

**LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY**

Syrian Refugees and Lebanese Christians, Together Against the  
Turmoil

By

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A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in International Affairs

School of Arts and Sciences

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**Documents Submitted:**

Initial Protocol Application	Received 14 March 2014
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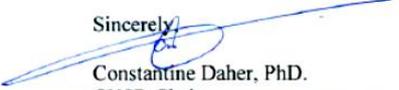
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# Syrian Refugees and Lebanese Christians, Together Against the Turmoil

Loubna Milad Abi Khalil

## ABSTRACT

Almost four years have passed since the Syrian conflict started. More than one million Syrians have officially taken refuge in neighboring Lebanon, a country of 4.2 million people. Lebanon's ability to host and support incoming refugees has been stretched to the limit. In fact, with the absence of a clear Lebanese refugee policy, Syrian refugees have self-settled all over Lebanon, mainly in the North and the *Bekaa*. Lebanese Christian communities, among others, have been shaken by this crisis and have been developing coping mechanisms to face the Syrian refugee influx to their towns and cities. The purpose of this paper is to explore these coping mechanisms, the impact of the massive presence of Syrian refugees in predominantly Lebanese Christian areas and the relation between the two parties. The paper concludes that the main reasons for tensions are mutual misperceptions leading to fears related to security and safety and that the Syrian refugees' presence can also bring some positive effects on those areas' socioeconomic situation. Finally, the paper also proves that despite the fatigue of the host community studied, there is still a space for social cohesion and mutual compassion, which is translated in personal and community-based initiatives.

Keywords: Syrian turmoil, Syrian refugees, Lebanese host community, Impact, Relation, *Batroun*.

# Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	VI
ABSTRACT.....	VII
Table of Contents .....	VIII
List of Tables .....	X
List of Figures/Charts .....	XI
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
1.1 Background and Context .....	1
1.2 Key definitions .....	9
1.3 Research Question.....	11
1.4 Structure .....	13
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	15
2.1 Theories of conflict analysis and resolution.....	15
2.2 Refugees and the diffusion of conflict .....	17
2.3 Syrian and Lebanese relations.....	21
2.4 The impact of the Syrian ongoing unrest on the Syrian population.....	23
2.5 Living conditions of Syrian refugees in Lebanon .....	24
2.6 Impact of the Syrian refugee influx on Lebanon.....	26
2.7 Previous refugee influx to Lebanon .....	35
2.8 Challenges for the Middle Eastern Christians.....	38
2.9 Relation between Syrian refugees and Christian host communities .....	41
2.10 The gap captured in the literature.....	42
Chapter 3: Research Methodology.....	43
3.1 The purpose of the research.....	43
3.2 Target groups and sampling .....	45
3.3 Instrumentation.....	47

3.4 Method of analysis .....	48
Chapter 4: Main Findings .....	49
4.1 Reasons for tensions .....	49
4.2 Coping mechanisms .....	59
Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations .....	65
Bibliography .....	76
Appendices.....	81
Appendix 1: Interview with Lebanese Christian host community in <i>Batroun</i> .....	81
Appendix 2: Interview with the Syrian refugees in <i>Batroun</i> .....	83
Appendix 3: Interviews with local figures involved in the Syrian refugee response in <i>Batroun</i> .....	84
Appendix 4: Raw data from interviews with Syrian refugees and members of the Muslim and Christian Lebanese host communities.....	92

## **List of Tables**

Table 1: Target groups sampled in the survey .....	51
Table 2: Raw data from interviews with Syrian refugees and members of the Muslim and Christian Lebanese host communities.....	85

## List of Figures/Charts

Figure 1: Map of the Lebanese Syrian borders .....	11
Figure 2: Distribution of the Registered Syrian Refugees at the cadastral level .....	13
Figure 3: Registered Syrian Refugees as of 17 February 2015.....	32
Figure 4: Profiles of 10 Syrian refugees interviewed .....	52
Figure 5: Profiles of 10 members of the christian host community interviewed.....	52
Figure 6: Profiles of the 10 members of the Muslim host community interviewed .....	52
Figure 7: The reason for tension between Syrian refugees and the Lebanese host communities .....	55
Figure 8: How do Syrian refugees feel around Lebanese .....	59
Figure 9: How do Christians interviewees feel about refugees .....	59
Figure 10: How do Muslim interviewees feel about refugees .....	60
Figure 11: Have you ever been involved in or heard about a violent clash between the host community and the refugees?.....	62

# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background and Context

The wave of popular unrest to demand freedom from authoritarian regimes came peacefully to Syria in 2011 after it started in Tunisia and expanded to many Arab countries. Nine months after peaceful protests, the wave turned into one of the most violent and prolonged civil conflicts that the region has witnessed in its recent history.

The protests started in the city of *Daraa* in March 2011, when Syrians took to the streets to claim their freedom and demand democratic representation and to put an end to oppression, mismanagement and corruption. After the unwillingness of President *Bashar Al-Assad* to implement the demanded reforms, protests began to take other forms and soon after, military clashes began pitting a fractioned militarized opposition to the national army. What was described as a civilized expression of opinion soon turned into a violent civil war, which is still ongoing due to the resilience of the government, the determination of opposition forces, and the sustained interference of external, regional major powers (International Crisis Group, 2013).

The conflict erupted in all the Syrian governorates; however, it was more violent in some due to their geopolitical locations, sectarian composition, and adherence to the regime or to the armed opposition groups. As a result, this conflict has caused the death of hundreds of thousands of civilians and the displacement both internally and externally of almost seven million refugees because of lack of access to security and

safety in their homeland in addition to lack of access to basic needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare. In fact, according to the Regional Refugee Response Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal (2014), current estimates show that more than 200,000 people were killed, and 6.5 million people displaced among whom, more than 2 million have taken refuge in neighboring countries. Eighty one percent of the refugees who fled into the five biggest hosting countries are living in cities and villages rather than in camps (UNHCR, 2013). In fact, the Syria has been devastated by this conflict and the refugee crisis that resulted is said to be the most enduring and challenging crises that the world has faced in recent history.

The conflict has also affected neighboring countries like Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, and Egypt who are still carrying a heavy burden for hosting refugees fleeing Syria. The impact refugees have had on local communities has differed from one country to another according to several criteria such as the proximity to the conflict areas, the nature of the established borders with Syria, the foreign policy of the neighboring governments, their sectarian composition, the types of regimes in these countries and their response to the Syrian crisis. In this respect, many reasons have led Lebanon to be the most affected country by this crisis.

First, the proximity and the geographical nature of the Lebanese-Syrian borders are a source of contention between Lebanon and Syria. As indicated on the map, Lebanon shares common borders with



Figure 1: Map of the Lebanese Syrian borders

Syria in the North (*Abboudiyeh* and *Areeda*), in the *Bekaa (Al-Masnaa)*, and in the

South (*Shebaa*), not to mention the unofficial border crossings of *Wadi Khaled*, *Arsal* and many others. In fact, the poorly defined border is conducive to Syrian incursions into the Lebanese territories. In addition, the no-man's land of the border region is a conduit for arms and human smuggling, and a source of terrorist attacks. Not only does Lebanon share borders with Syria but the two countries share a complex history together, including Syria's government direct presence in Lebanon for 30 years.

Second, Lebanon's fragile demographic composition makes it vulnerable to external tensions. Lebanon is a country built on confessional divisions whereby it is made of 18 religious sects dominated by Sunnis and Shiites, Christians and Druze, in addition to other minorities such as Jews, Baha'is, Buddhists, and Hindus. Even though these communities share broad religious beliefs, they are all fighting for their existence and each has a special perception of the country, the government, and the institutions. For that, their loyalties are not for their country first but for their confessions, parties and social groups. This delicate dynamic has been the main driver to many conflicts that erupted during the country's history and are still dragging to our current era, and allows for the diffusion of external conflicts and foreign political interference.

Adding to this, Lebanon's fragile political system is struggling to achieve cohesion and stability. Until this day, the Lebanese government is assumed to be adopting a "dissociation" policy, which means that no political party should be engaged in any form in the Syrian conflict. However, this has not been exactly the case and many political parties are involved in a way or another in the Syrian war. In fact, the Lebanese parliamentary system is shaped around confessional ranks. At the end of the 1975-1990 war, at the time when Christians were a majority, the different groups signed the *Taif* Agreement which divided the legislative, executive and representative

powers between the different sects, with the President of the republic being a Maronite, the Prime Minister a *Sunni* and the Speaker of the Parliament a *Shiite*. Since 1932, Lebanon's demographics have changed a lot; however, there was no agreement on the need to undertake a new count that would really reflect the current composition of the Lebanese population. Currently, the two predominant political coalitions sharing the governance of Lebanon are on one hand, March 8 coalition which includes *Hezbollah*, *Amal* (Shiites), the Free Patriotic Movement and his allies (Christians), Druze based and communist parties, and on the other hand, March 14 coalition including parties the Future movement (Sunni), *Al-Kataeb* and the Lebanese Forces (Christians), and other independent parties.<sup>1</sup>

This political imbalance and corruption resulted also in unequal distribution of resources and government services and in widening the gap between social classes whereby the middle class population is decreasing, while the poor and wealthy are increasing. Economic development is being constantly challenged by the ongoing political instability and the conflict of interest among political parties. In fact, many Lebanese governorates such as *Bekaa* and North experience lack of access to economic opportunities, development, government infrastructures, and services that causes internal tensions and divisions making the country even more exposed to external instabilities.

Moreover, Lebanon's economy is considerably developed. Private and public services such as education, healthcare, and banking have high standards and have a very good reputation in the MENA region. However, not only does Lebanon share borders with

---

<sup>1</sup>"The March 8 coalition have seen the light after the big 2005 demonstration against Israel whereas the March 14 coalition is named after the 2005 demonstration against the Syrian presence."

Syria, but the two countries are also closely connected through geopolitics, commerce and trade and as the conflict led to the obstruction of many trade routes the Lebanese economy was largely affected (Traboulsi, 2014).

This long history of political strives, tensions and stereotypes is another element that exacerbates the current vulnerability of the Lebanese political system whereby the impact of the Syrian turmoil can pull Lebanon into civil unrest. In fact, tensions between Lebanese and Syrians go back to more than 30 years. In 1976, Syrians were asked to intervene in Lebanon to stop the war between the Palestinians and the Lebanese right wing, mostly Christian parties. Syria proceeded to consolidate its grip on Lebanon's political system despite the resistance of many political and popular elements of the Lebanese society. A popular unrest following the assassination of former Prime Minister *Rafiq Al-Hariri* resulted in the end of Syria's military presence in Lebanon in 2005. However, the Syrian government still has significant influence over many political segments of Lebanon. Over the years, the existence of the Lebanese-Syrian labor accords has facilitated the migration of Syrian job seekers from rural villages to Lebanese coastal towns and cities to take on menial jobs, mostly in agriculture and construction. This led to associating the Syrians with either military officers or menial workers with low social standing (Traboulsi, 2014).

The situation in Lebanon is deteriorating with the presence of a large number of Syrian refugees in addition to refugees from other nationalities. In fact, as the Syrian civil war continues into its fourth year, Lebanon had no other choice but to host since 2012, one of the biggest refugee influxes. As of the writing of this paper, and based on UNHCR data sharing portal, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has registered almost 1,197,140 Syrian refugees in Lebanon (as of 14 April 2015), these

large numbers add to the already tense and complex socioeconomic and political situation of the country.

In fact, refugees are putting a strain on the country's resources and infrastructures. According to the 2013 UN Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees, "72% of refugees are unable to meet their basic needs". During the last quarter of 2014, humanitarian workers from 23 agencies conducted a participatory assessment with 1000 refugees. Some of the main concerns reported were related to health, shelter, education, and protection. To start with, refugees are not able to afford chronic medication and health services that are very costly, sometimes unavailable and lack specialized services. They are also facing difficulties in paying rent and finding shelters with good conditions, hygienic and have access to clean water. Moreover, they are not being able to access education services and get enrolled in schools because of lack of clear and updated information on the services, the limited capacities of schools and the difficulties to cope with the Lebanese curriculum. Finally yet importantly, refugees shared important protection issues faced by vulnerable groups. They include isolation of women for cultural and traditional reasons, violence against women and girls, the increasing rates of street children and child labor, sense of marginalization and lack access to services for older persons and persons with disabilities who experience also limited access to livelihood opportunities (REACH, 2014).

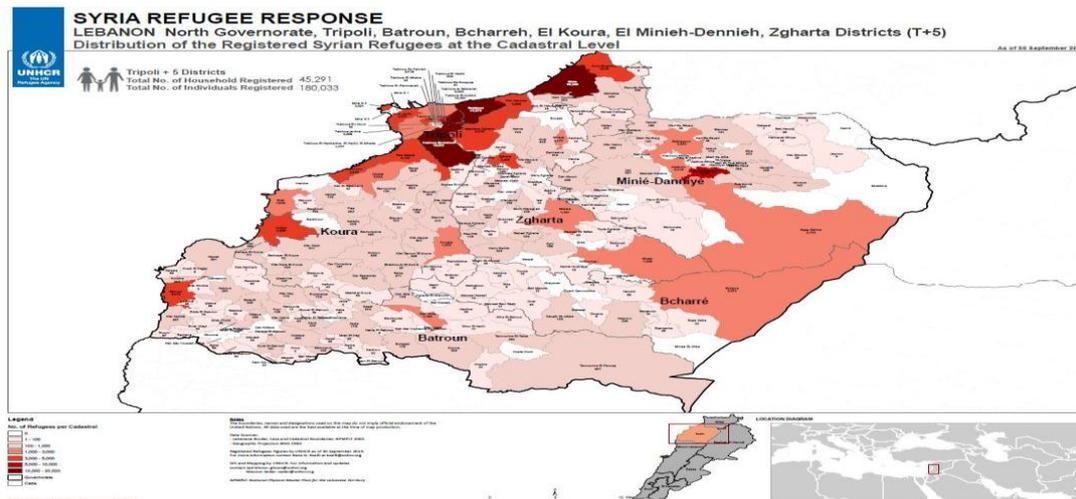


Figure 2: Distribution of the Registered Syrian Refugees at the Cadastral Level (2014)

Lebanese regions and communities are experiencing the impact of the Syrian crisis differently because they have different socioeconomic, political, and religious characteristics. As illustrated in the above map, while Beirut and its suburbs remain untouched, the security of bordering villages and the socio-economic conditions of economically vulnerable villages are deteriorating in the *Bekaa* and the North. In fact, according to the Syria Regional Refugee Response Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal, the majority of Syrian refugees comes from predominantly religiously Sunni villages in Syria and settled in Sunni dominated regions in Lebanon, namely in the *Bekaa, Beirut and North of Lebanon*. As such, Christian communities among others, are facing numerous challenges for hosting refugees but are more vulnerable due to different factors further discussed in the paper.

In the absence of a clear legislation and government policies as well as with deep political divisions, Lebanese host communities that are hosting a massive number of refugees are barely coping with the situation that is affecting their socio-economic well-being and infrastructure.

As the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports show, the host communities of the neighboring countries affected by the flood of refugees have developed different coping mechanisms to respond to the crisis. Some are positive such as hosting refugees, offering public spaces for shelter and distribution of assistance, and some others are negative such as isolating themselves and their children from the refugees, imposing curfews, practicing violence etc...

As such, Christian communities in the North, Beirut, and Mount Lebanon are facing numerous challenges in hosting refugees due to different factors further discussed in the paper. In fact, Christian communities in Lebanon have been developing coping mechanisms to face the Syrian refugee influx to their towns and cities. Given the important role of Lebanese Christian communities in the political, economic and cultural spheres in Lebanon, the focus of this study will be on the Christian community's response and situation in the wake of the Syrian uprising. Such analysis can help in getting a better picture of the ramifications of the Syrian refugee crisis in the region. The case study will focus on the area of *Batroun*, a coastal Lebanese city located 50 km north of the capital Beirut, and 29 km south of Tripoli. "*Batroun* is the official center of its *caza* with a population of around 20,000" (Municipality, 2014); According to statistics done by the municipality of Batroun, the city is currently hosting more than 2,000 Syrian refugees, which represents 10% of its population.

The purpose of this paper is to show and study "the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis" on the Lebanese Christian host community, the relation between the Syrian refugees and the host community in Lebanon, and the different coping mechanisms used by both Lebanese Christians and Syrian refugees. It takes into consideration the historical, socioeconomic, and cultural/ethnic factors proposed by the literature adding

to them the issue of stereotypes and misperceptions. This paper proves that despite the fatigue of the host country is experiencing, and acknowledging the negative coping mechanisms that the Christian host community is undertaking, there is still a lot of compassion between refugees and host communities, and this compassion is translated into personal and community-based initiatives that will be also developed further.

## **1.2 Key definitions**

As the focus of this thesis is on refugee communities and local host communities, mainly Christians, it is important to provide a definition of the key terms, which contributes to a better understanding of the context.

### **1.2.1 Refugees**

To start with, it is useful for the common understanding of the subject to define some key words that will be used throughout the paper. The 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of refugees and its 1967 Protocol defines a refugee as a person who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (UNHCR, 1978). This definition does neither include the internally displaced people (IDPs) who have not crossed international borders, nor the purely economic migrants, although they usually share the same challenges and living conditions. Refugees are usually victims of unwanted violence due to civil or international wars, authoritarian regimes, discrimination, and racism (UNHCR, 2013).

### 1.2.2. Religious Minorities

According to a definition offered in 1977 by Francesco Capotorti, Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, a minority is: “A group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members, being nationals of the State, possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language.” (OHCHR, n.d.)

As suggested by Albert Hourani: “Religious minorities in the Middle East who are non-Sunni Muslims but are ethnically or culturally Arab are mostly Christian Communities (Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Copts, Maronites, Latins, Protestants and the various Muslim heterodox sects notably *Shi'is*, *Alawis*, Druze and *Ismail'ilis*”( Moshe, 1999).

However, although all groups in Lebanon are technically minorities, Christians perceive themselves differently. They believe that without them, there would not have been a Lebanon and without Lebanon the destiny of Christians in the Middle East would have been different. In other words, Christians do not see themselves like in other countries in the region where they are a minority, but rather as the essence of the country and its main independence protector. Cardinal Nasrallah Sfeir put the question in sharp relief: “Without a strong Christian presence in government, he asked, what would be the incentive to maintain an independent Lebanon?” (Catholic Herald, 2014). Furthermore, at the conclusion of an inter-faith summit held in Bkerke on March 30, 2014, the religious leaders emphasized, “the Christian presence plays an essential role in the identity of the region and predates Islam by several centuries”

(Catholic Herald, 2014).

In fact, in Lebanon and until recently most Christian children were taught that Lebanon is a Phoenician and a western oriented nation. Many Christians believe that they are Lebanese and not Arabs. In other words, for many Christians, Lebanon cannot be understood using the traditional minority's definition.

### **1.2.3 Communities**

“Communities are units of belonging whose members perceive that they share moral, aesthetic, expressive, or cognitive meanings, thereby gaining a sense of personal as well as group identity. In turn, this identity demarcates the boundary between members and non-members. Communities therefore are constructed symbolically through an engagement with rituals, signs and meanings; they provide a container within which individual members negotiate meanings and construct and re-construct different kinds of social relationships over time” (Kennedy & Roudometof, 2001).

### **1.3 Research Question**

The increasingly volatile situation and the difficult refugee crisis in Lebanon, which represents a heavy burden on the host communities, have led me to pose the following research question:

What are the main elements of the relation between the Lebanese Christian host community and the Syrian refugees in Lebanon? Based on the study's findings, which are limited to *Batroun* area and the year 2014-2015, the paper will explore the nature of the relation between the Christian host community and the Syrian refugee community. Thus, a specific focus will be on analyzing levels of tolerance and

sympathy towards the Syrian refugees' situation. This analysis will uncover any deeply rooted feeling of insecurity, which may go back to many reasons including the difference of cultures between a mostly Sunni refugee population and a Christian host community, the scarcity of resources, the fear of conflict escalation, and its diffusion into the Lebanese territories in addition to other historical factors. The paper will also help define some of the coping mechanisms that the Christian host community is using.

The sources of tensions explored in the present paper can be summarized as follows: Existing tensions between the host and refugee communities, competition over resources such as housing, competition over jobs, development aid distribution, social services, education and health, bearing in mind that Lebanon suffered from poor resource management and service delivery even before the influx of refugees. In addition to differences in the identity and social practices such as marriage, family, culture, traditions, and religiosity and the increasing risks of violence erupting due to a lack of community cohesion, high levels of unemployment among young men and women, and mounting frustration among host communities who feel neglected in the face of constant support exclusively targeting refugees.

As important as the destabilizing factors are, some elements have been sources of stability and social cohesion, such as existing social ties that have long linked host and refugee communities, shared interests, trade and commerce relations that implicate opportunities for shared income generation and profit, positive stereotypes in addition to mutual empathy.

## 1.4 Structure

The present thesis starts with the introduction, which gives a brief overview of the general situation of the Syrian conflict and the Syrian refugee influx to Lebanon, explaining the rationale of the choice of this subject and an overview of the objective of such a study. It also presents the structure of the thesis and briefly goes about describing each of its parts.

Afterwards, the literature and historical overview delves deeper into the subject by tackling the issue of the Christians in Lebanon, their history and the previous experiences with refugee influxes that Lebanon has faced throughout its history. In addition, reviewing the academic literature on the impact of refugee influxes on host communities helps in understanding the dynamics of the relation between those two parties.

The Research question and Methodology section presents the thesis statement and explains the relevance of this subject to the field in addition to the process adopted to collect the data, the number of interviews, the reason I chose *Batroun* as a location for my research and the challenges I faced while conducting my research. Moreover, I discuss the limitations of the findings based on the methodology used.

In the following part, the collected data from the desk review and from the conducted interviews is presented, explained, and analyzed. Data collection and analysis has three aims; first to develop a base of knowledge about the nature of the relation between the Christian host community and the Syrian refugee community, the second is to identify coping mechanisms that the Lebanese Christian community and the

refugee community are using to deal with the crisis and protect themselves and third to defend the thesis statement.

Finally, the last chapter of the thesis is important for it includes a summary of the findings and a conclusion. In this part, we will explore the lessons learned from the analysis of the findings and look for a way forward by giving some recommendations that address the issues raised.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

The following literature review is a summary of sources of information related to the topic. It is essential as it provides a handy guide to the understanding and analysis of the topic; it also provides a solid background for the thesis and points out the gaps in the literature. The literature tackles the impact of the conflict in Syria on the Syrian and Lebanese populations however; the literature review conducted for this thesis does not focus on the impact on Syria but rather on the Lebanon and the Lebanese Christian community. It starts with the role that refugees might play in diffusing conflict across borders and the impact of the Syrian refugee influx on the Syrian population. It further elaborates on the situation of refugees in Lebanon and their impact on Lebanon and the host community. Then it gives background information on previous refugee influx in Lebanon and the challenges for Middle East Christians and Lebanese Christians in particular.

#### **2.1 Theories of conflict analysis and resolution**

First, it is important to review some of the theories of conflict analysis and resolution that might be important to understand the nature of the conflict that may erupt between refugees and host communities and that can provide some practical recommendations for those communities. The main conflict theories that apply for the case of refugees and host communities are based on the individuals, society and culture. Herbert C. Kelman introduces a social-psychological approach to conflict analysis and resolution, which is relevant to existential conflicts relating to identity and ethnicities. It begins

by defining the nature of international conflict as a “dynamic process, shaped by changing realities, interests, and relationships between the conflicting parties”. Inter-state and inter-communities conflict is shaped by collective needs and fears which are related to ethnicity and nationality. According to Burton (1990), “conflict arises when a group is faced with non-fulfillment or threat to the fulfillment of basic needs, including not only material needs such as food, shelter, physical safety, and physical wellbeing but also psychological needs such as identity, security, recognition, autonomy, self-esteem, and a sense of justice”.

In order to resolve this type of conflict, the process should address the needs and fear of both societies, which are at the basis of the conflict. In order to get to a sustainable peace, solutions should enhance the welfare and development of both communities. It should also address psychological needs such as security, identity, recognition in a comprehensive way. Thus, the resolution of the conflict should come at the level of the individuals and human interactions which also includes building the capacity and awareness of individuals on problem solving and mutual empathy (Sandole, Byrne, Sandole-Starosteand, & Senehi, 2008). Inter-state conflict is basically an inter-societal conflict which necessitates not only a review of the military and political aspects, but also the socio-economic and psychosocial aspects so conflicts that “engage the collective identities and existential concerns of the adversaries require a process conducive to structural and attitude change, to reconciliation, and to the transformation of the relationship between the two societies” (Sandole, Byrne, Sandole-Starosteand, & Senehi, 2008).

Coming to conflict resolution, we explore an innovative perception of conflict resolution which is “interactive conflict resolution”. Professor Ronald J. Fisher is a

political scientist who is known for his involvement in many dialogues and workshops on conflict resolution and who has been very innovative in introducing new ways of resolving conflicts between adversaries. One of which is the theory of interactive conflict resolution which is a term coined by Fisher and which refers “in the first instance to the involvement of unofficial yet influential representatives of parties engaged in destructive conflict in small group, problem-solving discussions which are facilitated by a third party panel of social scientist-practitioners. On a broader scale, the term is used to denote any facilitated face-to-face activities engaging antagonists in communication, training, education, or consultation that promotes collaborative conflict analysis and problem solving to address the basic human needs of the parties” (Fischer, 1997). This theory involves many unofficial processes that can be useful to solve inter-communities and inter-personal conflicts.

As mentioned in the findings, refugees and members of the host communities prefer not to be involved in conflicts and try to manage their differences and tensions through third party negotiations and legal pathways which are referred to in the theory of interactive conflict resolution. This can also be a lesson learnt for other communities experiencing similar tensions.

## **2.2 Refugees and the diffusion of conflict**

The UN former Secretary General Kofi Annan stated: “No war leaves the neighboring countries untouched... What often begins as an internal dispute over power and resources can quickly engulf an entire region” (Annan, 2011).

Civil conflict means that clashes and tensions and their resulting impact are limited by the concerned state’s territory however, politics are not bound by territorial limitations

but rather are interconnected whereby certain instability in one state can largely affect another. The human costs of civil war and state persecution may not be limited to the country itself, but may create significant externalities or spillover effects that jeopardize interstate as well as intrastate relations.

In the article “Refugees and the Spread of Civil War” by Idean Salehyan and Kristian Gleditsch, the authors explore the effects of a civil war in one country on another spatially proximate. Civil wars can spread across boundaries through four basic causal mechanisms. First, the transnational ethnic ties engender the sense of solidarity among ethnic groups that will mobilize in one country to support their ethnic kin in another. Second, the so-called “demonstration effect” might push groups in a country to identify with the claims of their counterparts in another. Third, is the external effect of civil war. Due to the decline of investments related to instability or the obstruction of trade exchange, the neighboring countries of the country in civil war suffer from economic recession. In addition, the spread of diseases is one of the most important public health issues in civil wars. Last but not least is the huge and rapid refugee flows caused by population movement and the difficulty to deal with them. This can influence the ethnic composition, the security and the political stability of the neighboring country and the region at large (Salehyan and Skrede, 2006).

The article “Civil Wars and Criminality: The Spillover of Violence” by Miguel Carreras discusses the negative externalities of civil wars and the effect of refugees on the increase of crime rates. Miguel Carreras points out several mechanisms in which population movements and refugees can destabilize their host countries (Carreras, 2012). These include ethnic antagonism, as refugees can affect the balance of power in the host country. They can also be a source of socioeconomic problems because

they compete with the locals on jobs and scarce resources and become a burden on the host country that has to assure for them adequate living conditions including shelter, food, transportation, medical supplies, jobs, and schools among others... Moreover, the article sheds light on the issue of social values that has not been tackled. In fact, in an environment of disorganized social values, refugees might witness psychological problems and pathologies that can also cause criminal behaviors. According to Carreras's article, the host community faces problems to tolerate and socially integrate refugees, which leads to a feeling of hostility and resentment between the two counterparts. As much as the host community resents refugees because of competing interests or political, ethnic, and social differences, refugees also perceive the first party as their aggressor and might use violence to protect themselves from their threat (Carreras, 2012). The author also shows a very important hypothesis about the economic aspect of the criminal behavior. Usually, the only means for vulnerable groups to achieve their goals and satisfy their basic needs in the case of deprivation is the criminal behavior (Carreras, 2012).

The article "Large Refugee Populations, Resource Scarcity, and Conflict" shows the effect of demographic patterns on conflict. The author Heidrun Bhoen stressed that the conflict, due to a security situation that is unstable, is increased by the densely populated regions especially in refugee camps. The article delves into the problems of geographical distribution of refugees. The settlement pattern is a factor that defines when a conflict is generated by a refugee or not. Refugee flows and their effects change and vary depending on the settlement that a country may adopt and on the way that refugees are distributed in that country. That's why the article shows that a disaggregated approach towards refugees has to be applied and their settlement

patterns have to be taken into consideration to define the mechanism of conflict related to refugees (Bohnet, 2012).

However, an important factor in refugees' conflicts that are diffused especially in the Middle East region known for its ethnic diversity and sectarian clashes is the ethnic composition of refugee flows. Refugees who share the same ethnic kinship with a politically marginalized group may support that group in the host country and could affect the balance of power due to their demographic size that will pose a threat to the group in power and may lead to a conflict. On the other hand, when refugees settle in communities that are not similar to their sectarian background, this can cause tensions between the two communities who might be carrying past fears that may lead to the diffusion of conflict. When the host country is ethnically diverse just like the sending countries' composition, this can increase the threat. For that, "a large influx of ethnic kin refugees of an excluded group increases the risk of conflict in the host country taking into consideration the ethnic composition of that country and the receiving mechanisms that it adopts" (Ruegger and Bohnet, 2011).

Refugees' flows create both intra-state tension and inter-state conflicts that could eventually lead to war. The attacks committed by the insurgents on bordering countries do violate international law and its restrictions thus resulting in interstate conflict. In addition, the sending state might attack the receiving state in retaliation for protecting their political opponents and for encouraging refugee militarization. Thus, the support for militant activities and the existence of external rebel bases among refugee communities are likely to escalate into international hostilities (Salehyan, 2007).

With that being said, the literature proposes that protecting vulnerable populations from violence should be a priority in order to prevent tensions between the host community and the refugees. The international community has long focused on responding to the humanitarian needs of civilians who are victims of wars however; there are bigger security challenges for the states and refugees themselves that powerful countries should also address. Closing the borders and denying access of civilians can be also an exacerbating factor for diffusing the conflict. For that, instead of being caught in responding to wars implication, states must take measures to prevent civil unrests of erupting (Salehyan, 2007).

### **2.3 Syrian and Lebanese relations**

As mentioned earlier, what made Lebanon vulnerable to the Syrian conflict and its consequences is the complex history of their relation and existing agreements between Lebanon and Syria. Thus, a brief overview of this history after the end of the French mandate, and during, and after the Lebanese 1975-1990 war helps to understand the existing dynamic.

To start with, after the end of the French mandate, Lebanon became a sovereign country in 1943. Since then, Lebanon and Syria agreed that there was no need for diplomatic relations and rather a relationship of unity and historical linkages.

During the Lebanese 1975-1990 war the Syrian military was asked by the Lebanese government to intervene directly in Lebanon as a peacemaking force. That presence continued until 2005. During those years, 3 major agreements were signed between the two countries:

First, the Taif Accord in October 1989 was meant to put an end to the Lebanese civil war and gradually bring to an end the Syrian interference on presence on Lebanese territories. This accord largely affected the Lebanese sovereignty and practically gave greater influence to the Syrian government, who was reluctant to see it fully implemented, on Lebanon.

Second, The Treaty of Brotherhood, Coordination and Cooperation (BCC) in April 1991 aimed at ensuring the highest level of coordination and cooperation on all levels including political, cultural, military, and security and it stated “that the two Syrian and Lebanese governments via their joint committees will decide on the re-deployment of Syrian military troops in Lebanon”.

Third, the Defense Pact signed in September 1991 had forbidden all activities in the areas of politics, military, and national security that may damage the other nation (Bassil, 2012).

In addition to the above-mentioned agreements that limited the freedom and sovereignty of the Lebanese state, the Syrian secret intelligence was known to have had several facilities in Lebanon. The Syrian military was responsible for holding Lebanese captives. Many disappeared and their destiny remains unknown till this day even though many human rights organizations have advocated for their release from Syrian prisons.

Moreover, Syria controlled Lebanese politics, economy and commerce through its direct and indirect intervention or through Lebanese actors and political parties.

Based on the brief review of the Lebanese-Syrian relations, Syria has been influencing and directly interfering in Lebanese affairs whether it is through diplomacy or through

military power; which have led many Lebanese to be affected and harmed by the Syrian troops and still have a bad memory of the Syrian presence (Bassil, 2012).

## **2.4 The impact of the Syrian ongoing unrest on the Syrian population**

The Syrian civil war affected the lives of uncountable Syrian families, caused atrocities, and deprived them from all basic needs including food, education, and medical services. It has also caused a severe damage to the country's infrastructure, cultural image and economy.

### **2.4.1 The Syrian refugee influx**

With almost 7 million Syrians who have been displaced, which is one quarter of the Syrian population, the Syrian refugee crisis entails the harshest refugee tragedies so far with its magnitude and time stamp. More than 40 percent of Syrians are currently high risk cases in need of humanitarian assistance, whether in their country of asylum or within the country of origin. According to UNHCR data, over 3.9 million Syrian refugees have sought refuge in neighboring countries and North Africa. In addition, more than 200,000 Syrians have sought asylum in Europe, as of 26 April 2015 (UNHCR, 2015).

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, no country has been more affected and has shown greater hospitality than Lebanon. In 2011, with the outburst of violence, the outflow of refugees started to gradually increase reaching 175,000 in Lebanon in 2012, then over 700,000 in 2013, to reach 1,197,140 as of 14 April 2015. In addition to the Syrian refugees, Lebanon has been hosting 270,000 Palestinians with an additional 51,000 Syrian Palestinians who joined them with the Syrian crisis (UNHCR, 2015). Yet, unlike other countries, Lebanon rejected the creation of camps on its territories, which caused a greater burden on the refugee community.

Refugees in Lebanon are mostly women and children (over 70%), dispersed as follows: 411,011 in *Bekaa*, 284,263 in the North, 338,097 in Beirut and 138,894 in the South; the North being the second most populated district and the biggest hosting community in the country (UNHCR, 2015). In the below graph, the upper line represents registered refugees and the lower line represents refugees who are awaiting registration.

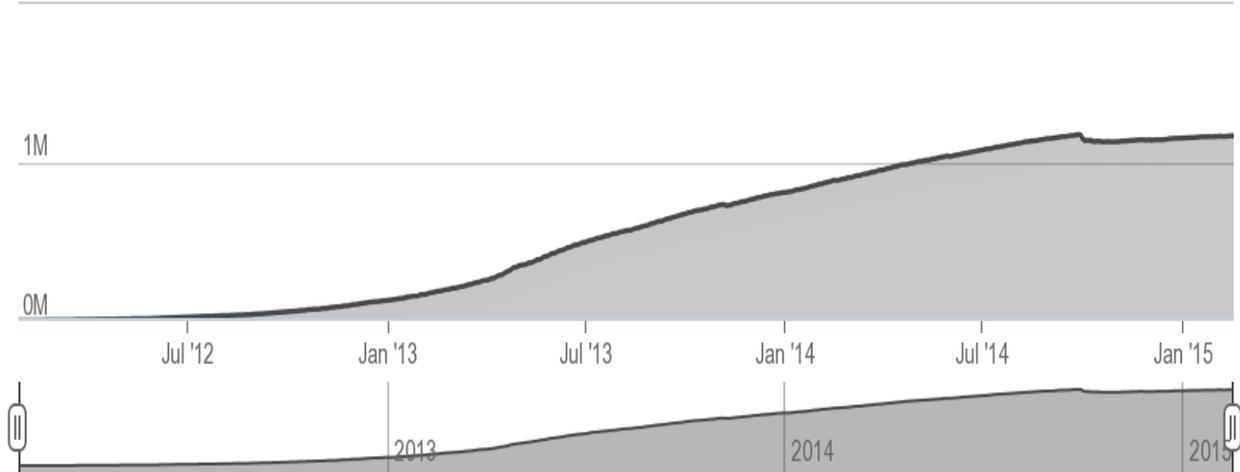


Figure 3: Registered Syrian Refugees as of 17 February 2015 (Syria Regional Refugee Response, 18 February 2015)

### 2.5 Living conditions of Syrian refugees in Lebanon

Given the widespread dispersal of refugees throughout Lebanon, reaching out to refugees and providing the needed services is critical. According to various surveys and assessments conducted in 2013, displaced Syrian refugees revealed a high exposure to several risks due to the lack of services in Lebanon and the high scarcity of resources. Those services included social and medical care, especially for disabled victims of war, and more importantly access to the job market. It is important to note that female heads-of-households are the most vulnerable faction in the displaced

Syrian community due to the heavy burden they endure, and the absence of family support to face their poor conditions. According to the 2013 UN Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees (VASyr), 72% of refugees are unable to meet their basic needs. Unfortunately, this situation resulted in a struggle among Lebanese locals and displaced Syrians to access jobs, services and resources. (UNHCR, 2014)

One of the first basic needs for refugees is the provision of shelter. As any other crisis, the refugees first settled with families or friends within the host community. In the case of Lebanon and the Syrian crisis, this was most evident first in North Lebanon and *Bekaa* governorates. With time, Syrians started renting very small spaces to host many families, but with limited capacity due to lack of jobs and low incomes. Nevertheless, local charities and international organizations provided significant support to the Syrian refugees in the area of housing. By the end of 2012, more than 6000 households were assisted with housing, whether by cash or shelter. Yet, refugees had to resort to informal and illegal settlements despite their inadequate conditions. With increasing influx of refugees and overstretched humanitarian assistance, the living conditions of asylum seekers became harder and difficult to cope with. Due to high rents, and exhausted savings, refugees began finding shelter more and more in informal tented settlements. Being forced to live in such settlements, poor unsuitable conditions, shared and overpopulated rooms, and the Syrian population is increasingly being subject to infectious diseases.

“It is important to note that the central Government prohibited any intervention for the enhancement of tent settlements across the country under a policy that hinders the creation of camps for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. As a result, the demand for shelter

has exceeded supply in many parts of the country with more than 60 per cent of Syrian refugees living in rented accommodation” (ILO, 2014).

Another crucial basic need is education. Despite the attempts of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) to help the Syrian children to access education by allowing them access to public schools, challenges remain evident. Public schools in the North including those in *Batroun*, are facing an unacceptable shift from being previously under-populated with a low ratio of students and teachers, to become congested and highly overcrowded. On the other hand, even with the availability of schools, the Syrian children are facing significant obstacles to access education, including transportation, different curricula, different languages and at times discrimination. Those factors are highly hindering the Syrian children’s learning abilities.

Just as shelter and education, the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) and the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) have granted the Syrian refugee community in Lebanon access to free primary healthcare services in public dispensaries, health centers and mobile clinics of various organizations, along with services offered by International and national organizations. A major example of an important medical service granted is the vaccination of children against measles and polio, which is being provided through campaigns by MOPH with partners such as UNICEF and UNHCR. Yet, in the case of the medical services, they remain insufficient to meet the needs and demands of the Syrian community. This is most significant in the reproductive health sector. In general, all these services are limited to the refugees registered with UNHCR.

## **2.6 Impact of the Syrian refugee influx on Lebanon**

The Syrian crisis is now in its fourth year with more than 1 million registered refugees dispersed in all the regions across Lebanon (UNHCR, 2015). Having multiple border lines with Syria with almost no effective monitoring of illegal border crossings since the beginning of the crisis, Lebanon has adopted an open-border policy which has made the country the biggest destination for Syrian refugees among other neighboring countries.

On the political level, the enduring and worsening Syrian conflict is having internal implications on the political stability by increasing political tensions among Lebanese. For instance, it has awakened latent conflicts among the major political alliances leading often to violent clashes in different locations. On a macro level, the Syrian conflict which is becoming more and more volatile has strongly affected trade routes by disrupting the established ones and interrupting the exchange of goods inward and outward of Syria (Bohnet, 2012)

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 2013, the International Crisis Group issued a report under the title: “Too Close for Comfort: Syrians in Lebanon” to examine the impact of the Syrian refugee presence on the stability and security of Lebanon. The report says it well in the following statement: “porous boundaries, weapon smuggling, deepening involvement by anti-Syrian regime Sunni Islamists on one hand and the pro-regime Hezbollah militia on the other as well as cross-border skirmishes, all atop a massive refugee inflow, implicate Lebanon more deeply in the conflict next door”(International Crisis Group, 2013). The big number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon can be seen in all the aspects of Lebanese daily lives including demographic change, dominating Syrian dialect, increased traffic, and the increasing prices of all services and goods. Moreover, the presence of refugees has largely affected the already deeply polarized

political situation in Lebanon. In fact, Lebanese perceive the conflict in Syria through a sectarian prism, so their attitude towards them is shaped by confessional beliefs. That is why, bearing in mind that most of the Syrian refugees are Sunnis, Muslims who are against the regime, they are viewed by a majority of Lebanese as agents of conflict and whose presence and demographic effect may have impact on security, safety and local politics. The International Crisis Group article “Too Close to Comfort” studies more closely the Lebanese sociopolitical situation affected by the Syrian conflict and the presence of refugees. Lebanon, as described in the article, is a country based on sectarianism, weak in terms of politics and economy, and vulnerable to external influence and conflicts. With that being said, the Lebanese state clearly does not have the means and mechanisms to deal with such a big refugee crisis in addition to a political disagreement on many primordial issues related to the refugees. The issues that have become source of conflict among Lebanese political parties, include providing camps or not, fulfilling the rights of refugees as mandated by international norms and conventions, and what position to take regarding the involvement of Lebanon in the Syrian conflict among others. As a result, Syrian refugees are dispersed in all the Lebanese governorates; *Sunni* refugees tend to settle in predominantly *Sunni* areas with whom they share a strong resentment towards the Syrian regime, while the other minorities including Christians and *Alawites* have settled in *Shiite* or Christian areas that are more supportive of the regime. This has led to the polarization of the country and to more tensions at the community level. Due to porous borders, the conflict has spread to bordering areas like the *Bekaa* and *Akkar* where Islamist militants are smuggling weapons and are participating in the fighting taking place in Syria and Hezbollah fighters on the other hand have been engaged with the Syrian army in their war against the Islamists militants groups (International Crisis

Group, 2013). However, it is undeniable that the atrocities recently committed by the Islamic State, an ultra-conservative and extreme group controlling large parts of Syria and Iraq, have brought the Lebanese communities closer to each other, resulting in a greater support of the Lebanese military. In fact, in a review of discourses and positions of Lebanese and regional actors between August and November 2014, done by the civil society knowledge center, most of the Lebanese parties have rallied around the army supporting it unconditionally and regardless of political affiliations (Civil Society Knowledge Center, 2014).

Not only was Lebanon affected by the political and security instability caused by the nearby Syrian conflict, but all its resources were drained by the big influx of the poor and destitute Syrian refugee population mainly coming from rural areas and most affected cities. As the decision to host refugees in tented settlements was strongly rejected by some political parties, refugees had to settle in urban settings in apartments, unfinished buildings, informal tented settlements, and collective shelters provided by humanitarian agencies. By that, Syrian refugees have reversed the Lebanese economy and have brought new challenges to the Lebanese government on the political, social, and economic level. However, it is important to mention here that although the overall impact of this influx is a negative one, the middle and upper class in Lebanon have benefited from the plentiful cheap labor force, the increase in local consumption, the deviation of the trade routes and the increase of exportation.

Syrian refugees are highly concentrated in the poorest regions in Lebanon such as the North, the South, and *Bekaa*. Host communities residing in those areas are experiencing very hard living conditions with increased poverty rates, lack of access to adequate health care and education services, absence of social protection and negative

coping mechanisms. REACH is an international non-governmental organization working in the Syrian refugee response as an implementing partner for UNHCR. REACH focuses on community development and mobilization, working alongside with other partners and the community to study the needs and vulnerabilities of the refugee and host communities. In this context, REACH conducted a study entitled “Host Community Vulnerabilities in Lebanon: Secondary Data Review” that explores the socioeconomic effect of the Syrian refugee crisis on the Lebanese host community (REACH, 2014). The key findings of the study indicate that Syrian refugees, who have crossed the million, are a burden on the Lebanese infrastructure. On a micro level, with the increasing number of refugees, there is an increasing need for public services that include health, education, transportation, and infrastructure and similarly support for the Lebanese household which are under the poverty line who are also suffering from the lack of services. Furthermore, what added to the frustration of the host community is the increase in the available labor force, which has resulted in increased competition in the labor market and affected the most vulnerable communities working mainly in agriculture and construction.

In fact, one of the quantitative studies found on this case is the “Development Management International’s Rapid Assessment of the Impact of Syrian Crisis on the Socioeconomic Situation in the North of Lebanon and the *Bekaa*,” conducted on 600 households. The results of the survey show that host communities do not have the capacities or the means to respond to the refugees needs “with an average of 7 or 8 Syrian refugees per receiving household and with some households receiving some 25 refugees simultaneously, 90 per cent of residents of the North and *Bekaa* have reported decreased incomes as a result of the crisis and 90 per cent of those who have lost incomes did not find any alternative sources of income.” The study clearly concludes

that Syrian refugees are not only a burden on host communities, but also a reason for the deterioration of the socioeconomic situation of vulnerable Lebanese who are also experiencing very low wages, and difficulties to access health and education services. The presence of refugees is putting a strain on the country's resources, capabilities, and infrastructures, which is also having implications on security, safety and social cohesion (UNHCR, 2012).

The international crisis group article provides more quantitative analysis of the effect of the Syrian refugee crisis on the rise of poverty in the most affected areas. In the North (53%), South (42%) and Bekaa (30%) in comparison with the country's poverty rate which increased by 28.5% which includes people living under the poverty line, thus earning less than 4 dollars a day and the ones who are earning even less than 2 dollars. "Per capita consumption in those regions is the lowest and inequality is the greatest compared with other governorates. The expenditure level of poor households is far below the poverty line and their per capita poverty deficit is 2.4 times that of the overall one" (International Labor Organization, 2013). The North, namely *Akkar* and *Minnieh*, is hosting 1/5 of the total refugee population however it hosts 46% of the extremely poor and 38% of the poor population.

Thus, both refugees and host communities are experiencing hardships in accessing their basic needs such as inability to provide decent shelter, food, and education due to unemployment and increase in prices. This results in negative coping mechanisms such as street children, child labor and abuse from employers, debt, mental health problems, domestic violence, early marriage and forced prostitution. For instance, the Ministry of Labor has increased its 2006 estimate of 100,000-child worker in the country to 180,027 (International Labor Organization, 2013).

In addition to poverty and access to basic needs, the lack of job opportunities and increased competition are sources of tensions between the two communities. The employment situation in Lebanon deteriorated due to the increase in labor supply and the already high numbers of Lebanese jobseekers looking for employment. In addition to that, Syrian workers are challenging the Lebanese workers mainly in construction and agriculture since they accept to work in the worst work conditions (longer hours, lower salaries and with no social security benefits). According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, FAO “the increase in the number of Syrian workers caused a reduction of 60 per cent in daily wages (International Labor Organization, 2013).

Competition in businesses is also another source of tension. Another source of income for Syrian refugees is illegal businesses. Such businesses are mostly run in the place of residence of the owner or at a public unused space. These illegal businesses tend to hire only Syrian workers,; thus, increases tensions with the Lebanese workers. Syrians are also selling their belongings that they had back in Syria at very low prices; thus, competing with the Lebanese market especially the artisan market. Self-employment especially in handicraft, semi-skilled jobs, taxi drivers is also challenging the Lebanese workers who have reported to be working less since the beginning of the crisis up until now and whose socioeconomic situation is deteriorating.

Furthermore, as a result for the big influx of Syrian refugees and the demographic changes that it implied as well as the injection of cash and food/cash vouchers by humanitarian agencies, there was an increase in the demand for goods and services. Considering the limited industrial and economic capacity of Lebanon, this has led to price increases. For instance, “the increasing demand for rented accommodation has

exerted an upward pressure on rental prices, estimated to have risen sometimes by more than 200 percent in a period of six months.” Prices of food, transportation, and water have also increased. “Development Management International has conducted an assessment in 2012 on the change of the prices of basic commodities including food, medicines, rent, utility bills, potable water, washing water and transportation showing that prices suffered a 15 per cent inflation rate in the region of the Bekaa and six per cent in the North”. Furthermore, both Lebanese and Syrians are suffering from a lack of access to cheap goods that used to be imported from Syria.

In addition, the increased demand on public services caused by the high influx of refugees is putting extra burden on already weak governmental capacities and services in terms of quality and availability. This is challenging the poor host communities who are barely finding a way to respond to their needs and achieve the minimum standards of living conditions.

In fact, with the outbreak of diseases, malnutrition and the increased population, demands for hospitalization and medicine have doubled since the beginning of the crisis. As reported in the UNFPA independent country program evaluation conducted in 2014, primary healthcare services are provided for the refugees almost for free at “the Ministry of Social Affairs social development centers and the primary health care centers of the Ministry of Public Health, in addition to some dispensaries run by international organizations and local NGOs” (UNFPA, 2014). Host communities are finding it very hard to access these centers due to their limited capacity and great refugee needs, so they have to go to private clinics, which are much more expensive. As a result, Syrian refugees are being perceived in this case as being the only ones

supported by humanitarian agencies and this is fueling tensions between the two communities.

With regards to education, the public school system in Lebanon has already a limited capacity, quality of the teaching, and the schools' infrastructure and materials are insufficient. With the limited resources of the Ministry of Education and the lack of support for public schools, the pressure exerted on the public schools being the main destination of Syrian students is causing tensions and competition with host communities. However, the increasing number of students at schools is contributing to the recruitment of Lebanese teachers and is also capturing the attention of the international donor community to support the public school system and provide funding for renovating the buildings, installing healthier sanitary equipment, providing school material and equipment, and recruiting and training personnel.

Indeed, Syrian refugees' presence is worsening the difficult living conditions of the Lebanese host communities, thus generating increased tensions. Refugees are putting a strain on local capacities, the environment and the government's services and infrastructures. This, along with the increased humanitarian attention towards Syrian refugees is severely affecting the poorest communities that already suffer a high level of unemployment, deprivation, and lack of resources.

Despite the dominating negative impact of the crisis, it has some positive implications mainly on trade, consumption, and labor market that are bringing benefits to the Lebanese entrepreneurs who constitute the middle and upper class, and who are hiring low-wage Syrian labor. Unfortunately, this is pushing Lebanese workers to lower their requested salaries and opt for less work conditions. Furthermore, the Syrian crisis is serving the Lebanese trade and commerce sector. For the first time, Lebanon

is having a positive balance with Syria in terms of imports and exports at a time when the Syrian industry is not functioning well anymore and Syria needs to import goods from neighboring countries (Bohnet, 2012).

## **2.7 Previous refugee influx to Lebanon**

In order to better understand the rationale behind the relation between the Christian host community and Syrian refugees, a flash back to previous experiences with refugee influx could help in getting a comparative view of the case, starting with the Armenian, Palestinian and then Iraqi influxes.

### **2.7.1 Armenians**

Armenians are present in Lebanon for over a century. While no census has been made for a few decades, because the numerical balance between Christians and Muslims in Lebanon is seen as volatile subject, it is estimated that there are more than 200,000 Lebanese of Armenian origin in Lebanon. Before the Lebanese 1975-1990 war, the number of Lebanese-Armenian was higher, but a large portion of its population emigrated. Prior to 1975, Beirut was a thriving center of Armenian culture with multiple media productions which were exported to the Armenian diaspora. Today, Armenians live in different parts of Lebanon. The Lebanese welcomed the Armenians with open arms as they were Christians and were thought to bring some balance to the demographic composition of the country; they were given the Lebanese nationality and their full civil and political rights. Today, the Lebanese-Armenians are allocated six seats in the Lebanese Parliament (Boujikianian, 2005)

### **2.7.2 Palestinians**

Palestinian refugees are considered as “persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict.” According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) estimates, Lebanon is hosting the highest number of Palestinian refugees in the Middle East which is equal to ten percent of its own population. Most of the refugees are living in camps and suffer from very bad living conditions such as poverty, unemployment and poor shelter conditions mainly because they do not have as many rights as the Lebanese citizens neither as other refugees as they are not formally citizens of another state. Based on the Cairo agreement, Palestinians were given the right to be armed and organized inside the camps. Lebanese right-leaning Christian political groups considered the mostly Sunni Palestinians as a military and demographic threat up to the end of the 1975-1990 war. With the coordination between the Lebanese government, the PLO and UNRWA, Palestinians are now more organized and have become integrated with the local communities. But still, the Lebanese community is being reluctant and cautious vis-à-vis the Palestinian refugees due to the memories related to the war and the heavy burden the Palestinians are putting on the country (UNRWA, n.d.). The continued presence of large quantities of weapons in the camps that are not under the Lebanese government’s control is another area of concern to many.

### **2.7.3 Iraqis**

Iraq suffers from conflict and crisis since it became a republic in 1958. In 2003, the United States of America led a military intervention to remove the longstanding regime of Saddam Hussein. As any other war, the Iraqi crisis has led to the death and

displacement of a large part of its population mainly to big cities in neighbor Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. The influx of the Iraqi refugees has reached its highest levels after the 2006 bombing of *Al-Askari* Mosque in *Samarra*, a city near the capital. The main concern in Lebanon was the political and socio-economic ramification of such exodus; for that, and as the Lebanese government did not ratify the 1951 convention which states the hosting country's responsibility to protect asylum seekers on its own territory, it was not easy for the Lebanese state to accept the integration of Iraqis however, the Lebanese community responded with empathy towards the Iraqis and their cause, which led to stable diplomatic relations with the state of Iraq. In fact, the international protection response to the refugee crisis is an example of the global solidarity in face of humanitarian tragedies. Without the international support to the Lebanese government whether through funding initiatives and providing technical and operational support through UNHCR, Lebanon could have not responded to the large needs of a big refugee population (Crisp, Janz, Riera & Samy, 2009). It is also worth to highlight the variation of experiences between Iraqi refugees in the different Lebanese regions according to their sectarian predominance. For instance, in the eastern suburbs of Beirut and others in the southern suburbs, the Iraqis experienced stronger social support and a sense of community as they lived close to each other and identified themselves with the Christian community. As for the Iraqis in the southern suburbs, they are facing many challenges especially because of their legal status and the tight security measures in the area, so they prefer to stay hidden and are more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse from landlords and employers. That is why they suffer from psychological problems such as anxiety, suicide attempts, and depression. (AUB Faculty of Health Sciences, 2011).

## **2.8 Challenges for the Middle Eastern Christians**

Before exploring the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on the Christian communities, a background on the challenges faced by the Middle Eastern Christians and the Lebanese in particular helps to understand the elements of the relationship between Syrians and Lebanese Christians in general. With the collapse of the bipolar world system and due to the effect of globalization, many types of communities were left to fight for themselves and amongst themselves. In the name of religions and nationalities, wars have been fought which engendered the displacement of those communities creating “transnational ethnic communities (Kennedy & Roudometof, 2001). Those migrant communities succeeded in adapting themselves to the customs and demands of the host communities because they feared to appear as culturally different and as such to be subject to discrimination. The social anthropology, psychology, and historical theories tackle the issue of nationalism and the dominance of the nation-state policy over religion. Therefore, religion must come to terms with the state and should not encourage loyalty to some wider community of religionists. If the nation-state fails to absorb the various religious groups, it will encourage them indirectly to establish their own non-state organizations inside the state or to migrate outside their states. Thus, while the literature speaks about religious groups being attached to a certain territory, these communities are often concerned with their detachment from their territory because they fear persecution (Rex, 1996).

To delve more into the situation of the Middle Eastern Christians and in particular the Lebanese Christian community, the following sources explain how challenging it is for the Middle Eastern Christians to overcome the demographic changes and the power struggle between the different religious communities.

In relation with the case study described in the book of Moshe Ma'oz "Middle Eastern Minorities between Integration and Conflict", the author goes back in history to the events of 1860 when many Christians left their country giving up on peaceful coexistence with Muslims while others stayed and reinforced their unity and solidarity with the support of European countries. Meanwhile, the Christian community, the Maronites in particular, had the ambition to build a Christian Lebanese state; however, they knew it was not possible, so they had to settle for a "Lebanese Arab State" similar to the surrounding Arab countries. Thus, some countries experienced initiatives to support a non-sectarian coexistence among Christians and Muslims; however, this new ideology was strongly challenged since it was a new concept and people had a stronger loyalty to their religion than to their state creating conflicts and tensions among nations and among communities (Moshe, 1999).

Going back to more historical tensions, we explored the book of Kenneth Cragg "The Arab Christian" which narrates the history of the Christians in Lebanon. In the chapter entitled "the Lebanon Tragedy", the author sheds light on the historical and cultural components that challenged the Arab Christians. The first challenge is the dilemma between Pan-Arabism and the Maronite principles. He explains that during the seventies and eighties, the gap was widened between the two waves. Christian Maronites had a plan for Lebanon to be built on the Phoenician aspect and the westernized ideologies that believe in "*Grand Liban*" and the collapse of the Syrian country. On the other hand, pan-Arabism believed in a unified Arab nation that includes all the Arab states located in the Middle East and North Africa. However, other political scientists do not agree with this idea and believe that "Arabists" whether Christians or Muslims are aspired to either annexing Lebanon to the "Greater

Arab Nation" or to establishing an Islamic or quasi-Islamic state. Lebanese nationalists rejected this political stand (Halawi, 1998). Second is the challenge that Israeli "Zionism" brought to exist and the challenge it represented to Arab Christians and in particular the Christians of the Middle East, mainly located in Lebanon (Cragg, 1991).

With focus on the outcome of the Arab-Muslim takeover of the Middle East region, Phares in his book entitled "Lebanese Christian Nationalism: the Rise & Fall of Ethnic Resistance", discussed in the chapter "Middle Eastern Christian Nationalism" the weakened Christian presence in the Middle East and the rise of the Christian resistance upon different sects as the Assyrians, Copts and others. The author most importantly ends his chapter with facts of how the Lebanese resistance movements were eliminated, and the Christian resistance was subdued (Phares, 1995).

Sectarian divisions can explain the reasons behind the Lebanese civil war in addition to political competition and foreign interference. External forces and sharp regional divisions exploit this weakness limiting the ability of Lebanon to have peaceful reforms. After the foundation of Israel, a large number of Palestinians sought refuge in Lebanon specifically in the South which started to raise questions regarding the national capacity to deal with such refugee crisis and many other political questions, notwithstanding the impact that the Palestinian massive presence had on the sectarian balance within Lebanon from 1948 onwards. On the 3rd of November 1969, the Cairo agreement was signed between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Lebanese authorities. According to this agreement, PLO was allowed to operate in refugee camps and to train, arm and recruit fighters against Israel, using Lebanon as its base for military operations. The aim of this agreement was to attempt at regulating

the political and military activities of Palestinians in Lebanon while respecting the Lebanese sovereignty. However, this agreement had the opposite effect and exacerbated tension between Palestinians and Lebanese leading to a gradual deterioration of the security situation in Lebanon and ultimately the breakout of war in 1975 (Klait, 2010).

The conflict meant a considerable migration of Christians and their gradual reduction in number and influence in Lebanon's consociation system. After the 1975-1990 war, the influence of Sunnis and Shiites has risen with less than 40 % being Christians that are mainly divided into Maronites, Greek Orthodox, and Catholics, by order of population size. Moreover, the sharp division of Christians has weakened their political influence on the national scene especially after the 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, which exacerbated tensions between the Sunnis and Shiites. In general, the sectarian atmosphere in Lebanon remains tense and complicated.

## **2.9 Relation between Syrian refugees and Christian host communities**

As mentioned before, many Lebanese consider Syrians to be poor, illiterate, and criminals or cruel soldiers. For the past few years, Lebanese and Syrians have wrongly perceived each other. While Lebanese judge Syrian refugees of bringing them political and security instability, Syrians perceive Lebanese as exploitative and disrespectful. Violent clashes in poor areas are trending and Christians seem to feel more targeted and alarmed. They also fear of demographic imbalance due to the increase of Syrian refugees and their experiences with the Palestinians that were supposed to be temporarily resettled to Lebanon and turned into a large military group

being mostly from the Sunni sect. One more reason of fear that the article mentions is the perception of Syrian Sunnis to be part of the regional militarized extremist group, which threatens national security and puts Lebanon on the map of the Islamist expansion (International Crisis Group, 2013).

## **2.10 The gap captured in the literature**

The literature reviewed says a lot about the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on Lebanon and the socio-economic, political and security related factors that are leading to the diffusion of the conflict into Lebanon. From the literature point of view, despite some minor positive effects of the Syrian refugee influx on Lebanon, the predominant impact is negative which results in a tense relation between refugees and host communities. The literature also mentions the current challenges for the Christian community in the Middle East and the drastic demographic change that is taking place in Lebanon since the 1975 war. However, the literature does not give attention to the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis specifically on the Christian host communities and the dynamics of the relationship existing between the Christian host community and the refugee community as it does not shed the light on the positive sides of this relationship and what could be an asset for a more strengthened social coexistence between the two. For that, this paper will provide an overview of the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on the Lebanese Christians and explores the elements that constitute that make up the relation between the two communities and their coping mechanisms and common grounds.

# **Chapter Three**

## **Research Methodology**

The main purpose of this chapter is to elaborate on the research methodology of this study, describe how the selection of the interviewees was made, and explain the procedure adopted in collecting and analyzing the data.

### **3.1 The purpose of the research**

As the subject discussed is related to human relations and interaction, case studies that reflect the reality of the situation are used to support the thesis statement and respond to the research questions. The case study conducted for this thesis explores first mutual perceptions, expectations and fears among Syrian refugees and Christians hosts, and examines the different coping mechanisms that the Christian host community in Batroun is using in response to the Syrian refugee influx to end up with a better understanding of the relationship dynamics and find out the root causes for such a dynamic in order to finally come up with helpful recommendations.

Based on the literature review, one can understand that refugees are a source of conflict given that their impact on their communities and on the hosting communities is negative from a political, economic and social stand point. Furthermore hosting refugees of other ethnic groups is also a source for diffusion of conflict because of conflict of interest, differences in social practices and beliefs in addition to sharp differences in political opinion and loyalty.

Thus, this paper takes into consideration this hypothesis and explores the different elements that constitute the two communities' relationship and that have an impact on their coexistence; including their socioeconomic backgrounds, ideas, and perceptions. Therefore, in the absence of books and academic articles on this specific topic targeting the Christian host communities' relation with the Syrian refugees, the biggest source of information for this paper was the humanitarian organizations reports including those of the United Nations Higher Commissioner for refugees (UNHCR) and other non-governmental organizations. Academic journals, newspapers articles and media releases were also explored.

Furthermore, a study of the relationship dynamics between Christian host communities and Syrian refugee communities was conducted in *Batroun*, a northern city, on the Lebanese coast located 29 km south of Tripoli. *Batroun* is the official center of the *caza* with a population of around 20,000 (Batroun Municipality, 2012) currently hosting more than 2,000 Syrian refugees which makes more than 10% of its total population. *Batroun* was chosen to be the case study as it is a Christian-Maronite dominated city hosting a mostly Sunni refugee population. Batroun also shares social patterns with other Lebanese cities like parts of *Beirut*, *Jounieh* and *Byblos* thus it can offer lessons learned for others that may be experiencing the same dynamic or even more tense relations. The recommendations provided at the end of the paper can serve as future steps to be taken in order to prevent conflicts from erupting in *Batroun* as well as in other locations.

The mapping relied on over 30 interviews with members of Lebanese Christian and Muslim host communities who are residing in *Batroun Caza* and hosting a large number of refugees, as well as representatives of the Syrian refugee communities. The survey respected the diversity element whereby participants included men and women

from all age groups (18-60 years), socio-economic classes, political affiliations and religious groups. Key informer interviews were also conducted in May 2014 with the city's relevant figures and personnel working in the Syrian refugee response. For instance, the meeting held on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2014 with the head of municipality of *Batroun*, Mr. *Marcelino Al Harek*, provided a more close up look at the relation between the refugee and the host communities as well as the role that the municipality plays in responding to the refugee influx to *Batroun*. Furthermore, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April, a meeting was held with the *QaemMakam* of *Batroun* District, Mr. *Roger Toubia* who is heading the committee assigned by the ministry of interior for the coordination of the response to the refugee crisis in *Batroun* District, so-called the security cell of the *caza*. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of May 2014, a meeting was held with Sheikh *Mahmoud Noman*, *Imam* of *Batroun* Mosque. Sheikh *Mahmoud* is the coordinator of all the humanitarian donations offered to the Syrian refugees in *Batroun* District and has provided a lot of insights into the situation of the refugees in *Batroun*, the type of assistance that they are receiving and their interaction with the host community.

### **3.2 Target groups and sampling**

The survey was conducted in the city of *Batroun*, the first city in the North, known for its Christian majority. It is currently hosting the second largest number of Syrian refugees in its *Caza*. The methodology for this study was a non-scientific random sample of Syrian refugees and members of the host community residing in the *Batroun* *Caza* based on data provided by UNHCR statistical data and the humanitarian assistance focal person Sheikh *Mahmoud Noman*. The following table shows the target groups sampled in the survey:

Target groups	Number of interviews
Christian host communities	10
Muslim host communities	10
Syrian refugees	10
Local authorities and officials	3

Table 1: Target groups sampled in the survey

As previously mentioned, the study included persons from different backgrounds and profiles in order for the results to be inclusive, representative and relevant for the case. It is important to note that all interviewees are residing in the city of *Batroun* although they might have different cities of origins. The following charts show the diversity of the profiles of the survey participants:

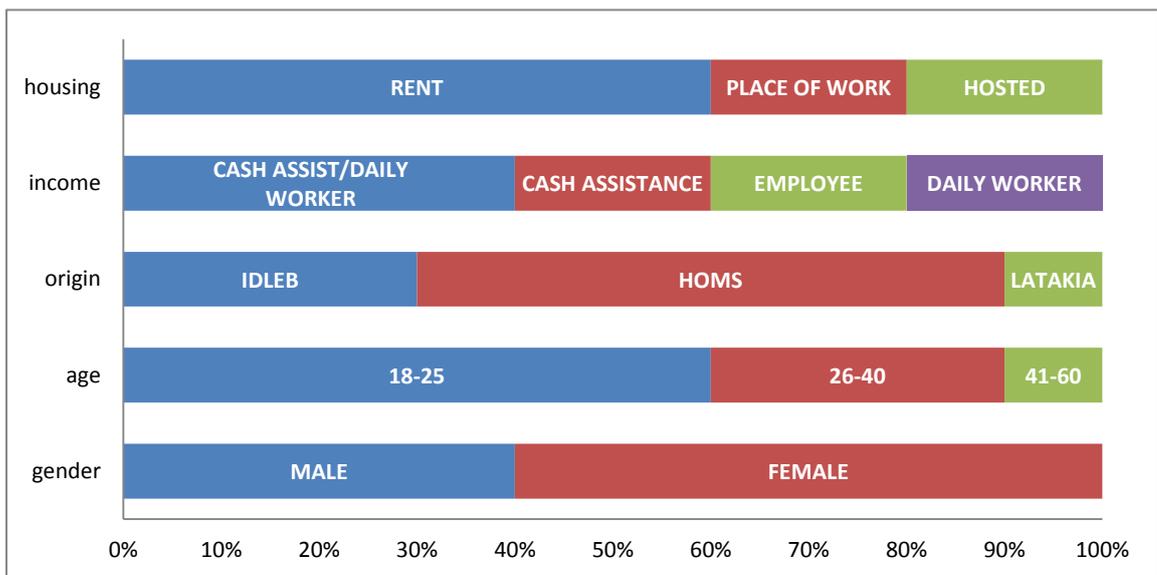


Figure 4: Profiles of 10 Syrian refugees interviewed.

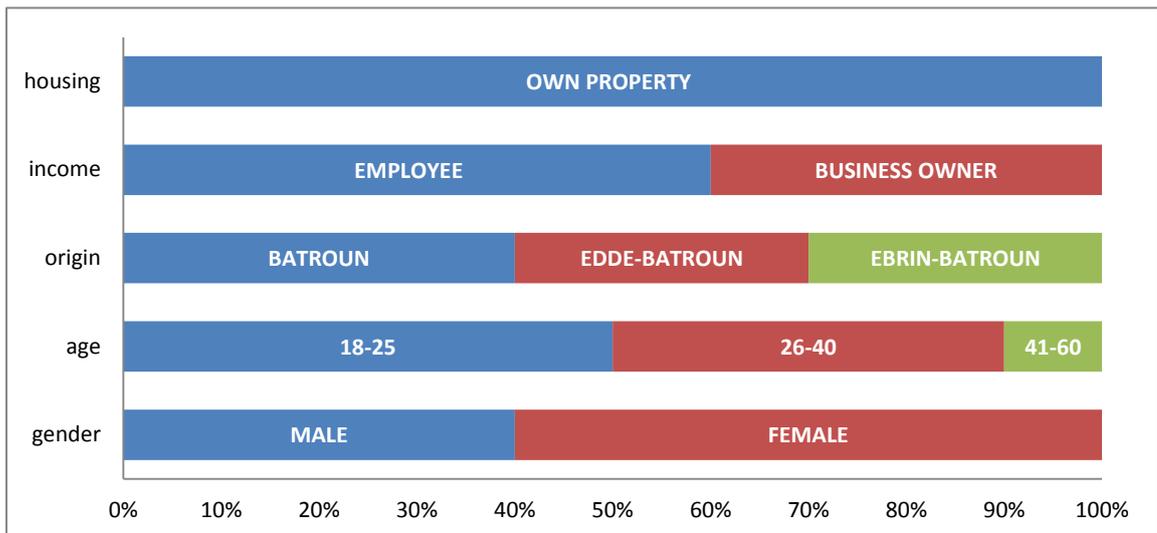


Figure 5: Profiles of 10 members of the christian host community interviewed.



Figure 6: Profiles of the 10 members of the Muslim host community interviewed

### 3.3 Instrumentation

First, two questionnaires were developed for the purpose of this research. The first one is for the Syrian refugee community and the other for the host community including Lebanese Muslims and Christians. Each questionnaire is made of one section including the personal information about the background, profile, and socioeconomic situation of the interviewee and another section, which delves into the relation between the two communities, touching upon facts, perceptions, and wishes. Following the approval of the Committee on Human Subjects in Research, the two

sample questionnaires were used. The data collected was kept anonymous, hardcopies were kept in a safe place for further reference and the information gathered was only used for the sake of the study and was not shared with anyone else than the advisor of the thesis.

### **3.4 Method of analysis**

The data analysis consisted of three steps:

The first step is to collect, check and code the data out of the surveys, and store it into an anonymous excel sheet (attached) for statistical purposes.

The second step is to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the existing data based on the answers' frequency and the descriptive information provided.

The third step is to construct descriptive statistics that reflect the gathered answers and show the results of the interviews.

Based on the information captured from the literature review and the data analysis, findings are shared and conclusions are drawn.

# Chapter Four

## Main Findings

### 4.1 Reasons for tensions

“Lebanese communities have shown incredible generosity and resilience, many taking refugees into their homes and providing food. But, the sheer number of people pouring into such a small country means the strain is just too much,” said Anita Delhaas-van Dijk, the National Director for World Vision in Lebanon. “The cracks are starting to show with worsening security and rising tensions. Communities are facing unbearable pressure. As the Syria conflict deepens, these pressures are more acutely felt. The crisis threatens to destabilize the whole region” (Midgley, Eldebo, Amarani, & Robertson, 2013). Building on this statement, rising tensions among Syrian refugees and Lebanese have been noticed by international and local organizations and humanitarian actors working in the Syrian responses. In the survey, we tried to understand from the interviewees what were their thoughts about the reasons behind such tensions, in case they did exist; the responses were divided into four categories:

- 1- Political and ethnic differences
- 2- Bad socioeconomic conditions
- 3- Tradition and cultural differences
- 4- Historical tensions

The graph below shows the different percentages of the interviewees who believe such tensions were caused by the above mentioned reasons. During the data analysis, other reasons surfaced such as the issues of perceptions and stereotypes, as well as the concerns over safety and security.

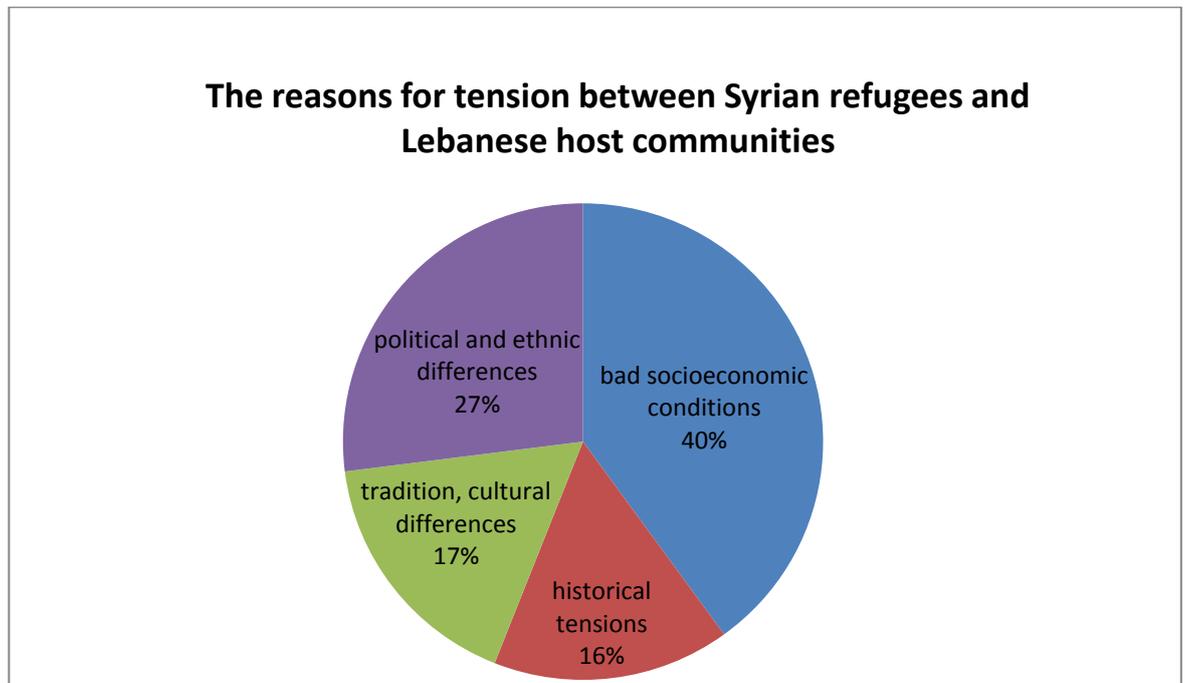


Figure 7: The reason for tension between Syrian refugees and the Lebanese host communities (as viewed by the 20 Lebanese interviewees)

#### 4.1.1 Historical tensions

Only 16 per cent of the interviewees mentioned the historical tensions as reasons for the current tense relationship between the two communities. However, that does not mean the irrelevance of such an element in our study, for it is a deeply-rooted factor that not everyone is aware of. It is worth mentioning here that the relationship between Syrians and Lebanese is a complex one and most of its complexity is based on historical facts mentioned in the literature review such as the Syrian military presence in Lebanon and the on-going intervention in Lebanese politics. While exploring such a relationship, we cannot limit ourselves to immediate and quantifiable

elements such as competition over economic resources, but we should also take into consideration that a certain part of the Lebanese and Syrian population share a history of hostility that dates back to the sixties and seventies.

Furthermore, historical reasons are also related to experiences with other refugee influxes coming in to Lebanon. In fact, when asked about the future of the Syrian refugee crisis, some Lebanese respondents stated that it will never come to an end, comparing it to the Palestinian refugee crisis that endured and has really affected the Lebanese demographic balance and the whole geopolitical setting. Lebanese Christians expressed their fear of such outcome and their resentment vis-à-vis the government who did not take effective action regarding the refugee flow and did not project the large impact that such crisis could bring to the Lebanese population and to the country's assets including economy, infrastructures, security and safety. Thus, historical factors can be considered as indirect causes for tensions as they are the basis for perceptions and stereotypes that exist between the two communities.

#### **4.1.2 Difference in traditions, cultures, religiosity and social practices**

It is true that Lebanon and Syria are neighboring countries, and both are Arab states sharing a set of common traits such as the language, history, cuisine etc..., they also differ by their traditions, culture, religiosity and social practices specifically with regard to *Batroun*, which is a rather modern city, hosting refugees coming mostly from underprivileged regions in Syria. In fact, figure 7 shows that seventeen per cent of the Lebanese and Syrians interviewed referred to the ethnic and cultural differences as the major reason behind tense relations between the two communities. As it was mentioned by the head of municipality, there is a major difference in religions, customs, and cultures between the Christian host community and the refugee

community. Members of the community complained to the municipality that refugees are using public spaces like the beach and the public gardens in an abusive way that they neither tolerate nor accept. The clash of the two cultures cannot be considered as an independent factor as it is deeply related to all the other reasons mentioned and specifically to the issue of perceptions. Though it did not yet cause any major physical conflicts, it has resulted in many verbal assaults that some members of the host community have committed. For that, the municipality decided to take preventive measures to lower down the risks for further conflicts bearing in mind that the Syrians, just like any other person, have all the right to use public spaces, while respecting the customs and culture of the host community. This has been communicated by the head of the municipality who stressed on the effect of cultural and ethnic differences on the relation between Syrian and Christian host community in *Batroun*.

#### **4.1.3 Political and ethnic differences**

Going back to history, Lebanese Christians and Syrians share many memories that complicate their current relation. Furthermore, considering the highly polarized Lebanese politics, they have also differed in their position towards the Syrian war and the conflicting parties since the beginning of the crisis. Another factor is also the involvement of many Lebanese parties directly and indirectly in the current Syrian conflict and its implication on the internal security situation, which plays an important role in increasing tensions that can result in violent incidents. Thus, 27% of the interviewees saw these political differences as exacerbating factors of conflict however, they also mentioned that they try as much as they can not to express their political opinions in public or to discuss politics among each other to prevent any eruption of conflict.

#### **4.1.4 Bad socio-economic conditions**

Competition over resources has been the main cause of wars since the beginning of time. It is a reason for tensions and conflicts among communities and in particular those who live under the poverty line, who suffer from unmet needs or discrimination. In the above chart, 40 per cent of the interviewees mentioned that bad socioeconomic conditions are reasons for tensions and the interview with the head of municipality confirms this statement. In fact, he mentioned that the majority of the city's inhabitants are of the middle and lower class, which can be alarming when speaking about an extra-humanitarian burden. He reported that there are many Christian families living in *Batroun* who are experiencing numerous challenges related to their financial and living conditions and those are in need of attention and immediate intervention. Economic pressures facing the host community are the main drivers of hostility towards Syrians in his opinion. The increase in population is stretching municipal services to their breaking point while no support is provided from humanitarian agencies in that regard. Interviewees complained about the strained resources resulting in the accumulation of garbage in the streets and the frequent water and electricity shortage among others.

Another economic factor mentioned in the survey was the issue of competition over job opportunities. Although the Lebanese economy is considered to be relatively developed, it suffers from numerous challenges such as the increase in the poverty rate, high rates of unemployment, and the widened gap between the poor and the wealthy in addition to the increase in living cost including rents, services, and food

and non-food items. Clearly, the Syrian refugee influx to Lebanon only made it worse. A country that is barely meeting the basic needs of its own population was overburdened by a big number of destitute refugees who had also to be supported and catered for.

For that, the survey that was conducted has shown that both communities consider the economic strains as main drivers for an unpleasant relation between Syrian refugees and Lebanese Christians. Meanwhile, the World Vision's study entitled *under pressure: the Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Host Communities in Lebanon*, found that “many Lebanese families face financial challenges as wages stabilize and rent prices increase, with hard-pressed Syrian refugees working for less money and sharing single-family homes with multiple families to save on rent. This strain is particularly difficult on Lebanese and Syrian children who are getting lost in the midst of the crisis” (Midgley, Eldebo, Amarani, & Robertson, 2013). However, although we recognize the amount of pressure that the refugee crisis has put on the Lebanese economy, we should also acknowledge that the majority of jobs that the Syrian refugees are recruited for are not usually occupied by Lebanese, but rather by migrant workers such as Syrians in the first place, Sudanese, Somalis, Egyptians etc... In fact, the Ministry of Labor's decision No. 197/1 backs this argument for it states the professions that are only open for Lebanese and the ones that are legally allowed for other nationalities as follows: “the right to practice the following professions shall be confined solely to Lebanese citizens: “The different types of administrative, banking, insurance and education professions, technical professions in the field of construction and its derivatives, various engineering works, all types of pharmaceutical, medication stores and medical professions, makeup and beauty centers, fishing etc... Also, all

types of trade professions, engineering professions, self-employment and other organized professions are legally prohibited for non-Lebanese, as well as every profession or job which proves to compete or harm any Lebanese employers; with the exception of Syrian workers working in agriculture, cleaning and the construction field” (ILO, 2014).

Based on the analysis of the above-mentioned reasons and based on information shared by refugees during the interviews two additional reasons surfaced as key elements of an unstable relationship between the two communities. One is the issue of perceptions and stereotypes, which leads to the second one that is the safety and security.

#### **4.1.5 Perceptions and stereotypes**

Inter-group perceptions between Syrians and Lebanese are mixed. Data collected shows that although Syrian refugees and Christian Lebanese feel uncomfortable around each other, they do interact on a daily basis whereby 80 per cent of the persons interviewed are interacting with each other whether by being hosts for refugees, employers or even relatives. The graphs below illustrate the responses of both Lebanese Christians and Muslims and Syrian refugees on how they feel around each other.

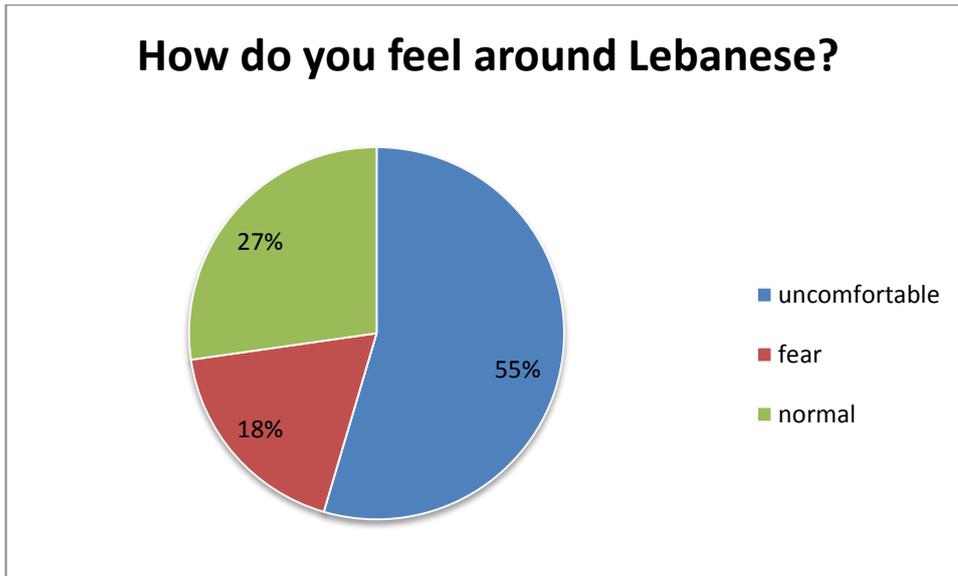


Figure 8: How do Syrian refugees feel around Lebanese

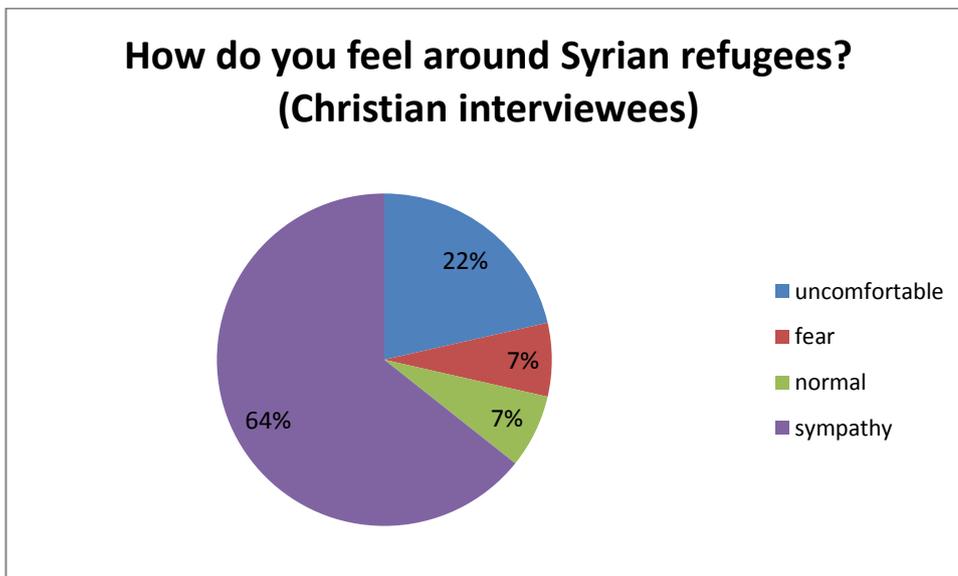


Figure 9: How do Christians interviewees feel about refugees

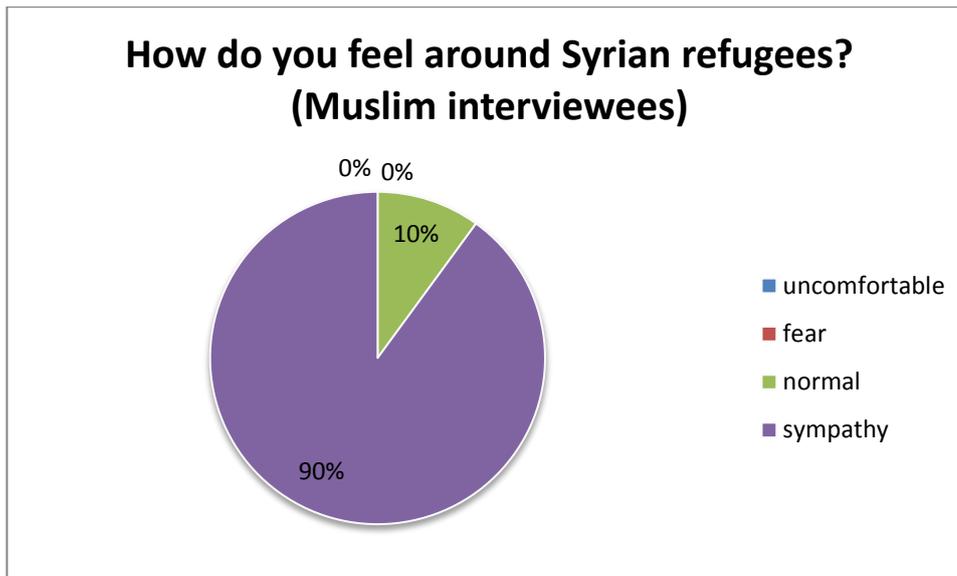


Figure 10: How do Muslim interviewees feel about refugees

Based on the interviews conducted, the majority of the Christian host community perceives Syrians as poor, uneducated, and generally of a lower social class than themselves. Discussions with the Lebanese show that of those Christians who have negative perceptions of the Syrians, many associate them with unemployment, overstretched resources and security threats. This link was found during the interviews in which Lebanese regularly mentioned the pressures associated with Syrian influx on their communities. Fear of strangers, verbal or physical harassment and the changing nature of their community are worsening the feelings of unease and impatience towards what they perceive as a protracted refugee crisis. However, a good part of the Lebanese Christians share with their Muslim counterparts feelings of sympathy towards the refugees with regards to their living conditions, their loss, and the tragedies they have gone through as they are also well conscious of similarities that link them to each other including traditional and cultural linkages.

When interviewed, Lebanese Christians expressed more fear towards Syrian refugees than the Lebanese Muslims of the neighbouring villages. Contrarily to the Lebanese Muslim host community, 10 per cent of the Lebanese Christians interviewed perceive Syrian refugees as a possible security threat. Syrian refugees fear the host community that they consider different. In fact, many of them said during the interviews that they do not leave their homes except to collect assistance or for work. Women were particularly afraid and their perception of danger was more apparent. Religion and sect here play a role in the intersection of paranoia and fear in host communities. The head of municipality reported that Christians are worried about the expansion of the refugee community in a way that harms the demographic composition of the city and affects its general atmosphere because the host community and the refugees have different backgrounds, cultures, and traditions.

It is important to mention here the role of the media, social media and social networks which are promoting more of a negative idea of Syrian refugees putting the lights on the misery that they are living in, the negative implications on the Lebanese community and more generally on Lebanon's security and safety by portraying them as the main drivers of bordering conflicts and socio-economic challenges faced by the Lebanese.

#### **4.1.6 Safety and security**

Refugees and host communities' perceptions of social cohesion have generally worsened throughout the past year. Both communities are experiencing diminished perception of safety in the worst affected areas. It is not unusual for host communities to report a more negative perception of social cohesion than refugees; however, refugees do not typically report on the majority of social cohesion incidents. The perception of safety and security in *Batroun* remains stable until now with no reported

social cohesion incidents. However, the local community perceives the situation as deteriorating since the beginning of the influx. For that, following the chamber of ministers' decree, a national Central Security Cell was created, headed by the minister of interior including all the security and military bodies of the countries. At the local level, a district security cell, a subdivision of this committee, was created and is headed by the *QaemMakam* and has as members the local branch representatives of the security and military bodies. The mission of this cell is to first collect statistical reports provided by *Al-Mukhtars* and the heads of municipalities on the number and status of the Syrian refugees in each village and second to control the security especially after the events that occurred in the Bekaa and in Tripoli to avoid any diffusion of conflict. Third, control and map the expansion of the Syrian refugees in *Batroun*. Municipalities and *Al-Mukhtars* in many villages have also taken some measures to protect their own security, such as imposing curfews and restricting the movement of motorcycles individuals after a certain hour of the night, mainly because of fear of any clashes or troubles with the local community especially that most of the district's villages are almost empty during the winter.

## **4.2 Coping mechanisms**

When asked about the durability of the crisis, both Lebanese and Syrians said that the crisis is unlikely to end in the near future, but with the hope that they will be mistaken and that it will end soon. Therefore, both communities had to undertake a set of actions to cope with this enduring crisis. Some of the coping mechanisms adopted by the Christian host community are mentioned below.

### **4.2.1 Engaging in violence**

Keeping in mind all the reasons for tensions mentioned above, one must explore the readiness of both communities to engage in violence. The following chart reflects the involvement of Syrian refugees and Lebanese Christians in verbal or physical conflicts.

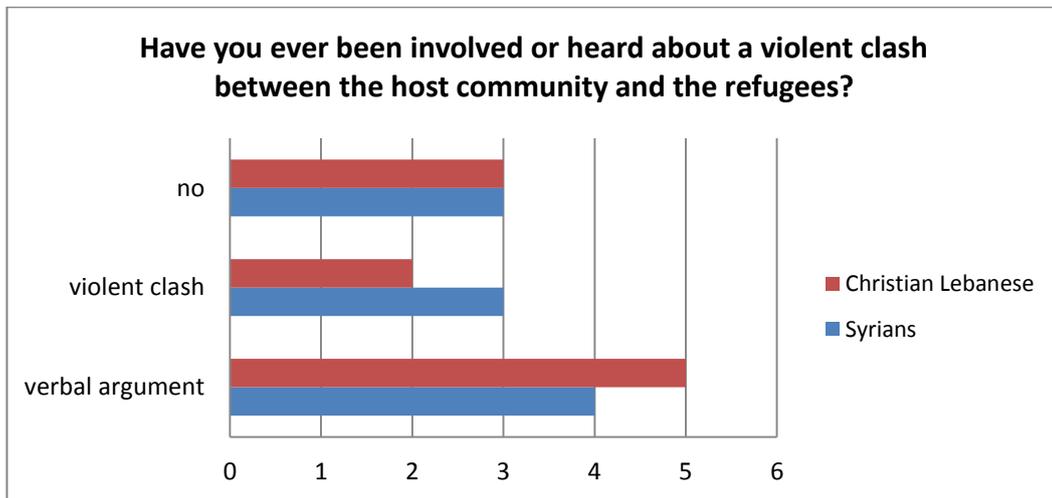


Figure 11: Have you ever been involved in or heard about a violent clash between the host community and the refugees?

As illustrated in the above graph, most of the Syrians and Lebanese Christians interviewed in the study period have not been involved in or heard of a violent clash between Syrian refugees and members of the host community. However, they have rather experienced and heard about verbal arguments leading to personal disputes, mainly because of mounting frustration or personal issues. The head of municipality in *Batroun* stressed the fact that “there are no tensions between Christian host communities and refugees”. As he said, both Lebanese and Syrians prefer to avoid conflicts and call for peaceful coexistence. Violent attacks rarely take place and the majority of conflicts are confined to verbal arguments.

Both Syrians and Lebanese are against conflict especially that both communities have suffered and lost a lot due to civil wars. For that, most of them have expressed their

preference to resolve their issues through family and friendly negotiations through mediation and involvement of third parties; in case the later does not work, they use already established legal pathways.

#### **4.2.2 Curfews and restriction of movement**

In order to respond to their security constraints and fears, Christian host communities started to impose informal curfews through the local authorities such as municipalities and *Al-Mukhtars* specifically in rural areas, although they do not have the legal power or justification to do that. In fact, the more the security situation along the Lebanese Syrian borders deteriorates, the more we are witnessing curfews especially in Christian areas. While curfews are perceived by some as a form of protection, Syrians are not happy with the principle as due to curfews they are not able to reach medical emergency services; even ambulances are being stopped to check documentation. They expressed their fear of harassment by the local community, and possible eviction from the villages. However, they react passively to such practices because they see their situation as refugees to be a temporary one and they have developed their own coping system such as securing the basic items on time and staying in their homes. On the other hand, Lebanese Christians consider curfews as a means to declare their control over their villages, whether or not they are legally permitted to do so. For them, with the current fractionized government and the external political pressures exerted on the government security institutions, every village should think of a security strategy to defend itself and protect its residents.

#### **4.2.3 Imposing conditions on labour**

Despite the conflicting interests and competition, the entrepreneurs association in *Batroun* has met and agreed on a quota for hiring Syrian workers excluding long-term residents who have been working in the city before the crisis. This decision is to give the priority to the Lebanese workers to find jobs and protect them from the so-called “Syrian refugee domination of job opportunities”. The host community welcomed this decision and affirmed that the harm that this kind of decision might bring to small enterprises in *Batroun* is very small compared to the outcomes of the rising unemployment among Lebanese host community.

#### **4.2.4 Providing aid**

As communicated by the head of municipality, when it comes to delivering humanitarian assistance, the municipality is coordinating with the Islamic *Waqf* which is collecting the assistance from donors and distributing it to the refugees. The committee of *Batroun* mosque is in charge of the appeal and the distribution of the assistance for the refugees in coordination with the local authorities (Municipality and *QaemMakam*) and international non-governmental organizations (UNHCR-IMC...). The refugee should present his/her entry card, the family booklet and the residence address. A group of volunteers visits the family to check the information and they are immediately given the assistance. The Saudi National Campaign provides 75% of the donations in addition to donations from the Lebanese Red Cross, the Emirates Red Crescent, the *Kwaiti* association *Abouab Al Khayr*, the donations committee at *Dar Al Fatwa* and the United Arab Emirates contributions through their respective embassy. Regardless of their origin, political affiliation or religious background, the mosque provides assistance on an equal basis to the Sunni refugees as well as to others. As reported by Sheikh Mahdmoud, the Archbishopric of *Batroun* is also providing

assistance for refugees of different religious and sectarian backgrounds. Refugees expressed their gratitude to the Christian host community in *Batroun* for letting them into their homes and providing them with shelter, water and other basic needs.

On the other hand, coping mechanisms adopted by Syrian refugees are various and include mostly being grateful for the hospitality of the Lebanese, trying not to interact with the host community as much as they can, and avoiding conflict.

#### **4.2.5 Guests v/s hosts relationship**

During the interviews, there was a dominating statement among refugees who said: “We are guests and the Lebanese are the hosts, we are here temporarily”. This statement comes in line with the cultural philosophy that most of the Arab states share as a guiding rule for their relations, communications etc.... For instance, even though Syrians are not comfortable with the curfews that some villages in *Batroun* have imposed, they are abiding by these curfews because they believe that they are here for a limited period of time and have to respect the rules set by their hosts.

#### **4.2.6 Isolation policy**

Most of the refugees who came to *Batroun* are joining their families who came earlier or the men in the family who are usually long staying casual workers. Apart from their families, they are finding it very hard to interact with the local community because they feel as strangers and they believe that the host community perceives them as threats to their security and stability. However, it is important to note here that, as reported by the interviewees due to cultural and traditions differences, women are not comfortable to go out without a male member of the family even though no cases of abuse or assault to women were reported.

#### **4.2.7 Avoiding conflict**

As mentioned before, neither Lebanese nor Syrians are keen to be engaged in conflict. They both prefer mediation as a solution for conflicts and they are both ready to compromise in order to maintain the city's tranquility and security. Syrian refugees in *Batroun* are enjoying the serenity and peace of the city especially that they are fleeing from war and violence. So far, despite some sporadic personal disputes or verbal arguments, Syrian refugees and Christian Lebanese are coexisting peacefully and protecting to a large extent the area's stability in terms of safety and security.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The purpose of this paper was to show the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on the Lebanese Christian host community, understand the dynamics of the relationship between a mostly Muslims refugee community and a Christian host community including any existing fears or related issues, and to define the different coping mechanisms that these communities are using in reaction to the crisis. The paper took into consideration the historical Lebanese-Syrian relations and previous experiences with refugee influxes to Lebanon, bearing in mind that no refugee influx was of the size of the current Syrian wave.

This paper wanted to prove that although there are many reasons for tensions, the space for mutual sympathy and coexistence is still there and both communities are willing to live together peacefully.

Following the introduction, the existing literature on the topic was explored. The literature revolved around the role of refugees in diffusing conflict, previous refugee influx to Lebanon, the local community response, challenges for the Middle Eastern Christians, the impact of the Syrian ongoing unrest on Syria, the Syrian refugee influx, living conditions of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, and the impact of the Syrian refugee influx on Lebanon, the Lebanese host communities and the Christian host community in particular. The analysis of the literature reflects a tense relation between Syrian refugees and Lebanese Christians because of the geopolitical characteristics of the area. This has caused the worsening of the security situation in Lebanon allowing the

diffusion of conflict and extremist military groups, and the increase in number of refugees, which is affecting the demographic composition of the Lebanese state.

In its third part, the paper dealt with a case study of Syrian refugees and their predominantly Christian host community in *Batroun*. Based on interviews with Syrian refugees, Muslim and Christian Lebanese host communities, the paper was able to analyze perceptions, fears and hopes of Syrian refugees and the Lebanese communities vis-à-vis each other, and examine the different coping mechanisms that the Christian host community in *Batroun* is using in response to the Syrian refugee influx.

In addition to existing tensions between the host and refugee communities, competition over resources like housing, jobs, aid, municipal services, water, education, and health, the paper was able to identify the top three main factors affecting this relationship.

Based on the survey's findings, inter-communities misperception is one of the main reasons for tensions. In fact, there is a history of stereotypes that both communities have. Lebanese consider Syrians as "low income, poorly educated menial workers, criminals or abusive security officers and soldiers" which fuels Syrian resentment. Syrian refugees describe the treatment of the Lebanese as being both positive and negative whereby they recognize the bad socio-economic situation which has further deteriorated in the wake of the crisis and at the same time they also see the fear that Lebanese, mostly the youth, have towards them. On the other hand, results of the interviews have shown that Lebanese Christians have an anticipated perception of Syrians in general. They often link their presence with unemployment, poverty, and security threats. They tend to look at them with a superiority lens especially that for many years the relationship between the two communities was that of an employer and

an employee. Syrians have come to Lebanon to work as casual workers in three sectors mainly: agriculture, industry, and construction, keeping in mind that the types of work that Syrians would do for very low wages, only few Lebanese would accept to do.

The presence of Syrian refugees is putting pressure on the country's economy and scarcity of resources and services. As shown in several UN reports, Syrian refugees in Lebanon are living in very bad conditions; they have limited resources and their needs are increasing. The situation of many Lebanese communities resembles a lot the situation of those refugees. These two communities living side by side have to strive each for its survival. With that being said, one can understand on one hand the contrast between the generosity and hospitality that refugees were met with the moment they stepped into Lebanon, and on the other hand, the animosity and hostility that the Lebanese host communities are developing towards them with time. What makes the situation more alarming is the limited and targeted assistance that humanitarian agencies are providing as a result of the decrease in funds and support from the international community.

Cultural, religious, and political differences are not the root causes for conflict. They can be one of the factors leading to tension which are also related to all the other factors mainly inter-communities perceptions. Nevertheless, they cannot be seen as a basis for unpleasant relationship between Syrian refugees and Lebanese Christians. In fact, as mentioned in the literature and in the data analysis, both communities differ in many aspects of their cultural and religious practices such as identity and religiosity and social practices like marriage, family, and traditions. However, they both believe that they cannot eliminate each other and they should respect each other's opinion and

space as long as it does not harm them in one way or another. Only in few cases, where there are very sharp differences mostly in political opinions, violence has erupted because of the lack of social cohesion associated with increased socioeconomic frustration, misperceptions and miscommunication.

As important as the destabilizing factors are, some factors can be considered as sources of stability and social cohesion and are worth mentioning. For instance, Lebanese and Syrians share the same norms and ethical behaviors relating to friendship, hospitality etc... For that, despite the severe economic impact that the Syrian crisis is bringing to the Lebanese society, Lebanese communities understand the grievances of Syrian refugees and have mobilized their resources and networks to provide Syrian refugees with safety and assistance. Moreover, existing historical and family ties have long linked both communities, as well as common interests related to trade and commerce relations which have previously been pillars for the diplomatic relations between the two countries. Not to forget the current economic relation between refugees providing the labor force and Lebanese entrepreneurs who wish to invest and are in need for an experienced yet cheap labor force, as well as the opportunities for shared income, generation and profit.

When asked about the durability of the crisis, both Lebanese and Syrians said that the crisis is unlikely to end in the near future with the hope that it will as soon as possible. For that, both communities had to undertake a set of actions to cope with this enduring crisis. Some of the coping mechanisms adopted by the Christian host community are imposing curfews, setting new labor law rules, and sympathizing with refugees by providing the needed assistance. As for the Syrian refugees coping mechanisms, they all fall under the do-no-harm principle meaning that they try not to get into conflict

with Lebanese by respecting their opinions, obeying to the laws and measures that they are imposing, and adopting an isolation policy to prevent any clashes from erupting. Syrians do believe that this is only a temporary situation and they are residing in Lebanon for a limited period as guests and by courtesy, guests should respect and abide by the rules set by their hosts.

Moreover, violent attacks rarely take place and the majority of conflicts are confined to verbal arguments. Neither Lebanese nor Syrians have shown their willingness to engage in any form of conflict. They both prefer friendly and family negotiation and mediation as a solution for conflicts as they are also both ready to compromise in order to maintain an atmosphere of tranquility and security in their living environment. With the joint efforts of the local authorities and humanitarian organizations working on social cohesion, and despite some inevitable personal disputes or verbal arguments, Syrian refugees and Christian host communities in *Batroun* are coexisting peacefully and protecting largely the area's stability in terms of safety and security.

To sum up with, the UNHCR representative in Lebanon mentioned in her speech the generosity of the Lebanese people in the face of such a tremendous refugee crisis. Despite the severe economic impact that the Syrian crisis has brought to the Lebanese country and population, which was also exacerbated by the refugee influx, Lebanese communities have mobilized to help provide Syrian refugees with safety and assistance. "Tales of the difficulties faced by refugees are also accompanied by countless stories of Lebanese opening their homes, sharing their space and their limited resources with refugees in ways that are a testament to the best of the human spirit" (Kelley, 2014). Since the beginning of the crisis, the international and local communities have joined efforts to support the Syrian populations who were forced to

flee their countries and have done a lot to secure that these populations are equally accessing the humanitarian services; thus, meeting their basic needs. The Christian host community in *Batroun* is an example of a community that has overcome the differences, challenges and the economic obstacles to support its guests. In the course of the survey, Syrian refugees have noted the amount of generosity and welcoming environment that they were welcomed with. Thus, despite the bad socioeconomic impact and the security threat that Syrian refugees are considered to have brought to *Batroun*, members of the Christian host community still do sympathize with Syrian refugees and understand their grievances and pains. For that, all levels of the community have been mobilized to assist refugees and respond to their basic needs such as the youth organizations, religious associations and other local charity organizations.

Finally, it is important to mention the limitation of such a study from an academic point of view.

First, the subject tackled in this paper is a new subject as there is no recent literature on the relation specifically between Lebanese Christian host communities and Syrian refugees especially in a context such as *Batroun*. Moreover, while doing the research, many reports were found on the impact and socioeconomic challenges that bordering areas such as Bekaa and Akkar are facing, however, there are no reports or studies that touch upon the socioeconomic impact of the Syrian refugee influx on *Batroun* or other similar cities.

As for the limitations of the survey, the researcher might face challenges in the different phases of the data collection and analysis. For this survey, the limitations were related to the scope of the survey and the total population sampled. For instance,

this survey was conducted by only one researcher, and given the limited resources and time; a large number of interviewees were not reached. Although *Batroun* is relatively a small city, refugees are widespread across its regions and are sometimes difficult to reach. In addition to that, some refugees and members of the host community abstained from sharing any kind of information for personal reasons despite the fact that they were informed about the research purpose and the confidentiality agreement. Thus, the study findings have shed light on the need to conduct further quantitative and qualitative research on this issue, more geographically specific and to also explore other areas to examine the burden sharing or the division of responsibility among local and international actors in order to contain such tensions and come up with preventive measures to lower the risks of potential conflict. These areas can be further explored in future research.

In order to come up with practical recommendations that target the main reasons for tensions and can offer a practical tool for decision makers of both communities that may be used in the future to prevent conflicts from erupting, one should first explore the wishes and hopes of communities concerned and find out what they can propose as solutions for existing tensions. The following action points were proposed by interviewees to build stronger social cohesion and better social interaction:

- Emphasize the similarities of both communities through social gatherings and common activities.
- Liaise with Syrians already integrated in host communities. For example, those who have been in Lebanon prior to the crisis, and have already a good relationship with the host community.

- Identify capacities within the refugee and host communities and empowering them.
- Include vulnerable Lebanese families in the distribution of assistance.
- Establish mixed committees and train them on conflict resolution and mediation especially in collective sites
- Facilitate the access to community centers where activities target all groups including Syrian refugees, host communities and refugees from other nationalities
- Conduct awareness sessions for both communities concerning racism, discrimination, and social cohesion.
- Coordinate with municipalities in order to address issues of violence and security.
- Use media outlets to promote social co-existence and remove mutual stereotypes.

With that being said, in order to put these suggestions into a structured framework, an integrated comprehensive approach to deal with the various economic, cultural and political factors is helpful. The following recommendations address some of the reasons for tensions that have surfaced during the interviews and build on the solutions proposed above to move forward into a more systematized community-based approach:

- Addressing the issue of misperceptions by trying to overcome common discriminatory prejudices through the design of mass communication campaigns including videos, national broadcasts, brochures, and billboards that target these stereotypes. These campaigns can show the hardship of both

communities and shed the light on joint initiatives and efforts of both to overcome these challenges together. For instance, allocating 3 minutes of the local channel to show a small documentary on skillful refugees working with Lebanese entrepreneurs as a way to document an experience where both communities are collaborating successfully.

- Enhancing and protecting social cohesion by engaging both communities in activities that enhance their social and economic well-being. This could start by:

- 1- Conducting a mapping of the existing community structures and organizations such as youth organizations, women centers, and charity organizations and putting them in touch with vulnerable refugees and members of the host community so they can be assisted and supported equally.
- 2- Providing a community based platform such as community centers and the ministry of social affairs, social development centers, municipality building and other public spaces for these organizations to meet, discuss issues that are of importance for the two communities related to their needs, feelings, and problems and explore together the solutions and the implementation strategy.
- 3- Joining the efforts of local authorities and community based organizations with the expertise of the international humanitarian organizations to design and organize activities for both Lebanese and Syrians such as vocational trainings, life-skills trainings, recreational activities, awareness sessions and workshops on various issues like conflict resolution, communication skills etc...
- 4- Encouraging the participation of Syrian refugees in local and municipal events to facilitate their integration with Lebanese Christians. They can participate in

meetings with local municipalities and organizations and take initiatives within their communities.

- Addressing the economic impact of the Syrian refugee influx on the Lebanese host community through:

1- A burden-sharing of refugee response costs among the Lebanese government, host communities, Syrian refugees, and international donors. For instance, as mentioned in the interviews the presence of refugees is putting a strain on the infrastructure and the municipality capacities. Thus one suggestion could be to organize regular community days where both Syrians and Lebanese get engaged in community activities such as cleaning the beach, renovating schools, public gardens etc... With respect to the Lebanese labor law, *Batroun* municipality can identify skillful Syrians having skills that do not exist among the Lebanese labor force and match them with Lebanese entrepreneurs resulting in income generating activities for both communities.

2- Introducing and providing funding for labor-intensive projects to create jobs for both communities.

3- Providing support to local communities through enterprise development and microfinance interventions that are suited to low-income populations in rural areas. Such interventions can serve to increase division of labor between Lebanese and Syrians, thus diffusing some pressure over job competition between nationalities in local labor markets.

- Addressing the issue of security and stability through:

1- Raising the awareness of refugees on their rights and responsibilities.

- 2- Informing refugees and members of the host community on the legal pathways to report an incident of verbal or physical violence.
- 3- Providing support to the government security forces including the Lebanese armed forces and the internal security forces and the municipal personnel and train them on what to expect and how to respond to security incidents that might erupt.
- 4- Supporting the district security cell which is the official body that is responsible for the implementation of central government's decisions and decrees and the coordination of the security response actions.

Finally, in the special edition of the Peace Building joint news supplement, Wissam Saade addresses the Lebanese Christians saying: "For Lebanese Christians, Syrians are not all Syrians" meaning that Syrians are not all similar; the same goes for the Lebanese. Syrian and Lebanese are different among each other and among themselves based on social class, sect, region, political affiliation, but they share the same virtues and norms. Thus, there should be no room for generalization and stereotypes, but room for peace, dialogue and mutual aid.

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## Appendices

### **Appendix 1: Interview with Lebanese Christian host community in *Batroun***

<b>Personal Information</b>
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Location:

Date of birth (Year/Month/Day):

Nationality:

Gender:

Age:

Marital Status:

Family size:

Sect:

Job:

Type of income:

**Relation with the Syrian refugees**

**Scale: 1=Bad; 2=Good; 3=Very good; 4=Excellent**

Is there any personal relation with Syrian refugees?

How would you describe this relation on a scale of 1 to 4? Why?

Is there a refugee influx to your town? How big is this influx?

Are they finding a place to stay? Where?

How are you managing to cope with the Syrian refugee crisis?

How do you find yourself coexisting with the Syrian refugees?

According to you, what are the barriers that stand in the face of this coexistence if any?

In your opinion, what is the best way to host refugees? Camps or non-camps settings?

And why?

Have you ever been involved or heard about a violent clash between the host community and the refugees in Batroun? Tell us about it?

What do you think are the reasons behind the tense relation between the refugees and the host communities?

How would you describe the relationship between the Lebanese community and the Syrian refugees? What are the variables affecting this relationship in your opinion?

What do you feel is likely to happen in the future with the refugee crisis in Lebanon?

And what do you hope will happen?

**End of the questionnaire**

## **Appendix 2: Interview with the Syrian refugees in *Batroun***

<b>Personal Information</b>
-----------------------------

Location:

Date of Birth: Year/Month/Day

Nationality:

Gender:

Age:

Marital Status:

Family size:

Sect:

Job:

Place of Origin in Syria:

Type of settlement: (tented settlement/rented apartment/incomplete building/hosting family/collective shelter)

Type of income (employed/UN aid/unemployed)

Are you planning on going back to Syria when the war is over?

How would you describe your livelihood level?

<b>Relation with the host community</b>
---

<b>Scale: 1=Bad; 2=Good; 3=Very good; 4=Excellent</b>
---

Is there any personal relation with the host community?

How would you describe this relation on a scale of 1 to 4? Why?

Do you have any security concerns? Do you feel targeted by the local community?

How do you find yourself coexisting with the Lebanese host community?

According to you, what are the barriers that stand in the face of this coexistence if any?

Have you ever been involved or heard about a violent clash between the host community and the refugees?

What are in your opinion the reasons for such tensions?

What do you think are the reasons behind the tense relation between the refugees and the host communities?

How would you describe the relationship between the Lebanese community and the Syrian refugees? What are the variables affecting this relationship in your opinion?

What do you feel is likely to happen in the future with the refugee crisis in Lebanon?

And what do you hope will happen?

**End of the questionnaire**

### **Appendix 3: Interviews with local figures involved in the Syrian refugee response in *Batroun***

#### **Interview with Mr. *Roger Toubia***

On 23 April 2014, an interview was conducted with Qaemmakam-Batroun District at his office in Saraya Batroun. The QaemMakam Roger Toubia is the head of the committee assigned by the ministry of interior for the coordination of the response to the refugee crisis in Batroun District. The following is a summary of the interview.

Q: What is the religious aspect of *Batroun* District and the nature of the relation between the different religious components of the *Batroun* society?

A: *Batroun* has basically a Christian aspect; however, there are many Muslim villages that are part of this district. The relation between the Christian and the Muslim communities is very peaceful and close.

Q: What is the number of Syrian refugees in *Batroun* district?

A: The latest number provided by UNHCR is listed in the attached document.

Q: Where is the biggest concentration of Syrian refugees in *Batroun* district?

A: Cities of *Batroun* and *Chekka*.

Q: What is the most prominent way of settlement that the refugees are using?

A: In *Batroun*, we have been strict on prohibiting camp settlements because of fear of losing the security control over these settlements and this was a decision circulated by the ministry of interior. So, most of the refugees in *Batroun* are renting apartments or unfinished houses and the municipalities in coordination with the security cell are working on organizing these settlements.

Q: How is the Syrian refugee influx being dealt with?

A: Following the chamber of Ministers decree, a Central Security Cell was created, headed by the minister of interior and includes all the security and military bodies of the countries. As a subdivision of this committee, a district security cell was created which is headed by the *QaemMakam* and whose members are the branches of the security and military bodies. The mission of this cell is to first, collect statistical reports provided by *Al-Mukhtars* and the heads of municipalities on the number and status of the Syrian refugees in each village. Second, control the security especially after the events that occurred in Syria and in Tripoli to avoid any clashes. In fact, a number of illegal cars and motorcycles were confiscated. Third, control the spread of the Syrian refugees in *Batroun*.

Some villages have also taken some measures for their own security such as putting restrictions on movement of motorcycles and even individuals after a certain hour because of fear of any clashes or troubles with the local community especially that most of the district's villages are almost empty in winter.

Q: How are the refugees receiving the assistance in *Batroun*?

A: The refugees are basically receiving a monthly assistance from the Saudi and Qatari funds at the Mosque in *Batroun*. Christian Syrian refugees are receiving the assistance from the Archbishopric of *Batroun*.

Q: How would you describe the relation between the Christian host community and the Syrian refugee community?

A: There is no hostility among the two, but a feeling of fear that the Christian host community is having towards the Syrian refugees. Most of the incidents that we encounter are personal clashes among Syrian refugees and rarely do we find clashes between the host and the refugee community.

Q: Do you find any difference in the relation between Christian and Muslim host communities towards the refugee community?

A: No.

Q: According to you what are the fears of the Christian host community?

A: There is basically the fear of the expansion of the refugee community.

Q: What are the challenges that the Christian host community is facing?

#### **Interview with Mr. *Marcelino Al Harek***

On 9 May 2014, an interview was conducted with the head of municipality of Batroun, Mr. Marcelino Al Harek, who provided a close-up look to the relation between the refugee and the host communities and on the role of the municipality in responding to the refugee influx to Batroun.

Q: What are the religious aspect of *Batroun* District and the nature of the relation between the different religious components of the *Batroun* society?

A: *Batroun* is a city mostly consisted of a Christian Maronite community.

Q: What is the number of Syrian refugees in *Batroun* district?

A: The latest number provided by UNHCR is listed in the attached document.

Q: Where is the biggest concentration of Syrian refugees in *Batroun*?

A: There is no specific concentration for Syrian refugees in *Batroun*, since most of them are renting apartments or living in unfinished buildings which are scattered all over the city.

Q: What is the most prominent way of settlement that the refugees are using?

A: In *Batroun*, there is a little distinction between migrant workers who have been long residents in the city and families who are seeking refuge from the Syrian war. Refugees have built few tents on the riversides which the municipality is aware of and still has control over.

Q: How is the Syrian refugee influx being dealt with?

A: The head of municipality noted that *Batroun* is not neighboring to any borders, so it hadn't witnessed a massive refugee influx, but refugees who have members of their families working in *Batroun* are joining them simultaneously. The municipality's role in the response to this refugee influx is to coordinate with the security bodies to be kept updated on the developments and stay in control and ready for the response in case of any incidents. When it comes to delivering humanitarian assistance, the municipality is coordinating with the Islamic *Waqef* which is collecting the assistance from donors and distributing it to the refugees.

Q: How are the refugees receiving the assistance in *Batroun*?

A: The refugees are basically receiving a monthly assistance from the Saudi and Qatari funds at the Mosque in *Batroun*. Christian Syrian refugees are receiving the assistance from the Archbishopric of *Batroun*.

Q: How would you describe the relation between the Christian host community and the Syrian refugee community?

A: The head of municipality stressed on the fact that there are no tensions between Christian host communities and refugees.

Q: Do you find any difference in the relation between Christian and Muslim host communities towards the refugee community?

A: No.

Q: According to you what are the fears of the Christian host community?

A: First of all, there are many Christian families who have very bad financial and living conditions and who need attention. Christians are worried about the expansion of the refugee community in a way that harms the demographic composition of the city and affects its general atmosphere based on the fact that the host community and the refugees have different backgrounds, cultures and traditions.

Q: What are the challenges that the Christian host community is facing?

A: First, there is a major difference in religions, customs and cultures between the host and the refugee community. Refugees are using public places in a way that is not accepted by the host community i.e. the beach, the public garden... These manifestations will be dealt with by the municipality, noting that Syrians have all the right to use the public spaces, but they have to respect the customs and culture of the Christian host community. Moreover, the increasing number of refugees is putting a pressure on the existing infrastructures (electricity, water) and on the municipality (collecting garbage). Notwithstanding the security fears of any incidents that the

Syrian refugees might cause noting that only a few of them were observed and these were strictly related to personal issues.

### **Interview with *Sheikh Mahmoud Noman***

On 19 May 2014, a meeting was held with Sheikh Mahmoud Noman, Imam of Batroun Mosque. Sheikh Mahmoud is the coordinator of all the humanitarian response to the Syrian refugees in Batroun District and has provided a lot of insight on the situation of the refugees in Batroun, the type of assistance that they are receiving and their interaction with the hosting environment. The following is a summary of the interview.

Q: What is the religious aspect of *Batroun* District and the nature of the relation between the different religious components of the *Batroun* society?

A: Batroun is mostly Christian though *Batroun* district includes some Muslim villages like *Rachkida*, *Al-Heri*... Christians and Muslim have a good relation.

Q: What is the number of Syrian refugees in *Batroun* district?

A: When refugees started to come to *Batroun*, the mosque was filling out a form for each family, but when the number became too big it became impossible to do that logistically, so the latest information we have is that there are approximately 3400 refugee in *Batroun* district.

Q: What is the dominating religious entity among the Syrian refugees residing in *Batroun*?

A: Refugees in *Batroun* are mostly *Sunnis*. However, Sheikh Mahdmoud produced a study on minorities that shows relevant numbers of Syrian refugees being Christian, Armenian, Allawites...

Q: Where is the biggest concentration of Syrian refugees in *Batroun* district?

A: The hills side of *Batroun*, *Al-Heri*, *Anfeh* and *Chekka*.

Q: What is the most prominent way of settlement that the refugees are using?

A: Refugees in *Batroun* are mostly staying in unfinished buildings, “agricultural chambers” or renting small apartments. However, in *Chekka* many refugees are staying in tented settlements.

Q: How is the Syrian refugee influx being dealt with?

A: Since the beginning of the influx, the committee of *Batroun* Mosque has been in charge of the distribution of assistance to the Syrian refugees.

Q: How are the refugees receiving the assistance in *Batroun*?

A: The committee of *Batroun* mosque is in charge of the appeal and the distribution of the assistance for the refugees in coordination with the local authorities (Municipality and *QaemMakam*) and international non-governmental organizations (UNHCR, IMC...). The refugee should present his/her entry card, the family booklet and the residence address. A group of volunteers visits the family to check the information and they are immediately given the assistance. The Saudi National Campaign provides 75% of the donations in addition to donations from the Lebanese Red Cross, the Emirates Red Crescent, the *Kweiti Abouab Al Khayr*, the committee of donations at *Dar Al-Fatwa* and the Emirates contributions through the Emirates Embassy. The mosque provides assistance for the *Sunnis* refugees as well as the refugees from other sects.

Q: How would you describe the relation between the Christian Host community and the Syrian refugee community?

A: There are no issues between the Christians and the Syrian refugees. Only personal disputes occur and they are mostly among the refugees themselves. However, there are many bad people among the refugees who can cause troubles.

Q: Do you find any difference in the relation between Christian and Muslim host communities towards the refugee community?

A: No. However, refugees tend to reside in areas with Muslim concentrations, where they can identify more with the community and feel more comfortable.

Q: According to you what are the fears of the Christian host community?

A: The Christian host community has definitely many fears that can be summarized into 2 points:

- 1- Fear of security incidents like stealing, violence, clashes.
- 2- Fear of the competition over jobs. The business owners are only concerned about the more profits they make, so they are hiring Syrians who request lower wages.
- 3- Fear of the demographic changes and the Christian presence.

Q: What are the challenges that the Christian host community is facing?

A: The most important challenge ahead for the Christian host community is to respond to the immense need that the refugees have; meaning need for shelter, water, electricity, jobs....

## Appendix 4: Raw data from interviews with Syrian refugees and members of the Muslim and Christian Lebanese host communities.

Table 2: Raw data from interviews with Syrian refugees and members of the Muslim and Christian Lebanese host communities.

Data Analysis: interviews with members of the Christian host community in <i>Batroun</i>	indiv 1	indiv 2	indiv 3	indiv 4	indiv 5	indiv6	indiv7	indiv8	indiv9	indiv10
Any personal relation with Syrian refugees (E.g.: hosting, employing, relatives...)	No	hosting	employing	hosting/employing	hosting/employing	No	hosting	hosting/employing	employing	No
How would you describe this relation on a scale of 1 to 4? Why?	2	2	2	4	4	2	2	4	4	2
Is there a refugee influx to your town?	no	no	no	No	no	no	no	no	no	no
Do you have any security concerns with the presence of refugees?	no	no	yes	No	yes	no	no	yes	yes	yes
How do you feel affected by the Syrian refugee crisis?	competition over resources, jobs, services	security/safety concerns	competition over resources, jobs, services	not affected	not affected	security/safety concerns	security/safety concerns			
How do you feel around refugees?	uncomfortable	normal	fear	sympathy	fear	uncomfortable	uncomfortable	sympathy	sympathy	sympathy
In your opinion, what is the best way to host refugees? Camps or non-camps settings?	camps	camps	camps	camps	camps	camps	camps	camps	camps	camps
Have you ever been involved or heard about a violent clash between the host community and the refugees in Batroun?	no	verbal argument	verbal argument	No	no	verbal argument	no	no	verbal argument	no

What do you think are the reasons behind the tense relation between the refugees and the host communities?	historical tensions	tradition, cultural differences	political and ethnic differences	bad socioeconomic conditions	historical tensions	historical tensions	bad socioeconomic conditions	tradition, cultural differences	political and ethnic differences	bad socioeconomic conditions
What do you feel is likely to happen in the future with the refugees? And what do you hope will happen?	I don't think they will ever leave, but I personally wish they'll do	the crisis is not ending anytime soon	I think they will leave as soon as it calms down in Syria because their living conditions are really bad	the crisis will end soon and they will all go back to Syria except those who managed to become productive and are able to support their families in a decent way	I don't think they will ever leave, but I personally wish they'll do	I don't think they will ever leave, but I personally wish they'll do	I think they will leave as soon as it calms down in Syria because their living conditions are really bad	the crisis will end soon and they will all go back to Syria except those who managed to become productive and are able to support their families in a decent way	I don't think they will ever leave, but I personally wish they'll do	I don't think they will ever leave, but I personally wish they'll do
<b>Data Analysis: interviews with members of the Muslim host community in Batroun</b>	<b>indiv 1</b>	<b>indiv 2</b>	<b>indiv 3</b>	<b>indiv 4</b>	<b>indiv 5</b>	<b>indiv 6</b>	<b>indiv 7</b>	<b>indiv 8</b>	<b>indiv 9</b>	<b>indiv 10</b>
Any personal relation with Syrian refugees (E.g.: hosting, employing, relatives...)	hosting	relatives	hosting	relatives	relatives	no	hosting	relatives	relatives	no
How would you describe this relation on a scale of 1 to 4? Why?	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3
Is there a refugee influx to your town?	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Do you have any security concerns with the presence of refugees?	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no	no	no
How do you feel affected by the Syrian refugee crisis?	competition over resources,	not affected	competition over resources,	competition over resources,	competition over resources,	competition over resources,	not affected	not affected	not affected	not affected

	jobs, services		jobs, services	jobs, services	jobs, services	resources, jobs, services				
How do you feel around refugees?	sympathy	normal	sympathy	sympathy	sympathy	sympathy	sympathy	sympathy	sympathy	sympathy
In your opinion, what is the best way to host refugees? Camps or non-camps settings?	camps	non-camps settings	camps	camps	camps	camps	non-camps settings	non-camps settings	camps	non-camps settings
Have you ever been involved or heard about a violent clash between the host community and the refugees in Batroun?	no	verbal argument	no	no	no	verbal argument	no	no	verbal argument	no
What do you think are the reasons behind the tense relation between the refugees and the host communities?	bad socioeconomic conditions	bad socioeconomic conditions	bad socioeconomic conditions	bad socioeconomic conditions	historical tensions	political and ethnic differences	bad socioeconomic conditions	bad socioeconomic conditions	political and ethnic differences	bad socioeconomic conditions
What do you feel is likely to happen in the future with the refugees? And what do you hope will happen?	the crisis will end soon and Syrians will be able to go back to their land	I hope everything will calm down in Syria so our brothers can go home safe	the crisis will end soon and Syrians will be able to go back to their land	the crisis will end soon and Syrians will be able to go back to their land	the crisis will end soon and Syrians will be able to go back to their land	refugees are staying here as it happened with the Palestinians	the crisis will end soon and Syrians will be able to go back to their land	the crisis will end soon and Syrians will be able to go back to their land	the crisis will end soon and Syrians will be able to go back to their land	refugees are staying here as it happened with the Palestinians
<b>Data Analysis: interviews with members of refugee community in Batroun</b>	<b>indiv 1</b>	<b>indiv 2</b>	<b>indiv 3</b>	<b>indiv 4</b>	<b>Indiv 5</b>	<b>indiv 6</b>	<b>indiv 7</b>	<b>indiv 8</b>	<b>indiv 9</b>	<b>indiv 10</b>

Any personal relation with the host community? (E.g.: hosting, employing, relatives...)	employer	relatives	employer	landlord	employer	landlord	landlord	landlord	landlord	landlord
How would you describe this relation on a scale of 1 to 4? Why?	4	2	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	4
Have you ever had any problems with the Lebanese security forces?	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Do you have any security concerns?	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
How do you feel around Lebanese?	strange	uncomfortable	strange	fear	fear	strange	uncomfortable	normal	normal	strange
Have you ever been involved or heard about a violent clash between the host community and the refugees?	No	No	verbal argument	No	verbal argument	No	verbal argument	No	No	verbal argument
What do you think are the reasons behind the tense relation between the refugees and the host communities?	political and ethnic differences	The difference in the socioeconomic class	bad socioeconomic conditions	tradition, cultural differences	historical tensions	political and ethnic differences	tradition, cultural differences	tradition, cultural differences	The difference in the socioeconomic class	bad socioeconomic conditions
How do you feel yourself perceived by the Lebanese?		"They see us as strangers, they look at us weirdly, but they have never insulted us or abused us"	The relation is fair. "When they look at us they see us as strangers as if they don't want us to be here"		It is a good relationship and we have been coexisting with Christians since we were in Syria however there are misunderstandings	It's a very good relation and there are no conflicts				

					that occur and mostly are personal or political					
What do you feel is likely to happen in the future with the refugees? And what do you hope will happen?	I think that the Syrian crisis will only get worse	There is no solution for the Syrian crisis	I hope it will get better	I hope it will get better	The only way to resolve the problem in Syria is through dialogue and reconciliation	As soon as we find some where to stay in Syria we will go back	I hope it will get better	I hope it will get better	The only way to resolve the problem in Syria is through dialogue and reconciliation	As soon as we find somewhere to stay in Syria we will go back