however the children remain eligible to register.
11. Since the operational definition of Palestine Refugees according to UNRWA is transmitted through the male line, the descendants of Palestine Refugee women are not considered as Palestine Refugees. Nevertheless, they are able to register and receive UNRWA services.
12. UNRWA started registering the husbands and children of Palestine Refugee women (MNR children) in 2006. This was done retroactively, so marriages contracted before 2006 as well as children born before 2006 also could register. Recently, it has become relevant to look at the registration of the children of MNR children. Whilst there is no common guideline at this point in time, this issue is addressed differently across UNRWA's five fields of operation. The type of services provided to MNR families also varies significantly between fields.

- Non-Refugee Wives

13. These are women who do not meet UNRWA's criteria for Palestine Refugees and are (or were) married to Registered Refugees. These women are eligible to register to receive UNRWA services. In cases of divorce, the divorced woman loses the right to registration.

- Jerusalem Poor and Gaza Poor

14. These are persons whose normal place of residence until 15 May 1948 was East Jerusalem or Gaza City, who lost their work or properties and suffered hardship as a result of the 1948 conflict. Persons who are currently registered in this category are entitled to receive UNRWA services. Descendants of such persons through the male line are also entitled to register to receive UNRWA services. Except for such descendants, UNRWA does not accept new applications from persons wishing to be registered in this category.

- Frontier Villagers

15. These are persons who lived in towns or villages along the 1949 armistice lines in the West Bank who lost farming properties or suffered other hardship as a result of the 1948 conflict. Persons who are currently registered in this category are entitled to receive UNRWA services. Descendants of such persons through the male line are also eligible to register to receive UNRWA services. Except for such descendants, UNRWA does not accept new applications from persons wishing to be registered in this category.

- Compromise Cases

16. These are persons of Lebanese origin who were working in Palestine but not permanently residing there until 15 May 1948, who suffered loss of livelihood and hardship as a result of the 1948 conflict. Persons who are currently registered in this category are entitled to receive UNRWA services. Their descendants, however, are not eligible to register to receive UNRWA services. UNRWA does not accept new applications from persons wishing to be registered in this category. It is noted that there are very few cases within this category.

- Kafalah Children

17. These are children who are receiving from a Registered Refugee or Other Registered Person parental care according to the terms of Islamic Kafalah practice. These children are eligible to register to receive UNRWA services during the period of their residence in the household of the Kafalah patron until they reach the age of 18 years.

*Persons eligible to receive UNRWA services without being registered*

18. Besides the categories of persons who are eligible to register and receive services, CERI also includes other categories of persons who are eligible to receive services on an emergency basis but are not registered in UNRWA's Registration System. This group is referred to as 'non-registered persons' or 'services only'.

- 1967 displaced persons
19. This group includes persons displaced as a result of the 1967 hostilities as well as subsequent hostilities. UNRWA makes its services available to persons in this category in accordance with established practice and/or host country agreement. In resolution 2252 of 4 July 1967 and in other subsequent resolutions, UNGA has endorsed UNRWA's efforts "to continue to provide humanitarian assistance, as far as practicable, on an emergency basis, and as a temporary measure, to persons in the area who are currently displaced and in serious need of continued assistance as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities". However, the precise criteria in terms of descendants are not clearly outlined, as this category is considered to be served on an emergency basis.
  20. UNRWA does not provide services to all 1967 displaced and persons displaced due to subsequent hostilities. Currently the displaced Palestinians in Syria who are not 1948 Registered Refugees or descendants are receiving services because they are experiencing other hostilities. In Lebanon and Jordan, UNRWA is also serving 1967 displaced and their descendants, which is governed by an instruction, whereby the director of the individual field office at his/her discretion can decide to whom services can be provided. The authority to serve other populations is delegated to the field directors by UNRWA's Commissioner-General.
  21. Currently UNRWA is not recording nor registering these individuals in the registration database, while they may or may not be registered in UNRWA's education or health databases. However the records in these databases are not based on verified ID documents of the person and s/he may solely be registered by name. This also makes it difficult to know the exact number of 1967 displaced and descendants, who are receiving services from the agency. The 1967 displaced do not have any UNRWA documents. It is not possible for UNRWA to verify whether a 1967 displaced or a descendant is receiving UNRWA services.
  22. In practice, beyond the authority delegated to each field director to identify other groups that may receive services, in some instances it comes down to the staff on the ground deciding whether or not a 1967 displaced or descendant will receive services. The protection regime for this population is weak.
  23. Within the 1967 category there are also different groups. Some are actually 1948 refugees, that were displaced to the West Bank or Gaza in 1948 and then were displaced a second time in 1967. This group are registered as 1948 Palestine Refugees.

*The situation for 1967 displaced persons in Jordan*

24. Palestine refugees who were first displaced in 1948 and then a second time in 1967 are registered with UNRWA as Palestine refugees.
25. In Jordan, the Jordanian Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA), were responsible for recording persons displaced in 1967. As DPA no longer issues documents to this group, the only proof of being a descendant of a 1967 displaced, would be this original registration certificate.

26. Most of the 1967 displaced persons hold Jordanian citizenship. However, some later left Jordan for various reasons and went to Syria or Lebanon where they established their families. This caused some losing their right to Jordanian nationality.

*The situation for 1967 displaced persons in Lebanon*

27. There are also 1967 displaced and descendants in Lebanon. Some arrived with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and had no challenges staying in the country until PLO left Lebanon in 1982, after which these individuals were left without any rights in the country. Others were displaced to Lebanon as a result of the 1967 war as well as subsequent Arab/Israeli hostilities. Descendants of these persons seek UNRWA's services as they cannot obtain legal stay or any rights from the Lebanese government nor does UNHCR consider it their mandate to assist this group. This group is referred to as 'non-IDs'. There are an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 non-ID Palestinians in Lebanon. These are Palestinians who began to arrive in Lebanon in the 1960s and do not hold any type of valid identification documents. They are not recognised by the Government of Lebanon and thus do not hold valid legal status in the country<sup>202</sup>.
28. Furthermore, the Government of Lebanon is reluctant to accept new registrations of persons, who may qualify to be registered as 1948 Palestine Refugees or descendants, whose ancestors are not already registered with the Lebanese authorities.

*The situation for 1967 displaced persons in Syria*

29. In Syria, some 1967 displaced may have a family certificate issued by the General Authority for Palestinian Arab Refugees (GAPAR), stating the date for when they or their ancestors entered Syria.
30. Most of the 1967 displaced from Syria, who left Syria because of the current conflict, are registered with UNRWA to receive services in line with Resolution 2252, referring to 'subsequent hostilities'. This is the only time UNRWA started recording persons from the 1967 displaced persons in its registration system, under the 'services only' category.
31. In conclusion, it is difficult to say, who and when 1967 displaced have documents from host governments. Some have and some do not.

*MNR eligibility to register and receive UNRWA services*

32. In 2006 UNRWA started registering children of Palestine Refugee women married to non-refugees under the category MNR Family Members. Following this shift, UNRWA now sees cases for registration of descendants of MNR children. It is a current internal debate, whether descendants of MNR children - where none of the parents are Palestine Refugees - are eligible to register. According to CERI, in principle the children could be registered as MNR Family Members. In reality, each field director follows a different approach.

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<sup>202</sup> UNRWA, *Lebanon – Protection at UNRWA in 2018*, n.d., [url](#)

33. At this point in time, there is no clear decision or policy on how children of second or third generation MNRs should be considered in terms of right to registration.
34. As for MNRs in Syria, the children of MNRs are not registered, unless the husband is a Palestinian who is not a 1948 refugee. In case the father is a Syrian citizen, UNRWA does not register the children and they will not be eligible to receive UNRWA services.
35. In Jordan, MNR children are registered. Even though Palestine Refugees in Jordan have access to public services, the request for UNRWA services continues to be very high in health centres and schools. This is mainly due to service locations as well as the fact that services, including medicine, are free of charge.
36. UNRWA noted that the instructions related to MNR eligibility has changed over time. At the outset, a Palestine Refugee woman would lose the right to services despite being a registered Palestine Refugee, as she married someone who was not a Palestine Refugee and therefore in most cases would have access to services through his citizenship. Since 1993, women who are married to a non-refugee maintain their eligibility for services. Since 2006, their non-refugee husbands and children have also become eligible to register for services.
37. However, in the West Bank the number of MNRs is much higher than in other fields and it remains challenging to provide services to MNRs. Since this group can also receive services from the Palestinian Authority it is not clear what their current status is. As per Field Director's decision, MNR children do not receive services in the West Bank.

### **Registration and transfer of registration**

#### Storage and update of UNRWA Registration Records

38. In 2010 UNRWA began operating on a web-based Refugee Registration Information System (RRIS). The system currently allows for live updates of registration records from over 60 registration offices across the five fields.
39. The registration records are organised on a family basis, and the registered persons themselves provide updates by providing official documents, i.e. marriage certificates etc. UNRWA only registers births, deaths, marriages, divorce etc., when a registered person approaches the registration offices with an official document related to the said life event and requests to have the status updated in the database and in the family registration card issued by UNRWA. The document must be original.
40. Due to the voluntary nature of the registry, UNRWA cannot be considered a civil registry and one cannot expect the records to be fully up to date. For this reason, there are cases where married persons are still registered as singles in UNRWA's records.

## UNRWA registration

### *Transfer of registration*

41. The field of registration in the family registration card reflects the place of registration of the person who originally registered with UNRWA. Therefore the majority of Registered Refugees have the 'field of registration', where their ancestors first registered. That is why one may find cases of Palestine Refugees born in Syria with GAPAR documents, but who are registered with Jordan as 'field of registration'.
42. It is quite complicated to change the field of registration. Such transfer of registration needs approval from the relevant host government. All of the five countries UNRWA operates in, with the exception of Syria, allow transfer out of their country to another UNRWA field country. However, it is generally more difficult for host countries to accept transfers from another UNRWA field in to their country.
43. However, in cases where the initial field of registration of a person is unclear, it is possible to establish this by looking at the original documents available in UNRWA's database.
44. Syria does not accept any transfer of registration address for Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) who left Syria and moved to another field. This results in some persons living in other UNRWA fields but with 'field of registration' as Syria.
45. As for the registration of the 'physical address', this can be changed if the person approaches UNRWA to change it. Due to the voluntary nature of this, one cannot assume that the physical address is updated.
46. Following the crisis in Syria, UNRWA established – on an emergency basis – a third address category: the emergency address. This address does not affect the physical address of the person, but solely indicates the person's physical presence during the emergency response. As such, PRS maintain their physical address where they normally resided before the emergency.
47. A PRS who currently stays in Lebanon would still have Syria as the physical address. This 'emergency address' does not appear on the UNRWA registration certificate, but only in UNRWA's registration system.
48. Children born in Syria whose father or grandfather is a Palestine Refugee in Jordan (PRJ) would be registered with Jordan as their field of registration, even if they were born and lived in Syria their whole life. In their family registration card, the physical address would be Syria. It is therefore important to not only consider the 'field of registration', if there are elements in the information shared by the individual, that strongly indicates differently.
49. It is possible that the Jordanian authorities have withdrawn the citizenship from the PRJ father or that the descendants did not manage to uphold their citizenship. These persons could be illegally in Jordan

in spite of them having Jordan as their field of registration. However, this group would still be eligible to receive UNRWA services.

50. It is most likely, that PRJs who lived in Syria since the 1970s are related to Black September<sup>203</sup>. Many faced problems upon return to Jordan. This can range from denaturalization to mandatory weekly reporting at the intelligence service. This may also have an impact on descendants who in some cases also can be prevented from working, as they are not granted permission to do so by the authorities due to the past actions of their father or grandfather.
51. There are about 7,000 PRS without Jordanian nationality most of which have entered Jordan illegally. After several cases of refoulement, they are now residing in an unwelcome grey zone in Jordan without being able to apply for residence, employment permits, access to public services and are in a precarious situation.
52. An unmarried son living outside of Syria whose family is still residing in Syria would have Syria as his 'field of registration'. However, since his family is residing in Syria and he may not have the family registration card with him, he can be provided with a separate family registration card where his physical address would correspond to where he actually resides.
53. PRSs, who are residing illegally in Jordan or Lebanon, would have problems obtaining marriage and birth certificates and in turn will have problems registering their spouses or children in UNRWA's registration system.
54. For example, some Palestinians have entered Jordan with fake documents under false names. When they approach UNRWA it is necessary to establish their real identity to be able to register them. This can be done in cooperation with UNRWA Syria Field offices. In cases where the identity can be established, the persons will be registered. This is mostly done in Jordan. In Syria and Lebanon it is more challenging to register persons who do not have official documents, due to the governments' approaches towards Palestinians.
55. UNRWA does not have information pertaining to the legal stay of a person. Every single case differs and one has to look into the personal history of the refugee. In cases where it is difficult to establish where the person is from, UNRWA may be able to assist by looking at the family book and other ID documents in the individual's file. However, UNRWA underlined that, for various reasons, it is not possible for them to assert that the person still has the legal basis to reside in a given country.
56. For example, a person who has Jordanian citizenship may have had it revoked. This is not reflected anywhere in UNRWA's system. Therefore the registration address may not reflect where the person is currently residing and where the person has legal stay.

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<sup>203</sup> A conflict, now known as Black September, breaks out between the PLO and the Jordanian Armed Forces. Thousands of Palestine refugees are expelled from the country, and the PLO leadership moves from Jordan to Lebanon (UNRWA, *Black September*, n.d., [url](#))



*Verification of UNRWA registration*

57. In light of the increase of verification requests, particularly following the Syria crisis, UNRWA is in the process of developing a registration verification portal, which will be available on UNRWA's website. The aim is to have this portal ready by the end of this year. The purpose is to have all verification requests sent to this portal which will enable a more streamlined and efficient approach, with the option of asking further questions if needed once a response has been received. Using this portal will require that UNRWA's consent form is completed by the person in question, before submission of the request. Currently a number of European countries, including Denmark, send registration verification requests to UNRWA. During the second half of 2019, UNRWA received 511 verification requests.

*Registration issues related to MNR Family Members*

58. UNRWA only registers the citizenship of the husband if this is provided by the family. In cases where it is provided, it may not be up to date and UNRWA is not in a position to verify or confirm if this is indeed the nationality the spouse holds.

*Registration of other nationalities*

59. Generally, in the registration system, there is a column for 'other nationalities', which also would hold information relating to Palestine Refugees, should they have another nationality. There is an 'original nationality' and a 'current nationality'. However, UNRWA stressed that this information will only be available if the individual provides this and the information is not verified by the agency.

*Registration by proxy*

60. According to CERI anyone who wishes to register, must do so in person. However, it is possible for a descendant who meets the criteria in CERI and who is unable to meet in person to register by proxy. The person will need to show original documents, such as an original birth certificate, ID cards of parents or documents identifying the 1948 Refugee of whom the person is a descendant. Once the identity as a descendant of a 1948 refugee has been established, the family of the male descendant can also be registered with UNRWA, provided they present proof of family unity (e.g. marriage certificate, birth certificates of children). Unregistered descendants of a Registered Refugee living outside of UNRWA mandate areas can be registered in the same way as above.

61. Once a person is registered, he can obtain a family registration card which will be given to his relatives acting as proxy. In some cases, UNRWA also sends the family registration card by mail to individuals or lawyers acting on behalf of the individual.

62. UNRWA cannot facilitate access to any of its fields of operation, in cases where an individual does not have any relatives to act as proxy.

63. When asked what family members are able to act as proxies, UNRWA stated that there are no criteria for this and that it could also be cousins.
64. UNRWA began maintaining Palestine Refugees' registration records in May 1950 and the initial registration process closed in June 1952. Therefore, in Lebanon individuals who wish to register with UNRWA who were not included in the initial registration will need prior approval from the Lebanese authorities before they can obtain an UNRWA registration. Persons residing outside of Lebanon, who wish to register with UNRWA in Lebanon, can apply for a preapproval through a Lebanese embassy. The Lebanese authorities also check against UNRWA registrations to see if the registration files match.

*Possibility of registration for persons living outside of UNRWA's fields of operation*

65. A Palestinian from Algeria, who is the descendant of a 1948 Registered Refugee, with relatives in Jordan can apply to register with UNRWA through his relatives. As such, an individual living outside of UNRWA's fields of operation can be registered where her/his family is. However, this does not grant access to the country. It is possible to register with UNRWA and never obtain access to its services because the person has no legal rights to reside in one of UNRWA's fields of operation.
66. In the case of a person from Algeria who is a descendant of a 1948 Palestinian Refugee who never registered with UNRWA, this will be considered to be a new registration and is much more complicated and sensitive as outlined previously related to new registrations. Again, this is very rare.
67. Most individuals register with UNRWA to obtain services. In the example of Algeria the services are not available to this person, and therefore registration will mean very little in practice. In these cases, registration with UNRWA may be done for political purposes to establish a link to Palestine.

*Return to former place of residence*

68. A person who has lost his Jordanian citizenship would not be let back into Jordan. In Lebanon, Palestinians will not have any rights and the Lebanese authorities will not let a Palestinian who previously resided in Lebanon back in once they have left. There are Palestinians with Lebanese citizenship for whom the situation would be different. Almost all of them were Christian Palestinians, but a considerable number were Sunni Palestinians and even some Shiites that were registered with UNRWA coming from border towns.
69. As for Syria today, even if a person has a residential card, it is impossible to think that s/he can return meaningfully at this point in time. It is impossible to live in Syria and it is simply too dangerous. There are some cases of PRS who have voluntarily returned. However there is no guarantee that they will survive and not be approached by and/or taken by the Syrian authorities.
70. Returning to Gaza and the West Bank is also not possible, as the Israeli authorities will not facilitate the return and let the person in. Therefore there are serious restrictions to go back for each individual once s/he has left.

## **UNRWA documents**

### Family Registration Card

71. The family registration card is the central card for a Palestine Refugee. Normally, a family will have one card per family; however, it is possible to request an additional card. The family registration card does not have an expiry date.
72. As for divorced families, the children will be registered in the card of the parent with legal custody. The father will generally keep his card with the children included. The mother may upon request receive a separate card. The children will only be included in her card if they are under her legal custody. Whilst the mother will obtain her own registration card, she will be moved back to the family registration number of her father. In some instances, the woman may not request her own registration card but prefer being included in her parents' card. A widowed woman maintains the family registration number of her deceased husband.
73. The divorced husband will always keep his own family registration number and does not have the option of moving back to his parents' registration card, as the family registration number follows the male line.

### Other UNRWA documents

74. An individual can receive a family registration card with only his/her name on it.

### Possibility of obtaining documents online

75. It is not possible to apply for documents online. However one may apply for documents by proxy, who can be a family member or a lawyer.

### Possibility of re-obtaining documents in case they have been lost

76. In case a person has lost all UNRWA documents, he/she can approach any UNRWA field to have new documents issued. The person would be interviewed and will be asked to present any documents that s/he might have. UNRWA can subsequently issue new documents if the identity is verified.

### Registration numbers

77. The UNRWA registration system operates with two types of registration numbers:
  - a. *Family registration number*. This number starts with '1-'
  - b. *Individual registration number*. This number starts with '2-'
78. Previously it was possible to detect from the old registration numbers which field, area and camp a person was from. However, this is not the case anymore as these numbers are no longer used as identification markers and are not updated by UNRWA anymore.
79. There are no registration numbers for the 1967 displaced.

### Prevalence of fraudulent UNRWA documents

80. UNRWA almost only sees genuine documents. The UNRWA representatives have only seen one case where a fraudulent UNRWA document was provided in relation to a registration verification request.
81. The family registration card consists of a number of specificities that makes it difficult to make fake copies of it. For example the light blue border on the cards is very difficult to replicate. The border is changed when a new company is tasked with printing the family registration card. This means family registration cards from 2011 and 2017 would have different borders.

### **Availability of Services**

#### Budget implications on services

82. Following the US budget cuts in 2018, UNRWA managed to maintain and even slightly increase the funding by the end of the year, compared to 2017. However, this was only possible because the Gulf States donated large amounts of money and Germany provided an additional 100 million USD as an immediate response to the US cuts and to stabilise the situation. But that funding stream is not continuing this year. The Gulf States have not pledged their contributions for this year and not all of the pledged funding for last year has been paid yet. As for the German funding, it remains to be seen if it will meet same level as last year's contribution. So while roll over funds, savings and incredible austerity measures as well as solidarity contributions saved 2019, the withdrawal of the US funds has triggered a crisis for the Agency and it remains unclear how UNRWA can sustain itself. By the end of May UNRWA will not have any funds left and thus will not be able to pay salaries to its staff and let alone deliver services.
83. UNRWA conducted a forward-looking trend analysis for the budget year 2020, addressing the increasing expenditures due to population growth and demands for higher salaries for UNRWA staff in order to maintain a salary level equal to that of host governments. For example, the increase in teacher salaries in Jordan in 2019 had a serious knock-on effect for UNRWA's salary expenditure requirements for 2020. This analysis concluded that it is unlikely that UNRWA will reach the same income level of last year. The reaction to this has been to introduce a ten percent budget cut in all fields, which is now being implemented. Taking into consideration however, that the budget for 2020 currently has not been finalised as not all pledged contributions have been paid out. By May 2020, the currently available funds will be depleted. This could mean that certain services no longer can be provided by the end of May 2020.
84. UNRWA cannot decide to close down certain programmes. Host governments are firmly rejecting UNRWA's austerity measures and believe that donors will need to provide additional funding.

85. Implementing a planned ten percent budget cut in 2020 will be very difficult without having a critical impact on the quality of services. With the vast majority of UNRWA's budget being tied to staff cost, any budget reductions will result in some level of staff reductions. Implementing staff reductions is challenging and may very well lead to unrest, as it has in the past. This leaves UNRWA in a conundrum where it is unable to make these required critical savings, due to external and internal interests and pressures. This may however eventually lead to a point where services cannot continue.
86. Since 2015, the financial crisis of UNRWA has become very chronic. Even though the budget shortfall has resulted in services being adjusted to a minimum, the impression amongst donors and host governments is that UNRWA will manage as it has in the past. It is not clear however, who will contribute with the necessary funds this time around.
87. Trying to maintain universal access to education and basic health care may come at the detriment of the quality of services UNRWA is providing. Some services are already curtailed such as relief which is based on a needs assessment. Furthermore, delivering a high quality of services that meets the needs of beneficiaries rather than just being able to provide some sort of service is also important to UNRWA.

*Relief and Social Services Programme (RSS)*

88. UNRWA's Relief and Social Services Programme historically has focused its services on food assistance to UNRWA beneficiaries and was initially based on de facto universal provision of services to persons displaced and affected by the 1948 Arab Israeli conflict. Over the years, UNRWA has implemented a number of changes to its relief services to enable better targeting of the most vulnerable and shifting towards a more needs based approach.
89. In November 2011, UNRWA proposed shifting from a status-based targeting approach to a poverty-based approach made possible through the development of the Proxy Means Test Formula (PMTF) which suggested identifying people based on poverty. In the years that followed, UNRWA implemented the poverty-based service delivery approach in all its fields and moved from food services to cash services – except for Gaza, where the food delivery services was maintained while cash contributions were also introduced.
90. RSS today provides relief (cash) and/or food assistance. Overall, the current provision of services is far from sufficient and does not cover the actual need of the beneficiaries. The PMTF approach proved to be inappropriate as the Agency could not adjust to changes in poverty levels in the population, i.e. coverage of programmes and the formula became outdated over time with increasing inaccuracies reported by staff leading to a feeling of disempowerment and injustice among refugees. As a consequence of the current budget shortfall, there is a freeze on the intake of individuals who meet the criteria to receive cash assistance from UNRWA. Since 2013, the cash assistance programme in Jordan, the West Bank and Lebanon has been frozen for new intakes. In Gaza, new intakes were accepted until February 2020 when a general freeze was announced. In Syria, all eligible persons in the country receive assistance. Following the US decision to stop funding UNRWA in 2018, the cash assistance portfolio available covers two out of three payment rounds for 2020 only. It remains to see if funds will

be reallocated to cover shortages. This is a current discussion in UNRWA.

91. Through its relief services, UNRWA is providing a minimum lifeline. UNRWA stated that the cash assistance that is currently provided is insufficient for survival.
92. In Gaza, RSS provides a food basket with a value of 11-18 USD per person every three months. UNRWA covers 15 % of food imports into Gaza contributing to stabilising basic food commodity prices. Very few vendors have a license to import food and would have monopoly. Food price hikes would be harmful to the majority of households given very high poverty rates.
93. In the West Bank, RSS provides cash assistance to 60,000 individuals who receive 130 USD per person per year in cash assistance.
94. In Jordan, 60,000 persons receive 125 USD per person per year in cash assistance.
95. In Lebanon, 60,000 people receive 130 USD per person per year in cash assistance.
96. In Syria, RSS is currently assisting 130,000 persons (the most vulnerable, including female headed households) with 14 USD per person per month addressing the particularly vulnerable people and to cover minimum 50 % of their food requirements. An additional 280,000 persons receive 9 USD per person per month. While this in itself is not sufficient for survival, it is more than what is currently being provided. The Syria cash assistance has been heavily reliant on US funds. Last year, the cash assistance was aided by funds that were carried over from 2018, but this year the gap will be difficult to meet without additional funds that have yet to be pledged. The objective is at least to maintain the 14 USD per month per person for the 130,000 most vulnerable. All PRSs are currently receiving cash assistance.
97. In addition to its relief efforts, RSS is also responsible for registration and social work, and is currently focusing its efforts on supporting psychosocial well-being in families through social workers.

#### *Education Programme*

98. The education programme is the biggest programme serving more than 533,000 students in 709 schools across the five fields. Any Palestine Refugee who is registered with UNRWA is accepted in UNRWA's education programme. MNR children are accepted as well. Other categories of Palestinians can be accepted on an exceptional basis depending on the availability of space following the yearly class formation. This includes 1967 displaced and descendants, who may be accepted based on availability in the schools. Therefore, it may vary over time and field whether this group actually has access to education services.
99. The education programme, with an annual budget of 400 million USD, will have to cut 40 million USD because of the general decision to cut ten percent in all programmes. One way to address this is by instating daily paid teachers, however this is not sufficient nor quality assuring. A deduction in the teacher capacity will reduce the availability as well as quality of services. With an ever-increasing class

size and less teachers, children are missing out on school with cancellation of classes, due to a lack of teachers and a lack of funds to replace them.

100. Because of the budget cuts, UNRWA is currently not in a position to hire new teachers on long-term contracts, as the cost of this includes providing pension, sick leave etc. As a mitigating measure UNRWA is currently hiring daily paid staff. A daily paid teacher does not have the same possibility to build up a relation to her/his students as one hired on a long-term contract, which could lead to a decrease in teaching quality. In addition, daily paid teachers do not receive training or educational support as they are not considered as staff. UNRWA is trying to mitigate the usage of daily paid teachers, but the number of daily paid teachers continues to increase as the budget shortfall continues.
101. The majority of UNRWA schools operate on double shifts. However, this has long been the situation which does not necessarily relate to the budget constraints. It would be very costly to implement single shift schools, even though it is evident that double shifts impact the quality of education.
102. Another challenge and consequence of budget shortfall is the overall class size. The top ten percent in terms of numbers of students per class was 45 students before the US budget cuts; this has now increased to 50 students.
103. Following the US budget cuts, UNRWA implemented a glass ceiling of 50 students per classroom, when conducting its annual class formation planning.
104. It is also evident on educational results that the UNRWA education services are deteriorating. For example, while UNRWA in Jordan has previously done above average in the PISA results, the results of this year are poor. Previously, UNRWA has scored just below the Jordanian public schools, however this year UNRWA is clearly falling behind. In practice, this means that currently there are children in UNRWA schools who are being under stimulated because they do not have the same opportunities as the host government school can provide, which is a serious turning point.

#### *Health Services Programme*

105. In 2019, UNRWA continued to deliver free of charge comprehensive primary health care (PHC) services to the 5.6 million registered Palestine Refugees while supporting their access to secondary and tertiary care.
106. Universal access to PHC is provided on the basis of the Family Health Team Approach (FHT), a person-centred platform focused on the provision of comprehensive care for the entire family. Emphasising long-term provider-patient/family relationships, the approach is designed to improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of health services.
107. As a result of the budget deficit, it is no longer possible to ensure that retired doctors are replaced. In addition, it is currently not possible to hire any new full time doctors. Instead, UNRWA hires daily paid doctors, which has a negative impact on the quality of health services. A daily paid doctor cannot

adhere to the FHT approach which builds on patient continuity and knowledge of the health status of an entire family.

108. On average, the doctor/patient consultation time is three minutes, which cannot be considered sufficient time for proper medical treatment and diagnosis. In most cases, 'quick fixes' are given in the form of medicine and/or antibiotics which may not always be needed.
109. From 2017 to 2018 the number of medical consultations per doctor per day went up from 78 to 82.
110. Secondary and tertiary treatment is generally not provided by UNRWA. Instead, UNRWA contracts certain hospitals across its fields where Palestine refugees can have part of the cost reimbursed. However, such reimbursement will also be at stake with this continuous financial deficit.
111. As for procurement of medication, non-chronic medications have been procured. However medicine for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is at risk which would impact more than 270,000 patients receiving care for NCDs.
112. In Syria, health services are available, however in limited capacity and not with a high level of quality due to the situation on the ground. An estimated half of hospitals have been destroyed during the war. In addition, government services are under constraint and there are cases of Palestine Refugees seeking medical attention at a government facility that have been turned away and asked to seek UNRWA assistance instead.

#### *Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme*

113. The Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme (ICIP) is not part of UNRWA's core programmes and therefore is not directly affected by the budget constraints as far as it comes to construction which relies on project funding. The ICIP financially relies on project funding. However, part of the responsibility of the ICIP is solid waste management in camps which is funded from programme budget.
114. As part of budget cuts, sanitation workers are also not being replaced upon sickness or retirement and this has led to a deduction in sanitation workers. For example, where camps used to have four sanitation workers this has been reduced to only one person. This in turn, can lead to a deterioration of the overall health status of camp residents, as weakened sanitation systems can lead to deceases.
115. In Syria, a number of camps have been destroyed, however no camp reconstruction is currently being considered. Minor rehabilitation work has been concluded on schools in camps where access has been possible and where it has been meaningful to do so.

#### *Protection*

116. UNRWA does not provide protection in the same sense that UNHCR does. Furthermore, UNRWA is not in any way providing physical protection to its beneficiaries as this is the responsibility of host governments, though not a responsibility that is always taken on board.



117. UNRWA is operating from a service delivery mandate and unless this is changed into a human rights focused mandate, providing physical protection remains impossible. Therefore, when UNRWA states that it conducts protection, this is not to be understood as following international protection standards. UNRWA's protection efforts are solely protection mainstreaming in its programmes and service delivery and small scale protection interventions in specific cases – e.g. addressing child abuse by referring the case to a protection provider about the case, when this is possible, and in very limited cases of refoulement related to PRS, interventions with government. UNRWA cannot provide physical protection. UNRWA does not manage the refugee camps and has no role in ensuring personal safety in the camps.
118. UNHCR engages with governments to ensure legislation which improves the protection space for UNHCR beneficiaries. UNRWA does not conduct such advocacy with its host governments. An example of this is the difference of the status of Syrian refugees in Jordan and PRS in Jordan. Refugees with Syrian citizenship can hold legal stay, whereas many PRS cannot due to the inability of UNRWA to address this issue with the host government.
119. In cases of mixed families who fled from Syria to Jordan, where a PRS is married to a Syrian refugee there is little cooperation between UNRWA and UNHCR. The family may be registered with both UN agencies as well as receiving services from both.
120. UNRWA stated that host governments would not accept if UNRWA facilitated any sort of resettlement of a Palestine Refugee to their countries. Therefore, UNRWA does not conduct such protection interventions.
121. UNRWA explained that recently some Palestine Refugees in Lebanon have attempted to deregister from UNRWA, hoping that this would allow for them to fall under UNHCR's mandate. This shows the level of distress and unfairness that the Palestine Refugees feel subjected to, not having the same rights as any other refugee across the world that fall under the 1951 Convention related to the Status of Refugees. UNRWA has communicated that deregistration in itself will not remove the individual from falling under the mandate of UNRWA.

#### Short field-by-field overview

##### *Syria*

122. About 2/3 of the PRS community is displaced and the majority live in the Damascus area. Three camps have been completely destroyed and one informal camp (Yarmouk) is not accessible without permits. During the uprising, a proportion of PRSs have supported the cause of the opposition. This is why some of the camps that were considered as oppositional were completely destroyed.
123. UNRWA conducted a survey in Syria from 2018-2019. The survey showed that 90 % of the refugees lived below the poverty line of 2 USD per person per day, without taking UNRWA's financial assistance into account. At that time, UNRWA still provided cash assistance to the poorest groups amounting to

28 USD per person per month, which now has been reduced between ½ to 1/3 of this (USD 14/USD 9 respectively). Taking into consideration the modest assistance provided by UNRWA at the time of the survey, 74 % still lived under the poverty line at the time.

124. PRSs in Syria experience high rental costs, lack of heating, rationed and unaffordable food and lack of employment. The government exercises indirect controls over UNRWA's operations through staff members. UNRWA staff and their family members have disappeared.

#### *Lebanon*

125. The current economic crisis affects the already vulnerable Palestine Refugee community. Employment restrictions have now worsened. Even holding a job within the informal employment sector now requires a permit from the Lebanese authorities. During a 2015 survey, only 6 % of those employed held employment permits. The PRS community in Lebanon are in legal limbo with no formalised legal stay. Having entered the country illegally or being unable to renew their previous permits, many are now trapped inside the UNRWA camps, where entry and exit in most cases is controlled by the Lebanese army. There are extremely limited and poorly paid work opportunities in the camps and the PRS survive on handouts.

#### *Gaza*

126. Gaza remains under blockade. The opening of the Rafah border continues to be irregular. If the Rafah border opens on a more regular basis, it can be expected that there will be an increase in the number of persons seeking to leave – even by sea.

#### *West Bank*

127. The Israeli control regime remains penetrating. Palestine refugee communities are affected by demolition orders and restrictions on movements.

#### *Jordan*

128. Even if most Palestinians are Jordanian citizens, tension remains between East and West Bankers. A majority of the communities living in slum areas which are often sprawling camp sites that have expanded are Palestine Refugees. In 2013, poverty inside camps stood at just over 30 % compared to all other populations outside of camps (14.4 %). In addition, the ex-Gazan community remains vulnerable. Jerash camp which is almost entirely inhabited by ex-Gazans had a poverty rate of 53 % in 2013 alone. The group of ex-Gazans in Jordan consists of about 150,000 persons, who have to renew their residence permits every two years including a security check.

#### External factors impacting UNRWA's ability to deliver services

129. Actions of the host governments can also directly or indirectly impact UNRWA's ability to deliver services. For example, the Jordanian government decided to increase its salaries for teachers. In return, it is expected that UNRWA does the same in accordance with its salary alignment policy across

all fields. This will cost UNRWA 40 million USD a year from 2020 onwards, of which 10 million USD are for Jordan alone.

130. The population growth also results in an increasing demand of services which is not possible to meet without a continuously growing budget.

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## Meeting with the Director-General of Department of Palestinian Affairs in Amman

Amman, 4 March 2020

*The Department of Palestinian Affairs is an independent department under the Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates that works on implementing official policies on Palestinian issues. This includes cooperation and coordination with UNRWA, and supervising issues related to Palestinian refugee camps.*

### **Background**

131. The Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA) stated that there are about 2.3 million Palestinian refugees in Jordan. This number includes both the 1948-refugees and the 1967 displaced. Of these 95 % have the Jordanian citizenship as a result of unity between East and West Bank of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The remaining 5 % are so-called ex-Gazans who either left the Egypt-administered Gaza Strip in 1967 or are descendants of this group through the paternal line.
132. The number of displaced persons who arrived in Jordan in 1967 was approximately 206,000. The DPA does not have exact figures of how big this group (incl. descendants) is today. According to DPA, 1967 displaced have Jordanian nationality.
133. The Palestinian refugees with citizenship in Jordan enjoy the same rights as any other Jordanian citizen, whereas ex-Gazans have more limited rights. For instance, ex-Gazans are unable to get a job in the public sector and are allowed to own land but with special restrictions and conditions.

### **Access to services**

134. UNRWA provides services to 1948 refugees as well as to the 1967 displaced. They also extend services to Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS).
135. DPA stated that UNRWA has continuously operated on a budget deficit, which was also the case in 2018 and 2019. The austerity measures resulting from the budget shortfall, has affected all UNRWA services. For example, many teachers and sanitary workers are currently hired as 'daily paid' which means that it is difficult to ensure continuity and quality. Furthermore, UNRWA was unable to ensure that chronic medicine is available. With regard to Relief and Social Services, 2.5 % of UNRWA's

beneficiaries are currently receiving financial relief support. DPA was expecting this number to increase, however UNRWA has not been in a position to do so due to the budget constraints.

136. After the US budget cuts in 2018, then the Commissioner-General of UNRWA stated that UNRWA's schools were unable to open for the school year 2018/19. However, additional funding from all donors made it possible for UNRWA to open its schools and ensure that education services were upheld.
137. The budget cuts have had the biggest impact on education, as it is the largest of UNRWAs programmes. Consequently, more parents have decided to enrol their children in public Jordanian schools, which put further pressure on government services and budgets. The Jordanian government had appealed to the International Community to build more public Jordanian schools. DPA emphasized that the regression in UNRWA services has increased the burden of the Jordanian government.
138. The 1967 group of Palestinians are considered to be displaced persons and are not registered as refugees with UNRWA. However, some of them still receive services from UNRWA. DPA has facilitated access to education in UNRWA schools for some of them. There are others from this group who study in public schools and receive health services from the Jordanian government.

#### **Loss of citizenship**

139. Following the 1988 detachment of the West Bank from Jordan, Palestinian residents in the West Bank were no longer considered Jordanian citizens. Palestinian residents in Jordan retained their citizenship.
140. Following the Oslo Accords, some Palestinians with Jordanian citizenship moved back to the West Bank and received Palestinian passports. As a consequence, they lost their Jordanian citizenship. According to DPA, except for these cases, Palestinians have only lost their citizenship upon their own request.
141. It is possible to have your citizenship reinstated. The decision to reinstate citizenship is taken by the Ministry of Interior. DPA are aware of cases where people have reinstated their citizenship.

#### **Documents**

142. Until 1988, DPA issued a special card for 1967 displaced, which is no longer in use. DPA does not issue any special documents to this group anymore.
143. DPA does not issue any documents to Palestinian refugees from Syria and does not have any contact with this group.

## Residency for non-citizens with right to residency in Jordan

144. Jordanian women cannot pass on their Jordanian nationality to their children. There are many organisations who call for this to be changed, but the Jordanian authorities have not made a decision on this. Except from not having a citizenship in Jordan, these children enjoy the same rights as children that are Jordanian citizens.

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## Meeting with four Western embassies

Amman, 4 March 2020

*The delegation met with representatives from four Western embassies. The representatives' main focus was return of asylum seekers from Europe to the region.*

### Re-entry requirements

145. The Jordanian authorities do generally not accept forced returns of Palestinians without citizenship, according to two embassies (A and B).

146. A person who is being forced to return, will be considered a foreigner and therefore not eligible for legal stay in the country. If the return is voluntary, and not supported by any foreign authorities, i.e. the person returning has bought his own return ticket, has a valid travel document and residence permit in Jordan, (s)he can return. However, if a person with legal residence permit in Jordan, has been abroad in a longer period, for instance 6-8 months, he likely will have problems upon return. The embassies emphasized that all is possible depending on the network of the embassies with the Jordanian authorities.

147. The western embassy (B) stated that generally, it will be difficult for a person on a temporary residence permit in Jordan to return to the country, as s/he is not considered Jordanian. If the person is forcefully returned, the person will not be allowed to enter.

148. A western embassy (A) informed the delegation that persons with a Jordanian national ID number can return to Jordan, if the citizenship has not been withdrawn. For persons without a national ID number, it will be difficult.

149. Regarding Palestinians who hold a T-passport, two embassies (A and B) stated that it depends on the circumstances if such persons could return. Some embassies have experienced that the Jordanian authorities have accepted that persons return, while others have experienced that it is not possible. It often depends on having strong relations or connections with the responsible authority. The return of Palestinians with a T-passport would have to be a voluntary return without the involvement of foreign authorities. A western embassy (B) stated that a person returning on a T-passport will be refused entry if s/he is deported. Such return needs approval from the Jordanian authorities.

150. According to a Note Verbal issued by the Jordanian authorities, all forced returns have been stopped since September 2019. Whilst the Jordanian authorities have stated that it is a temporary measure, the western embassies considered it to be ongoing.
151. The Note Verbal is only related to transits to the West Bank.
152. A western embassy (C) mentioned that they see an increasing number of Jordanian citizens who are to be returned from its country, but the Jordanian authorities do not want them back if it is a forced return.

### **Residence permits**

153. If the residence permit of a Palestinian without Jordanian nationality is expired, the person cannot enter Jordan to apply for an extension in the country.
154. A western embassy (A) mentioned a case of a family living in Saudi Arabia, where only the Jordanian woman who lived in Saudi Arabia could enter Jordan, whereas her husband and children were unable to enter, as they were not Jordanian citizens.
155. The same embassy (A) mentioned that children of a Palestinian mother with Jordanian citizenship, and a father who is a Syrian Palestinian (PRS) would be able to return to Jordan, only if the parents were divorced. Even if the wife is Jordanian citizen, their children will not be allowed entry if the parents are not divorced.
156. In the case of a PRS mother and a father who is a Palestinian refugee from Jordan (PRJ), the children will be Jordanian nationals. The mother can apply for a residency if the father still has his nationality intact.
157. Regarding foreign women married to Jordanian husbands, it would be the husband who has to apply for a residence permit for the wife. (A)
158. Some countries (Canada, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands and USA) previously had a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Jordanian authorities allowing Palestinians from the West Bank to transit through Jordan when returning to the West Bank. The Jordanian authorities cancelled the MOU in late 2018. Some of these countries are now trying to establish a new agreement, but have not succeeded so far. Previously, it happened on a case-by-case basis that some European countries obtained permission for Palestinians to transit Jordan and Israel to get access to West Bank and Gaza. However, in September 2019, the Jordanian authorities issued a Note Verbal stating that all returns to Gaza and the West Bank must go through Israeli airports. Since then there have been no transits through Jordan.

### **Access for Palestinians from Syria**

159. All the western embassies informed the delegation that since 2014/15 legal access to Jordan for Palestinians from Syria (PRS) has been denied.
160. In September 2018, the Jaber/Nasib border crossing between Jordan and Syria was reopened to allow around 15,000-20,000 Syrians to enter Jordan for security reasons. However, these people were not Syrian Palestinians, but people who held Syrian passports.
161. A western embassy (C) stated that in late 2018 and the beginning of 2019; some Syrian refugees began returning to Syria. However, according to the Jordanian Government, no Syrians have been forced back to Syria.

### **Access for Palestinians from Algeria and Libya**

162. Palestinians would not be allowed to enter Jordan for registration purposes, regardless of their eligibility to register with UNRWA, according to a western embassy (A). A western embassy (C) stated that a Palestinian in Algeria cannot be returned or sent to Jordan if the person does not hold a valid residence permit in Jordan. A western embassy (B) added that historically some Palestinians have obtained citizenship in Algeria.

### **Documents**

163. A western embassy (B) informed the delegation that only travel documents and residence permits for Palestinians issued by the Jordanian authorities are relevant for return. The embassy does not see UNRWA documents used during the return process and has not received any reports on false documents either. If there are any doubt about the family members of a Palestinian refugee family (for resettlement purposes), the embassy would conduct a DNA test. Another embassy (C) similarly stated that forged Syrian family books were submitted to them in resettlement cases, but there are no reports of forged UNRWA documents, and they are not used as documentation by individuals who are returning.
164. When asked if the airlines are under an obligation to the Jordanian authorities, to ensure whom they are returning to Jordan, one embassy (B) stated that it is not the duty of the airline to ask the proper authorizations from the Jordanian authorities. This should be done weeks or months before by the Immigration Services of the country who wants to return back the Palestinian.
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## Skype meeting with Professor Susan Akram

Copenhagen, 17 February 2020

*Susan Akram is a Professor at Boston University of Law, where she directs the International Human Rights Clinic. Akram has lectured on Palestinian refugees to general audiences around the world as well as to the committees of the United Nations, the European Union as well as representatives of European and Canadian government ministries and parliaments.*<sup>204</sup>

### **Persons eligible to receive UNRWA services**

165. To understand whether a person is qualified to register with UNRWA, it is important to understand what category the person falls under, as this determines if descendants of that person can register.
166. The largest category is the '1948 Palestine Refugee', which falls under Resolution 194 and its definition of a Palestine Refugee. However, it is important to note, that this is not really a refugee definition but rather a nationality definition. Looking at the interpretations issued by the United Nations legal advisor to the Secretariat's United Nations Reconciliation Committee on Palestine (UNCCP) and the UN Secretariat, that definition is explained in three particular notes by the Secretariat's United Nations Reconciliation Committee on Palestine (UNCCP), who drafted the first definition for the purpose of Resolution 194. The categories listed in those interpretative notes relates to the nationality definition under the Lausanne treaty of 1924 and the subsequent Palestine citizenship law of the British mandate period, under which Palestinians firstly were defined as nationals of Palestine and somewhere between 40-60.000 of them received passports during the mandate period.
167. UNRWA used this as the basis of drafting its first definition of Palestine refugees related to the 1947-1949 conflict definition. It is a direct subcategory of the Resolution 194 definition. This is important to understand, because the 'Palestine refugee' definition - the major category under UNRWA – is actually not a refugee definition per se, but rather a nationality definition. UNRWA added to the UNCCP 194 definition the language 'who lost their homes and livelihoods and were unable to return'. This created the refugee category, but it is a different refugee category than what one would normally understand as a refugee under the Refugee Convention and the UNHCR statute. In other words, 'Palestine refugees' under Resolution 194 are not defined as persons with a fear of persecution who must individually fulfill a set of criteria to be so defined. They are defined as an entire population or category by virtue of fitting within the Lausanne Treaty definition of Palestine nationals.
168. The second largest category (under the CERJ guidelines), is the 1967 displaced persons. In addition to this, there is the intergenerational definition, laid out in GA Resolution 2252, which explicitly extends both of these definitions ('Palestine refugees' and 'Palestine displaced persons'), to subsequent generations without limitation. While 2252 does not mention 'descendants', it is intended to mean all subsequent generations and this interpretation is available in UNRWA writings (see also UNRWA and the refugees, sixty years later: Lance Bartholomeusz; UNRWA at sixty). This describes UNRWA's

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<sup>204</sup> Refugee Legal Aid Information for Lawyers Representing Refugees Globally, *Resource Person: Professor Susan Akram*, n.d., [url](#)



position on who qualifies, and UNRWAs position is consistent in the way that 2252 means that all subsequent generations of both 1948 refugees and 1967 displaced persons are eligible for registration. This is also consistent with all other refugees in the world, who remain refugees even as subsequent generations, as long as a durable solution has not been found for their condition. All of the other categories (such as 'Kafala children', Gaza poor etc.), are ad hoc categories that do not specifically fit into either of the two abovementioned groups. These other categories completely relates to what UNRWA decides are the urgent needs of specific subsequent displaced populations. As such, these other categories have to be addressed separately, as they do not fall into the automatic registration categories, but are based on needs, and they may or may not be registered under one of the two main definitions. This is fairly clear in the UNRWA CERI explanations, other than that including them in UNRWA services entirely depends on whether UNRWA has the funds to provide for them.

169. To try and simplify it, one can think of these two buckets: 1) 1948 refugees and 1967 displaced and 2) all the other categories, as two very different buckets. Bucket one is based on a registration definition; automatic entitlement to be registered. Bucket two; the ad hoc categories, are for temporary service delivery depending on whether or not UNRWA has the funds to give services. These categories do not fit under the automatic registration entitlement. So for purposes of Article 1D of the 1951 Refugee Convention and recognition as a refugee under the Convention, these two 'buckets' have to be addressed differently.
170. Today, article 1D in the 1951 Refugee Convention covers only Palestine refugees and no other refugee population. It states that: "This Convention shall not apply to persons who are at present receiving from organs or agencies of the United Nations other than the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee protection or assistance. When such protection or assistance has ceased for any reason, without the position of such persons being definitively settled in accordance with the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, these persons shall ipso facto be entitled to the benefits of this Convention." The first sentence of Article 1D appears in the UNHCR Statute, as well as in the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons. For decades, these provisions were interpreted as 'exclusion clauses,' meaning that Palestine refugees as a whole were excluded from the benefits of both the Refugee Convention, the Convention on Stateless Persons and from the mandate of UNHCR. However, over the last decade or so, these interpretations have been challenged, and the most authoritative interpretations are now from the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), based on the Bolbol and El Kott cases, and on UNHCR's reinterpretations which track the CJEU jurisprudence.
171. The CJEU jurisprudence refers only to Palestine refugees and Palestinian displaced persons (i.e. the first bucket referred to above), not the ad hoc categories, in determining whether such 'Palestinian refugees' are eligible for the benefits of the Refugee Convention once they are outside UNRWA mandate areas per the language of 1D "when such protection or assistance has ceased".
172. This is completely different from UNHCR. Where UNHCR refugee status determination (RSD) is an international determination for purposes of durable solutions, this is not the case for the UNRWA

definitions. Being based on voluntariness, Palestinians are not recognised in the same way as refugees registered for durable solutions under international refugee entitlements.

173. It is important to remember, that registration with UNRWA is voluntary.

### **MNRs**

174. Whether the MNRs have the right to pass on the right to registration to descendants has to be addressed by UNRWA. It is however clear in UNRWAs writings, that its position is that descendants of all refugees are entitled to be recognised as refugees until a durable solution is achieved. In that sense, UNRWA's position is not different from UNHCR refugees. All refugees continue to be refugees until durable solutions are found to their situation. Even though the determination of durable solutions for refugees is different for Palestinians than for UNHCR refugees.

175. When addressing whether a female child of an MNR, who has children herself, inherits the right to register with UNRWA, one has to separate the nationality question from the right to registration and services. Nationality is a complicated issue. In the Arab states, first of all, it is important to recognise that these states do not recognise refugees as refugees per se. None of them has ratified the Refugee Convention or the Convention on Stateless Persons and none of them have adopted a domestic definition of refugees. In the memorandums of understanding (MOU) with UNHCR and with UNRWA, the Arab States have specifically restricted UNHCR from recognising Palestinians as refugees. In addition, UNRWA can solely recognise Palestinians by their right to registration and services. It therefore is a big question mark what nationality a Palestinian in the Arab states will have. In 1965 the Arab States came together through the League of Arab States (LAS) and ratified the Casablanca Protocol; this consists of eight provisions which were intended to help resolve the question of uncertainty around the Palestinian nationality by giving them certain superior rights. Casablanca and several other LAS Resolutions, intended to recognise dual nationality for Palestinians. This is an exception to the Arab States position, which does not recognise dual nationality for anyone.

### **MNR children and descendants /maternal line grandchildren**

176. Therefore, the question of passing on nationality, which women cannot do, is a separate question to the one of whether a Palestinian can receive services. It is up to UNRWA to decide, whether that subsequent generation of the woman lose the right to registration. UNRWA followed the 'system of following the paternal line' in order to be consistent with the Arab States' position on nationality. But UNRWA can decide which subsequent generations should get services; this is up to UNRWA and can be separated from the nationality question. MNRs fall under the 'other groups' and it therefore is up to UNRWA to decide if it wants to continue to extend services to another generation within that category. This is all based on needs.

## **Ex-Gazans**

177. According to Akram, the total population of the Ex-Gazans consists of approximately 10,000 persons. Some have temporary passports and some have no documents at all.
178. There are very few organisations providing services to the Ex-Gazans, besides UNRWA. One key organisation in this regard is Islamic Relief (IR), as they work in the Ex-Gazan refugee camps on a daily basis. IR will be able to provide detailed information on this group, including a breakdown of persons with and without documents.

## **Availability of UNRWA services**

### **Overall Impact of external factors**

179. Following the US budget cuts to UNRWA in 2018, around 500 schools were temporarily closed, until the financial shortfall was closed by other key donors (including the EU).
180. Akram stated that each UNRWA field will have to make a determination about its funds and how they should be put to use.
181. Akram explained that several issues could impact UNRWA's ability to deliver services. One is the Syria crisis. Host states have been under pressure as the crisis has continued, and six million have fled to neighbouring states. This has resulted in UNRWA coming under pressure from the host states - as has UNHCR - not to expand its services or refugee population. Especially since January 2015, most of the neighbouring states began to limit the access on their borders. UNRWA then started recording Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS), which means they would transfer or simply record the information on the PRS (in e.g. Jordan or Lebanon). As a result, PRS did not automatically have access to all services. UNRWA did this for two reasons: partly in response to the pressures of the host states, but also because Syria took the public position that any Palestinian who left Syria, would not be able to go back. To ensure that the PRS' could retain their registration in Syria, UNRWA maintained the registration in Syria and did not fully transfer their registration to Lebanon or Jordan, to give them the option of going back.
182. Akram explained that the position of the Syrian Government, in relation to not allowing PRS to return, still stands. However, some PRS have managed to go back.
183. In Lebanon, PRS have ended up in the already established Palestinian camps and have massively exacerbated the problems of overcrowding and limited services. The camps in Lebanon are the most poverty-stricken of the ones UNRWA operates in, except for Gaza.
184. When asked what the limitations of services for PRS are, Akram explained that the limitations were within the additional services which were available for the Syrian crisis under the Emergency Appeals

of UNRWA. Furthermore, because UNHCR has been prohibited in delivering any of their Syria Emergency Response services to Palestinians, PRS have been caught both ways. But in terms of the detailed services, this has again been dependent on the funds.

### **Protection mandate of UNRWA**

185. UNRWA's protection work is very ad hoc and in conversations with protection officers over the years, the answers differ in regards to what the focus of the protection efforts are. It again comes back to what each field has the funds to provide, and whether there is a protection officer who can undertake protection interventions. This is based on anecdotal information. Protection work, as well as service delivery, is challenged due to lack of funds. Moreover, protection staff does not always have the clear legal authority to intervene. National authorities state that UNRWA's area of work is to provide services and not be involved with protection related efforts, such as for example deportation interventions where Palestinians have been detained and deportation is imminent. Akram published a report in 2014, focussing on refoulement back to Syria, specifically from Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt. The report highlights cases of PRS in Egypt, who were sent back to Lebanon by the Egyptian authorities. The Lebanese authorities claimed that they had the right to send them back to Syria, but it is not known whether this took place, as it was impossible to obtain any solid information in this regard. In some of these cases, Egypt sent PRS to Jordan where they were detained and subjected to imminent deportation. It is also unclear what happens to these individuals when they go back to Syria, as they Syrian Government will have access to them, since they are deported and not going under the radar. UNRWA may be tracking such cases. Akram believes that this is a growing problem with limited information available.

186. When asked if she was aware of incidents, where UNRWA assisted Palestinians in leaving due to protection related issues, Akram provided information of the historic incidents related to the exodus from Kuwait, as well as the Gulf wars (from camps on Jordan/Iraqi border), where UNRWA and UNHCR entered into a cooperation. It may be that such collaboration between UNRWA and UNHCR is still ongoing, but there is no public evidence of this.

### **Documents**

187. Akram is not aware of any misuse of documents and has not seen any such cases with fraudulent documents through her work with US lawyers. She furthermore explained that under the 'El Kott' decision of the Court of Justice of the European Union, an individual does not necessarily need to have UNRWA registration, but just need to be able to show eligibility for UNRWA registration. So probably the reason for people to obtain fraudulent documents, would simply be to be able to leave the country and not so much for the UNRWA registration purposes but rather the fact that they have very limited access – if any – to other forms of identity documents.

### **Access to Jordan**

188. When asked if it is possible for a Palestinian to enter Jordan if he/she is eligible for a residency permit in Jordan (e.g. husband of a Jordanian wife), Akram explained that this is a complicated question. Generally, Palestinians in Jordan have an extremely difficult time in terms of obtaining residency, because the law on residency has been changing frequently, as has the criteria for eligibility. It may also depend on the status of the family member, if it is a family based residency, and the duration of the permit of the family member.
189. The requirements to obtain residency can range from 12-15 years, however there is conflicting legislation on the period of time necessary to be remaining in the country before one can obtain residency status. But this is better addressed with the Ministry of Interior directly, as the MoI are implementing residency and nationality laws and have a representative in charge of the refugees file.

### **Nationality /citizenship**

190. More of the temporary passports holders are not getting those passports renewed. This includes Palestinian Jordanians with the five year duration passports. The organisation Jordanian Centre for Legal Aid (JCLA) has been dealing with these cases as de-naturalisation cases and has represented the cases in court. The position is that they hold West Bank citizenships, which they do not. The denial of renewal of such passports still occurs. When meeting with JCLA in November, Akram explained that the organisation had a number of cases that they were currently defending in court. The practise started some time ago and has accelerated in the last couple of years. The acceleration came as part of the implementation of the 'Jordan First' policy. The policy – led by the King of Jordan – states that there are no Palestinians, and that the ones who are citizens are Jordanians. Anyone else residing in the country is considered a foreigner. This has resulted in the de-naturalisation process; implying that you cannot have something in between. When asked to clarify which groups are being stripped from citizenship, Akram explained that all the 1948 Palestinians have Jordanian nationality/citizenship. This group has a national ID number and a full passport. Any person, who holds a passport with a national ID number, is considered a Jordanian citizen. These are not at risk of being revoked. The 1967 and post 1967 Palestinians, who have anything less than a passport with a national ID number, appear to be vulnerable to de-nationalisation. Some people travelling back and forth from Jordan to the West Bank are losing their temporary passports or their Jordanian ID cards upon return to Jordan. Others, who have been in Jordan longer, and who may have passports without national ID numbers, are going through the process of revoking or non-renewal of passports. Without knowing the exact number, Akram expects that this is going to be a growing problem.

### **Access for Palestinians from outside of UNRWAs areas of operations**

191. Akram is not aware of cases where UNRWA has assisted Palestinians in entering one of its five fields for the purpose of obtaining registration. During the 1960s and early 1970s, when the Casablanca Protocol was operating, it was much easier to move between an UNRWA 'country' and other Arab

countries. States that had signed the Casablanca Protocol were required to facilitate the issuance of documents and at that time, they did. UNRWA might have been involved in this process at the time, but states have since backed away from their Casablanca obligations, despite being reminded hereof.

192. When asked if Palestinians from Algeria and Libya can register with UNRWA, Akram explained that since UNRWA is not operating in these countries, they are not registering Palestinians in either of these countries. UNRWA has no offices in Libya or Algeria and cannot assist in any way. Akram is not aware of any MOU between UNHCR and these two governments to enable UNHCR to operate there. However, UNHCR does conduct RSD in North Africa for some Palestinians. Akram stated that she is convinced that UNHCR would not be doing so in Libya, however without having done on the ground research, it is not possible to give a definite answer.

193. When asked if a Palestinian living in Algeria, who may be eligible to register with UNRWA, in any way can register with UNRWA, Akram stated that this is not possible. She explained that UNRWA only registers Palestinians in countries in which they are authorised to operate. Also, the person has to meet one of the criteria. In addition, the funds that are allocated to a specific country for providing services will determine the registration and service delivery. UNRWA is not allowed to register someone, who does not belong to one of their five fields of operations. A person is registered as 'Palestine refugee, Jordan' or Palestine refugee, Lebanon' and so on. One has to physically be there to be eligible to access that country's registration process. Again, it would be hugely problematic for the host countries, and they would absolutely object to that.

### Final comments

194. Finally, Akram stated that from her perspective, one of the big misconceptions, when addressing the issue of Palestinians, is that registration with UNRWA somehow is considered to be equivalent of RSD with UNHCR. Legally that is not the case, because UNRWA has no durable solutions mandate. This seems to be confused in the way CJEU and many European countries have been viewing UNRWA registration. Somehow, Palestinians in the UNRWA fields of operation have no access to durable solutions. They do not have an international refugee status recognition that is verified by UNRWA registration. This is the biggest misconception and a big concern, considering how CJEU has addressed the issue of protection.

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## Skype meeting with Professor Oroub El-Abed

Copenhagen, 20 February 2020

*Oroub El-Abed is a principal researcher at Lebanese American University and a postdoctoral research fellow at SOAS University of London. Her field of research includes citizenship, migration and refugee rights, with a particular focus on Palestinians in the Middle East.*

## **Citizenship**

195. The West Bank was formally annexed by Jordan between 1950 and 1988. As a consequence, all Palestinians living in the East Bank and the West Bank obtained Jordanian citizenship. In 1988 the Jordanian king severed ties with the West Bank, and thus withdrew the citizenship from people living in the West Bank. Instead of a passport, the West Bankers were given provisional travel documents issued by Jordan. Palestinian travel documents, which this group later got entitled to, were introduced in 1996.
196. Palestinians who lived in the East Bank in 1988 continued to be Jordanian citizens, except for a group of Palestinians who left from Gaza to Jordan following the 1967 war.
197. Over the last 40 years or so, there have been cases of Palestinians affiliated with PLO who were asked to leave and had their citizenship withdrawn.
198. At one point the number of citizenship withdrawals reduced. However, an increase has occurred in later years. There is no clear pattern in regard to who are at risk of having their citizenship withdrawn. The decision of citizenship withdrawal is based on regulations set out by the government.
199. The recent increase in withdrawals relates to a number of people whose ancestors were affiliated with Palestinian armed groups and left Jordan to Syria and Lebanon in the 1970s. Those persons believed they were still Jordanian citizens, however upon fleeing Syria, they realised that their Jordanian citizenship had been withdrawn.
200. There is no clear pattern of who is at risk of having their citizenship withdrawn. Examples include descendants of PLO fighters from Syria, persons from the West Bank who lived abroad, children of ministers of Palestinian origin, and Palestinians with Jordanian passports who never been to Palestine.

## **Access for Palestinians from Jordan (incl. non-citizens)**

201. Access to Jordan for Palestinians depends on what category the person belongs to. The Palestinians in Jordan can roughly be divided into three categories: 1) persons who entered Jordan between 1946 and 1954, 2) persons who entered Jordan from the West Bank as a consequence of the war in 1967, and 3) people who entered Jordan from Gaza in 1967.
202. The persons in the first category of Palestinians in Jordan are fully-fledged citizens. They have Jordanian national numbers and can enter Jordan on the same conditions as any other Jordanian citizen.
203. The second category comprises of Palestinians who left the West Bank because of the 1967 war. According to official Jordanian figures from 1968, 354,248 Palestinians with Jordanian citizenship arrived to the area that comprises present-day Jordan as a consequence of the 1967 war. Some

persons belonging to this group possess yellow border crossing cards that were introduced in the 1980s and allowed them to travel to the West Bank. People in this category are also full citizens and enjoy rights as such.

204. The third category consists of the so-called ex-Gazans. Today there are approximately 250,000-350,000 persons belonging to this category. They are Palestinians who left Gaza to Jordan in 1967. At that time their numbers were 15,000-20,000. When they left Gaza, they were holders of Egyptian travel documents, but Egypt refused to take responsibility for them. In 1968 Jordan started issuing provisional travel documents to this group. Recently, the validity period of these travel documents increased from two to five years. There are examples of ex-Gazans who lost the right to have travel documents issued because they refused to act as informers for the Jordanian authorities.

205. The possibility of returning to Jordan for an ex-Gazan depends on the specific scenario, and on which papers and travel documents the person has. If an ex-Gazan has access to Gaza, Jerusalem or the West Bank by having a border-crossing card to one of those places, Jordan could direct the person to that place.

206. If an ex-Gazan leaves Jordan illegally he would be put in prison having left the country illegally which will be considered as an illegal act.

#### **Border-crossing cards**

207. A smaller group of Palestinians from the West Bank, not exceeding 200,000-300,000, needed to have regular access to Jordan. They were given provisional Jordanian travel documents and at the same time are holders of green border-crossing cards.

208. The border-crossing cards were introduced in the 1980s and entitle the holders to move between Jordan and either Gaza, Jerusalem or the West Bank respectively because of family or business.

#### **Access for Palestinians from Syria**

209. Palestinians from Syria (PRS) have not been allowed to enter Jordan, except for a few thousand persons who entered Jordan legally before 2013. In case a family is comprised of a wife who is a Jordanian citizen and a husband who is a PRS, the husband and their children can be allowed to enter Jordan if the wife acts as a guarantor.

#### **Rights to services**

210. Registration with UNRWA took place 70 years ago and it has not been possible to register ever since, except for some cases in 1991, when many Palestinians from the West Bank left the Gulf.



211. The registration of Palestinians was done in 1948 by the Red Cross which passed its records to the UNRWA. Those who registered were given ration card and seen as Palestine refugees. Those who arrived in Jordan then were given the ration card. In 1967, people had already the cards of registration with UNRWA and simply moved from West Bank cities to Jordan. Registration of new cases was done once in 1991. There is a continuous registration for descendants.
212. It is possible to be a Jordanian citizen and a registered refugee with UNRWA at the same time. Such individuals are entitled to receive services from Jordanian authorities as well as from UNRWA. In many instances it would be a matter of proximity that decides whether a person chooses to get assistance from the authorities or from UNRWA.
213. Non-citizens, e.g. ex-Gazans, cannot enter Jordanian public schools for free, faces constraints in getting private sector jobs and are treated as Arab foreigners when accessing higher education. This means that they often have no other choice but to receive help from UNRWA.
214. Among ex-Gazans there are both registered refugees, who experienced their second displacement in 1967, and persons who got displaced for the first time in 1967. Oroub El-Abed stated that according to UNRWA's rules, those who got displaced for the first time in 1967 must live inside an UNRWA refugee camp in order to receive services from UNRWA.
215. According to UNRWA's guidelines, refugee status goes through the paternal line. The situation for children of women who are married to a non-refugee (MNR) has been discussed in the last 10 years. In 2006 these children got entitled to some limited services such as school and health services. It is unlikely that children of MNRs would be able to receive services.

### **Impact of external factors**

216. Oroub El-Abed stated that the quality of core services has deteriorated since 1991, when the Madrid peace talks diverted funding to support state building inside the West Bank and Gaza. In the 1980s, UNRWA schools were known to provide the highest level of education due to well-educated teachers and well-equipped facilities. Because of the decreased funding after 1991, teachers were hired on a yearly basis instead of being permanently employed. Combined, this led to a decrease in the quality of education in UNRWA schools.
217. When the US discontinued its funding to UNRWA in 2018, the gap was filled in by some European countries as well as Gulf countries.

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## **E-mail correspondence with Francesca P. Albanese**

Copenhagen, 13 April 2020

*Francesca P. Albanese is an international lawyer and Affiliate Scholar at Georgetown University (ISIM). A former Legal Officer at UNRWA Department of Legal Affairs, she is the author, with Lex Takkenberg, of Palestinian Refugees in International Law, Oxford University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2020.*

*Francesca P. Albanese was asked to respond to three questions reflected in the headlines. Footnotes included in the answers are written by the source and the numbers have been edited to correspond with the report.*

### **The direct impact of the U.S. budget cuts on UNRWAs service delivery**

218. The abrupt U.S. decision in 2018 to cut off its financial contribution to UNRWA has severely hampered UNRWA's capacity to discharge its mandate, as an expression of the international community's responsibility toward the Palestinian refugees.<sup>205</sup> Such responsibility remains unaffected, until a just and lasting political solution in line with international law is found.
219. The U.S. was the largest bilateral donor to UNRWA for decades (with projected funding of \$364 million in 2018), covering nearly a quarter of the agency's budget. As a result of the dramatic U.S. decision, UNRWA was forced to undertake extraordinary efforts to seek funds from other donors including Gulf countries and the EU. While in the short run the Agency was able to close the resulting funding gap from the U.S. budget cuts, it had to substantially reduce its services to millions of Palestinian refugees across all of its five fields and many programs.
220. In a region ravaged by conflict and instability, the U.S. budget cuts has had a direct impact on UNRWA's capacity to serve its registered 'Palestine refugees' in its area of operations.<sup>206</sup> The U.S. contribution served to sustain UNRWA's core and emergency programs that are essential, especially in the war-torn areas where the Agency operates, where refugee dependency on assistance is particularly high. Pressured by the lack of funds, the Agency had no alternative but to suspending some of its emergency relief programs, including essential food and cash distribution to the poorest of

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<sup>205</sup> A note on the terminology used in this paper: commonly, distinction is drawn between the terms "Palestine" and "Palestinian" refugee, where the former refers to refugees under UNRWA's mandate and the latter refers to refugees from Palestine of Arab origin only: in 1948 refugees from Palestine included a dozen different nationalities all of whom received immediate UN assistance and attention (Takkenberg: 1998). The term "Palestinian refugees" comprises all persons of Arab origin who were displaced from the territory of the former British Mandate Palestine, but also from the Gaza Strip, West Bank and East Jerusalem that Israel occupied in 1967, and their descendants, for whom a solution in line with UN resolutions is still to be found. In UN resolutions, they are referred to as 'Palestine refugees' and '1967 displaced' respectively. In the paper, the term 'Palestine refugee' is used when referring to UNRWA's mandate in a technical sense only.

<sup>206</sup> UNRWA also provides assistance to (some) Palestinians who were displaced from the West Bank and Gaza (mostly to Jordan) when Israel occupied those territories in 1967. These persons, who are referred to as '1967 displaced' are refugees for the purpose of international law. However, UNRWA has never extended all of its services (including registration) – and the General Assembly has never extended UNRWA's mandate – to this group; significant protection concerns exist for them in UNRWA area of operations, owing to their precarious status in the host countries. Like those who became refugees in 1948, they are persons for whom a solution is still to be found in accordance with relevant UN resolutions, e.g. UNGA Resolution 194 of 1948, Resolution 302 of 1949, Resolution 2252 of 1967, and UNSC Resolution 237 of 1967.

the poor; to cut some jobs<sup>207</sup> and reduce much-needed services in communities that are experiencing severe hardship. This has somewhat affected the relationship between UNRWA and the refugees, who have resented (and often protested) the reduction of services. A pressing concern, moving forward, is what's going to happen to the half a million children attending UNRWA's 712 schools as education accounts for approximately forty per cent of the agency's budget and most of its staff.

221. An area where the impact of the U.S. funding cut was immediately felt was UNRWA's protection function, seventy per cent of whose budget was funded by the U.S.<sup>208</sup> A third of protection staff positions were discontinued in 2018. While UNRWA 'restructured' its protection function within the available budget and 'refocused' strategic protection priorities, it is undisputable that such a critical area, which was in fact in continuous need to be strengthened, has dramatically been reduced at the detriment of the refugees.<sup>209</sup> This is all the more evident in the following contexts in the face of burgeoning attacks by the IDF in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) - and also by settlers in the West Bank - and the increasing precarity of Palestinian refugees in East Jerusalem; owing to the discrimination and lack of coping mechanisms endured by Palestinian refugees in Lebanon; and last but not least, the growing protection needs of impoverished, traumatized and often displaced Palestinian refugees in Syria. Would anyone expect UNHCR to operate 'business as usual' with its very protection functions significantly hampered by budget cuts?

222. Last but not least, the budget cuts, which reflected a "new policy" of the U.S. towards UNRWA (accused of perpetuating the existence of Palestinian refugees and hence being "part of the problem" — rather than part of the solution — between Israelis and Palestinians),<sup>210</sup> has cast uncertainty and confusion over the future of both the Agency and refugees (see also para.12, below).

### **UNRWA fields affected by the budget cuts**

223. The cuts occurred in 2018, after which UNRWA was forced to painfully adapt. In the immediate aftermath of the budget cuts, the West Bank and Gaza Strip appeared to be the most affected areas as the U.S. Government had been the largest funder of the UNRWA 'oPt Emergency Appeal'. This proved to be the most vulnerable part of the Agency's operations as the Agency struggled to compensate the lack of U.S. funds by other sources of funding.<sup>211</sup>

224. As of 2018, the U.S. fund cuts became emblematic of a wider funding crisis in UNRWA. This accelerated an erosion of services that have become increasingly difficult for UNRWA to fund. The

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<sup>207</sup> It is important to highlight that more than 99% of UNRWA's 30,000 staff are Palestinian refugees themselves working as doctors, nurses, teachers, sanitation labors and administrators. In the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) UNRWA is the second largest employer of Palestinians after the Palestinian Authority.

<sup>208</sup> UNRWA Annual Report for the reporting period 01 January – 31 December 2018, 2019.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> This issue is discussed in Albanese, F. 'UNRWA, New Attacks, New Challenges', *IPS Current Issue Series*, Oct 2018.

<sup>211</sup> A number of emergency services were cut as a result and also those staff who were paid through this modality lost their jobs or were put on temporary contracts.

fields who are currently the most adversely impacted by this financial crisis are those where beneficiaries are most acutely in need of the Agency's services, including from a protection perspective.

225. In the oPt (Gaza Strip and West Bank, including East Jerusalem), the refugees are highly dependent on UNRWA both for financial support, owing to the tight grip of the occupation of the Palestinian economy, and for protection. This applies to the West Bank/East Jerusalem, given the severity of the attacks by Israeli forces and settlers alike against the Palestinian civilian population; and all the more to the Gaza Strip owing to the blockade, which has now entered its 13th year, and the frequent military operations by Israel.
226. In Lebanon, where Palestinian refugees are highly discriminated and marginalized, UNRWA's losses are particularly felt by the refugees as the whole country is on a downward economic spiral. In recent years, there was a sharp uptick in the number of Palestinian refugees leaving Lebanon illegally for Europe. Many have been taking extremely dangerous routes to escape the hellish reality of Lebanon where Palestine refugees are: effectively discriminated out of the labour market, prevented from accessing essential services that UNRWA does not provide (e.g. specialized health care) and, in a number of cases even deprived of freedom of movement. For instance, in south Lebanon some camps are effectively closed-off areas encircled by walls and checkpoints and it is hard if not impossible for camp residents to come in and out; amidst poverty and lack of security, camps constitute the *facto* 'state of exceptions', as renowned sociologist Sari Hanafi calls them, as Lebanese authorities do not exert any authority in camps. In this situation, UNRWA services would need to be significantly boosted.
227. The situation is even direr in Syria, a country trapped in a nine-year-long violent war, with 90 per cent of Palestine refugees are dependent on UNRWA's services, and are exposed to risk and severe protection threats. Here, UNRWA's strong presence would be all the more needed to so that Palestinians are protected and not further displaced.

**Other recent external factors (security, political etc.) preventing UNRWA from delivering its services across the five fields of operation**

228. There are three sets of factors external to UNRWA that affect its operations.
229. The first factor relates to the increased hostility by the U.S. towards UNRWA's mandate which has materialized through the Trump administration's withdrawal of U.S. funds to the agency and its political attacks against UNRWA (i.e. that UNRWA perpetuates the refugee crisis by registering 'illegitimate' refugees, namely descendants – who are in fact refugees under international law as in any protracted refugee situation).<sup>212</sup> These direct and indirect attacks, which have continued unabated since 2018, have fostered a climate of uncertainty that is damaging both to the Agency and Palestinian refugees globally. Particularly, it distracts from the reality that both the protracted nature of the Palestinian refugee situation and the conflict 'over Palestine' require a political resolve in line with

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<sup>212</sup> See source at fn.217.

international law. This goes beyond UNRWA's functions: while UNRWA may stand as a symptom of this structural political failure, it is certainly not its cause.

230. The second factor pertains to political and security circumstances in UNRWA's area of operations, which increase the refugees' demand on the agency, both from its core programs (education, health and relief) and in terms of extra services needed to help the refugees cope with exceptional circumstances.
231. In the oPt, the occupation has turned increasingly hostile against Palestinians including Palestinian refugees residing in the area, and that has severely harmed UNRWA's services. In the West Bank, the quality of UNRWA's services is negatively affected by the very nature of the occupation, together with the restrictions and limitations it imposes. Most UNRWA beneficiaries live in areas that are under Israeli military/security control (areas B and C), which are significantly impacted by Israeli policies, IDF's incursions and settlers' attacks alike (e.g. movement restrictions, home demolitions, destruction of livelihood).
232. In East Jerusalem, Israeli authorities are increasingly obstructing UNRWA from fulfilling its mandate. Recently, the local municipality has been providing services at Palestinian refugee camps, such as sanitation work, on the claim that 'Jerusalem is no longer divided between East and West' following the Trump recognition of the holy city as the undivided capital of Israel. These actions, which runs against international will as well as UNRWA-Israeli agreement dating back to 1967, feeds refugees' fear that UNRWA will be dismantled, creating tension and furthering a sense of marginalization among the refugees.
233. In the Gaza Strip, the severity of the occupation is compounded by the 13 year old blockade, which severely restricts movement of goods in and out of the Strip and virtually prohibits movement of people across the border, and recurrent military operations, which destroy life and livelihood.
234. In Syria, the conflict is a major inhibiting factor, as UNRWA can't provide services in the middle of active hostilities or in areas where access is severely restricted or prohibited. Even though the Syrian Government has successfully recaptured the vast majority of the country, many areas with significant Palestinian refugee population remain inaccessible to UNRWA, thereby deepening the plight of this group. All the more, given the prevailing (security) environment, it may be very challenging for UNRWA to exercise its protection function toward the refugees in an unfettered manner.
235. Finally, in Lebanon, while UNRWA is able to provide services inside Palestinian camps (for the most part, except when civil war flares between factions), the agency's inability to leverage on Lebanese government's systems hinders its service delivery. All the more, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, because of their status and general conditions, are often exposed to abuse and mistreatment by Lebanese authority without possibility to meaningful/systematic access to legal aid and justice. About 3,500 Palestinian refugees are also undocumented (so called 'non-IDs'), therefore at continuous risk of arrest and detention because they are considered illegally present in the country. How can UNRWA

deliver its mandate effectively to this highly at risk population, when the general environment itself is not conducive?

236. The final factor concerns the continuous failure of the international community to deal with the political dimension of the Palestinian refugee question and Israel's impunity. Facing the deepening of the humanitarian crisis among Palestinian refugees in UNRWA's area of operations, this fosters a sense of marginalization and distrust among the refugees (half of whom are youth) vis-à-vis the international community. Despite this factors is external to UNRWA, it also feeds a sense of dissatisfaction against UNRWA among Palestinian refugees (who feel abandoned amidst, and threatened by, the continuous attacks against UNRWA).
237. These external factors risk compromising the present and future of UNRWA and, with it, of the Palestinian refugees. This requires a concerted effort by the international community to sustain UNRWA at such a critical moment. Lack of funds risks to vanish any opportunity for UNRWA to make a difference, pending a just and lasting solution for Palestinian refugees.

## Appendix 2: Terms of Reference

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### a. Eligibility, registration and documents

#### 1. Persons eligible to receive UNRWA's services

1.1. Eligibility criteria

1.2. Possibility to receive services in all UNRWA areas of operation (Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank)

#### 2. Registration and transfer of registration

2.1. Registration requirements for registered refugees

2.2. Registration requirements for persons who do not meet UNRWA's Palestine Refugee criteria

2.3. Possibility of registration for descendants of persons who did not register with UNRWA despite being able to do so

2.4. Possibility of registration for persons living outside of UNRWA's areas of operation

2.5. Transfer of registration to another UNRWA area of operation

#### 3. UNRWA documents

3.1. Family registration card

3.1.1. Transfer or issuing of new family registration cards (e.g. in case of marriage or divorce)

3.2. Other important documents

3.3. Possibility of obtaining documents online

3.4. Possibility of re-obtaining documents in case they have been lost

3.5. Meaning of numbers and codes on documents

3.6. Prevalence of document fraud

### b. Services

#### 4. Availability of core services

4.1. Impact of external factors on the availability of core services (security, budget cuts etc.)

4.1.1. Relief and Social services

4.1.2. Education services

4.1.3. Health services

4.1.4. Infrastructure and Camp Improvements

4.2. Protection

### c. Access to Jordan for Palestinians

#### 5. Entry and re-entry requirements

5.1. Access for Palestinians from Jordan (non-citizens)

5.2. Access for Palestinians from UNRWA's other areas of operation (Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank)

5.3. Access for Palestinians from outside of UNRWA's areas of operation (eg. Algeria, Libya)