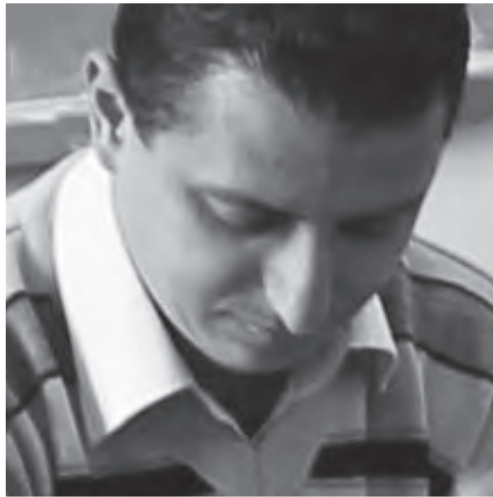


June 2014

# THE WAR FOLLOWS THEM

Syrian University Students  
and Scholars in Lebanon

By: Keith David Watenpugh, Adrienne L. Fricke, and James R. King



INSTITUTE OF  
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**UC DAVIS**  
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This report on the conditions and educational needs of Syrian university students and scholars in Lebanon is part of a broader regional study by IIE and the UC Davis Human Rights Initiative. It follows the May 2013 report “Uncounted and Unacknowledged: Syrian Refugee University Students and Scholars in Jordan.” When completed, the project will have brought together field-based research in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey to assess the impact of the conflict in Syria and resulting refugee crisis on higher education in the front-line hosting states. The study aims to provide policy and program recommendations for use by governments, multilateral agencies, international NGOs, donors, universities, and other institutions, with the overall goal of improving access to higher education for displaced Syrian university students and faculty. The final study’s findings and recommendations will be presented at the Clinton Global Initiative’s Annual Meeting in New York in September 2014, and at other conferences and events. The study will be published in the winter of 2014.

#### **Institute of International Education**

A world leader in the international exchange of people and ideas, the Institute of International Education (IIE) designs and implements programs of study and training for students, educators, young professionals, and trainees from all sectors. Established in 1919 as an independent 501(c)(3) not-for-profit, IIE administers over 250 programs serving more than 30,000 individuals each year.

#### **IIE, Higher Education Emergencies, and the Scholar Rescue Fund (IIE-SRF)**

This study derives from IIE’s longstanding commitment to supporting higher education and national academies during periods of repression or emergency. IIE has assisted displaced and persecuted students and scholars since its founding, and has helped students and scholars fleeing the Bolshevik Revolution, Nazi Germany, and post-war Iraq. This commitment was formalized in 2002 with the creation of the Scholar Rescue Fund (IIE-SRF), which provides academic fellowships and life-saving support to professors, researchers, and public intellectuals who face threats to their lives or careers.

In response to the crisis in Syria, IIE has provided emergency support and educational opportunities to over 200 Syrian faculty and university students whose lives and learning both have been threatened due to the conflict. For this work, IIE-SRF was awarded the Middle East Studies Association’s 2013 Academic Freedom Award. In addition to IIE-SRF, the IIE Syria Consortium for Higher Education in Crisis has enabled dozens of Syrian university students to resume their studies at member institutions in the U.S. and globally. IIE’s Emergency Student Fund (ESF) has also supported Syrian students who are currently studying at U.S.-based colleges and universities. Since 2010, ESF has supported more than 500 university students from Syria, Libya, and the Philippines, among other countries.

#### **University of California, Davis Human Rights Initiative**

The University of California, Davis Human Rights Initiative creates opportunities for research, teaching and public service collaboration around the question of human rights across the scholarly disciplines. UC Davis joined the IIE Syria Consortium in 2013 to provide original research and policy recommendations that can be used by IIE, Consortium members, and other institutions, universities, multilateral agencies, and governments in their efforts to support Syrian faculty and university students.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	5
2. Research Team Membership.....	6
3. Methodology.....	7
4. Background: Syria’s “Lost Generation” in Lebanon.....	9
The Scope of the Problem .....	9
Why Improving Higher Education Access for Displaced Syrians Matters .....	11
Effect on Syrian Society of Fewer Educated Women .....	13
5. Political Context and Lebanese-Syrian Relations.....	13
Lebanon’s Sectarian Balance.....	10
Lebanon and Past Refugee Crises .....	14
The Syrian Occupation of Lebanon: 1976-2005 .....	15
6. Legal Context: Lebanon’s Open Border and Closed Social Policies .....	16
Lebanese Residency Permits .....	17
Residency in Lebanon for Palestinian Residents of Syria.....	17
Registering as Refugees with the UNHCR .....	18
7. Educational Context: Lebanon’s Higher Education Sector and its Challenges for Displaced Syrian Students.....	19
Overview of the Lebanese Higher Education System.....	19
8. Typologies of Syrian University Students in Lebanon .....	20
Students with Means.....	21
Urban Students at Risk .....	21
Informal Camp-Based Student Refugees .....	22
9. Challenges and Problems Facing Refugee and Displaced Students.....	22
Lack of Resources .....	22
Employment and Lack of Post-Graduation Opportunities .....	23
Restrictions on Course of Study and Issues of Language Preparation.....	24
Psycho-Social Problems and Isolation .....	25
Political Threats / Fear of Violence .....	25
10. Displaced Syrian Academics .....	26
11. Institutional Case Studies .....	28
Case One: LAsER’s “Syrian Refugees Scholarship Program” .....	28
Case Two: Jusoor’s “Refugee Education Program: Generation Hope for Syria” .....	30
Case Three: USAID’s “University Scholarship Program” .....	31
12. Key Findings.....	32
13. General and Lebanon-specific Recommendations.....	33
14. Further Readings.....	36
15. Acknowledgements.....	37
16. Endnotes.....	38





View of the Tripoli coast.

*J. King, March 2014*

# INTRODUCTION

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In April 2014, the United Nations registered the one millionth Syrian refugee in Lebanon. He is a nineteen-year-old named Yahya, who fled across the border from Homs, a large city in central Syria that has seen some of the worst fighting and civilian suffering during the country's three years of conflict. Yahya is only one of 2.8 million Syrian refugees scattered throughout the region as of May 2014.<sup>1</sup> Some 6.5 million more Syrians are internally displaced within Syria itself.<sup>2</sup> Yahya spoke for millions of displaced Syrians when he told journalists gathered at the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) headquarters in Southern Beirut: "For Syrian refugees, life has stopped. Every day, we have hope that things will get better, but it gets worse. Life is very hard here. There's no work or anything to do. Now it's been three years that we haven't been able to study. We haven't been able to work. The Syrian people have lost a lot."<sup>3</sup>

This report marks the second phase of a broad-based research collaboration between the Institute of International Education (IIE) and the University of California, Davis (UC Davis) Human Rights Initiative. The aim is to understand what Syrians like Yahya have lost, particularly in the fields of higher education and post-graduate training, and to determine how to improve their access to educational opportunities in the front-line states of Syria's refugee crisis: Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey.

While this report focuses on Lebanon specifically, the authors recognize that there are a number of scholarship schemes and program models internationally that are effectively supporting a limited number of Syrian refugees' higher education needs. In addition, although the report addresses Syrians' access to higher education *within* Lebanon, we consider this issue to be the shared responsibility of the global higher education community at large, including universities, educational NGOs, and governments.

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**Although Lebanon's fragile and ineffective political system, as well as the severe economic problems facing the country, will render any intervention challenging, there is nonetheless a significant opportunity to increase the capacity of a number of existing programs while—potentially—replicating them, as well as to develop new initiatives in alliance with Lebanese and Syrian partners.**

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The situation for Syrian students and academics in Lebanon is generally bleak. We found that, in addition to severe resource constraints and physical threats, unwritten discriminatory policies make Syrian students and academics vulnerable to exclusion from higher education in Lebanon. At the same time, the country's weak regulatory system allows for flexibility and innovation in creating solutions at local levels. At present, international organizations, donor agencies, and universities are largely absent in terms of programs or policies to address the critical higher education needs of displaced Syrians in Lebanon. Although Lebanon's fragile and ineffective political system, as well as the severe economic problems facing the country, will render any intervention challenging, there is nonetheless a significant opportunity to increase the capacity of a number of existing programs while – potentially – replicating them, as well as to develop new initiatives in alliance with Lebanese and Syrian partners. Any such efforts will need to take into account the problems that Syrian students face in terms of their physical and economic security; the entrenched and complex sectarian system of allocating higher education resources; and the localized nature of networks of support.

The period of field research for this report (March 2014) was marked by some of the most intense fighting in Lebanon between pro- and anti-Syrian government forces in three years of armed conflict. During that period, Syrian government forces captured the strategic city of Yabrud, the main transit point between Lebanon and Syria for anti-government rebels. A few days later, the Crusader-era castle known as the Krak des Chevaliers fell to the Syrian

regime. Inside Lebanon, allies and sympathizers of both sides engaged in small-scale violence. At one point during a meeting with Syrian students at an outdoor coffeehouse in the northern city of Tripoli, unknown assailants attacked a nearby building. For members of the research team, that attack, along with personal narratives of terrible discrimination, economic and personal insecurity, and fear, confirmed that, while Lebanon is unquestionably more stable than much of Syria, the conditions are far from ideal for displaced students and scholars. As Dr. Salwa Nacouzi, Director of the Lebanese office of the *Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie* (AUF) told us, "The war follows them."

## RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERSHIP

The fieldwork for this assessment was led by Dr. Keith David Watenpaugh, Associate Professor and Director, UC Davis Human Rights Initiative, a historian and theorist of Human Rights and Humanitarianism Studies, and an expert on Syria; Ms. Adrienne Fricke, a human rights consultant specializing in Africa and the Middle East, who currently serves as Syria Advisor for Physicians for Human Rights; and Mr. James R. King, Senior Research and Program Officer at the Institute of International Education's Scholar Rescue Fund (IIE-SRF), who conducted research from 2005–2006 on a Fulbright grant in Jordan and has lived and worked throughout the Arab world. Additional support for the project was provided by Ms. Tara Siegel, Georgetown University; Ms. Rawan Arar, University of California, San Diego; and Dr. Andrea Stanton, University of Denver.



Maps of Lebanon and Beirut with universities where Syrian students interviewed were studying.

- 1 Lebanese University-Qubbeh
- 2 Al Jinan University
- 3 University of Balamand
- 4 Lebanese International University-Khiyara
- 5 Lebanese American University
- 6 Arts, Sciences, & Technology University in Lebanon
- 7 American University of Beirut
- 8 Haigazian University
- 9 Beirut Arab University
- 10 La Sagesse University
- 11 Lebanese University
- 12 American University of Science & Technology
- 13 Islamic University of Lebanon

## METHODOLOGY

This report is based on an assessment by a multidisciplinary Arabic-speaking team of Human Rights, Middle East Studies, and International Higher Education experts who travelled to Lebanon for a ten-day period in March 2014, preceded by an earlier exploratory visit and extensive interviews and correspondence with stakeholders and experts in Lebanon. With the help of key personnel at institutions of higher education and within educational NGOs, the research team identified participants for focus groups of both university students enrolled in Lebanese universities and youths not yet able to pursue their university studies. Due to security concerns and travel restrictions at the time of the assessment, we did not conduct focus groups with university students living in informal camp settings. We believe this group merits further attention and note that young people in this category face the added disadvantage of poor access to information

about scholarship programs or other forms of assistance. We are not aware of any specific programs designed to identify – or assist in overcoming – barriers this demographic faces in gaining access to higher education.

The research team conducted focus groups with more than 75 Syrian students, including students currently enrolled in 12 of Lebanon's 44 universities, as well as students still seeking to enroll. Focus group sites included three areas with dense populations of displaced and refugee students:<sup>4</sup> the capital, Beirut; Tripoli, in northern Lebanon; and the Biqa'a Valley, near the border with Syria on the road to Damascus. In addition to their geographic diversity within Lebanon, participants represented Syria's regional diversity as well. We interviewed young people from Latakia, Homs, Hassaka, Damascus and its suburbs, Aleppo and its suburbs, and





Syrian students discuss with Dr. Keith Watenpaugh challenges to further study. *J. King, March 2014*

Raqqa. They also reflected Syria's ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity: Muslim, Christian, and Druze Arab Syrians were interviewed, along with Syrians of Armenian and Kurdish background. Focus groups also included Palestinian refugee students from Syria.

In addition to meeting with students, the team interviewed administrators and educational policymakers in Lebanon. These included educational experts from the UNHCR and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Lebanese government's Director General of Higher Education, and representatives of many of the country's public and private higher education institutions. We also interviewed representatives of Lebanese and Syrian-diaspora civil society organizations engaged in efforts to identify scholarship support and public service opportunities for displaced university-age youth. The

team benefitted from conversations with Syrian university professionals, some of whom have been in contact with IIE through its Scholar Rescue Fund program.

When speaking with students, we explained that the research team was unable to provide any goods, services, or scholarship opportunities, and that our focus was on research. We obtained oral informed consent, including for photographs, and explained the security precautions we take to preserve anonymity and the confidentiality of all raw data. We employed semi-structured interviewing techniques that allowed us to obtain baseline data about the students' educational backgrounds, ages, geographical origins, and future goals, as well as their answers to open-ended questions about access to resources, information exchange, and interactions with peers and institutions. The names of students included in this report have been changed to protect their privacy and safety.



Syrian students at  
Al Jinan University in Tripoli.  
J. King, March 2014

## BACKGROUND: SYRIA'S "LOST GENERATION" IN LEBANON

### The Scope of the Problem: Thousands of Syrian University Students Deprived from Higher Education Opportunities

A common perception is that Syrian refugees come from the country's poorer rural communities. However, as war has engulfed Syria's major urban centers, middle class families have joined the exodus as well. Included among them is a large number of Syrians aged 15-24, whose higher education, professional development, and technical training has been disrupted as a result of the violence and general deterioration at both Syria's high schools and its public and private universities. Estimates from before the war indicate that 26% of urban Syrians (male and female) benefitted from

some form of higher education; even in rural areas, 17% of men and 15% of women went on to college, vocational training, or a university. The rise of private universities after the limited liberalization of the Syrian economy in 2001 boosted student numbers. As explained in detail in our earlier report, "Uncounted and Unacknowledged: Syria's Refugee University Students and Academics in Jordan," higher education was a critical engine of development and social mobility in pre-conflict Syria.<sup>6</sup>

The war in Syria, however, has damaged university campuses and created an environment in which study is difficult and travel to campus dangerous for many students and professors.<sup>7</sup> As a result, it is likely that hundreds of thousands

of university students have had their education interrupted by the violence, while thousands more have been prevented from even beginning their university education.

During our research, we encountered several students who had faced targeted violence in Syria. One such student – Maya, a twenty-one year-old woman with wavy brown hair

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**The role of highly-skilled and educated young people in vulnerable communities is not often the focus of established humanitarian policies and programs. This neglect persists despite the fact that the stability of the Middle East-North Africa region, as well as the rebuilding of post-conflict Syria, depends on maintaining the human and intellectual capital these young people represent.**

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and a serious expression – comes from a village near the city of Suweida in southern Syria. Maya told us that she had been in her third year studying at Damascus University, but left when members of the National Union of Syrian Students (NUSS) (in Arabic, *al-Ittihad al-Watani li-Tulab Suriyya*), a Ba’ath-party affiliated and pro-regime student organization, prevented her from entering the campus after her name was listed as working with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC).

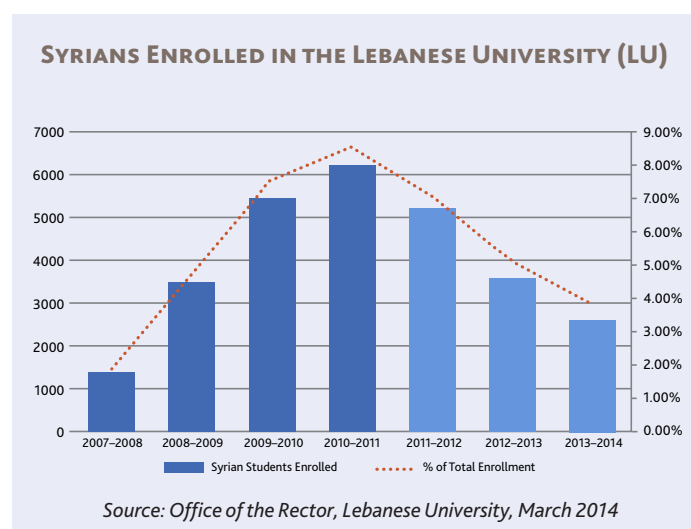
She reported that she was not allowed to return to take her exams. Although she never wanted to leave Syria, Maya fled after being arrested and detained four times for providing humanitarian assistance to displaced people in the suburbs of Damascus. She explained that, after her final arrest, she feared being raped during interrogation: “If I had stayed four minutes longer, that would have been it. I don’t know how it didn’t happen.” Other students reported intimidation by the *Kata’ib al-Ba’ath*, a paramilitary student group that has formed over the last year, and whose members wear uniforms and insignia on Syrian campuses.

Regardless of the reason for their flight, large numbers of Syrian students are in Lebanon. Although neither the UNHCR nor the Lebanese authorities count university-age youth as a distinct category for record-keeping purposes, based on available data, we assume that roughly one-third of the total registered refugee and displaced population in Lebanon – or 360,000 – are between the ages of 15 and 24. Using an average of pre-war figures for university attendance as a guide, we estimate that there may be as many as 70,000 displaced Syrian university students in Lebanon.

Despite the massive influx of displaced middle-class Syrians into Lebanon over the last three years, data provided by the Lebanese Ministry of Higher Education,<sup>8</sup> the Lebanese University (LU),<sup>9</sup> and a local NGO<sup>10</sup> indicate that at most 10,000 Syrian nationals, and possibly only 6,500, are currently enrolled in Lebanon’s universities. These figures should not be taken as representing the number of displaced Syrian university students in Lebanon, because they also include the many Syrians who enrolled in Lebanon before the conflict



or came to its universities from abroad, particularly the Arab Gulf. In fact, data suggests that rather than increasing enrollment, the number of Syrians at LU – Lebanon’s largest and sole public university – and several of Lebanon’s private universities is declining.<sup>11</sup> During the 2010-11 academic year, prior to the conflict, over 6,000 Syrian nationals were enrolled at LU, compared to just 2,644 in 2013-14 (*see table below*).



While it is difficult to determine what is causing this sharp decline in enrollment, we hypothesize that factors include a loss of overall income among Syrian families supporting students in Lebanon; the need for students to suspend their studies to seek paid employment; and the need to travel back to Syria or to other countries. In addition, male Syrian students may have left the university, or never began, in order to serve in the Syrian military or fight for the rebels.

## Why Improving Higher Education Access for Displaced Syrians Matters

The need to develop both immediate and longer-term strategies for improving Syrians’ access to higher education

is acute. In the years ahead, many Syrian refugees, including those in Lebanon, will likely enter what is considered “protracted refugee situations” (PRS). This predicament is defined by the UNHCR as a situation in which refugees have lived in exile for at least five years, and in which there is a low likelihood that the disruption at home that caused them to flee will abate in the near future. Whereas the average PRS length in 1993 was nine years, it had increased to 17 years in 2003, and it is now close to two decades.<sup>12</sup> Taking into account this sobering timeline, the risks of ignoring access to higher education for vulnerable Syrian youth in Lebanon are high.

Yet the role of highly-skilled and educated young people in vulnerable communities is not often the focus of established humanitarian policies and programs. This neglect persists despite the fact that the stability of the Middle East-North Africa region, as well as the rebuilding of post-conflict Syria, depends on maintaining the human and intellectual capital these young people represent. As a UNESCO education specialist explained to us, “The focus on elementary education is important, but we must ask who the Syrian teachers in the future will be if we neglect the university students now.” Moreover, as described in the May 2014 UN report *Squandering Humanity*, the economic losses in Syria caused by the conflict are immense, topping \$144 billion. Syria is now categorized as a “low human development” state because of the collapse of its economy, health, and education sectors.<sup>13</sup> The failure to connect young Syrians in the refugee population with higher educational and training opportunities now will only worsen that decline. It will also prevent them from entering fields of study that are critical to helping Syria recover in the future.



Educated young people also represent a possible resource for families: students are often the sole means of support for an extended family group. As a young man in Tripoli said, “Without the assistance from IHR [International Humanitarian Relief, a Syrian diaspora-led NGO], my whole family would be in trouble. They are not just helping me, they are helping many.”

In the best-case scenario, displaced Syrian students will be able to continue their education in safety and security, and return post-conflict to help rebuild Syrian infrastructure and society. Even if returning is not feasible, providing these students with higher education will enable them to be productive members of their community within their country of refuge, and mitigate the risk they will turn to extremism or crime.

Significantly, a number of Syrian students we spoke with articulated a strong desire to return to Syria and help rebuild. For example, at Haigazian University (HU), we met with

several young Syrians of Armenian ethnicity, mostly from Aleppo, who expressed this goal. HU is an English-language university, modeled on American liberal-arts institutions, that was founded by Armenian Protestant missionaries. It has a small program for Syrian students that is supported by the global Armenian diaspora and provides 30-40% of tuition and fees. Elias, a tall, heavy-set, cheerful young man told us that, before the war, he had no plans to go to a university and was content to join his father at his family’s factory. Like other young men in his community, he faced an increasing threat of kidnapping for ransom, as well as forced military service. These perils led his family to make the tough decision to send him to Beirut, where he is studying Human Rights and Political Science, and volunteers with various organizations involved in humanitarian relief.

In Tripoli, we interviewed a group of three very serious graduate students from who were working toward Master’s degrees with the support of IHR. Two of the young men, from the embattled towns in Northern Syria, were studying



Diverse Syrian university-age students share their experiences with the research team in Beirut.

*J. King, March 2014*

Arabic Literature and a third, from Homs, was pursuing Islamic Studies after having completed a degree in French Literature. They reported that, in addition to picking up odd jobs to support their families, they also work as teachers in the “second shift” schools – primary and secondary schools established by Syrian exile groups that rent space in the afternoons and evenings from private Lebanese elementary schools to hold classes – in Abu Samra, a relatively quiet suburb near Tripoli.<sup>14</sup> These young men expressed the hope that they might one day become leaders of the religious community of Homs.

Finally, providing displaced Syrian university students access to educational opportunity is a practical demonstration of the value of the human right to education. Though the authors recognize the inherent limitations and incremental nature of this right, the demonstrable relationship between higher education, peace, security, and development – not merely of Syrians but other displaced peoples as well – shows how inseparable that right is from the constellation of rights that motivate humanitarian efforts more generally. We also argue that, regardless of how the right to education is construed, access to higher education is an issue of shared humanity, and, for university professionals and educators, a professional and collegial responsibility, with profound policy and humanitarian implications for Lebanon and the entire Middle East.<sup>15</sup>

### Effect on Syrian Society of Fewer Educated Women

The Syrian government’s policy of heavily subsidizing higher education and promoting equal access made it possible

for Syrian women to attain higher education in significant numbers; one 2009 study estimated that almost 50% of enrolled students were women.<sup>16</sup> The dramatic decline in higher education opportunities as a result of the conflict and refugee crisis is having a negative impact on Syrian young women in particular.

Advanced education helps foster the process of empowerment and the delay of marriage and childbirth, while displacement interrupts or ends altogether women’s entry into the professions. As a consequence, qualified young Syrian women who are unable to pursue higher education may be vulnerable to being forced into economically strategic marriages they may not want, as well as the loss of critical professional and economic opportunities. One young Syrian woman said, “We are trying so hard. We students are the future and we need support if we are going to be able to do anything. I like my studies at Arts University [Arts, Sciences and Technology University of Lebanon], but socially it is difficult. Here in Lebanon, many men have the wrong ideas about Syrian women and it is very uncomfortable.”

Syrian families with multiple university-age students may face difficult choices about whether to send sons instead of daughters to school, because university registration allows young men to avoid compulsory military service.

### POLITICAL CONTEXT AND LEBANESE-SYRIAN RELATIONS

The presence of more than one million displaced Syrians has imposed an immense burden on the economy and social

fabric of Lebanon, whose pre-war population was a little over 4 million. Not least, this influx of Syrians has made the lives of many of Lebanon's own marginal poor, and those of existing populations of Palestinian and Iraqi refugees, more difficult. To a large extent, the situation mirrors that in other front-line states, like Jordan. Nonetheless, politics and history unique to Lebanon exacerbate the problems facing displaced Syrians.

### Lebanon's Sectarian Balance

Politically, Lebanon is a weak state in the sense that its governmental institutions are less powerful than many non-state actors and societal forces. In particular, political movements and non-state paramilitary organizations organized along religious lines (various Christian, Sunni Muslim, Shiite Muslim, and Druze) have considerable clout. As a result, Lebanese policy makers and much of the population view social problems, politics, and security issues through the lens of sectarian communal identification, while abstract notions of common Lebanese citizenship or human rights have little currency. Central to this system, which is sometimes called a consociational regime, is the perceived need for "balance" between the various sectarian communities. The Shiite political and social movement Hizbollah has enjoyed increased influence over the last decade. Displaced Syrians – the majority of whom are Sunni Muslims – may threaten that existing balance of power, undermining the growing Shiite dominance of Lebanon. Another source of concern among many of Lebanon's Shiites is the mounting anti-Shiite and anti-Alawite discourse that has become commonplace in the rhetoric of some of the Jihadi and even politically moderate forces opposing the government in Damascus.

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**Qualified young Syrian women who are unable to pursue higher education may be vulnerable to being forced into economically strategic marriages they may not want, as well as the loss of critical professional and economic opportunities.**

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Many displaced students from Syria told us how bewildering and stressful they found Lebanese politics. "People automatically want to know who you support," a young woman wearing a large silver cross explained. She was finishing a Master's in comparative literature at Lebanese University. "Are you with Assad, or are you against him?" Her classmate, a woman of Greek and Syrian extraction, proudly stated, "I will tell anyone right away that I support President Assad." She also recalled experiencing "dirty looks and whispers" when, on a school bus trip, she had to show her identity card at a checkpoint and her Syrian nationality was announced aloud.

### Lebanon and Past Refugee Crises

Lebanon is home to more than 450,000 Palestinian refugees,<sup>17</sup> who have been described in Human Rights Watch reports as living "in appalling social and economic conditions."<sup>18</sup> Many Lebanese trace the origins of the 1975-1990 civil war to Palestinian disruption of the *status quo ante*. Regardless, legal restrictions that have evolved over the last 66 years have resulted in Palestinian refugees in Lebanon enjoying few civil rights or protections.



This same lack of protection applies to displaced Syrians. Indeed, the historical memory of the perceived role of Palestinians in past Lebanese conflicts contributes to a heightened anxiety about the presence of refugees, regardless of where they are from. That anxiety is manifest in the Lebanese government's refusal to allow the UNHCR to establish official refugee camps or other institutions that have the appearance of permanence, although at the time of writing that decision was under review.<sup>20</sup> In terms of access to universities, this anxiety contributes to reluctance by many Lebanese higher education officials to make any sustained effort to develop programs for displaced Syrians; such anxiety will also hamper any international or multinational effort to address that issue. The Lebanese government's failure to

articulate a coherent policy toward Syrian refugees will make the implementation of effective programs to address the education crisis more difficult and complicated.

## The Syrian Occupation of Lebanon: 1976-2005

Still fresh in the memory of many Lebanese is the generation-long occupation of their country by Syria. In 1976, Hafiz al-Assad, the father of the current president of Syria, Bashar al-Assad, ordered Syrian forces to invade and occupy Lebanon in an effort to assist Syria's local allies. The occupation was also a manifestation of the elder al-Assad's belief that the colonial-era division of Lebanon from Syria should not stand, and indeed that Syrians and Lebanese were

Bullet holes on the Roman columns record the remnants of the Lebanese civil war. Solidere district, Beirut.

*J. King, March 2014*





“one people in two countries.” For the majority of that period, Syria maintained a force of nearly 30,000 soldiers and a major secret police (*mukhabarat*) presence in the country. The occupation was generally unpopular among the Lebanese. With the 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, a mass popular movement – the so-called Cedar Revolution – led to an unexpected Syrian withdrawal. Many Lebanese believe that the war in Syria will ultimately lead to a renewed Syrian presence in Lebanon, regardless of who prevails in the conflict.

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**One law student told us, “We’re displaced students, not the government or another group. Deal with us with humanity...I was just a kid during the occupation. Don’t blame me.”**

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During its occupation of Lebanon, the Syrian government told its citizens that its army was in Lebanon to protect the Lebanese people from alleged Israeli aggression and other threats, and that it was a humanitarian intervention. Younger Syrians remember that their country had helped Lebanese in the aftermath of the brief 2006 conflict between Israel and Hizbollah, so the often-ferocious animosity they face, arising from this memory of occupation, comes as a great surprise and disillusionment. As one law student told us, “We’re displaced students, not the government or another group. Deal with us with humanity...I was just a kid during

the occupation. Don’t blame me.” A residue of the Syrian occupation is the general sense that elements of the Syrian secret police still function in Lebanon. Anti-regime or even neutral students at the American University in Beirut (AUB), for example, reported that they believed they have been spied upon, as well as harassed, by individuals they believed to be Syrian agents, who may or may not be students but are physically present on campus.

## **LEGAL CONTEXT: LEBANON’S OPEN BORDER AND CLOSED SOCIAL POLICIES**

Displaced Syrian students have faced expensive, dangerous, or otherwise limiting choices to maintain their legal status in Lebanon. Several of these options are discussed below.

### **Lebanese Residency Permits**

In general, Lebanon has maintained an open border with Syria throughout the period of the conflict. Under a 1994 bilateral agreement, Syrians entering Lebanon with valid identification receive a free six-month residency permit that may be renewed at no cost for an additional six months. At the conclusion of this twelve-month period, individuals over the age of 15 must either pay the equivalent of \$200 or cross back over the border for at least 24 hours in order to obtain a new six-month free permit.<sup>20</sup> Although a number of young people we interviewed reported that they had in the past returned to Syria through a legal checkpoint to gain a new six-month permit, this possibility remains open to fewer and fewer Syrians as the conflict has progressed. In addition, the border with Syria appears to open or close based on sectarian

criteria: for example, several Christian Syrian students from northern Syria who were living in Beirut reported that they planned to return home for Mother's Day (March 21). Similarly, a young woman attending the Lebanese International University (LIU) in the Biqa'a Valley explained that she could visit her family in the old Christian quarter of Damascus although the time it takes has increased from 45 minutes to over four hours due to checkpoints. In contrast, many of our Sunni Muslim respondents indicated they could not return to Syria at official checkpoints.

Under this residency scheme, a Syrian who has been unable to leave and re-enter Lebanon, and is unable to pay the fees, loses legal residency. Although it is technically possible to appeal for reinstatement, this appeal costs approximately \$600, a sum that is far beyond the budgets of most Syrians.<sup>21</sup> While some young men appear to be seeking residency permits on the basis of their student status, which is less expensive, others indicated that they were pursuing a university education because it grants them the added benefit of deferment. They would otherwise be required to serve in the Syrian military.<sup>22</sup>

Crossing the border may be dangerous on the Lebanese side as well. Individuals and organizations have reported that, when a Syrian holds an identity card showing he or she is from an anti-regime area, or allegiance to the opposition is suspected, cards have been destroyed by Lebanese border guards in certain instances. In general, many of the students we interviewed – Sunnis in particular – feared the Syrian state's presence in Lebanon. According to one Lebanese expert we interviewed, "For those Syrians who are not pro-

regime, the Syrian Embassy is more like a secret police post."

Yet Lebanon is the only option for some Syrians, despite the perceived risks. One student, who had completed two years of study in law at Aleppo University, had initially planned to join his family in Egypt but was unable to do so after the Egyptian government abruptly suspended visas for Syrians last July.<sup>23</sup> When we met the student, he had begun his first year at the Lebanese University in Qubbeh (Tripoli), but reported that he was tempted to return to Aleppo despite the fighting because of conditions in Lebanon.

The high cost of residency permit renewal, and the danger for many Syrians of crossing the border back into Syria in order to gain a new free permit, means that maintaining residency through study in Lebanon may become even more important to young people hoping to keep their options open.

## Residency in Lebanon for Palestinian Residents of Syria

Palestinian residents of Syria face heightened residency requirements in Lebanon and are subject to harassment and detention in practice. On May 9, 2014, Lebanon's Minister of Interior announced the decision to restrict Palestinian residents of Syria from entering Lebanon by requiring new forms of documentation.<sup>24</sup> This requirement appears to violate the customary international humanitarian legal norm of *non-refoulement*, which states that refugees cannot be returned or expelled to places where their lives or freedoms are threatened.<sup>25</sup> While there are no clear data for students

in Lebanon carrying Palestinian-residents-of-Syria identity cards, it is likely to be a significant number. Until April 2014, Palestinian residents of Syria with a valid student visa for Lebanon were allowed to enter without restriction, although it is not clear whether they can still do so.

Many such Palestinian students appeared to be stuck in a legal gray area in Lebanon. Mahmoud, a former student at Aleppo University, explained that he had been unable to pay the renewal fees for his permit. In light of the new Lebanese government policies, he could not risk traveling back to Syria. He admitted that he could not imagine a way to finish his degree. Another young man traveled all the way to Beirut from the crowded Palestinian camp outside Tripoli to meet us, hoping to discover strategies for resuming his education. Still another explained that he had trained in Syria as an

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Emergency Medical Technician in anticipation of a career in medicine. Like many young Palestinian residents of Syria, to escape the war and conscription, he initially fled to Egypt and registered at Cairo University; with the change in politics following the 2013 Egyptian military coup d'état, he was ordered to leave. In Lebanon, he had hoped to study medicine, but because of many restrictive policies was unable to do so. He hoped to go further abroad to study, but it is unclear what kind of travel document he could use, as explained below.

### **Registering as Refugees with the UNHCR**

In considering the interplay of higher education and residency requirements in Lebanon, it is helpful to understand basic features of the legal frameworks for refugees there.<sup>26</sup> Significantly, registration with the UNHCR effectively forecloses third country study opportunities (or travel for any reason to third countries), since these countries are unlikely to issue visas to individuals who are claiming refugee status, due to the perceived likelihood that they will seek asylum upon arrival. Lebanon has not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, and therefore is not obliged to provide Convention travel documents to registered persons of concern who might want to study in a third country. However, under a 2003 Memorandum of Understanding between the Lebanese government and the UNHCR, the latter organization can register refugees in Lebanon.<sup>27</sup> Although registration may provide access to limited resources, and affords no formal legal protections against deportation, it does allow for the possibility of Refugee Status Determination (RSD) for extremely vulnerable cases identified by the UNHCR or its





Syrian students with resources and scholarship support may be able to access elite universities like AUB, pictured here. *J. King, March 2014*

NGO partners. Resettlement of RSD applicants is contingent on third countries making spaces available, and few Syrian registrants have been able to benefit from this mechanism.<sup>28</sup>

### **EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT:**

#### **Lebanon's Higher Education Sector and its Challenges for Displaced Syrian Students**

With the growth in new universities and the creation of branch campuses, Lebanon's higher education sector is now probably more divided by sectarian affiliation and geography than at any time in the past. There is a wide range of quality, educational styles, and opportunities inherent in the Lebanese system, all of which affect Syrians' access.

### **Overview of the Lebanese Higher Education System**

Lebanon has a highly developed and regionally significant public and private higher education sector, with 44 institutions of higher education.<sup>29</sup> The Lebanese Ministry of Higher Education provides accreditation to Lebanese universities, and some are accredited internationally. Colleges and universities range from small campuses with fewer than 2,000 students to the Lebanese University (founded in 1961), which hosts 16 Faculties and more than 70,000 students. The majority of the country's universities are based either on an American liberal arts model or, as a legacy of Lebanon's colonial past, the French university model. Several universities employ English or French as the language of instruction; only a few conduct coursework entirely in Arabic. As discussed below, non-Arabic entrance examinations



and instruction pose a significant barrier to Syrian student participation in certain Faculties of the state university.

While AUB and Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth (USJ) were founded in the late 19th century, the vast majority of Lebanon's universities were established after the end of the Lebanese civil war. These post-war institutions tend to be for-profit, often associated with a single religious group, political party, or politician, and draw students from a limited geographical range. They rarely have an endowment or major philanthropic support and are dependent on tuition payments for expenses and salaries. Transportation and travel during the civil war was extremely difficult, and as a result many higher education institutions in Beirut established branch campuses in other parts of the country.

It is critical to recognize, however, that both in the period before and after 1991, despite the fact that schools like USJ, AUB, HU, and the Lebanese American University (LAU) had western Christian missionary origins, they, like LU

and Beirut Arab University, have attracted a multi-sectarian student body. Moreover, Lebanon has a tradition of attracting international students from the Arab Middle East, Africa, Europe, and the United States for both undergraduate education and graduate training. Prior to the conflict in neighboring Syria, foreign students made up as many as 30,000 of Lebanon's estimated 180,000 university students.<sup>30</sup>

## TYOLOGIES OF SYRIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN LEBANON

As in our 2013 research in Jordan, we identified and met with three broad categories of displaced Syrian university students from among the university-age Syrians in Lebanon: students with means; urban students at risk; and informal camp-based students. The team also met with a number of well-off Syrian young people whose families were living outside of Syria in countries like the United Arab Emirates or the United States. These students did not identify as displaced, and they experienced relatively less fear and loss than their peers.



Members of the research team (left) speak with Syrian student focus groups in Beirut.

K. Watenpugh, March 2014

Although they saw Lebanon as a place to pursue higher education rather than a refuge, they also reported an interest in helping less fortunate Syrians. For example, Amal, a 22 year old student at AUB, noted that she and other students were active in raising awareness about the needs of Syrian refugees. She pointed out a model shelter they had erected on campus to help the elite students at AUB understand the physical hardship that many Syrian refugees face. While the effectiveness of these initiatives is unclear, they nonetheless indicate awareness even among the most elite Syrians in Lebanon of the problems of the majority.

## Students with Means

Syrian youth who are able to attend Lebanon's expensive private universities generally have access to external sources of funding. Often, money is received from relatives working outside of Syria, although some have scholarships. In general, students attending expensive private universities in Lebanon receive support from relatives abroad in addition to support they may receive from their families in Syria.

The biggest challenge facing even these students with means is that high tuition fees represent a significant barrier to completion of university studies. Nonetheless, there is a tremendous range of private university tuition costs in Lebanon. American-accredited universities charge tuition roughly equivalent to that charged by liberal arts colleges in the United States (\$20,000). They stand in contrast to LU, where a year can cost \$700. Despite their access to higher education options and relatively good resources, students with means are not insulated from prejudice, and many in this category reported an uptick in anti-Syrian attitudes

and discrimination. While students in this category are the least likely to feel a direct impact from the conflict, even they expressed concerns about conscription, as well as their ability to renew passports and travel. Several students we met planned to continue their studies in North America or Europe, and, while indicating that they would like to return to Syria at some point, saw little opportunity there and would most likely seek employment and build careers elsewhere.

## Urban Students at Risk

Far and away the largest group our study encountered falls into the category of at-risk refugee or displaced students. In this category are students attending university full- or part-time, often working long hours to pay for tuition and help support their families. This category includes students who have received scholarship assistance and partial tuition remission from universities or foundations and NGOs, including some in Syria like the Association of Religious Clerics of Homs, which subsidizes students at al-Jinan University in Tripoli. This group also includes a large number of young men who are quite clear that the chief reason for their enrollment is to avoid military service in Syria.

Balancing work – generally illegal employment in food service, construction, and retail – with study is among the greatest educational problems facing this group. Many are also stymied in efforts to pursue studies in professional fields for which they are well-qualified, an especially frustrating situation when they believe that such study will allow them to build careers. Many of these students have few to no reserves to draw on, were their financial circumstances to change for the worse.





View from the campus of Al Jinan University.

*J. King, March 2014*

## Informal Camp-Based Student Refugees

Lebanon has disallowed the establishment of refugee camps like those in Jordan or Turkey. Instead, Syrians have built informal settlements, often renting open space from landlords and constructing temporary shelters. As discussed in the methodology section, we were unable to conduct focus groups with this type of student. However, because of the state-subsidized nature of Syrian education, and the high percentage of enrolled students prior to 2011, we believe there are many displaced students in these communities.

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**One student told us, “I’m working to afford to go to university, but I don’t actually have time to go to the university.”**

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## CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS FACING REFUGEE AND DISPLACED STUDENTS

The vast majority of displaced Syrian students face at least one, if not all, of the following major categories of challenges.

### Lack of Resources

Syrians, like all non-Lebanese, must pay tuition in some form to attend a university in Lebanon. They are ineligible for Lebanese-government-based financial aid. In addition, the cost of living is high in Lebanon when compared to Syria, and those costs continue to rise as refugees’ demand for housing has increased rents. Displaced Syrian university students told us of having to choose between supporting themselves and their families, and paying tuition. Additional problems include higher tuition costs, devaluation of the Syrian Pound, struggles to pay residency fees, and inability to secure significant income.

All of these factors combine with the issues below and contribute to high dropout and deferment rates. In fact, many of the students we met appeared barely able to both study and survive. Hossam, a 25 year old student attending the LIU campus in Khiyara in the Biqa'a Valley, explained his situation, visibly shaken at the limited prospects in his future. He had been in his third year of pharmacy studies at Aleppo University when his home was destroyed in 2012 and his family decided to leave Syria for Baalbek. Hossam commutes to the LIU campus, where he is studying English and accounting and has almost completed enough credits to enter his third year. He explained that, despite working ten hours a day, he could never have continued his studies without the loans extended by LIU: "The administration has been very good to us, but in the end this is not a charity, it is a business. I do not know how much longer I can continue as a student."

## Employment and Lack of Post-Graduation Opportunities

Young Syrian refugees, especially those with some university experience, have been able to find employment. Under Lebanese law, their employment is illegal, but none of our respondents reported any official interference on the job. This situation contrasts with Jordan, where young people reported harassment and threats by government officials. As noted, these jobs are often medium-skill positions that require some social prowess, literacy, numeracy, and cultural competency. They often work in food service, retail-like vending of cell phones in the local mall, healthcare, tutoring, and test preparation. Others are in construction, house painting, and childcare. Students admit to working long hours to support their families, some more than twelve-hour shifts for wages

they know are far less than what Lebanese citizens earn for the same work. One student told us, "I'm working to afford to go to university, but I don't actually have time to go to the university." The fact that Lebanon is a weak state also means that young Syrians face few legal obstacles to employment as undocumented workers. However, like undocumented workers elsewhere, they are at risk of workplace exploitation and wage theft, and have no legal recourse in the face of abuse by employers.

One student, Gina, a tall blonde from Aleppo, was working to support herself by selling mobile phones in a Beirut mall. Although she complained of being paid less than a Lebanese for performing the same job, Gina told us that what affected her morale most deeply in Lebanon was "to always be treated as a stranger." She is currently a law student at the small Christian college of La Sagesse in East Beirut, and stated that her goal is to complete a Master's degree in international law so that she can "work at the highest levels to deal with injustice between countries."

Many students we met expressed concern about their inability to secure professional jobs, which require work permits, upon graduation. While theoretically possible, formal employment is very difficult to obtain in practice, given Lebanon's legal restrictions, competitive work environment, and popular attitudes toward Syrians in the country. One researcher at a Lebanese university told us that as part of a study he was conducting related to the refugee crisis, he had planned to hire Syrian data collectors but was refused by his university, which interpreted the Ministry of Labor laws to indicate that he must hire Lebanese.



## Restrictions on Course of Study and Issues of Language Preparation

Institutional attitudes, entrance and language requirements, high tuition and fees, *de facto* restrictions on possible courses of study, and *de jure* limitations on professional opportunities have all contributed to the Syrian higher educational crisis in Lebanon.

Although there is no formal law restricting non-Lebanese from studying in various Faculties, due to a number of issues – including the language of instruction, differing curricula, and a widespread belief that Syrians are not well educated – Syrians reported that they believed study for careers in pharmacy, engineering, and medicine were not open to them in Lebanon. Critically, non-Lebanese are denied membership in at least 25 professional syndicates, which effectively bars them from crucial upwardly-mobile white-collar opportunities in medicine, engineering, finance, and the law, were they to complete the relevant course of study.<sup>31</sup>

One Syrian student explained the broader functional restrictions on Syrians entering the Faculties of Medicine, Pharmacy and Engineering as follows: “The only affordable university for the majority of Syrians is the Lebanese University [which costs only \$700 a year for non-Lebanese], but the placement tests are completely in English and very competitive.” He added that these high-prestige courses of study involve a number of entrance exams in English, including math, physics and chemistry, which are reputed to be very difficult even for Lebanese students who have the requisite language preparation. “For Syrians it is only the

language[s] that limits their number in these schools,” he added. A senior researcher on Lebanese education framed the issue slightly differently, noting that at LU, “Syrians cannot access majors such as pharmacy or medicine, not because they are not eligible but because they are not able to compete with Lebanese students. The entry exams to such faculties are based on national secondary exams (the Lebanese curriculum) in French or English.” He further explained that the majority of Syrian students pursue courses of study such as Letters

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**Non-Lebanese are denied membership in at least 25 professional syndicates, which effectively bars them from crucial upwardly-mobile white-collar opportunities in medicine, engineering, finance, and the law, were they to complete the relevant course of study.**

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and Social Sciences that do not require entry exams. This functional restriction on Syrian students is significant not only due to LU’s relative affordability, but because students reported that they believe the LU degree is valid in Syria.

Issues of communal identity may also play a role – usually subtle and unstated – in university admissions policies and hiring practices for faculty. A specialist in Lebanese higher education described this *de facto* religious segregation as “an implicit policy from the decision-making side, and an auto-relegation process from student and faculty side.” He added

that he believes this phenomenon is limited to the LU branches in Greater Beirut, where staff, faculty, and students belong within each branch to the same confessional groups, although he acknowledged there is some mixing of religious affiliations.

The history of Lebanon-Syria relations and Lebanon's past experience with Palestinian refugees has contributed to the hostile reception many students face. In a group meeting with a dozen university administrators, we were struck by the attitudes exhibited by many Lebanese university administrators when discussing possible programs and policies for Syrians. In several cases, it was clear that their sense of educational mission or recognition of the basic human right to education did not extend to Syrians. Also, their collective attitude toward Syrian young people included a degree of animus that we, as well as local Western colleagues present at the same meeting, found troubling. One Lebanese university administrator told us, "We cannot accept one dollar for a Syrian if there is not also a dollar for a Lebanese student." Although most expressed willingness to accept external funding for Syrian students, they reported that what they termed "positive discrimination" would be resented by Lebanese students and would risk exacerbating tensions on campus. This set of attitudes is in sharp contrast to the kind of support provided by small private universities, such as Islamic University of Lebanon, HU, and the University of Balamand (UOB).

## Psycho-Social Problems and Isolation

The reality that their homeland is at war and that many students have not seen or even heard from their families for extended periods has had obvious social and psychological

effects on them. Respondents reported high levels of worry and frustration. One Syrian university student candidly stated, "With all of the problems we must solve, how can we focus?" In addition, for some Syrians with older family members and familial obligations, refugee registration would make travel to Syria impossible. A university administrator we spoke with described a male student in his third year who had decided to leave UOB to return to his home outside of Aleppo after his brother was killed. As the administrator said, "Can you believe the stressors on these kids? He feels as the oldest boy it is his duty to return to try and protect his family's land." Students expressed interest in personal, academic, and career counseling, preferring peer counseling to internet-based assistance. As one student reported, "I trust other students more than I trust the Government."

## Political Threats / Fear of Violence

The perception that Syrian university students may pose a threat to the communal balance in Lebanon has influenced the way they are treated in both public and private educational institutions. In areas of Lebanon where Christian or Shiite majorities prevail, Sunni Muslim respondents told us that they are often verbally abused. Harassment and threats to personal safety are common. In other parts of Lebanon, in particular Tripoli, which is overwhelmingly Sunni and whose people have had long-standing political and social ties with central Syria, Sunni students reported much better treatment. However, Greek Orthodox Christian students at UOB – located near the village of Koura, just outside of Tripoli – explained that they do not feel comfortable in metropolitan Tripoli, but feel safe in their confessional enclave.

While many Syrian refugee students report that they are generally treated fairly by their fellow Lebanese students, they expressed fear of student organizations that may have some association with the Syrian secret police. They also worry about the political allegiances of other Syrians on campus, and about official indifference to their safety. As noted above, this fear was expressed by students from AUB. Politically active Syrian students at LU raised similar concerns.

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**One student stated, "I studied for my exams but I have no idea when I will get to take them. It has been weeks now. How can we call this a university? I attend only by risking my blood." He added that he was tempted to return to Aleppo to try to finish his initial degree, but his family was against it.**

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Finally, some displaced Syrian university students may risk general civil violence as the conflict in their home country increasingly plays out in Lebanon. This risk is especially acute in Tripoli, where a violent conflict between Sunnis and Alawites dates to Syria's 1967 intervention in Lebanon. Syrian students there described trying to attend class at LU in the neighborhood of Qubbeh. Unfortunately, the campus lies between the two warring communities, and the students we interviewed noted that they had been unable to take their

exams for weeks because of the intensity of the fighting. One stated, "I studied for my exams but I have no idea when I will get to take them. It has been weeks now. How can we call this a university? I attend only by risking my blood." He added that he was tempted to return to Aleppo to try to finish his initial degree, but his family was against it.

## **DISPLACED SYRIAN ACADEMICS**

Many of the barriers that prevent Syrian university students from continuing their education in Lebanon – political, financial, and linguistic, among others – affect Syrian academics as well. The primary challenge they face is competition with Lebanese scholars in a job market that is already saturated with prospective faculty. Legal impediments to employment, popular hostility to hiring Syrians, and the perceived inferiority of the Syrian academy renders Syrians less competitive. This perception is further exacerbated by their generally weaker English and French proficiency, compared to their Lebanese counterparts. As a Syrian professor who has taught in Lebanon for several decades remarked, "Many Lebanese think that if you speak English, you must be better at chemistry."

While some Syrian academics we met had prior experience and contacts in Lebanon, others were struggling to navigate Lebanon's diverse, complex, and competitive higher education sector. The role of a candidate's religious background in hiring decisions led to difficulties for a number of the Syrian scholars we interviewed. One Muslim professor, for example, explained that she had initially believed that Christian-affiliated universities would never hire her due to her *hijab*, or veil, which shows the prevailing perception of



confessional bias. Another Syrian described the importance of finding an intermediary of the same religious community at the university who could help him with applying.

Confessional quotas at LU could also impact Syrian faculty seeking employment at Lebanon's largest university.<sup>32</sup>

Even those Syrian academics who enjoy strong connections to Lebanese higher education institutions face problems due to the country's restrictive labor laws and the obtuse criteria and processes for securing Lebanese work permits and residency (not limited to Syrians, but affecting all non-Lebanese). These barriers are compounded by the widespread sensitivity to Syrians' employment in Lebanon. We interviewed one Syrian academic who, as part of the hiring process at a Lebanese university, was compelled to have his wife sign a contract stating that she would not work in Lebanon. Had she refused to sign, she would have been denied residency in the country.

Lebanon's tenuous political situation is also affecting Syrian academics. As with students, Syrian scholars with a history of opposition to the al-Assad family do not feel comfortable in the country, fearing that the hands of the regime stretch into Lebanese universities. Several Lebanese university administrators expressed reluctance to hire Syrian faculty who may be opposed to the Assad regime. One administrator informed us that, for his university to hire a Syrian, the professor would need to sign a statement pledging to avoid any engagement in political activity.

International organizations and donors can play a critical role in facilitating the academic integration of Syrian faculty at Lebanon's universities. Without this support – both the funding and cost-sharing of visiting positions, and the

promise of attractive international partnerships for Lebanese universities – it is highly unlikely that Syrian scholars will be able to continue their work in Lebanon's current environment, regardless of their background or qualifications.<sup>33</sup> Several university administrators we spoke with, including representatives from AUB and UOB, expressed a desire to partner with programs like IIE's Scholar Rescue Fund to support their Syrian colleagues.

Another important issue confronting Syrian academics in Lebanon stems from the February 2014 Cabinet-level decree from the Syrian Ministry of Higher Education to deny all unpaid and external sabbatical leave requests for Syrian faculty employed at public institutions. Through this decision, which has implications far beyond Lebanon, the Syrian regime has effectively made it impossible for Syrian academics to work temporarily outside Syria and keep their Syrian positions. The result is that they may be compelled to choose between risking their short-term security by remaining in Syria, and jeopardizing their long-term career and source of livelihood by leaving.

We interviewed one academic who had secured a visiting position in Lebanon. After applying for sabbatical from his home university in early 2014 and receiving conditional approval, his request was ultimately denied as part of this broader decision. The scholar described attending a faculty meeting where faculty leaders of his university's Ba'ath Party organization stated that professors who leave Syria will be considered "traitors to the nation." He expressed anxiety about his ability to return to his university position in Syria once the situation stabilizes.

## INSTITUTIONAL CASE STUDIES

Despite the general indifference of Lebanese university administrators to the educational plight of Syrian university-age students, there are some examples of Lebanese and Syrians establishing initiatives to support the integration of Syrians into Lebanon's universities. Two such initiatives are described below, as well as one initiative led by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). While the latter is intended to help Lebanese students, it might be applied as a model for Syrians.

It should also be noted that various programs exist on an institutional basis to provide displaced Syrian students with scholarships, including at USJ, in partnership with the Global Platform for Syrian Students, and an initiative at UOB funded by a Syrian businessman. There are also several programs that seek to assist Syrian students by connecting them to scholarships outside of Lebanon, such as the IIE Syria Consortium for Higher Education in Crisis and the Global Platform, a Consortium partner. The Global Platform recently organized what amounted to an "airlift" of 45 Syrian students from Lebanon to Portugal, where the students are pursuing undergraduate and graduate studies at universities in seven Portuguese cities.

### CASE ONE: LAsER's "Syrian Refugees Scholarship Program"

In response to the massive influx of displaced Syrian university students into Lebanon, the Lebanese Association for Scientific Research (LAsER)<sup>34</sup> developed the "Syrian

Refugees Scholarship Program," a pilot initiative to increase the number of Syrian university students enrolled at Lebanese universities. Since its launch in the fall of 2013, this program has provided more than 250 scholarships to Syrian students, primarily at the Lebanese University and private middle-tier universities, such as Al-Jinan; Tripoli; Arts, Sciences and Technology; and Lebanese International.

LAsER employs a unique and highly pragmatic model that requires intimate knowledge of the local higher education economy. In short, the organization negotiates tuition discounts for Syrian students in under-occupied majors, thus allowing the university to continue to earn a profit on students who are paying reduced tuition. LAsER supplements these tuition discounts with its own partial scholarships.

We met with the LAsER leadership team at their Tripoli headquarters, where they described for us the multi-step admissions and placement process. The LAsER scholarship is limited to Syrian university students who have been unable to continue their studies in Lebanon and are registered with the UNHCR. The application asks students to reflect on how their studies will benefit their community, rather than merely focusing on the students' academic qualifications or financial need. LAsER submits the list of its accepted students to partner universities. These universities then decide which students they can admit. The organization and respective registrar's offices match these students to majors with space. The students are offered reduced tuition rates, while the remaining fees are paid by LAsER to the university as a scholarship.<sup>35</sup> Students who are accepted by LAsER and a university but who cannot feasibly be added to the majors of

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**In response to the massive influx of displaced Syrian university students into Lebanon, the Lebanese Association for Scientific Research (LASeR) developed the "Syrian Refugees Scholarship Program," a pilot initiative to increase the number of Syrian university students enrolled at Lebanese universities.**

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their choice are offered counseling through LASeR to assist with either switching majors or transferring to a different university.

In this way, LASeR utilizes the profit motive at Lebanon's private universities by negotiating scholarships at little to no cost to the institution. It also taps into the universities' desire for positive exposure; it allows them to be seen as socially responsible and supportive of the Syrian refugees, which is important in northern Lebanon in particular.

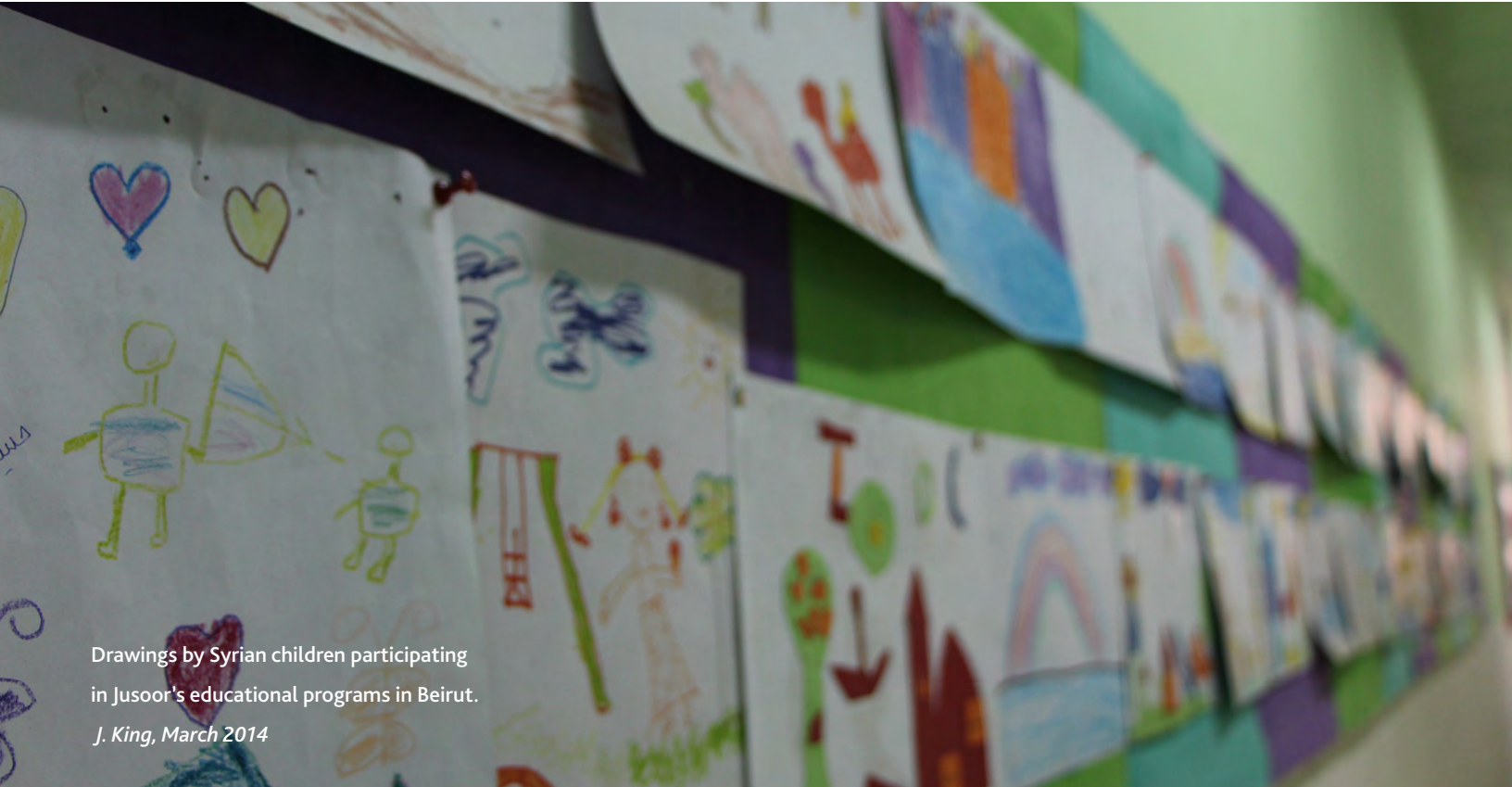
To further maximize impact, the organization prioritizes students who fall into one or more of the following categories: undergraduate and graduate students in their final year of study; students majoring in fields that are especially suited to addressing the needs of Syrian refugees and that afford more job opportunities or offer students the opportunity to be self-employed given the various professional restrictions placed on

non-Lebanese (e.g., education, health sciences, and business); recipients of partial scholarships who cannot pay the remaining tuition; and students of the Lebanese University, where tuition is significantly lower than at private universities.<sup>36</sup>

LASeR recently expanded its compass to offer vocational and leadership training to scholarship recipients in the areas of conflict resolution, negotiation, stress management, and emotional intelligence. As part of this training, in the future, students will be expected to develop proposals for projects to serve their communities. At present, the organization is able to fund several of these projects each year, and it is seeking funding to support additional projects. It also plans to begin offering English language courses to its students during summer 2014, in recognition of the fact that English proficiency is an important contributor to academic and professional success for Syrians in Lebanon.

With additional funding and capacity-building support, LASeR's Syrian Refugees Scholarship Program could enable many more Syrian university students to continue their education in Lebanon. In addition, although the LASeR constituency is primarily Sunni, which represents the vast majority of the refugee population in northern Lebanon, the model the organization employs has the potential to be replicated in other regions and communities as well.<sup>37</sup> Significantly, LASeR has placed students throughout Lebanon. We do not believe that LASeR actively seeks to support primarily Sunni Syrians; rather, this focus is largely due to the geographical location of the organization's natural constituency.





Drawings by Syrian children participating  
in Jusoor's educational programs in Beirut.

*J. King, March 2014*

## **CASE TWO: Jusoor's "Refugee Education Program: Generation Hope for Syria"**

Jusoor is a Syrian expatriate-led international NGO that supports various educational initiatives for Syrians affected by the conflict.<sup>38</sup> In Lebanon specifically, the organization's "Refugee Education Program: Generation Hope for Syria" enrolls Syrian students in primary and secondary schools throughout the country and provides informal education at centers in Beirut and the Biqa'a Valley.<sup>39</sup> Launched in June 2013, the program is currently educating more than 1,000 Syrian children.

Significantly, the Refugee Education Program is led by displaced Syrian university students, with fundraising and other support from Jusoor's international leadership. The director of Jusoor-Lebanon, a university student himself, estimated that half of the teachers at the Biqa'a Valley schools are university-age: recent graduates, enrolled students,

and students seeking to continue their university studies in Lebanon. Most are employed by Jusoor, while others work as volunteers. The research team visited Jusoor's Center for Informal Education in Beirut and met with a number of these students, who expressed a desire to both continue their education and help their fellow Syrians. This program, notable for both its efficacy and its ripple effects, represents an important example of the benefits that flow from connecting highly-motivated Syrian university students to opportunities to serve and work within their own communities.

Jusoor-Lebanon is also active in advising Syrian students on their higher education options, both in Lebanon and internationally. These activities could be expanded with donor support and could also include the formal administration of scholarship programs in Lebanon. With Jusoor's extensive networks among displaced Syrians, experience in higher education-related mentoring and outreach, and knowledge of





Graffiti near the former Green Line in Beirut.

*J. King, March 2014*

the Lebanese education sector, the organization could serve as an effective link between international NGOs and donors, Syrian university students, and Lebanese universities. In addition, it has the advantage of being largely perceived by Syrians as non-sectarian, as its staff and volunteers come from a variety of Syrian cities, religions, and ethnic groups, and includes Lebanese and non-Syrians as well.

### **CASE THREE: USAID's "University Scholarship Program"**

In 2010, USAID launched the University Scholarship Program in Lebanon, which provides undergraduate scholarships and supplemental support for Lebanese public school graduates to study at three Beirut universities: AUB, LAU, and HU.<sup>40</sup> Although this program focuses exclusively on Lebanese citizens, it nonetheless provides several important scholarship models that are directly applicable to the Syrian university student population in Lebanon.

For example, it bridges an important gap between need- and merit-based scholarships by stipulating that recipients have a public school background and established financial need, while also requiring that they attain certain minimum test scores and demonstrate a history of community service and leadership. The USAID program also provides a complete package of supplementary support to its students. In addition to paying the students' tuition fees, the scholarship offers a monthly stipend, housing or a transportation allowance, medical insurance, a book allowance, and a laptop. At AUB, students are eligible to take intensive English courses.<sup>41</sup> Finally, the program focuses on fields of study seen as critical to Lebanon's development and the students' future employment prospects.

A similar or parallel program, subject to the limitations of US sanctions on Syria and Syrians, could be replicated to target Syrian university students in Lebanon, especially if additional resources were devoted to language and leadership training and work-study opportunities.

# KEY FINDINGS

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1. The overwhelming majority of displaced Syrian university students in Lebanon are not continuing any form of higher education or advanced training.
2. The crisis of a “Lost Generation” will grow worse as Syrian students in Lebanon are unable to complete high school or take the requisite exit and entrance exams and as the resources of currently enrolled university students are depleted.
3. Despite pre-conflict Syria’s rough parity between female and male attendance rates at universities, male enrollment in Lebanon appears to stand at a much higher rate.
4. Several factors significantly impact the ability of Syrians to access institutions of higher learning in Lebanon: economic hardship; the historical relationship between Lebanon and Syria, local political issues; popular attitudes toward Syrians; and Lebanese university policies and practices.
5. The practical impact of Syrian student enrollment on Lebanon’s academic infrastructure has been negligible thus far. Significantly, Syrian students could fill an important gap for private universities, as enrollment, especially from the Arabian Peninsula, has declined due to the insecurity in Lebanon. Enrollment of Syrian students at the Lebanese University, the state-run institution of higher education, has declined, as it has at several of Lebanon’s private universities.
6. Lebanese higher education institutions are generally resistant to establishing programs to support Syrian university students, claiming these programs must benefit vulnerable Lebanese students as well in order to succeed.
7. Syrian university students report significant negative attitudes and discriminatory practices toward them both on and off campus.
8. Location within Lebanon, religious affiliation, and available resources all affect displaced Syrians’ ability to navigate Lebanon’s institutions of higher education, or, for scholars, to secure academic employment.
9. Lebanon is politically unstable, and the Syrian conflict is increasingly playing out in the country, including on a number of university campuses. Security concerns for Syrian university students and faculty in Lebanon are very real, particularly for those who may have been politically active or who hail from anti-regime areas.
10. Educational initiatives and opportunities that are innovative and replicable, and for which the international community could provide funding and build capacity, will have to contend with significant historical and political realities unique to Lebanese society.
11. Effective existing programs providing scholarship support and subsidies to university-age Syrian refugees and displaced people have limited capacity as measured by personnel and funding, but are succeeding in local contexts. Successful local NGOs have created efficient and creative solutions in part because they do not



have strict reporting requirements. While these local organizations and initiatives are stepping in effectively where many international NGOs and educational service providers are not, in some cases they may reinforce patterns of confessional-based resource allocation.

**12.** With few exceptions, Syrian faculty are unable to secure academic work at Lebanese universities without external support from international organizations.

## GENERAL AND LEBANON-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

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### General Recommendations:

- 1.** Helping qualified displaced Syrian university students connect to higher education opportunities should become a key plank in international humanitarian efforts to: address the suffering caused by the conflict in Syria; maintain the intellectual capacity needed to undertake the work of rebuilding Syria after the conflict; contribute to regional security; promote women's empowerment; and affirm the human right to education.
- 2.** Young adults, aged 18-24 – and the subset of university students – should become a specific and internationally recognized category of humanitarian analysis and support. This research should also seek to understand how best to close the evident gender gaps in university attendance.
- 3.** Programs and initiatives should connect Syrian university students and graduates to volunteer and job opportunities

to serve their community, especially in education, human rights, and physical and mental health care. This effort might include university scholarships that are directly tied to internships, work-study programs, and post-graduation employment. Such programs can serve as a critical tool in providing alternatives to radicalization and other antisocial behavior. Furthermore, they represent an important opportunity to empower highly motivated youth with advanced skills and training to help meet the vast humanitarian and educational needs of the Syrian refugee population.

- 4.** A range of higher education programs and solutions should be developed that can account for the diverse contexts within which displaced Syrians are living. In practice, United Nations bodies, governments, donor agencies, NGOs, and universities should work with the front-line hosting states to develop a holistic and coordinated response that offers targeted solutions to meet

students' diverse needs. For example, the higher education opportunities and challenges for Syrians in Lebanon differ significantly from those elsewhere. Furthermore, while the vast majority of Syrian students need support to continue their education within the front-line hosting states, others have the educational background to pursue their studies in North America or Europe, and should be supported in this pursuit.

**5.** The international community, working primarily with global higher education, should begin to shift the cost of connecting Syrian university students with educational opportunities in contiguous host states through various measures, including helping those states expand capacity for all students, especially in language instruction. In particular, European and North American institutions of higher learning should build collaborative relationships with universities and educational NGOs in these countries to provide opportunities for scholarships and other support. In cases where universities have pre-existing relationships with universities in the region, assistance to Syrians should become a priority. Consortium-type models, such as the IIE Syria Consortium, can help by connecting scholarships with applicants, assisting institutions in hosting Syrian students, and mentoring students in adjusting to academic life abroad.

**6.** Universities in North America and Europe should increase the number of visiting faculty positions at their institutions for displaced and endangered Syrian university academics and professionals. Partnering with programs like the IIE Scholar Rescue Fund can help ease this process. It is

difficult to expect front-line states – especially Jordan and Lebanon – to support displaced Syrian academics if universities in the West are not doing so as well.

**7.** North American and European governments should demonstrate the utmost flexibility in granting student and visiting scholar visas to displaced Syrians, especially those who have registered with UNHCR. In many cases, students registered with UNHCR are ineligible for international scholarships due to visa limitations from the hosting country.

### **Lebanon-Specific Recommendations:**

**1.** International NGOs, donor agencies, and universities should work with consortia of Lebanese universities that are interested in developing or expanding programs that can assist qualified displaced Syrian students and faculty. Such programs should build these universities' capacity in the areas of preparatory language instruction, academic and peer counseling, and work study opportunities, potentially benefitting both Syrian and Lebanese students.

**2.** An ideal consortium would bring three Beirut-based, American liberal arts-style universities together – the American University of Beirut, Lebanese American University, and Haigazian University – in a program for Syrian students similar to the USAID University Scholarship Program. Given these campuses' close proximity, they could potentially share the costs for intensive English language training programs and psychosocial, academic, and career counseling services,

as well as work-study programs. Each of the universities has extensive and long-term relationships through student and faculty exchange programs with universities in the U.S., which could serve as a basis on which to build support for projects and programs to benefit vulnerable Syrian students. These consortia would be a platform from which fellowship and scholarship opportunities and work-study opportunities could be designed for vulnerable Syrian students on both need- and merit- bases.

proficiency in English or other European languages, within the Syrian context, these scholarships have generally been limited to elite students who enjoy access to language training. The implementation of a hybrid need / merit model that takes into consideration both financial or other needs and such merit-based factors as history of community service, rather than simply academic credentials, would enable administrators to identify and support high-achieving students with leadership potential who may lack top test scores or advanced foreign language fluency.

3. Establish an academic center for Syrians through established local NGOs that empowers local young Syrians with leadership roles. Such a center should work with university students on their short-term adjustment issues and longer-term decisions, playing the following roles: provide psychosocial support, academic and career counseling, and visa advising; serve as an information hub for academic and scholarship opportunities; and interface with local, regional, and international NGOs. This collaboration should also connect students to volunteer, internship, and job opportunities.
4. Intergovernmental bodies, NGOs, universities, and donors should be conscious of how their scholarship programs and priorities may or may not foster the perception or reality of sectarianism. Rather, programs should emphasize the potential of higher education to ease sectarian tension and build social comity and solidarity.
5. Existing and prospective scholarship programs should find creative ways to bridge traditional merit- and need-based models. Because international scholarships typically require

Financial support could be tailored to meet the programmatic interests and priorities of institutional donors and might include several scholarship archetypes:

**Merit-based scholarships for elite students:** direct funding to Lebanon's top universities to ensure that Syria's most promising students are able to continue their studies.

**Merit- and need-based scholarships to non-elite students with academic promise and demonstrated commitment to working with refugees:** funding to local NGOs like IHR and LASeR to develop programs that reach students with some access to funding (scholarships can be partial), and who have already demonstrated some ability, but will face challenges without support.

**Need-based scholarships to non-elite students:** funding to local organizations like IHR and LASeR that are able to access the vulnerable students who lack means.

6. Work with established Syrian and Lebanese educational NGOs like Jusoor and LASer to build capacity and train a new generation of Syrian human rights and humanitarian activists from among vulnerable Syrian youth.
7. While the Lebanese government negotiates a longer-term strategy toward the Syrian refugee population, the international community should encourage it to ease labor restrictions that might prevent Syrians from working within the refugee communities, especially in sectors such as education, health care, and the delivery of services.

A possible model is a program initiated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA), which employs Palestinian refugees to provide educational and medical services within the Palestinian refugee environment. Such a model would both increase opportunities for vulnerable Syrian youth and enhance the ability of the Syrian community to meet its own basic educational and development needs by utilizing the skills and training of this demographic. To some extent, this effort is already underway in the context of second shift schools for Syrian children in Tripoli.

## FURTHER READINGS

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Although we witnessed both cruelty and indifference in Lebanon, we also met young people whose courage, dedication, and hard work in the face of terrible circumstances gave us great hope. We dedicate our report to these young men and women, who, though displaced from their homes and their education, represent the future of Syria.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR data. Retrieved from <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php> (last accessed May 28, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> UN estimate as of December 2013. Retrieved from <http://syria.unocha.org> (last accessed May 28, 2014).

<sup>3</sup>“For Syrian Refugees, ‘Life Has Stopped.’” (2014, April 5). [Radio broadcast]. Washington, D.C.: National Public Radio. Retrieved from [www.npr.org/2014/04/05/299352278/for-syrian-refugees-life-has-stopped](http://www.npr.org/2014/04/05/299352278/for-syrian-refugees-life-has-stopped).

<sup>4</sup>Under international law, a refugee is defined by the 1951 Refugee Convention as “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.” See *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*. Retrieved from [www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html](http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html). Lebanon has not signed the 1951 Convention, and has no domestic refugee law; Syrians fleeing violence are termed “displaced.” For the purposes of this assessment, we use the term “displaced” to describe Syrians who are living in Lebanon as a result of the violence in Syria, including those who have registered with UNHCR for Refugee Status Determination. We further define “displaced Syrian university students” as Syrians between the ages of 15-24 who fall within one or more of the following categories: 1) higher education students when the war began who have been unable to complete their studies, 2) enrollees in higher education institutions after March 2011 who have fled subsequently, and 3) individuals eligible for admission to university by virtue of passing required examinations. This definition includes officially registered refugees, displaced people, persons of concern, and persons vulnerable to displacement.

<sup>5</sup>Kabbani, N., & Salloum, S. (2011). “Implications of Financing Higher Education for Access and Equity: The Case of Syria.” *Prospects*, 41(1), 97-113.

<sup>6</sup>Watenpaugh, K. D. et al. (2013). “Uncounted and Unacknowledged: Syria’s Refugee University Students and Academics in Jordan.” Retrieved from the UC Davis Human Rights Initiative and the Institute of International Education, 7: [www.academia.edu/3474289/Uncounted\\_and\\_Unacknowledged\\_Syrias\\_Refugee\\_University\\_Students\\_and\\_Academics\\_in\\_Jordan](http://www.academia.edu/3474289/Uncounted_and_Unacknowledged_Syrias_Refugee_University_Students_and_Academics_in_Jordan)

<sup>7</sup>*Squandering Humanity: Socioeconomic Monitoring Report on Syria*. (2014). Retrieved from UNRWA, UNDP, and the Syrian Centre for Policy Research, 37: [www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/scpr\\_report\\_q3-q4\\_2013\\_270514final\\_3.pdf](http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/scpr_report_q3-q4_2013_270514final_3.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Statistics from the Lebanese Ministry of Higher Education on Syrians enrolled at Lebanon’s private universities for the 2012-13 academic year, July 28, 2013, on file with the authors.

<sup>9</sup> Statistics from LU on Syrian enrollment from 2007-08 through 2013-14, March 18, 2014, on file with the authors.

<sup>10</sup> The Lebanese educational NGO LASer (described in the Institutional Case Studies section) estimates that of the approximately 120,000 university-aged youth in Lebanon, slightly more than 5% have been able to enroll in Lebanese universities. LASer promotional video, on file with the authors.

<sup>11</sup>Syrian enrollment at the American University of Beirut, for example, declined between the 2012-13 and 2013-14 academic years, as it did at the Islamic University of Lebanon. This figure is drawn from statistics provided by the two universities, on file with the authors.

<sup>12</sup>For more information, see the University of Oxford’s Refugee Studies Centre: [www.prproject.org/](http://www.prproject.org/).

<sup>13</sup>*Squandering Humanity*, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup>“School is a Dream for Syrian Refugee Family Struggling in Lebanon.” Retrieved from UNHCR: [www.unhcr.org/534291e09.html](http://www.unhcr.org/534291e09.html) (retrieved May 20, 2014). These elementary schools are run by the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (commonly known in Arabic as *al-Ittilaf*), which has negotiated with Lebanese private schools to use classrooms after the traditional school day is over. This agreement allows Syrian children to receive instruction in Arabic, following a revised Syrian curriculum. See also Watenpaugh K. D. (2014, March 21). “Struggling to Save a Generation of Syrian School Children on the Second Shift.” Retrieved from Huffington Post: [www.huffingtonpost.com/keith-david-watenpaugh/struggling-to-save-a-gene\\_b\\_5004903.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/keith-david-watenpaugh/struggling-to-save-a-gene_b_5004903.html).

<sup>15</sup>The human right to education is established in Article 26(1) of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and Article 13(2)(c) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR) states, “Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education.” Retrieved from UNOHCR: [www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx). See also Steiner, H. and Alston, P. (2000). “Comment on the ICESR and the Character of the Rights.” In H. J. Steiner, P. Alston, and R. Goodman (eds.), *International Human Rights in Context: Law, Politics, Morals*. (pp. 245-48). New York, NY: Oxford.

<sup>16</sup>Kabbani and Salloum, 11.

<sup>17</sup>UNWRA estimate as of June 2014. Retrieved from [www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon](http://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon) (last accessed June 10, 2014).

<sup>18</sup>Retrieved from [www.hrw.org/en/world-report-2011/lebanon](http://www.hrw.org/en/world-report-2011/lebanon).

<sup>19</sup>“Camps Only Solution to Refugee Crisis: Abu Faour.” (2014, May 12). *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from [www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/May-12/256151-camps-only-solution-to-refugee-crisis-abu-faour.ashx#axzz31hz219VH](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/May-12/256151-camps-only-solution-to-refugee-crisis-abu-faour.ashx#axzz31hz219VH).

<sup>20</sup>S. Akram, personal communication, May 2014. See also: “Protecting Syrian Refugees: Laws, Policies, and Global Responsibility Sharing.” Boston University School of Law International Human Rights Clinic (forthcoming June 2014); and Norwegian Refugee Council, Lebanon. (2013). *The Consequences of Limited Legal Status for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*. Retrieved from [www.nrc.no/arch/img.aspx?file\\_id=9692920](http://www.nrc.no/arch/img.aspx?file_id=9692920) (accessed May 17, 2014).

<sup>21</sup>Syrians without legal residency, including those who enter Lebanon at an illegal crossing but have valid identity documents, may submit a “petition of mercy” for a \$600 fee. While outside the immediate scope of this assessment, it should be noted there are likely to be qualified students residing illegally in Lebanon.

<sup>22</sup>Note, however, that young men from Deraa interviewed in Jordan reported being seized at checkpoints despite showing proof of university enrollment. See Watenpaugh K. D. et al., 10.

<sup>23</sup>PressTV. (2013, July 9). "Egypt Says Syrians Will Now Require Visas to Enter the Country." This report states that Egypt began abruptly barring Syrians from entry on July 8, 2013. Retrieved from [www.presstv.com/detail/2013/07/09/312919/egypt-says-syrians-will-now-require-visas/](http://www.presstv.com/detail/2013/07/09/312919/egypt-says-syrians-will-now-require-visas/).

<sup>24</sup>Rainey, V. (2014, May 9). "Machnouk: New Entry Rules for Palestinians from Syria." *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from [www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/May-09/255811-machnouk-new-entry-rules-for-palestinians-from-syria.ashx#ixzz32mg1flr0](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/May-09/255811-machnouk-new-entry-rules-for-palestinians-from-syria.ashx#ixzz32mg1flr0) ("The new rules state that in order to enter Lebanon, Palestinian refugees from Syria must now possess one of three Lebanese documents: an entry permit approved by the General Directorate of General Security, a residency of one to three years or an exit and return permit").

<sup>25</sup>Note that Lebanon acceded to the Convention Against Torture on October 5, 2000, which prohibits *refoulement* in Article 3 (1). See also Human Rights Watch. (2014, May 6). "Lebanon: Palestinians Barred, Sent to Syria." Retrieved from [www.hrw.org/news/2014/05/05/lebanon-palestinians-barred-sent-syria](http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/05/05/lebanon-palestinians-barred-sent-syria).

<sup>26</sup>For a comprehensive assessment of refugee law frameworks and Syrian refugees, including a discussion of the UNHCR's limitations in Lebanon and discrimination against Palestinian Syrians, see Akram, S. et al. *Protecting Syrian Refugees: Laws, Policies, and Global Responsibility Sharing*. Boston University School of Law International Human Rights Clinic (forthcoming Summer 2014).

<sup>27</sup>It is important to note that although the 2003 Memorandum intended to provide up to one year of protection prior to resettlement, and was not designed to cover large influxes of refugees, the UNHCR technically is operating its current refugee registration operations under its terms. See Frontiers Center. (2003). *Lebanon-UNHCR Memorandum of Understanding*. Retrieved from <http://tinyurl.com/k3bqoew> (last accessed May 17, 2014); Syria Needs Analysis Project. (2013). "Legal Status of Individuals Fleeing Syria." Retrieved from <http://tinyurl.com/nn5xl5l> (last accessed May 17, 2014); and Sadek, G. (2013). "Legal Status of Refugees: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq." Retrieved from The Law Library of Congress, Global Legal Research Center: [www.loc.gov/law/help/refugees/legal-status-refugees.php](http://www.loc.gov/law/help/refugees/legal-status-refugees.php).

<sup>28</sup>See Akram et al., footnote 25.

<sup>29</sup>For more information on Lebanon's higher education sector, see the Arabic-language article Zeitoun, M. et al. (2011). "University Education and the Job Market." Abdelmonem, S. (Ed.). *The Fourth Arab Report on Cultural Development* (pp.193-398). Beirut, Lebanon: Arab Thought Foundation. See also El Amine, A. (2014). "Quality Issues in Higher Education Institutions in Arab Countries." Retrieved from Lebanese Association for Educational Studies: [www.laes.org/\\_news.php?lang=en&news\\_id=50](http://www.laes.org/_news.php?lang=en&news_id=50).

<sup>30</sup>See e.g., *The Fourth Arab Report on Cultural Development*, 377-378. Retrieved from the website for the Syrian Ministry of Higher Education: [www.higher-edu.gov.lb/arabic/](http://www.higher-edu.gov.lb/arabic/).

<sup>31</sup>Retrieved from [www.hrw.org/en/world-report-2011/lebanon](http://www.hrw.org/en/world-report-2011/lebanon).

<sup>32</sup>El Amine, 8.

<sup>33</sup>Due to the fierce competition, political and popular sensitivity to the Syrian presence in Lebanon, and exclusionary labor laws, the vast majority of Syrian professors who have been able to find work in Lebanon are employed on a short-term, hourly contract basis. These contracts do not need approval from the Ministry of Labor.

<sup>34</sup>LASeR was founded in 2009 with a mission to support Lebanese researchers and graduate students through scholarships and exchange programs. For more information, visit [www.laser-lb.org/](http://www.laser-lb.org/).

<sup>35</sup>It also seeks flexibility from partner universities on credit transfer and admission of students with missing documents.

<sup>36</sup>LASeR scholarships pay the full LU tuition. At approximately USD \$700 / year, LU is significantly more affordable than Lebanon's private universities, where the average tuition is USD \$4,000 / year.

<sup>37</sup>LASeR's arrangement with LIU – with its branch campuses throughout Lebanon and reputation as non-sectarian – offers a good example. With the exception of the LIU-Akkar, all LIU branches offer a 50% tuition discount to LASeR's Syrian students in any field except pharmacy; LIU-Akkar charges the lower fixed tuition of USD \$1,000.

<sup>38</sup>For more information, visit [www.jusoor-sy.org/](http://www.jusoor-sy.org/). Jusoor and IIE implemented an Emergency Student Fund for Syrian students in the United States in 2012. Jusoor is also a founding partner of the IIE Syria Consortium for Higher Education in Crisis, which connects Syrian university students to scholarships and tuition waivers at universities outside Syria. For more information on the Consortium, visit [www.iie.org/Programs/Syria-Scholarships](http://www.iie.org/Programs/Syria-Scholarships). Jusoor also provides academic mentoring to Syrian university students seeking to study abroad: [www.jusoor-sy.org/programs/academic-programs/mentorship-program/](http://www.jusoor-sy.org/programs/academic-programs/mentorship-program/).

<sup>39</sup>For more information, visit [www.jusoor-sy.org/programs/academic-programs/refugee-education-program/](http://www.jusoor-sy.org/programs/academic-programs/refugee-education-program/).

<sup>40</sup>For more information, visit [www.usaid.gov/news-information/frontlines/youth-mobile-technology/schools-and-scholarships-transforming-lebanon%E2%80%99s](http://www.usaid.gov/news-information/frontlines/youth-mobile-technology/schools-and-scholarships-transforming-lebanon%E2%80%99s). In total, the program aims to support more than 170 students per year (AUB: 52; LAU: 54; and HU: 65).

<sup>41</sup>A similar USAID initiative in Egypt, the LOTUS Scholarship Program, provides the opportunity for select scholarship recipients to undertake a semester abroad in the U.S. For more information, see [www.iie.org/Programs/USAID-Lotus-Scholarship-Program-English](http://www.iie.org/Programs/USAID-Lotus-Scholarship-Program-English).