Introduction

There are 570,000 Palestinian refugees registered with United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Syria. They have all been affected by the ongoing conflict in Syria. These Palestinian refugees are decedents of around 80,000 Palestinians who fled to Syria during the creation of Israel in 1948. UNRWA estimates that there are 480,000 who remain in Syria of which 280,000 are internally displaced.

The movement of Palestinian Syrians within Syria is very restricted and their access to neighbouring countries is very difficult. Early in the conflict Jordan and Turkey effectively closed their borders to Palestine refugees from Syria (PRS); Lebanon followed suit in May 2014. Thankfully, 90,000 Palestinians have managed to leave Syria since the start of the conflict.

In the 4 years to date, millions of Syrians have become refugees, they have predominantly sought refuge in neighbouring countries. Unlike Syrian refugees PRS (who constitute less than 3% of the ex-Syria refugee population) have been denied registration by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The reason offered is that PRS are already registered to another United Nations agency, namely UNRWA.

Despite repeated efforts and advice by UNRWA as well as by other local aid organizations, UNHCR’s detrimental humanitarian policy towards PRS has not changed and in fact added further complications to their legal status in the host countries.

This report endeavours to:

- provide a context to the status of PRS at the United Nations; and
- highlight some of the consequences of UNHCR’s policies towards them.

This report is based on Palestinian refugees in the Yarmouk Camp in Damascus; the majority of Palestinian Refugees from Syria are from Yarmouk.
Yarmouk Camp

The Yarmouk refugee camp was home to the largest Palestinian refugee community in Syria. According to UNRWA, Yarmouk’s population before the Syrian crisis was 148,500. It lies 8 kilometres from the Damascus city centre and is within the city boundaries. Yarmouk was established in 1957, it occupies an area of 2.1 square kilometres and was built to house Palestinian refugees who had until that time been living, scattered amongst mosques, schools and other public places.

Over the years the residents of Yarmouk improved their dwellings and created a semblance of “normal” life. Yarmouk was a very densely populated camp with three main roads lined with shops crammed with every manner of service as well as taxis and microbuses. Many of the refugees in Yarmouk were professionals, working as doctors, engineers and civil servants (1).

Following the US led invasion of Iraq in 2003 there was a rise in anti-Palestinian sentiment in Iraq subsequently an estimated 5000 Iraq Palestinians sought refuge in Yarmouk between 2005 and 2011 (2).

The Syrian crisis and the camp’s neutrality

With the onset of the Syrian political and social unrest in March 2011, Palestinians in Syria took a neutral stance. Due to this neutrality, Yarmouk remained a relatively safe neighbourhood in Damascus. The overall population of Damascus grew as it became a haven for many internally displaced Syrians.

Turning point

On the 16th of December 2012, Palestinian neutrality in the Syrian crisis collapsed completely as the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and Islamist fighters overran most of the camp. The Syrian regime's response was immediate and ruthless. Warplanes bombarded a district which housed Palestinian refugees in the camp, killing and injuring tens of people. (3)

Leaving Syria

According to Lisa Gilliam, UNRWA’s Deputy Chief of Staff, by the 20th of December 2012, two thirds of the 150,000 Palestinians housed in the Yarmouk refugee camp had fled to seek refuge in the neighbouring towns and villages of Syria and Lebanon. (4)

Given the scarcity of credible information on the movement of Palestinian Syrians, be they internally displaced or seeking refuge in neighbouring countries, the following image is of value in illustrating the movement of the Palestinian Syrians. The figures were released by UNRWA 2 years after the “turning point” and it highlights the movement of Palestinian Syrians in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and other countries.
Resettlement attempts in West bank

On the 19th of December 2012, UN Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-moon received an urgent request from the Palestinian President, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, requesting assistance to facilitate the movement of Palestinian refugees fleeing Syria to the Palestinian territories.

Given that any movement of refugees into the Palestinian territories (i.e. the West Bank) would need the consent of Israel, Mr. Ban Ki-moon submitted the Palestinian request to the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr Benjamin Netanyahu. Mr. Ban Ki-moon offered UN resources to facilitate this movement if Israeli agreed.

On the 10th of January 2013, Mr. Ban Ki-moon told Mr Mahmoud Abbas that Israel had agreed to the request, on the condition that the refugees sign a document in which they would have to forgo their “right of return” to their hometowns and villages within Israel.

Mr Mahmoud Abbas rejected that condition (6).
UNHCR policy towards PRS

The world commemorated International Refugee Day on the 20th of June where the UNHCR sounded an urgent warning at the increasing numbers of displaced people, their number has now reached a staggering level of 59.5 million refugees (7). We are unable to confirm if Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) have been included in this figure.

Over the past 4 years, the war in Syria has resulted in the expulsion and flight of millions of refugees. Unlike the Syrian refugees, Palestinian Refugees from Syria have been denied registration by the UNHCR, the rationalization being that Palestinians are already under the mandate of another UN agency, namely UNRWA.

The following facts have not been taken into consideration:

1. The UNWRA mandate dictates that its services are only in relief, education and work. The current situation requires urgent aid and assistance.

2. There are thousands of Palestinian Refugees from Syria in countries in which UNRWA does not have a presence and does not operate namely Egypt and Turkey.

3. UNRWA in Lebanon has been suffering from severe financial and other resource shortages. The recent flood, currently estimated at 45,000, of Palestinian Refugees from Syria has resulted in an almost catastrophic pressure on the already eroded infrastructure of the Palestinian refugee camps of Lebanon. Since January 2013 and despite persistent efforts, UNWRA has not been able to fully provide for these new refugees. These Palestinian Refugees of Syria are confronted with a situation where nearly half of them are without access to schools, hospitals or even secure shelter. Furthermore, UNWRA has just announced that due to the continued financial pressure they will be cancelling the monthly rent allowance of $100.00 per family from July 2015 (8).

UN agencies and the Palestinian refugees

Legal context (9)

Between 1948 and 1949 the United Nations General Assembly accorded mandates to two separate UN agencies to provide international protection (including durable solutions) and assistance to Palestinian refugees. This unique regime comprised of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) – established in December 1948, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). The complex mandate of UNCCP included provision of protection for all refugees and displaced persons in Palestine and facilitation of durable solutions (i.e., return, restitution, and compensation based on individual refugee choice). UNRWA was established one year later to provide assistance for those refugees in need without prejudice to and pending implementation of UN Resolution 194.

Palestinian refugees also have a unique and complex relationship with a third UN agency - UNHCR. The UNHCR was established as a temporary agency in December 1949, to provide international protection and seek permanent solutions for refugees. Generally, UNHCR has a mandate to provide international protection and search for durable solutions for the refugees’ world-wide, including persons defined as ‘Convention refugees’ under the 1951 Refugee Convention.
According to special provisions set forth in Article 1D of the 1951 Refugee Convention, Palestinian refugees are entitled to the benefits of the Convention (i.e. Palestinian’s are considered ‘Convention Refugees’) when protection or assistance from other organs or agencies of the United Nations has ceased for any reason, without the position of the refugees being definitively settled in accordance with relevant resolutions of the UN General Assembly.

Though UNCCP protection completely collapsed in the mid-1950s, neither the UNHCR nor any other international agency stepped in to fill the subsequent gap of comprehensive international protection for Palestinian refugees. UNHCR protection is characterized by a limited degree of protection for a limited number of refugees based on geographical restrictions. UNRWA, on the other hand, does not have an explicit protection mandate for Palestinian refugees. The collapse of UNCCP protection, limited intervention by the UNHCR, and lack of an explicit UNRWA protection mandate have resulted in severe gaps in international protection for Palestinian refugees. The reality is that Palestinian refugees have no systematic access to international protection.

**PRS in Lebanon**

*Estimated number of Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) currently in Lebanon: 44,000*

*Syrian refugees registered in UNHCR’s offices in Lebanon: 1,175,000 (UNHCR June 2015) (10)*

The Syrian crisis and influx of refugees has exacerbated the complexity and volatility of the social, economic and political landscape of Lebanon. The 260,000 Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon prior to the crisis (11) were already highly marginalized, with two-thirds considered poor or extremely poor.

The PRS in Lebanon are particularly vulnerable given their irregular legal status and the extremely limited social protection services and livelihood opportunities available to them. This also means that PRS are unable to access civil registration of births, deaths and marriages. According to UNRWA this is leaving a whole generation of Palestinians without any official documentation proving their existence (12).

They are highly dependent on host communities and UNRWA for basic services, emergency assistance and shelter. However, UNRWA services were already stretched, and infrastructure long overdue for maintenance and rehabilitation. The pre-crisis refugee population has limited rights and limited access to public services and employment. With the influx of PRS, UNRWA had to address the growing needs of an almost 20 per cent increase in the Palestinian population in Lebanon. Over 90 per cent are in need of continued support for food and shelter. The assessment found that 10 per cent of families include a person with a disability, 47 per cent have at least one member suffering from a chronic illness, and 26 per cent of families are female-headed (13).

Host country regulations towards refugees from Syria, including Palestinians, are unwelcoming and unaccommodating to say the least. The growing sentiment against refugees from Syria, seen by some locals as a serious threat to the country’s economy, social coherence and infrastructure, has fuelled great debate centred on the impact of hosting refugees. Local Lebanese councils have recently commenced restricting the movement of refugees and imposing daily curfews from 21:00 to 06:00. Al-Jazeera TV recently interviewed the mayor of a Christian-dominated suburb in Beirut who said that Syrians were issued with special cards. “They must finish all their work during the day and return to their residence at night,” the mayor said. In March 2014, former Minister Nicolas Sehnou was at a news conference that Syrian refugees should be “shipped” back to Syria (14).
Second-class refugees

Denying the Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) registration at UNHCR has turned them into second-class refugees in host countries. The following table highlights several discriminatory regulations, which affect only the PRS in Lebanon (15).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Syrians</th>
<th>Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre 21/10/2014: Entry is permitted without visa.</td>
<td>From December 2012 until May 2013: A one month crossing visa was granted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post 21/10/2014 until present: Entry is permitted (6 months visa- renewable) with limitations:</td>
<td>From May 2013 to April 2014</td>
<td>A one month crossing visa was granted with limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanese sponsor</td>
<td>From April 2014 until present: Entry has been blocked exemptions apply for the following:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession of $US1000.00</td>
<td>(i) medical surgery (72 hrs permit)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(ii) appointments with foreign embassies for resettlements purposes (24 hrs permit)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(iii) Departure from Beirut Intl. Airport (8 hrs permit)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residency</th>
<th>Entry to Lebanon December 2012 and May 2013:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of entry visa: no visa required</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permit validity: one year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fees: free of charge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status: refugee</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Renewal: every 6 months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewal fees: $US200.00 per person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>School Fees: Government schools fees are paid for by the UNHCR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waiting List: Second in line (after Lebanese students)</td>
<td>School Fees: UNRWA paid for 6600 students to November 2014, the remaining study in Government schools but must pay $130.00 per student per year plus the costs books and uniform</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health</th>
<th>UNHCR provides a subsidy of up to 75% of fees to approved hospitals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment and medicine</td>
<td>UNRWA provides services to refugee who have found shelter within UNWRA camps the remaining 50% of Palestinian Refugees from Syria have no access to medical or health services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Not legally allowed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aid</td>
<td>Receive aid in different forms from local and international organizations (food vouchers, rent allowance, winter assistance, etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denied systematic access to aid from local and international organizations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid is limited to UNRWA’s monthly payment of $US20.00 per person (down from $US30.00)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civil registration</th>
<th>PRS don’t have access to civil registration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syrians in Lebanon have access to civil registration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Most PRS can’t renew their visas. Because they can’t afford to but also because new restrictions have now been placed on obtaining visas. This limits their freedom of movement as without papers they are arrested at checkpoints. This limits their ability to find work outside of the camps.*

**Schools sometimes have two shifts. Morning for Lebanese students and afternoon for Syrians. There have been many problems with bullying by Lebanese students. There have been discussions about mixing the shifts but it hasn’t happened yet.**

***Inside the camps many PRS are taking the jobs of PRL. PRS are also good entrepreneurs and have set up businesses inside the camps. This is causing social tension between the two groups.*
Even the very little remaining from UNHRWA may disappear soon. In an interview with Lebanon-based Palestine Today TV on 18/7/2015, Mr. Mateus Shamali; Head of UNRWA operations in Lebanon warned that the UNRWA’s aid to PRS may completely discontinue as of end of September 2015 due to the financial deficit (16).

These fears were echoed by Mr. Tammam Salam; the Lebanese Prime Minister at a press conference during his visit to Amman, Jordan. “UNRWA’s deficit will lead to the deterioration of its operations and services, something that will certainly have a dramatic impact on Palestinian refugee societies in Lebanon. Let me just give you one example: If UNRWA schools in Lebanon don’t start on time this year, 37,000 Palestinian students will find themselves on the streets, and the contracts of 2,000 teaching staff will be suspended”, said Mr. Salam at a press conference in Jordan on 12/08/2015. (17)

**PRS in Turkey**

*Due to the scarcity of information on PRS in Turkey, this part will highlight the Turkish policies towards PRS from Entry perspective only.*

_Estimated number of Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) currently in Turkey: unknown_

_Syrian refugees registered in UNHCR’s offices in Turkey: 1,805,255 (UNHCR July 2015) (18)_

With nearly 2 million Syrian refugees, Turkey has become the country that hosts the biggest Syrian population after Syria. This figure is testimony of the lenient entry policy for Syrians implemented by Turkey since the beginning of the crisis. This policy, however, excluded the PRS fleeing from the same war and for the same reasons. Strict no-entry regulations have been placed into effect in the Turkish land borders, sea ports and airports when it comes to PRS. That did not stop an unknown number of PRS from crossing the borders without visas to Turkey; a journey that cost some of them their lives. Raghad Abboud; a 17 year-old Palestinian female teenager from Yarmouk was killed when Turkish soldiers opened fire on a group of refugees while trying to cross on 10/08/2015. (19)

The no-entry policy towards PRS is so strict that there have been several reported cases of deportation from Turkish airports and seaports of those who took the risk and managed to travel to Turkey without visas- the last of which was last month. H. is a three-year-old daughter of a Palestinian-Syrian father and a Syrian mother. Her father was killed in 2014 in Damascus. When H. and her mother arrived on 9/7/2015 at the Mercin Port from Lebanon, the mother was granted a visa (given that she is Syrian) but the police insisted on returning H. to Beirut on the next available ship (H. is a holder of Palestinian travel document). H. was kept in detention from 4:00 pm to 1:00 am and was deported, with her mother who refused- of course- to leave her daughter, back to Lebanon (20).

Despite the above, there are no registered cases of deportation of PRS who entered Turkey “illegally”.
PRS in Jordan

Estimated number of Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) currently in Jordan: 15,000

Syrian refugees registered in UNHCR’s offices in Jordan: 629,000 (UNHCR June 2015) (21)

Though officially announced in January 2014, Jordan’s policy of non-admission for PRS was put into effect in the early days of the conflict and still continues to define Jordan’s policy towards PRS. This policy effectively permits only Palestinians who hold Jordanian national documents to enter Jordan from Syria. Mrs. F. A., a Syrian Palestinian from Yarmouk and a holder of a Jordanian passport, was permitted to enter but without her husband, sons and daughters who don’t have Jordanian documents. Mrs. A. eventually chose to stay with her family and fled to Egypt. Jordanian men married to non-Jordanian women can pass on the citizenship to their wives and children, this right is denied to Jordanian women with foreign husbands.

Nevertheless, small numbers of Palestine refugees fleeing the conflict in Syria continue to cross into the country, many through irregular and unsafe routes. Palestinians, who have made it to Jordan from Syria, unlike Syrian refugees, face ongoing risk of refoulement and live in great uncertainty. UNRWA assessed 111 cases in 2014 of refoulement, including many women and children. It is believed that the actual number is much higher, as many deportations are unreported (22).

The PRS in Jordan are a highly marginalized group, and according to the 2014 UNRWA reports, the majority struggle with limited income and livelihood opportunities. A significant number are in psychological need due to the trauma of conflict and displacement, as well as the ongoing risk of deportation.

PRS in Egypt

Estimated number of Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) currently in Egypt: 5,500

Syrian refugees registered in UNHCR’s offices in Egypt: 134,000 (UNHCR May 2015) (23)

The situation for the PRS is even worse in Egypt with the general opinion that Palestinian organisation Hamas helped to destabilise Egypt. The anti-Hamas and anti-Palestinian sentiment further developed after former Egyptian President, Dr. Mohamad Morsi’s was deposed. Hamas is seen as an arm of the Muslim Brotherhood and stands accused of numerous attacks and plots throughout Egypt (24).

“According to the politics run by the state ever since the late 1970s, Palestinians are made to seem either like terrorists or as an ungrateful group. The space for sympathy with the Palestinians, particularly for those living in Egypt, has really been toned down since then.” said Oroub el-Abed, an academic who wrote the book Unprotected: Palestinians in Egypt Since 1948.

The Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) in Egypt have no aid and no protection. UNRWA’s absence (UNRWA does not operate in Egypt) and UNHCR’s no-registration policy towards PRS have made these stateless people extremely vulnerable. With no local and international aid organizations stepping in to help, the only aid they receive is from the Palestinian Embassy in Egypt, this aid is both irregular and insufficient to cover the cost of accommodation and sustenance and exacerbate the feelings of insecurity, and thus PRS are denied even a semblance of normalcy.
Case 1

Mohammad was born in Yarmouk refugee camp in 1984. He is the grandson of Palestinians who sought refuge in Syria having been fled or been driven from their homeland of Palestine in 1948. In 2007 he married a Syrian woman, S. Al-Arour. A year later he became a father. Mohammad is a tailor and had permanent employment in a garment factory in Damascus. When the war started the dangers were immediate to Mohammad’s family, his wife is related to one of the ruling regimes most vocal opposition voices, Sheikh Adnan Al-Arour. Her daily life was impacted almost immediately, she was harassed whenever she had to go to any government institution and she started receiving anonymous death threats. At the same time the Yarmouk refugee camp was being shelled. Mohammad and his small family moved to the suburb of Jaramaneh in Damascus and he moved in with his widowed mother, four brothers and two sisters. Mohammad was in a constant state of fear, the fear was not only for his wife and child but also for the rest of his family, especially his brothers, whose ages range from 19 to 30. The men could be called upon at any moment to fulfil their mandatory military service for the Syrian regime or even worse, get kidnapped by the opposition forces who would require the same service. Each and every day Mohammad and his brothers would go out for work filled with the dread of the unknown but impending nightmare, the very real possibility of detention, kidnapping or death. In 2013 the family decided to leave Syria, they managed to get visitor visas to Egypt (this was possible until June of that year). In May of 2013 they arrived in Cairo to face the fate and hardships of unrecognised refugees. Despite their repeated efforts, they were denied registration as refugees by the UNHCR – this would not have been the case had they been Syrian. As there is no UNRWA office in Cairo, there is no international body that can provide them with financial, medical, educational help or any other form of support.

Despite a ban on working in Cairo, Mohammad and his brothers have had to work without permits to provide for their family, without the security of a permit or refugee status they are constantly being taken advantage of by their employers. Recently, Mohammad learnt that both his mothers and his home had been targeted and were completely destroyed. (25)

Case 2

Suleiman, aged 12, lives with his uncle, Mazen in Lebanon. Suleiman’s parents and brother, who had fled with him to Lebanon to escape the conflict in June 2013, returned to Syria in July 2013 to get new identity documents issued. According to Mazen the family members who went back to Syria were able to obtain their documents but were denied entry to Lebanon when they tried to return in August 2013. Despite trying many times, over several months, to re-enter Lebanon at the Masnaa border cross, they were refused entry by the Lebanese border officials. Mazen, who has spoken to Sulilman’s parents by phone, knew that the family have their papers in order but were denied entry because they are Palestinian refugees from Syria. They are now in Damascus, livening in a school that is being used as a shelter for internally displaced people. Mazen told Amnesty International: “I can’t work because I am injured and we don’t have enough for the rent. But this boy has no one else but me.” (26)
Hassina, aged 37, from Yarmouk in Syria came to Lebanon with her five children, who are aged between 14 and four years old, on 17 March 2014. They were able to leave Yarmouk when there was brief respite in the ongoing siege. Hassina’s husband and two elder sons remained in Syria. She was six months pregnant when she left Syria and she says that her children were suffering from hepatitis. Hassina first attempted to cross into Lebanon at the beginning of March 2014 but was denied access by the Lebanese authorities. She says that she was told by General Security that Palestinians from Syria cannot cross. Although Hassina had obtained authorization to leave Syria from the Department for Immigration and Passports she did not meet any of the post-August 2013 requirements however. She waited for six hours at the border before leaving to stay with some neighbours in a suburb of Damascus. Hassina and her five children then attempted a second time to cross the border in mid-March. This time they were helped by a UN worker and were able to cross successfully into Lebanon. Her husband and one son subsequently tried to join the family in April 2014, also having managed to leave Yarmouk. According to Hassina, the Lebanese authorities told them that, as Palestinians, they could not cross. The transit visa that Hassina received on entry has expired and she does not have legal status; she was unable to renew her visa. She currently lives in a camp in south Lebanon with her children. She told Amnesty International: “I am afraid to leave the camp because I have not renewed the permit. I cannot pay the fees, I can hardly afford the rent”. Hassina had her baby in a hospital in Lebanon in late May 2014, but has not tried to register the birth as she is too scared to leave the camp. (27)
Durable solution

International best practise for the resolution of refugee situations has been to resolve them in three principal ways: local integration, resettlement in third countries and voluntary repatriation (25).

For the Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS), the facts on the ground clearly show that local integration in Lebanon and Egypt and voluntary repatriation to Yarmouk are no longer possible. Resettlement in third countries is therefore the only way to reach a durable and humane solution to their plight. **However, without UNHCR registration, PRS have no legal basis upon which they can apply for off-shore humanitarian protection in a third country even though they are genuine applicants and worthy of protection.**

Conclusion

Currently, the UNHCR does not have an explicit mandate to provide international protection and seek durable solutions for all Palestinian refugees.

For seemingly technical and administrative reasons, the UNHCR has not been triggered into intervening for ex-Syria Palestinians thus leading to serious negative outcomes for those affected. This crisis has been deepened by insufficient interagency communication (e.g. UNRWA) and the xenophobic anti-refugee policies of host countries.

UNHCR, UNRWA and other United Nations agencies should establish a coordination mechanism for the exchange of documents, information, data and reports regarding their respective policies and operations. Such a mechanism would assist in the identification of specific gaps (in the short and long term) and help provide durable solutions in the international protection regime for Palestinian refugees.

**ASPIRE is willing and ready to participate in any future discussions around the issue of PRS and to share its expertise with both the UNHCR and UNRWA.**

For all the reasons detailed above, ASPIRE is calling upon:

1. UN Human Rights Council, UNHCR, and UNRWA to highlight the plight of PRS, as a special group with specific legal status within the Syrian crisis. This group had been subject to flagrant human rights violations during several crises, such as Lebanese civil war, Iraq crisis, and currently Syria crisis;

2. UNHCR to grant the Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) registration and protection;

3. Australia and other countries that are signatories to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees to observe their humanitarian and legal obligations to include Palestinian Refugees from Syria in their intake of refugees from Syria;

4. all neighbouring countries to stop their discriminatory policies towards PRS and treat them on equal footings with the Syrian refugees; and

5. all local and international aid organizations to include PRS in their Syria-related aid programs.
References

2. ASPIRE’s briefing document of Stateless Palestinian Iraqis, 2011
11. 2010 American University of Beirut survey
12. ASPIRE interview with UNRWA field workers
15. Information of this table are based on Interviews and surveys conducted by ASPIRE with a number of refugees
20. ASPIRE sources
25. ASPIRE interview
Special thanks

This report would not have been possible without the generosity of the refugee families who warmly welcomed our team in their homes, openly spoke to us about their problems and made our mission in host countries much easier.

ASPIRE also would like to thank Dr. Graham Thom from Amnesty International Australia for presenting the findings of this report at UNHCR’s annual meeting in Geneva (1-3 July 2015), as well as Mr. Mutasem Hayatla from UNHCR for his advisory support.