

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

COUNTRY REPORT AND MIGRATION PROFILE FOR LEBANON

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Irregular maritime migration from Lebanon to the EU via Eastern and Central Mediterranean routes has increased in recent years, driven largely by Lebanon's compounded crises, regional spillover, and an increasingly hostile environment for Syrian refugees.



Despite relying on migrants for certain jobs, migration-related policies are complex and fragmented, while the country is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, leaving migrants and refugees with limited protection and rights.



Strengthening social and economic development at the local level to address migration drivers and establishing a comprehensive legal framework to ensure that migrant and refugee rights are protected are essential.

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¹ This report was completed before the ceasefire agreement between Lebanon and Israel was announced on November 27, 2024—while Israeli aggressions have continued since—and before the fall of the Assad regime on December 8, 2024. Both events are likely to influence migration drivers and trends and should be considered when interpreting the findings presented.

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	5
2. COUNTRY BACKGROUND	6
3. PEOPLE	8
4. LEBANON AS A RECEIVING COUNTRY	10
5. POLICIES	13
6. SOCIETIES	15
CONCLUSIONS	17

1

INTRODUCTION

Lebanon has a long history of emigration, with large Lebanese diaspora communities established worldwide since the 1860s.² At the same time, it is a receiving country with a substantial migrant population, primarily consisting of workers from Asia and Africa who arrive under the restrictive *Kafala* (or sponsorship) system. Lebanon is also a refugee-hosting state to various refugee communities from across the MENA region, despite not being a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention nor its 1967 Protocol. Notably, Lebanon lacks a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework as well as governance mechanisms for migration. Migrants and refugees residing in the country have limited rights and protections and face legal, social, and economic challenges.

The country is characterized by political instability, social and economic decline, and recurring conflict—all of which have been significant drivers of emigration over the years. In the past decade alone, Lebanon has faced multiple crises: an influx of over one million Syrian refugees since 2011, a financial and economic collapse that has intensified since 2019, the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the August 4 Beirut Blast in 2020, and, most recently, a wave of indiscriminate attacks by Israel across the country, increasing in frequency since September 23, 2024, and causing one of the country's largest internal displacement crises in recent history.

² Tabar, P. (2010). Lebanon: A country of emigration and immigration. p. 1–26. https://fount.aucegypt.edu/faculty_journal_articles/5056

2

COUNTRY BACKGROUND

From 1975-1989 Lebanon endured a 14-year-long civil war, during which one of the country's largest emigration waves occurred (990,000 people at the time), followed by bouts of violence, including wars with Israel, and political instability. Because of continuing instability in the country, migration continued to register high numbers during the 1990s and early 2000s; most Lebanese emigrated to countries in the Gulf and the West (North America and Europe), especially high-skilled workers, resulting in a 'brain drain.' In parallel, the 1990s saw a large influx of temporary Syrian migrant workers who contributed to rebuilding the capital, Beirut, after the civil war, reflecting a long-standing pattern of 'south-south' regional labor migration.³ Migration in Lebanon has also been affected at multiple levels by the spillover of regional (geopolitical) developments and their impact on the economy—including the Syrian war from 2011 onwards and the more recent war on Gaza (ongoing since October 2023). The past decade in Lebanon has been marked by political instability, social and economic decline, and conflict. The country's public institutions are fragile and/or inadequate; efforts toward social and economic development are fragmented; the quality of public services is poor; and investment in infrastructure is low. All these factors have created a large reliance on the private sector and/or clientelist, patronage networks for basic services.⁴ The country has faced multiple crises, from the influx of over one million Syrian refugees starting in 2011, to a more recent escalation in September 2024 of Israeli aggression characterized by indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. More than 1.2 million persons⁵ have been internally displaced since October 8, 2023, as per the Government of Lebanon (GoL), primarily from and within Lebanon's Dahieh, southern, and Bekaa regions to other already strained localities across the country. Among the displaced are Lebanese citizens, Syrian and Palestinian refugees, and migrant workers. While the majority of internally displaced Lebanese have been able to secure shel-

ter,⁶ this has not been the case for refugees and migrant workers who are not covered by the government's national emergency response.⁷ Furthermore, between September 28 and October 22, 2024, close to 440,000 persons fled to Syria across official borders, including approximately 29% Lebanese and 71% Syrian returnees,⁸ while an unknown number of Syrians likely crossed the border through irregular crossings, despite the risks of arbitrary arrest and human rights violations upon return.⁹

The Israeli war on Lebanon is happening on top of a protracted financial and economic crisis. Since 2019, the Lebanese pound (LBP) has lost over 90% of its value,¹⁰ dropping from LBP1,500 to LBP89,500 to the dollar, while the annual inflation rate in 2023 reached 221.3%.¹¹ The crisis has severely reduced the purchasing power of most of the population and decimated the salaries of those paid in the local currency. It was not until April 2024 that the minimum wage was raised for employees in the private sector to LBP18,00,000, equivalent to approximately USD200,¹² while public sector employ-

3 Ibid.

4 World Bank Group – Middle East & North Africa. (2022). Lebanon risk and resilience assessment. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099358405232232264/pdf/IDU02d26508d072230438508a3405c37b5a458ce.pdf>

5 Harb, D., & Hariri, H. (2024, Oct 6). Displaced families in Lebanon yearn for peace and a return home. UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/displaced-families-lebanon-yearn-peace-and-return-home>

6 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA]. (2024 Oct 16). Lebanon: Flash update #35 - Escalation of hostilities in Lebanon, as of 14 October 2024. <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-flash-update-35-escalation-hostilities-lebanon-14-october-2024>

7 Anti-Racism Movement [ARM]. (2024, Oct 30). Urgent call: IOM should open shelters for displaced and stranded migrant workers in Lebanon. <https://armlebanon.org/urgent-call-iom-should-open-shelter-for-displaced-and-stranded-migrant-workers-in-lebanon/>

8 UNHCR Flash Update. (2024, October). UNHCR Syria Flash Update #18, Response to Displacement from Lebanon to Syria- Reporting period: 24 September - 25 October 2024. https://www.unhcr.org/sy/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2024/10/UNHCR-FLASH-UPDATE-18_Displacement-from-Lebanon_25-October-2024.pdf

9 Human Rights Watch [HRW]. (2024a). Syrians fleeing Lebanon risk repression upon return. <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrians-fleeing-lebanon-risk-repression-upon-return-enar>

10 World Bank Group. (2023, May 16). Lebanon: Normalization of crisis is no road to stabilization. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/05/16/lebanon-normalization-of-crisis-is-no-road-to-stabilization#:~:text=The%20currency%20lost%20more%20than,food%20and%20non%20alcoholic%20beverages.>

11 Central Administration of Statistics [CAS]. (2023, December). Consumer price index in Lebanon and the governorates for the month of December 2023 [Arabic]. http://www.cas.gov.lb/images/PDFs/CPI/2023/12-CPI_DECEMBER2023.pdf

12 As of October 31, 2024, calculated based on the Sayrafa exchange rate of LBP89,500.

ees continue to be paid in LBP.¹³ Lebanon's economy is primarily a rentier economy, favoring mainly low-productivity sectors, including the service, financial (banking), and real estate sectors, and has failed to create high-quality jobs. The economy has struggled to pick up over the past five years, such that whatever growth was projected for 2023 is now unachievable. The current escalation of the war is expected to push the country back into recession, especially as recent growth was primarily attributable to a strong tourism season.¹⁴

Other significant crises of this decade include the COVID-19 pandemic and a large explosion in Beirut on August 4, 2020 that displaced over 300,000 persons.¹⁵ This past decade also saw several large-scale nationwide protest movements, including the 2015 'You Stink Protests' and the October 2019 Uprising, during which thousands took to the streets to protest years of endemic corruption and clientelism among the political class, and the deteriorating social and economic conditions, only to be met with severe violence and repression from the state.¹⁶ The country has been without a president since October 2022, and the current caretaker government has limited abilities to implement much-needed social and

economic policies and reforms, hindering any real progress toward addressing Lebanon's multiple crises and increasing instability.¹⁷

Together, these compounded crises have pushed thousands of families into poverty, brought on greater unemployment, and further strained public services and infrastructure. Poverty has increased both for Lebanese and non-citizens, including Syrian refugees, Palestinian refugees, and migrant communities. A recent survey by the World Bank¹⁸ covering five of Lebanon's eight governorates found that poverty had almost tripled in the covered governorates over the past decade, from 12% in 2012 to 44% in 2022.¹⁹ Furthermore, unemployment rose from 11.4% in 2019 to 29.6% in 2022 as per a follow-up labor force survey conducted by CAS in partnership with the International Labor Organization (ILO).²⁰ The survey estimated unemployment among youth to be 47.8% and 32.7% among females, while 62.4% of the population was informally employed.²¹

¹³ L'Orient Today. (2024, April 4). Cabinet approves doubling the minimum wage for private sector employees. <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1409268/cabinet-approves-doubling-the-minimum-wage-for-private-sector-employees.html>

¹⁴ World Bank Group – Middle East & North Africa. (2022).

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch [HRW]. (2021). "They killed us from the inside:" An investigation into the August 4 Beirut Blast. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/08/03/they-killed-us-inside/investigation-august-4-beirut-blast>

¹⁶ Amnesty International. (2019 Nov 11). Lebanon protests explained. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/11/lebanon-protests-explained/>

¹⁷ Cheaito, H. (2022, December 22). Lebanese-style déjà vu: The case of presidential elections. *The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy*. <https://timep.org/2022/12/22/lebanese-style-deja-vu-the-case-of-presidential-elections/>

¹⁸ The World Bank Group. (2024). Lebanon poverty and equity assessment 2024: Weathering a protracted crisis. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099052224104516741/pdf/P1766511325da10a71ab6b1ae97816dd20c.pdf>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ CAS & International Labor Organization [ILO]. (2022). Lebanon follow-up labor force survey – January 2022: Fact sheet. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_844837.pdf

²¹ Ibid.

3

PEOPLE

Emigration from Lebanon

As mentioned earlier, there is a significant history of emigration from Lebanon: drivers of emigration continue to include economic deterioration, poverty and high unemployment, political instability and uncertainty, corruption and sectarianism, conflict and violence, and inadequate public services and social welfare. The estimated total number of international emigrants at mid-year 2020 was 856,800, of whom 40.8% were women (UN-DESA),²² with the majority of Lebanese emigrants living in the Gulf, Europe, and North America, considered traditional destinations based on historical emigration patterns,²³ and which continue to be top destinations today.²⁴ Contributing 28% to Lebanon's GDP in 2023,²⁵ emigration serves as a major source of remittances, which have remained stable over the past decade and, following the economic crisis, and in the absence of a universal social protection program, have provided a much-needed social safety net, supporting families to meet their basic needs and services.²⁶

From the end of 2019 a mass migration movement has been observed, with those who were able leaving in search of better living conditions and work opportunities abroad.²⁷ The total number of reported emigrants from the country between 2018 and 2021 was estimated at 195,433.²⁸ An assessment of migration patterns during the COVID-19 pandemic found that the first to leave Lebanon were those with

good socio-economic standing and those with foreign passports. Among those with a valid Lebanese passport and limited savings or assets (required for visa applications), some pursued non-traditional destinations that offer accessible immigration pathways for Lebanese, such as Turkey, Armenia, Georgia, and other countries that do not require an entry visa.²⁹ Some Lebanese also opted to pursue their higher education abroad as a pathway out of the country, covered either through their own resources in a foreign currency, external funding, or scholarships;³⁰ others migrated through available work-visa programs for high-skilled workers, although opportunities through these programs are limited in number.³¹ One such program facilitating legal migration to Europe is the Blue Card Scheme. Some Lebanese, particularly those with a high net worth, have also participated in golden visa programs and other immigrant investor programs, such as small-island citizenship-by-investment programs.³²

The desire to emigrate, either through regular or irregular pathways, remains significant. For example, 36% of Lebanese participants in the eighth wave of the Arab Barometer (2024) expressed a desire to emigrate, listing Canada, Germany, France, Australia, and the United States (USA) as their top preferred destinations; while 17% reported a willingness to migrate irregularly.³³ Indeed, and despite the low numbers, the percentage of Lebanese attempting irregular migration has increased year on year since 2019, including to Cyprus, Greece, and Italy through the Eastern and Central Mediterranean routes; UNHCR data from 2022 indicates that

²² United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs - Population Division. (2020). International Migrant Stock 2020. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>

²³ De Bel-Air, F. (2017). Migration Profile: Lebanon. *Migration Policy Centre*.

²⁴ European Training Foundation [ETF]. (2021). Skills and migration country fiche – Lebanon. https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-04/etf_skills_and_migration_country_fiche_lebanon_2021_en.pdf

²⁵ World Bank Group. (2023, December 18). Remittance flows continue to grow in 2023 albeit at slower pace. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/12/18/remittance-flows-grow-2023-slower-pace-migration-development-brief>

²⁶ United Nations Development Program. (2023). The increasing role and importance of remittances in Lebanon. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-06/remittances_report_june_2023.pdf

²⁷ Mendelek, M. (2022). The Lebanese trend of emigration: A new peak since 2019? LAU News. <https://soas.lau.edu.lb/news/2022/01/the-lebanese-trend-of-emigration-a-new-peak-since-2019.php>

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Davidoff Gore, S. (2024). Diverging paths: The impacts of COVID-19 on migration in the Middle East and North Africa. *Migration Policy Institute*.

³⁰ Abdelbaki, S. (2021, November 8). "I could not see a future:" Lebanon losing youth in new wave of emigration. *Beirut Today*. <https://beirut-today.com/2021/11/08/i-could-not-see-a-future-lebanon-losing-youth-in-new-wave-of-emigration/>

³¹ European Union. (2024). Eurostat Data Browser: EU Blue Cards by type of decision, occupation and citizenship. https://doi.org/10.2908/MIGR_RESBC1

³² ITP. (2021, August 1). Why Lebanese high net worth individuals are increasingly turning to citizenship by investment. *ArabianBusiness*. <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/money/wealth/wealth-management/466626-why-lebanese-high-net-worth-individuals-are-increasingly-turning-to-citizenship-by-investment>

³³ Arab Barometer. (2024). Lebanon migration insights: 2024 public opinion factsheet. <https://www.arabbarometer.org/2024/08/lebanon-migration-insights-2024-public-opinion-factsheet/>

28% of irregular migrants departing from Lebanon were Lebanese.³⁴ This trend is expected to continue as the situation in Lebanon is still worsening, despite EU efforts to curb migration through its most recent deal (discussed below), and despite the multiple dangers inherent in irregular routes. Boats departing from Lebanon have faced dangerous pushbacks and pullbacks by Coast Guards,³⁵ while in 2023 a boat departing from Lebanon heading towards Italy was taken hostage by the Libyan group Tarek Bin Zeyad Brigade (TBZ) while crossing Maltese waters.³⁶ A study undertaken by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) among residents of North Lebanon and Akkar highlighted economic reasons, social services, such as health and education, and conflict and security as drivers among those willing to migrate irregularly, while youth participants reported feeling that there is no future for them in the country. Among those with a family, the situation created a sense of urgency due to the impact of these crises on their children.³⁷

The migration of high-skilled Lebanese since the onset of the financial and economic crisis continues to contribute to Lebanon's situation of 'brain drain.'³⁸ The current war has prolonged the emigration movement that began at the onset of the financial and economic crisis and the cost of human capital, mainly through the loss of high skilled labor, is high, as it is likely to have a long-term effect on the country's economic recovery.³⁹ Similarly to the post-economic crisis, those Lebanese with foreign passports or higher incomes were among the first to leave as the current war began to escalate, some to countries in the region, and others to their country of second nationality either through their own means or with the support of their local embassies. Some countries also facilitated family reunification pathways or introduced facilitations for those already in the country to extend their stay.⁴⁰

³⁴ Diab, J.L. (2024). Selective and Strategic indifference: Lebanon's migration and refugee landscapes in the absence of inclusive legal frameworks. <https://mixedmigration.org/lebanon-migration-and-refugee-landscapes/>

³⁵ HRW. (2024). Pushbacks and pullbacks of Syrian refugees from Cyprus and Lebanon. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/09/04/i-cant-go-home-stay-here-or-leave/pushbacks-and-pullbacks-syrian-refugees-cyprus>

³⁶ Aljoud, S. (2023, August 26). Libyan militants release 80 of 110 migrants departing Lebanon. *L'orient Today*. <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1347484/libyan-militants-release-80-of-110-migrants-departing-lebanon.html>

³⁷ IOM. (2023). Lost hope, lost lives: Insights into Lebanese irregular migration. Beirut: IOM.

³⁸ Vohra, A. (2021, August 9). Lebanon is in terminal brain drain. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/08/09/lebanon-terminal-brain-drain-migration/>

³⁹ Vohra, A. (2021, August 9).

⁴⁰ Tagoe, Y. (2024, November 4). Canada introduces temporary immigration measures for those fleeing Lebanon. <https://immigration.ca/canada-introduces-temporary-immigration-measures-for-those-fleeing-lebanon/>

4

LEBANON AS A RECEIVING COUNTRY

Labor migration

It is difficult to establish the total number of migrant workers in Lebanon due to the high number of irregular migrants.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the IOM estimated in July 2024 that there were around 176,504 migrants in Lebanon, of whom approximately half are domestic or live-in workers. Numbers of female migrant workers, particularly live-in migrant workers, began to increase in 2021 after an observed dip in 2019 due to the financial and economic crisis. However, this number remains lower than pre-crisis levels.⁴² In terms of their nationalities, migrants mainly are of African and Asian nationalities: Ethiopian (38%), Bangladeshi (21%), and Sudanese (9%), but the country also hosts migrants from other Arab countries and the West. In total, the IOM identified migrants of 98 different nationalities in Lebanon.⁴³

Migrant workers, particularly migrant domestic workers from African and Asian countries, have been coming to Lebanon for work since the 1970s, with migration promoted by their countries due to the influx of remittances.⁴⁴ Today, migrants in Lebanon struggle with unemployment, lack access to basic needs such as food and shelter, and face uncertainty regarding their future.⁴⁵ Many lost their jobs after the economic crisis and during COVID-19,⁴⁶ while more recently migrant domestic workers were deserted by their employers as Israeli aggressions escalated.⁴⁷ Live-out migrant workers face similar challenges. A representative survey conducted in March

2023 found that 45% of participants were unemployed, while a significant proportion reported averaging an income of 300 USD per month. Furthermore, live-out migrant households were taking on debt (44%), reported food as a primary need (78%), were unable to meet their healthcare needs (28%), had one or more household members without a residency permit (50%), and faced at least one safety and security concern (36% among women; 26% among men), among other issues, all of which are compounded by the *Kafala* or sponsorship system, discussed in the “Societies” section.⁴⁸

Refugees

Lebanon is not signatory to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention) nor its 1967 Additional Protocol. The country does not have a legal definition for refugees nor any specific legislation addressing the issue of refugee status.⁴⁹ Still, the country continues to host among the highest number of refugees per capita globally.⁵⁰ The country is host to 768,353 registered Syrian refugees (as of October 31, 2024; with official estimates closer to 1.5 million),⁵¹ and roughly 11,200 registered refugees and asylum seekers of other nationalities, including Iraqi, Sudanese, and Ethiopian.⁵² Over one million Syrian refugees initially crossed the border into Lebanon in 2011, facilitated through an ‘open-border policy,’ in line with policies and agreements that facilitated labor migration between Lebanon and Syria that were active prior to 2015.⁵³ The country is also host to some 180,000 Palestinian refugees from Lebanon, who started arriving in the country in 1948, and some 30,000 Palestinian refugees

41 REACH. (2024). Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment: Live-out migrant HHs in Lebanon. <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/multi-sectoral-needs-assessment-live-out-migrant-hhs-lebanon-march-2023>

42 Ad-Diyar. (2024, February 24). After a noticeable contraction... the sector of recruiting foreign workers has recovered [Arabic]. <https://addiyar.com/article/2156863>

43 International Organization for Migration [IOM]. (2024 Aug 21). DTM Lebanon - Baseline assessment round 4. LB: IOM. <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/lebanon-baseline-assessment-round-4?close=true>

44 Diab, J.L. (2024).

45 ARM. (2020). The impact of the economic crisis and coronavirus lockdown on migrant workers. <https://armlebanon.org/the-impact-of-the-economic-crisis-and-coronavirus-lockdown-on-migrant-workers/>; Reach. (2024). Multi-sectoral needs assessment: Live-out migrant HHs in Lebanon, March 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/multi-sectoral-needs-assessment-live-out-migrant-hhs-lebanon-march-2023>

46 ARM. (2020). The impact of the economic crisis and coronavirus lockdown on migrant workers.

47 ARM. (2024, October 30). Urgent call: IOM should open shelters for displaced and stranded migrant workers in Lebanon.

48 REACH. (2024). Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment: Live-out migrant HHs in Lebanon. <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/multi-sectoral-needs-assessment-live-out-migrant-hhs-lebanon-march-2023>

49 Acted et al. (2019). The labor sector in Lebanon: Legal frameworks, challenges and opportunities. <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/labour-sector-lebanon-legal-frameworks-challenges-and-opportunities>

50 UNHCR. (2024). UNHCR Lebanon at a glance. <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/at-a-glance>

51 UNHCR. (2024). Syria regional refugee response. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria>

52 UNHCR. (2024). Annual results report: Lebanon. https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/MENA%20-%20Lebanon%20ARR%202023_0.pdf

53 De Bel-Air, F. (2017). Migration Profile: Lebanon. *Migration Policy Centre*.

from Syria, who started arriving in the country in 2011.⁵⁴ Given its large Syrian and Palestinian refugee populations as well as its location, Lebanon is also a point of origin and transit for these communities. The UNHCR in Lebanon supports refugees with onward movement through several programs, including facilitating voluntary returns, resettlement, and complementary pathways, such as family reunification, education and employment opportunities, personal sponsorship, and humanitarian pathways. Resettlement spots remain limited and have decreased in recent years.⁵⁵ Palestinians do not fall under the remit of the UNHCR, and thus are not eligible to benefit from durable solutions, including resettlement programs,⁵⁶ although they do benefit from some facilitations with regard to asylum applications in certain countries, including some countries in Europe.⁵⁷ Refugees also depart from Lebanon through irregular routes, with less than 1% of boats departing from Lebanon arriving in Europe in 2023.⁵⁸

Syrian refugees

Increasing raids and crackdowns on Syrian refugees with irregular status—coupled with the reintroduction of the Voluntary Return Plan, which seeks to ‘facilitate’ the return of Syrian refugees to Syria in cooperation with the Syrian regime, as well as forced deportations—have contributed to a very hostile environment for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The situation is further exacerbated by a host of other negative push factors, including rising anti-Syrian refugee sentiment among the general population, decreased aid, difficulties in regularizing their stay, and restrictions on their freedom of movement,⁵⁹ including due to security measures and curfews imposed by municipalities in several cities and towns across the country.⁶⁰ Overall, drivers for migration among Syrian refugees vary but are related to both push and pull factors. A study by Save the Children (2022) found that among participants, push factors such as poor housing, a lack of work opportunities and income, limited freedom of movement, and poor integration, and pull factors such as better health-care services and living conditions, economic opportunities, and pathways to citizenship in third countries, underpin their decisions to migrate. Participants in the study, particularly

Syrian refugees living in Lebanon, also had limited hopes about their prospects for durable solutions.⁶¹

With limited opportunities for durable solutions or for leaving the country through regular routes, there has been an increase in the number of Syrian refugees attempting migration to Europe through irregular routes, including via boat to Cyprus in the past couple of years. From January 1, 2024, to June 20, 2024, there were a reported 61 verified actual or attempted movements by sea from Lebanon to Cyprus,⁶² compared to 65 verified actual or attempted movements in all of 2023.⁶³ Of these movements, 34 reached Cyprus in 2023, while 51 reached the island in 2024.⁶⁴ The majority of those aboard the boats were Syrian refugees, who over the past decade have been among the top nationalities arriving in Europe, and whose arrival numbers have been increasing progressively since 2021.⁶⁵ The increase in the arrival of Syrian refugees to Cyprus prompted the suspension of processing asylum applications for Syrians in the country,⁶⁶ and the announcement of a one billion euro EU-Lebanon migration deal, discussed in more detail below.

Notably, the increase in boat movements from Lebanon to Cyprus as a leading destination in 2023 indicates a change, as in previous years boats were more likely to move towards Italy.⁶⁷ In 2023, less than 1% of arrivals in Italy were reported to have departed from Lebanon.⁶⁸ In comparison, a study on irregular migrant boat departures from Lebanon found more traveling toward Italy via the Central Mediterranean route between 2020-2022, likely due to a migration deal between the GoL and the government of Cyprus; at the same time, Frontex data for the same years confirms more Lebanese ar-

⁵⁴ UNRWA. (2022). Hitting rock bottom - Palestine refugees in Lebanon risk their lives in search of dignity. <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/hitting-rock-bottom-palestine-refugees-lebanon-risk-their-lives-search-dignity-enar>

⁵⁵ UNHCR. (2024). Resettlement data finder. <https://rsq.unhcr.org/en/#C0wk>

⁵⁶ Forster, R., & Knudsen, A. J. (2022, December). *EFFEXT Background Paper—National and international migration policy in Lebanon*. <https://www.cmi.no/publications/8589-national-and-international-migration-policy-in-lebanon>

⁵⁷ Achilli, L., & Hanafi, S. (2022). Migration trends of Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA. In R. Bocco and F. Froehlich, “UNRWA and the Palestine refugees: Challenges for developing a strategic vision,” p. 142-174.

⁵⁸ IOM. (2024). DTM Europe — Mixed Migration Flows to Europe, Yearly Regional Report (January - December 2023). IOM, Vienna.

⁵⁹ HRW. (2024).

⁶⁰ UNHCR, UNICEF, & WFP. (2024). VASyR 2023: Vulnerability assessment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/vasyr-2023-vulnerability-assessment-syrian-refugees-lebanon>

⁶¹ Save the Children. (2022). Shrinking horizons for hope: Syrian refugees reflect on their priorities on durable solutions after a decade in displacement. <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/shrinking-horizons-hope-syrian-refugees-reflect-their-priorities-durable-solutions-after-decade-displacement>

⁶² UN-Security Council. (2024a). Implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) during the period from 21 February to 20 June 2024 - Report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/548). <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/implementation-security-council-resolution-1701-2006-during-period-21-february-20-june-2024-report-secretary-general-s2024548-enaruzh>

⁶³ UN-Security Council. (2024b). Implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) during the period from 21 October 2023 to 20 February 2024. <https://unifil.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/n2405583.pdf>

⁶⁴ Al-Jazeera. (2024, April 14). Cyprus suspends asylum applications for Syrians as arrivals rise. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/4/14/cyprus-suspends-asylum-applications-for-syrians-as-arrivals-rise>

⁶⁵ IOM. (2024). Migration Flow to Europe – Arrivals. <https://dtm.iom.int/europe/arrivals>

⁶⁶ Al-Jazeera. (2024, April 14). Cyprus suspends asylum applications for Syrians as arrivals rise. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/4/14/cyprus-suspends-asylum-applications-for-syrians-as-arrivals-rise>

⁶⁷ UNHCR. (2024). Annual results report: Lebanon. https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/MENA%20-%20Lebanon%20ARR%202023_0.pdf

⁶⁸ IOM. (2024). Yearly regional report – DTM Europe – January – December 2023. https://dtm.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1461/files/reports/DTM_Mixed%20Migration%20Flows%20to%20Europe_Yearly_2023_0.pdf

rivals on Italian shores.⁶⁹ Syrian refugees on intercepted boats were reportedly deported back to Syria from Lebanon, while there has also been a general rise in deportations and forced returns of Syrian refugees from Lebanon.⁷⁰ This trend of increased (attempted) maritime irregular migration movements is likely to persist as the situation in Lebanon continues to deteriorate, and as the war in the region remains unabated—particularly for refugees with limited prospects and rights in the country, but also among Lebanese—with movement along both the Eastern and Central Mediterranean routes, despite recent restrictions and pushbacks in Cyprus.

Palestinian refugees

The legal situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is complex, despite the protracted nature of their displacement. The situation for Palestine refugees from Syria is even more precarious, as they show higher rates of unemployment and poverty, in addition to difficulties regularizing their stay and other legal issues.⁷¹ There are reports that some 6,000-8,000 Palestinians migrated from Lebanon in 2020, while 12,000 had migrated by October 2021, either through regular or irregular routes.⁷² A small number of Palestinians were also aboard intercepted boats departing to Cyprus.⁷³ Among participants of a representative survey conducted by UNRWA in September 2022, 34% of participating families reported that one of their family members was considering emigrating, while 5% reported that a family member had initiated the emigration process.⁷⁴ Data from the UNHCR also indicated that a small percentage of those on intercepted boats heading toward Cyprus in 2022 were Palestinian.⁷⁵ A trend assessment conducted in 2019 found that lack of access to rights and poor socio-economic conditions are among the primary drivers for migration among Palestinian refugees, including high rates of poverty and unemployment and lack of employment opportunities—both of which have only worsened since the onset of the financial and economic crisis. A 2023 review by Achilli and Hanafi identified similar drivers among UNRWA-registered Palestinians, including lack of security and poor living conditions in their host country, particularly among those living in camps. Top destinations for Palestini-

ans include Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden.⁷⁶ The ongoing Israeli aggressions in Lebanon and the war on Gaza are likely to drive refugee movement of Palestinians to the EU, including to Greece and Cyprus.

⁶⁹ Diab, J.L., & Jouhari, I. (2023). Conflict, crisis, and migration: Maritime irregular migration from Lebanon since 2019. Madrid: Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom. https://shop.freiheit.org/download/P2@1476/727849/Conflict%20Crisis%20and%20Migration_Lebanon_Ibrahim_Jouhari_Jasmin_Diab_FINAL_.pdf

⁷⁰ HRW. (2024).

⁷¹ UNRWA. (2020). Protection brief: Palestine refugees living in Lebanon. https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/20-09-28_lfo_context_protection_brief_2020_final83.pdf

⁷² Al-Sahli, A. (2022). Factional and international dollar eases the burden of the economic crisis, but migration is a solution chosen by Palestinian refugees in Lebanon [Arabic]. *Institute for Palestine Studies*. <https://www.palestine-studies.org/ar/node/1652428>

⁷³ Diab, J.L. (2024).

⁷⁴ UNRWA. (2022). Socio-economic situation of Palestine refugees in Lebanon crisis monitoring report – High frequency survey results – September 2022. https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/lebanon_crisis_monitoring_report_september_2022.pdf

⁷⁵ Diab, J.L. (2024). Selective and Strategic indifference: Lebanon's migration and refugee landscapes in the absence of inclusive legal frameworks. <https://mixedmigration.org/lebanon-migration-and-refugee-landscapes/>

⁷⁶ Achilli, L., & Hanafi, S. (2022).

5

POLICIES

EU-Lebanon Cooperation

The EU and Lebanon have been cooperating in several areas since 2004 within the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), particularly the Partnership with the Southern Neighborhood, renewed in 2021, under which the framework for policy relations on migration is implemented. Areas of cooperation with Lebanon under the most recent Partnership with the Southern Neighborhood and as laid out in the Multi-Annual Indicative Program (MIP) 2021-2027 include “enhancing good governance and supporting reforms, strengthening an inclusive and resilient economy, and promoting a green and sustainable recovery,” with issues around migration and irregular migration falling under the first area of cooperation, and an action plan laid out in the Multi-Country Migration Program for the Southern Neighborhood 2021-2027.⁷⁷ The ENP was negotiated under the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement Establishing an Association between the European Community and Lebanon (EU-Lebanon Association Agreement). The Association Agreement is the only legally binding document related to the partnership between the EU and Lebanon; it was signed in 2002 and entered into force in 2006.⁷⁸ This Association Agreement addresses return and readmission (Article 68), stipulating that the two parties “agree to cooperate in order to prevent and control illegal migration,” including readmitting nationals illegally present on each partner’s territory.⁷⁹

While the Association Agreement is the only legally binding document between the two partners concerning migration, several other agreements between the EU and Lebanon address migration, including the EU-Lebanon Action Plans covering 2007-2011, 2013-2015, and 2016-2020. The 2016-2020 Action Plan provided more concrete support for migration control through acknowledging the importance of negotiating a Lebanon-EU mobility partnership among its priorities and introducing the Lebanon Compact. This Compact pro-

vides support for the Lebanese economy in return for the GoL providing social and economic opportunities for Syrian refugees to enhance their self-reliance and resilience and facilitate their legal residency.⁸⁰ However, without the necessary enforcement mechanisms and concrete deliverables, the Compact did not result in better living conditions for Syrian refugees in the country.⁸¹ The Compact was out of tune with the reality on the ground in Lebanon, as it came after the GoL had halted registration with the UNHCR, while it also failed to address the root causes of migration.⁸² Furthermore, while discussions around an EU-Lebanon Mobility Partnership were held, no such partnership was officially signed.

Lebanon has also received more than 3.5 billion euros in aid from the EU since the onset of the Syrian refugee crisis in 2011, disbursed through the government, humanitarian actors, and Lebanon’s civil society, and covering such diverse programs as legal assistance and protection, healthcare, education, livelihoods and food security, and water and sanitation, among others. The EU also supports refugee communities in Lebanon by providing direct aid to Syrian refugees through its EU Regional Trust Fund, and to Palestinian refugees through UNRWA and other non-governmental organizations, among other initiatives.⁸³ Most of the current EU assistance to Lebanon comes through the Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), which covers 2021-2027.⁸⁴ Most recently, in May 2024, President of the EU Commission Von der Leyen announced a 1.03 billion euro deal for Lebanon. Most of the funding is meant to support basic services such as education, social protection, and healthcare, and to help the GoL implement reforms to address the ongoing financial and economic crisis. About a quarter of the funding is allocated to supporting Lebanon’s security forces to secure the country’s borders in an effort to reduce migration attempts to the EU.⁸⁵ This is in line with recent deals the EU has

⁷⁷ European Union. (2021). The European Union and Lebanon. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/lebanon/european-union-and-lebanon_en?s=203#:~:text=The%20EU%20continues%20to%20support,%2C%20but%20also%20through%20NGOs

⁷⁸ EU-Lebanon Association Agreement. (2006). https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/euro_mediterranean_agreement_en.pdf; see also Lebanon - European Commission at https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/lebanon_hr

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Forster, R., & Knudsen, A. J. (2022, December).

⁸¹ Fakhoury, T. (2020). Refugee governance in crisis: The case of the EU-Lebanon Compact. Migration Governance and Asylum Crises.

⁸² Forster, R., & Knudsen, A. J. (2022, December).

⁸³ European Commission. (2024). European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) - Lebanon. https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/lebanon_en

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Schaer, K. (2024, May 7). Could the EU-Lebanon aid deal backfire on

struck with other Mediterranean countries aimed at externalizing border control; it also highlights the links between EU funding for development and border control. The EU also funds projects directly to support Lebanon in securing its borders. One example is the Frontex-implemented, EU commission-funded project called the EU4BorderSecurity project, which aims “to contribute to enhancing border security in the Southern Neighborhood, through bilateral and regional cooperation.”⁸⁶ Another such project was implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and aimed to “enhance capabilities of the Integrated Border Management (IBM) and related fields of operation in Lebanon.”⁸⁷

The May 2024 deal was met with significant backlash from political parties and other actors in Lebanon, with some considering it ‘European bribery’ to keep Syrian refugees in the country. Similarly to previous deals with the EU, it was announced despite the increase in anti-refugee rhetoric and diminishing rights for refugees in the country.⁸⁸ Of concern, the deal also points to “a European willingness to explore new ‘interpretations’ of key protection norms in an effort to stave [off] new arrivals to Europe from Lebanon,” namely, by declaring parts of Syria safe for return—something both Lebanese ministers and representatives from EU states have been calling for, including the Cypriot president.⁸⁹ The deal is not likely to address or minimize irregular migration; instead, it is more likely to make these journeys more dangerous, as has been shown in other contexts such as Libya.⁹⁰ Like earlier plans, and under the guise of “human rights-based migration governance” and the “protection of migrants and migrants at risk,”⁹¹ the current plan fails to address the drivers of migration from Lebanon; further, without the necessary reforms and support for long-term solutions to address the country’s push factors, it is unlikely that these efforts will curb migration.

Indeed, how these agreements and arrangements are implemented raises questions about the extent to which human rights are being respected, including the principle of volun-

tary return in safety and with dignity, particularly, for example, in the case of Syrian refugees who were returned to Lebanon after attempting to migrate to Cyprus through irregular routes.⁹² The return of Syrian refugees to Lebanon is likely to make the EU complicit in violating the principle of non-refoulement, as Lebanon has since 2019 implemented a policy of non-readmission for Syrian refugees who are returned from Cyprus and deports them back to Syria.⁹³ The Lebanese government has also hesitated to readmit Palestinians returning from third countries if they do not have a residency permit for the country they are returning from (for example, if their asylum application was rejected, or their residence permit revoked)—a practice that has been in place since May 2018. In all cases, applications are reviewed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the GDGS, whose permission must be obtained to return to Lebanon.⁹⁴

Other key partnerships

Lebanon has also signed bilateral cooperation agreements with some European countries that directly address labor- or migration-related issues. For example, a bilateral agreement signed between Cyprus and Lebanon in 2020 aimed to strengthen relations with Lebanon and focuses on the management of migration, stipulating that migrants trying to reach the island will be ‘intercepted’ and sent back.⁹⁵ Another bilateral agreement was signed between Lebanon and France aiming for “better management of migratory flows adapted to the needs of both stakeholders.”⁹⁶ France also has a bilateral agreement with Lebanon (signed in 2010) regarding the exchange of young professionals specifically, part of a series of bilateral agreements allowing third-country nationals aged between 18 and 35 to obtain a first work experience in France and improve their knowledge of the French language and culture, with a stay of 18 months maximum.⁹⁷ Furthermore, Lebanon has several bilateral readmission agreements with European countries, including an agreement with Cyprus, which was signed into effect in 2008 and has been in force since 2009.⁹⁸

Syrian refugees? *DW*. <https://www.dw.com/en/could-the-eu-lebanon-aid-deal-backfire-on-syrian-refugees/a-69018942>

86 Frontex. (2024). Beyond EU borders. <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/what-we-do/beyond-eu-borders/our-international-projects/>

87 European External Action Service – EU Delegation to Lebanon. (2020). Enhanced capability for integrated border management in Lebanon. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/lebanon/enhanced-capability-integrated-border-management-lebanon_en?s=203

88 Schaer, K. (2024, May 7).

89 Janmyr, M., & Baroud, M. (2024). Lebanon’s refugee return agenda: Negotiating global protection norms and responsibility sharing, p.8. Beirut: Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs.

90 Ibid.; ECRE. (2024). EU external partners: EU signs latest migration deal with Mauritania — Frontex’s co-operation with Libyan Coast Guard despite evidence of abuse exposed. <https://ecre.org/eu-external-partners-eu-signs-latest-migration-deal-with-mauritania-%E2%80%95-frontexs-co-operation-with-libyan-coast-guard-despite-evidence-of-abuse-exposed/>

91 European Commission. (2023). Action Document to support countries in the Southern Neighbourhood for the management of migration flows for 2023. https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/ff5ece36-1ef3-4cfe-a40b-1648431c90a6_en?filename=C%282023%294402_AD%202023.PDF

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93 11.11.11 et al. (2024). The risks and perils of an EU-Lebanon migration deal [Briefing paper]. https://www.achrighs.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/EU-LEBANON-MIGRATION-DEAL-BRIEFINGPA-PER_DEF-copy.pdf

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96 European Commission. (2015). Ad-Hoc Query on bilateral agreements or other frameworks of cooperation with the non-EU/non-EFTA countries. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-09/ad-hoc-queries-2015.694_pl_bilateral_agreements_wider_dissemination.pdf

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98 European Migration Network. (2022). Bilateral readmission agreements. <https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/>

6

SOCIETIES

Protection and rights of migrants and refugees

In Lebanon, decisions related to immigration are often made at the administrative and executive levels rather than through legislation and are subject to political influence and in line with Lebanon's confessional, sectarian power-sharing system.⁹⁹ Furthermore, Lebanon does not have a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework to address the rights of migrants and refugees. The governance of migrants is fragmented, with different entities having different responsibilities. The country is not signatory to the 1990 Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, nor has it ratified the 1975 ILO Convention No. 143 on Migrant Workers related to their protection,¹⁰⁰ nor the Domestic Workers Convention of 2011.¹⁰¹ Policies and facilitations differ based on the migrant's nationality and work category. Integration is generally out of the question for migrants (and refugees) who reside and work in Lebanon, while pathways to naturalization are also limited.

The entry and stay of migrant workers and foreigners in Lebanon are regulated by the 1962 Law "Regulating the Entry and Stay of Foreigners in Lebanon and their Exit from the Country," and they must obtain a residency permit to stay in the country. The law also includes several articles on asylum and the non-refoulment of former political refugees, which are not implemented in practice, as this is highly politicized. The law also applies to refugees, with Syrian refugees required to have a residency permit, while Palestinians must register with the Ministry of Interior and are issued an Identification Card for Palestine Refugees, which serves as a residency permit. Nevertheless, refugees and migrants face difficulties securing the required documents to renew their residency permits, while the high costs of the permit may be prohibitive.¹⁰² Current domestic law criminalizes the irregular

entry and stay of migrants, and without a residency permit, migrants and refugees risk being arrested, detained, and/or deported. The lack of a residency permit restricts freedom of movement, which may affect access to employment and basic services (such as healthcare).¹⁰³

Regarding Syrian refugees, the rules of entry, residency renewal, and regularization are often revised through decisions of the General Directorate of General Security (GDGS). In May 2024, the GDGS announced strict regulations limiting the conditions whereby Syrians could enter and stay in Lebanon.¹⁰⁴ The statement canceled previously allowed residency categories, making some refugees irregular overnight. It also made it more difficult for Syrians to obtain or renew residency permits. In 2023, only about 20% of Syrian refugees over the age of 15 had a residency permit.¹⁰⁵

Access to work

Foreigners wishing to work in Lebanon must be sponsored by a Lebanese national (a *kafeel* or sponsor) under the *Kafala* or sponsorship system, a set of procedures based on the entry and exit law, and which ties their residency permit to their employer. They must also obtain a work permit. The *Kafala* system dictates the conditions under which migrants in Lebanon can work and live and has been compared to 'modern-day slavery,' particularly for migrant domestic workers, who are also excluded from Lebanon's Labor Law and its protections.¹⁰⁶ Human Rights Watch (HRW) and other local organizations, such as the Anti-Racism Movement (ARM), regularly report incidents of abuse and exploitation of migrant domestic workers, including unpaid wages and long working hours, being locked inside, withholding of passports

EMN_INFORM_bilateral_readmission.pdf

99 Forster, R., & Knudsen, A. J. (2022, December).

100 https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:11200:0::NO::P11200_COUNTRY_ID:103147

101 Center for Migrant Advocacy. (2020). Translating rights – A study on bilateral labor agreements of the Philippines with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Lebanon. <https://centerformigrantadvocacy.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/bla-study-v.-2.pdf>

102 ICJ. (2020). Unrecognized and unprotected: The treatment of migrants and refugees in Lebanon. <https://www.icj.org/resource/lebanon-recognize-and-protect-refugees-and-migrants-human-rights-icj-new-report/>

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103 International Commission of Jurists [ICJ]. (2020). Unrecognized and unprotected: The treatment of migrants and refugees in Lebanon. <https://www.icj.org/resource/lebanon-recognize-and-protect-refugees-and-migrants-human-rights-icj-new-report/>

104 GDGS. (2024, May 8). Statement issued by the #Media_Affairs_Office [Facebook Post]. <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/Qt-6982LA13e16GQd/>

105 UNHCR, UNICEF, & WFP. (2024). VASyR 2023: Vulnerability assessment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/vasyr-2023-vulnerability-assessment-syrian-refugees-lebanon>

106 Majzoub, A. (2022). Lebanon's abusive kafala (sponsorship) system. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/01/04/lebanon-abusive-kafala-sponsorship-system>

and identity documents, and incidents of verbal, physical, and sexual abuse, which have only intensified with Lebanon's compounded crises. The *Kafala* system also places migrant domestic workers at risk of forced labor and human trafficking.¹⁰⁷ Live-out migrant workers and refugees also face exploitation, including unpaid wages and long working hours, particularly those who do not have a valid residency permit or work permit. Despite these violations, migrant workers have no/limited access to legal or protection services, while their employers are not likely to face repercussions. Migrant workers are further not allowed to change employers.¹⁰⁸

Furthermore, foreigners in Lebanon can only work within limited sectors, as set out in a decision issued by the Minister of Labor in December of every year specifying the occupations, trades, and businesses that are restricted to Lebanese nationals.¹⁰⁹ Other barriers to accessing formal employment for migrants and refugees exist, including the cost of the work permit for some nationalities, and the required documentation, such as a residency permit. Workers also face "gaps and contradictions in the legal framework, little enforcement of working conditions and social protection mechanisms, and entrenched discrimination on the basis of gender and national origin, barriers to workers accessing legal redress, and a general lack of awareness of workers' rights."¹¹⁰ As such, most migrant workers and refugees in Lebanon work in the informal sector or through informal work arrangements, where they are likely to face poor working conditions, including lower wages, long hours, limited protection, and risk of exploitation.¹¹¹

Access to healthcare

The right to healthcare is not enshrined in Lebanon's constitution; as such, it is not guaranteed for Lebanese nor for non-citizens. Healthcare is not universally available, the system is fragmented, there is a large reliance on private healthcare and high out-of-pocket spending. Non-citizens also fall outside most available social protection schemes and were excluded from Lebanon's recently launched National Social Protection Strategy. Palestine refugees receive subsidized healthcare through UNRWA and the Red Crescent Society, while Syrians and refugees of other nationalities receive subsidized healthcare through UNHCR. Some international and non-governmental organizations offer subsidized healthcare for migrant workers.¹¹² Nevertheless, migrants and refugees continue to face barriers to accessing healthcare, including

direct costs such as for treatment or consultation fees, and indirect costs such as for transportation, geographical accessibility, while those without a valid residency permit may face difficulties accessing healthcare centers due to limited freedom of movement.¹¹³

Access to education

The majority of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon can access education free of charge through UNRWA-operated schools. Syrian refugees can access education in second-shift afternoon schools within Lebanon's public education system. Enrolment in public schools is free of charge for primary education, while enrolment fees apply for secondary education. Nevertheless, the majority of Syrian children are out of school, while a significant number are registered in non-formal education programs. Barriers to enrolment exist, including the need to submit identity documents and a valid residency permit in some cases.¹¹⁴ Associated costs may also act as a barrier, including the costs of transportation and educational materials. Cost is also a barrier to enrolment in education for migrants and refugees of other nationalities. The compounded crises have also affected the quality of education in the public sector and have resulted in the intermittent closure of schools.¹¹⁵ Migrants and refugees can access skills training, primarily covered by the international community and donors, and within the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan framework. These programs provide training in various skills, including soft skills, digital skills, foreign languages, and entrepreneurial skills.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁷ Majzoub, A. (2022).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ As of October 31, 2024; <https://www.labor.gov.lb/Temp/Files/631f133d-0614-4163-ad3e-973299f589d9.pdf>

¹¹⁰ Acted et al. (2019).

¹¹¹ Saghir, C. (2023). The Lebanese labor market: Where informality, exploitation, and unemployment run rampant. The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy. <https://timep.org/2023/07/20/the-lebanese-labor-market-where-informality-exploitation-and-unemployment-runs-rampant/>

¹¹² Baroud, M. (2023). Right to health in times of crisis: A review of barriers and challenges to achieving the right to health in Lebanon. <https://annd.org/en/publications/details/barriers-to-achieving-right-to-health-lebanon-maysa-baroud>

¹¹³ Government of Lebanon & United Nations. (2023). Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-crisis-response-plan-lcrp-2023>

¹¹⁴ Randhawa, M. (2024). Stop politicizing education for Lebanon's refugee children. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/08/28/stop-politicizing-education-lebanons-refugee-children>

¹¹⁵ Government of Lebanon & United Nations. (2023).

¹¹⁶ ETF. (2021).

CONCLUSIONS

This report presents a brief migration profile for Lebanon, including recent drivers, trends, and policies. It highlights the challenges resulting from Lebanon's compounded crises and its complex legal and regulatory framework for migration, highlighting their impact on Lebanese host, refugee, and migrant communities. Lebanon's migration framework leaves migrants and refugees without adequate protection, increasing their vulnerability to legal, social, and economic challenges, while consecutive crises and their effects on communities continue to drive migration from the country. As such, there is a need for Lebanon to adopt a comprehensive strategy to address the root causes of emigration and ensure the rights and protection of migrant and refugee communities. To this end, the GoL should establish a clear legal and regulatory framework and effective coordination mechanisms across relevant government entities to ensure that migrant and refugee communities are protected, and their rights are respected in line with the principles of international human rights, including abolishing the exploitative *Kafala* system. The development of any such legal and regulatory framework should be participatory, building on ongoing efforts by civil society and non-governmental organizations, including community networks of migrant workers themselves.

There is also a need to strengthen social and economic development at the local level. The GoL must work toward improving the livelihoods and creating livelihood opportunities for both host community members and migrants and refugees. Efforts should also be made to ease legal restrictions that hinder the social and economic participation of migrants and refugees. Key areas for intervention include employment and the labor market, education, healthcare, and other basic services, and their development should be integrated into recovery and reconstruction plans. Continued support from the international community, including the EU and humanitarian actors, must be conditional on implementing reforms (financial, economic, and banking), and putting in place appropriate monitoring and accountability mechanisms (to minimize corruption). Support must also be conditional to ensure the protection and rights of refugee and migrant communities.

Finally, and as highlighted elsewhere,¹¹⁷ it is important to acknowledge that limited 'safer' alternative migration routes are available for migrants and refugees, including to Europe. For example, there are limited resettlement opportunities for Syrian and other refugee communities in Lebanon (and other countries) who are seeking asylum. As such, it is also necessary to strengthen the available mechanisms for global responsibility sharing and re-assess current EU policies for managing migration and related partnerships with countries in its Southern Neighborhood. The latter is crucial when considering the potential risk of human rights violations linked to current policies and partnerships.

¹¹⁷ Diab, J.L., & Jouhari, I. (2023).

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COUNTRY REPORT AND MIGRATION PROFILE FOR LEBANON

This report presents a brief migration profile for Lebanon, focusing on recent drivers, trends, and policies, particularly EU-Lebanon cooperation. It highlights the challenges of Lebanon's compounded crises and complex and fragmented legal and regulatory framework for migration and their impact on Lebanese host, refugee, and migrant communities. The legal and regulatory framework for migrants and refugees in Lebanon is complex and fragmented

and leaves them without adequate protection and with limited rights, increasing their vulnerability to legal, social, and economic challenges while ongoing crises continue to drive migration from the country. Though numbers remain relatively low, there has been an increase in the numbers of Syrian refugees, Lebanese, and Palestinian refugees departing on boats toward the EU via the Eastern and Central Mediterranean routes. A recent EU-Lebanon deal,

announced in May 2024, includes funding to support Lebanon's security forces with managing the country's borders toward reducing migration attempts; the deal is in line with other similar EU deals with countries in the Mediterranean aiming to externalize border control and highlights the links between EU funding for development and border management.