



THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF ANTI-SYRIAN HATE IN POST-CRISIS LEBANON A CRITICAL REVIEW

RAMY SHUKR



THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF ANTI-SYRIAN HATE IN POST-CRISIS LEBANON: A CRITICAL REVIEW

By Ramy Shukr

Acknowledgements

This report was overseen by Dr. Gabriel Tupinambá (Alameda) and edited by Salma Sakr (Anti-Racist Movement) as part of a collaboration between Alameda and the Beirut Institute for Critical Analysis and Research (BICAR). It is an output of the research project “Addressing socio-economic vulnerability through the Turkey/Syria Earthquake response” supported by the Disasters Emergency Committee.

© **April 2024**



This work is licensed under Creative Commons BY 4.0. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Contact the author:

Ramy Shukr, ARM’s Knowledge Coordinator - ramyshukr@gmail.com

About the Anti-Racism Movement (ARM)

Anti-Racism Movement is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) established by a group of local activists who work together with migrant workers to secure social, economic, and gender justice for all migrant workers and racialized groups in Lebanon. ARM runs a community centre dedicated to women migrant domestic workers in Lebanon where they can meet, learn new skills, organise, and access information and assistance. We mobilise public support for the abolishment of the Kafala (sponsorship) system and the realisation of migrant domestic workers' rights through advocacy and community-building. We also help migrant workers access services related to legal support, mental health, sexual and reproductive health, education, and shelter.

CONTACT

www.armlebanon.org

contact@armlebanon.org

About Alameda

Alameda is a research institute dedicated to fostering collaboration among researchers, civil society, and social movements worldwide to address pressing global challenges. Our mission is to promote critical thinking about today's major global challenges in order to find ways of dealing with current crisis in a collective and integrated way. Through our rigorous and collective research agenda, we aim to generate knowledge that informs decision-makers, in NGOs, multilateral organisations, and governments, opening up new paths — alamedas — towards a more sustainable future for children.

CONTACT

www.alameda.institute

info@alameda.institute

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
INTRODUCTION	9
CREATING THE PRECARIOUS LEBANESE MIDDLE-CLASS	11
PRECARIOUS JOBS FOR PRECARIOUS WORKERS	17
LEBANON'S RESPONSE TO THE NEW REFUGEE LABOUR	20
THE SYRIANIZATION OF THE FORMER LEBANESE MIDDLE CLASS	23
TODAY, THE CONFLICT CONTINUES TO BOIL	27
CONCLUSIONS	29
QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER ENGAGEMENT	31
REFERENCES	33
APPENDIX	37

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lebanon is going through one of the worst economic crises in modern history. At the same time, Lebanon hosts the largest refugee population per capita in the world; around 2 million Syrian refugees are estimated to be living in the country after fleeing war in Syria. In recent years, Syrian refugees have been facing alarming levels of hostility and violence from the Lebanese state, the security sector, media, and parts of the public. The goal of this short critical review is to identify the current role Syrian workers play in the Lebanese economy after the crisis and to explore any potential connections between that and the rise of xenophobic hate speech. To do that, I first go over a review of how the Lebanese economy works and the ways Syrian workers are included (and excluded) from Lebanese society based on available literature. This information is then used to offer a new analysis about the connection between the rise of hate speech and the exploitation of Syrians as a surplus population in the local economy. After presenting the main findings, this paper ends with questions for further engagement.

In order to develop a comprehensive understanding of Lebanon's economic structure, the integration and exclusion of Syrian workers, and the evolution of xenophobic hate speech, the methodology employed in this study includes a critical review of existing literature, including academic research, economic analyses, and media reports. Initially designed to only focus on refugee labour, it was necessary to expand the framework to understand how the position of the refugee and migrant worker was being produced in Lebanon to begin with. This adjustment allowed for a richer understanding of the interplay between economic factors and social dynamics.

This report contributes new insights by contextualising the plight of Syrian refugees within the broader dynamics of Lebanon's economic crisis and the structure of the Lebanese economy. Unlike previous studies that often isolated the refugee issue from Lebanon's structural economic problems, this analysis demonstrates how the refugees' situation illuminates the failings and exploitative nature of the Lebanese economy.

Key Findings

1. Economic transformation: The economic crisis caused a significant shift in the Lebanese class structure, with many previously middle-class individuals now pushed to take working class jobs. This shift has not been due to direct competition with Syrian workers but rather to the overall contraction of the economy and the scarcity of employment opportunities.
2. Valorization of identity on the market: The peculiar current alliance between the ruling class and members of the Lebanese working class when it comes to combating Syrian labour often comes with an attempt to valorize "Lebaneseness" in the labour market. This can be linked to the Lebanese workers (many are ex-middle class) finding themselves in cheap labour jobs and wanting to defend against that by trying to sell their identity on the market.
3. Creating a surplus population: Syrian workers are increasingly being managed as a surplus population in Lebanon, treated as not only cheap labour but unwanted labour subject to intensified legal and social restrictions by the security sector. This is a result of broader economic and political strategies rather than an inherent conflict between Syrian and Lebanese workers.
4. Preventing working class solidarity: The Lebanese ruling class has been attempting to solidify its position by exploiting Syrian labour and spreading anti-Syrian hate, while continuing to avoid the need for structural economic reforms. This strategy attempts to divert public attention from the root causes of the economic crisis in order to pit different segments of the working class against each other.

Main Recommendations

1. Addressing root causes: Efforts to address anti-Syrian hate must focus on the underlying economic and class dynamics. It is important to recognize that Syrian workers are not responsible for the economic difficulties faced by Lebanese workers. Initiatives should concentrate on building a productive and fair economy that benefits all workers in the country.
2. Building solidarity: Promoting Lebanese-Syrian solidarity for an economic system that benefits all workers is crucial. This can be achieved through community programs and initiatives that aim to dismantle xenophobic narratives by promoting shared economic and social objectives. These objectives challenge the divisive strategies of the ruling class.
3. Further research: Future research is needed on several fronts, including on the dynamics of the production of surplus value in an economy like Lebanon, the potential for radical working class political organisation in a hostile political climate, and the likely trajectory of the economic crisis if current trends persist. Comparative analyses from other contexts could also provide valuable insights.



Figure 1. A group of men in Beirut distribute flyers demanding Syrian residents in their area to evacuate their houses, saying they will torture and kill those who don't (Najib 2014)



Figure 2. A Syrian refugee boy walking in his camp with Batman, part of an advocacy video produced by War Child Holland in Lebanon (Thomson Reuters Foundation 2017)

INTRODUCTION

Although we can isolate broad structures that govern the labour and lives of displaced people around the world, attending to particular mechanisms at play in economies of the periphery allows us to better understand the current trajectory of the global capitalist system in times of economic crisis with its emerging forms of exploitation and new ways of organising social relations.

Since 2011, Lebanon has been hosting a large number of refugees who fled Syria after the Syrian regime's violent response against revolutionary protests, resulting in a long-standing civil war that produced the largest refugee population in the world according to UNHCR. Currently, Lebanon hosts the largest refugee population per capita in the world; around 2 million Syrian refugees are estimated to be living in the country as Lebanon goes through one of the worst economic crises in modern history. Analysing the situation in Lebanon as the potential future of people facing economic crises in other places around the world can offer useful insights that can be applicable on a global scale.

A lot of research studies and analyses have been conducted about the supposed "impact" on the Syrian refugee "influx" into the country, evoking a fantasy of an invasion, a fantasy that got picked up by the Lebanese ruling parties, especially the Christian right wing, in organised campaigns to mobilise hate speech against refugees. However, these campaigns were not always so successful. As we see later in this report, despite some conflicts between Syrian and Lebanese communities taking place in densely populated areas in the early years of refugee displacement, these conflicts were limited in scope, even during the Lebanese revolution in 2019 and in the first couple of years of the subsequent economic crisis. This becomes especially apparent when compared to current levels of anti-Syrian hate and mob violence taking place in the country where public lynching of Syrian workers in different areas, in addition to assaults at random checkpoints and censorship of pro-Syrian voices, created a grim new reality for Syrians in Lebanon.

Existing analyses explain the rise of anti-Syrian hate in Lebanon either as a scapegoating strategy used by political elites to channel public anger away from them, or as a result of labour market competition between Lebanese and Syrian workers in the new economy. These interpretations cannot explain the causes behind the particular recent intensification of anti-Syrian violence in the country. Some analysts make the assumption that economic conditions in Lebanon would be better off without Syrians, yet they do not consider the possibility that the economic position Syrian refugees currently occupy may be a product of decisions regarding the structure of the Lebanese economy itself. Even among leftist and feminist organisers, relatively little effort has been put into understanding the structure of the Lebanese economy, the specific causes of the economic crisis, and the impact of the crisis on class relations between Lebanese and Syrian workers. This can be partly explained by the helplessness many community organisers felt after the failure of the Lebanese revolution, coupled with the long-standing mystification of the Lebanese capitalist system which hides its inner workings from the working class, the media, and public discourse. This trumps our ability to organise against xenophobia or to develop alternative ways forward for a more egalitarian economy since to do that we first need to have an accurate understanding of the causes behind the existing state of things.

The goal of this short critical review is to identify the current role Syrian workers play in the Lebanese economy after crisis and to examine the connection between that and the rise of xenophobic hate speech. To do that, I first go over a review of how the Lebanese economy works and the ways Syrian workers are included (and excluded) from Lebanese society based on available literature. This information is then used to offer a new analysis about the connection between the rise of hate speech and the exploitation of Syrians as a surplus population in the local economy. After presenting the main findings, this paper ends with questions for further engagement.

CREATING THE PRECARIOUS LEBANESE MIDDLE-CLASS

Unlike Arab countries that rely on revenues from oil exports, Lebanon does not produce oil, nor does it heavily export any particular commodity. In fact, Lebanon's trade balance has been consistently negative since before the 1950s (Persen 1958), as it imports much more than it exports. In order to import commodities, Lebanon must pay for them in foreign currency, which Lebanon does not print. Hence, foreign currency needs to be secured from abroad in order to keep Lebanon's economy afloat. In order to do this in the absence of exports, Lebanon heavily relies on the service sector, including financial services, in order to attract foreign capital into the country in the form of foreign investment and tourism, in addition to the Lebanese rentier economy (where profit is generated through rents, mostly in the real estate and banking sectors). For example, trade (the exchange of goods and services with the outside world, considered part of the service sector since it does not produce tangible goods) had a high ratio of 89% relative to Lebanon's GDP in 2012 (World Bank 2024). This makes the local economy highly vulnerable as it is dependent on foreign capital flows into Lebanese banks for the country to be able to import the basic commodities it needs given its very weak agriculture and industrial sectors. Lebanon's negative trade balance has been coupled with governmental budget deficits since 1975 (Marashdeh and Saleh 2006), limiting the government's ability to implement developmental projects regardless of the will of individual politicians.

Despite this, Lebanon was surprisingly able to maintain its classification as an upper middle class country with a stable currency value since 1997. What's more unique is that Lebanon has a relatively low labour participation rate – only 46% in 2007, compared to a global average of 63% (ILO 2024) – which means that less people of working age were interested in taking up jobs and working in the local labour market, yet they were able to pay for the goods and services they consume. So how does this happen? *How was Lebanon able to maintain its upper middle income classification despite its trade deficit? And how does that relate to Syrian labour in the country?*

The World Bank has classified Lebanon as an upper middle income country since the late 1990s, based on its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This was around the same time the Lebanese central bank pegged the Lebanese Lira against the US dollar. This currency peg was meant to attract foreign capital into the country, as banks promised high interest rates on deposits – up to 13.6% in 1998 (IMF 2013) – and implemented strong banking secrecy regulations in order to encourage foreign deposits. This is only one example of the trajectory the Lebanese economy took since the end of the civil war in the 1990s, widely referred to as the implementation of the neoliberal vision of Rafik El Hariri, Lebanon’s prime minister at the time, who had strong ties with gulf countries which resulted in significant financial investments from these countries in particular into Lebanon. Post-war reconstruction projects were catered to foreign investors (as opposed to national development) as the Lebanese government also took out loans to supposedly develop the country’s crumbling infrastructure, promising to pay these loans back plus interest. The accumulation of this public debt reached 350% of the country’s GDP in 2021 (IMF 2021). Furthermore, the government passed a law that transferred the ownership of properties from a large number of individual owners in Beirut into a single real estate company called Solidere in 1991, “liberating” the properties to be used for foreign rental and investment.

Profits (and not wages) have been accounting for most of the country’s GDP from as early as the 1970s until today, where wages only represent 15% of the GDP in 2024 (Fadlallah 2022) and Lebanon has a low labour productivity rate (ILO 2024). These profits were only concentrated in the hands of the few, as the top 10% of the Lebanese were taking over 54% of local income (Assouad 2017). It is important to mention that this trajectory in the Lebanese economy did not develop undirected. Lebanon’s “rentier capitalists” – capitalists who make profit from rent-creating mechanisms such as real estate development and government interest – were the main orchestrators and beneficiaries of this model (Baumann 2019), as Lebanon’s ruling elites own most of the country’s means of generating profit through their networks (real estate shares, banks, land, industry). Through a model of crony capitalism, these ruling parties directed cash received from foreign loans to their own networks, secured major public contracts to companies affiliated with them, and divided public sector jobs to workers affiliated with them.

Most of the Lebanese middle class were able to make ends meet by relying on a huge chunk of foreign remittances, which according to the World Bank (2022) reached \$6.8 billion in 2022 – the third highest in the MENA region. Others sought public sector employment¹, participated in the banking interest schemes², or took up salaried (as opposed waged³) service sector jobs. However, the labour participation rate remained low, as many Lebanese skilled workers preferred to stay unemployed, waiting for immigration or better opportunities, than to accept the cheap labour jobs the local economy produces. This is because there is a huge mismatch between the jobs produced by the Lebanese economy (mostly unskilled manual labour jobs in the service sector) on one hand, and the skilled workers entering the labour market every year looking for suitable jobs on the other hand. As such, Lebanon became a place that can produce and supply skilled workers to the Gulf and Western countries which in many cases was cheaper compared to these countries having to produce these skilled workers themselves.

From a Marxist standpoint, in order to evaluate the health of an economy, we need to examine its production of surplus value and not just its production of profits. To do that, Marx differentiated between “productive” and “unproductive” economic sectors. Productive sectors (such as agriculture and industry) produce surplus value in the form of commodities, and the money generated through these sectors is reinvested in the production process in the form of “capital”. A productive economy is an economy with strong productive sectors, where the labour of workers is valorized as it directly contributes to the production of surplus value. For the worker’s abstract labour time to be valorized, it needs to be caught up in the process of production, where part of the surplus value generated through that process would go back to the worker in the form of wages, and the rest would go for the capitalist to reinvest in the production process.

¹ Around 20% of Lebanese employees work in the public sector (ILO 2024)

² Lebanese families receiving remittances in foreign currency benefitted from the high interest rates local banks provided on deposits in Lebanese pounds, as the Lebanese pound was pegged to the US dollar at a rate well above its real market value.

³ Waged labour here refers to precarious jobs where workers do not have job security and are paid on an hourly, weekly, or seasonal basis.

The real value of these wages (the value of their local currency and its strength) is thus directly related to how much surplus value this currency produces in the productive sectors.

Agriculture and industry are considered the primary and secondary productive sectors of an economy, based on the European trajectory of development. The service sector, or tertiary sector, expanded in Europe after the development of the first two sectors. It is regarded as unproductive by many economists since it does not directly produce surplus value in the form of tangible commodities, even if it creates profit. To understand this better, in the European model, consumers buy commodities in the market and pay with wages that were created from the process of production of surplus value in productive sectors. Since the unproductive sector is “unproductive”, any profit made in this sector is composed of money whose value was originally created in productive sectors. Income from non-productive sectors represented 40% of Lebanon’s gross national disposable income in 2019 (Fadlallah 2022). In the absence of productive sectors, an economy does not produce surplus value, and the value of its currency will be dependent on the whims of speculative profit instead of the normal dynamics of capitalist production. With the decrease in capital inflows and investment, especially from the GCC in the late 2010s, profits made through speculative rentierism could no longer sustain the value of the Lebanese currency, leaving it exposed.

This is not to overstate the importance of rentism in the Lebanese economy, for profit is also made in the productive parts of the tertiary sector, but rather to emphasise the economy’s huge dependency on foreign capital flows, the impact of not being able to produce surplus value in the form of tangible goods, in addition to the government’s financial schemes catering to the top 10% at the expense of national economic development. In short, the economy was not doing well for the Lebanese, and it was only a matter of time for the bubble to explode.

This pattern of “de-development” is not outside colonial relations, as some have argued that poor and developing countries were encouraged by the west not to develop their own industrial sectors but to buy western-made commodities in order to maintain a relationship of dependence on the west. Foreign capital flows could then more easily control the tertiary sector, the only sector left, creating huge consequences on local economies as a result. Under economies like this one, one can see how workers are not at the centre of the equation. Workers are not always needed for capitalists to produce profit, as a lot of profit can be produced in the economy of rentierism and financial operations without going through workers. This is not to overlook the actual labour sectors we have in our economy, but to point at the huge and risky dynamic that takes place when the bulk of the economy is profit-driven and does not produce surplus value (in the form of tangible commodities) in the process.

How was class conflict being kept at bay? When it comes to labour organising, the Lebanese ruling parties aimed to actively infiltrate and weaken workers’ associations and federations, using sectarian divides to fuel tensions between workers away from their actual class interests. This led to the weakening of the General Confederation of Lebanese Workers (CGTL) as it no longer encompassed federations that actually represent workers and their interests. This was done to prevent workers from having power over national policy, which, alongside weak and non-existent state institutions, led to solidifying the position of Lebanese ruling parties as the sole providers of needed social welfare through their clientalist and sectarian social relations (Slaybi 1999).

Since workers’ federations are now weakened, and since migrant, including Syrian, workers do not have the right to form their own labour unions in the country, we arrived to a situation where the only significant labour organising that was taking place after the Lebanese civil war was limited to the middle classes, particularly public sector employees and teachers’ unions. This is important to note since the class interests of these employees, usually calling for small reforms in the current system and wanting to eliminate corruption, are not the same as the class interests of the working class (which includes precarious workers) whose demands cannot be met with small reforms but necessitate a radical change in the structure of the Lebanese economy and in whom this economy is designed to benefit.

Baumann (2019) argues that the structure of the Lebanese economy created a precarious middle class which was the class organising against corruption and weak public services in the country. The problem was conceived of as one of “mismanagement” and embezzlement of public funds, as reforms were needed so that we can improve the situation of this precarious middle class that sought better public services as opposed to restructuring the economy as a whole. Hassan (2017) argues that the organising middle class was not able to disrupt how the Lebanese ruling class make their profits, especially since the bulk of the profits generated in Lebanon are not generated from the labour of middle class workers, as the economy largely depended on gulf rentism, financial operations, and cheap migrant labour. As such, the workers organising were only able to disrupt the already-weakened operations of state institutions, adding some pressure on ruling parties without risking the bulk of their finances.

Now that we have a rough idea of how the Lebanese economy works, leading to its inevitable crisis, let’s focus on the jobs the Lebanese economy does generate and the workers filling those positions.

PRECARIOUS JOBS FOR PRECARIOUS WORKERS

The service and financial sectors make up around 80% of Lebanon's GDP (World Bank 2023). In order to keep the prices of imported commodities low while making maximum profit, and to increase profit margins in construction, trade, and the service sector in general, a steady supply of cheap labour is needed, the cheaper the better, which means that less labour protections are preferred.

In fact, while 90% of workers in high-skill jobs are Lebanese, only 45% of workers in low-skill jobs are Lebanese (David et al. 2020). After the economic crisis, some of these manual labour jobs were taken up by a part of the Lebanese working class struggling to make ends meet, but most of these jobs are historically taken by Syrian, Palestinian, and non-Arab migrant workers in the informal economy. This is not a new phenomenon, as half of the labour force was estimated to be non-Lebanese in 2010 according to the World Bank (2011).

Syrian workers were preferred in the construction and agriculture sectors for example, enduring harsh conditions for wages below the local legal minimum without any healthcare coverage or other benefits. This is not new for Lebanon, and has always been part and parcel of the structure of the Lebanese economy. For example, in 1972, more than 90% of construction workers in Lebanon were Syrian (ACHR 2020). Since the 1980s, non-Arab migrant workers from African and Asian countries started coming to Lebanon and taking up jobs as domestic workers⁴ or for minimum wage in the service sector through the Lebanese sponsorship system, a legal framework designed to prevent their labour mobility and to deny these workers permanent residence or formal recognition as part of Lebanese society (Amnesty International 2019).

Since most jobs taken by Arab and non-Arab migrant workers in Lebanon lacked labour protections and benefits, they were undesirable and increasingly considered abject and of low value. However, these non-Lebanese workers were only allowed to work in these

⁴ Domestic workers in Lebanon are excluded from the labour law and get paid way below the national minimum wage. This also applies to most agricultural workers and workers in family-owned businesses.

abject jobs, and their existence in Lebanon was thus associated with these jobs. For example, Syrians in Lebanon are only legally allowed to work in three sectors: agriculture, construction, and cleaning. The jobs themselves became racialized, as if they were designed for a specific class and type of people to perform.

The Lebanese economic system thus interpellated working class foreign workers as abject workers who are naturally suited for extreme labour exploitation and abuse and as such are well suited for these unwanted jobs. For example, Lebanese employers in Lebanon's agriculture sector state that they prefer to hire Syrians over Lebanese workers since Syrians have less leverage or 'backing' in Lebanon as they are publicly unwanted and are not allowed to work in the country, which makes employers more comfortable with imposing forced labour and tough labour conditions on them without the concern of the workers' families retaliating against the employer (Turkmani and Hamade 2020). The same applies to migrant workers for cleaning jobs, as you often hear the phrase "she works as a *Sirilankieh* [Sri Lankan woman]" where one's nationality became synonymous with being a domestic worker, highlighting the racialization of this job.

This doesn't only apply to Syrian and non-Arab migrant workers who are deemed as not belonging to the country (hence more harshly exploitable) but also to Palestinian refugees who reside in the country. Despite constituting only 5% of the country's labour force (and less than 10% of the population), Palestinian workers are denied the right to legally work in several sectors (such as law, engineering, medicine, etc.)⁵ and are instead pushed to reside in segregated camps and seek employment in the private sector in the informal economy as cheaper labour. For example, the average monthly wage for Palestinian workers in Lebanon in 2012 was around \$358 – 20% below the national minimum (ILO 2014a).

⁵ For many in the Lebanese government, Palestinian workers need to be excluded from the formal labour market due to fears of them overwhelming the economy and pushing Lebanese workers out of middle/upper class jobs (L'Orient Today 2022).

Thus, we can start to see how the Lebanese state uses nationality as a tool to produce abject and precarious workers to fill the precarious and informal jobs this economy generates. Syrian workers have always been part of the Lebanese labour market, especially after the end of the Lebanese civil war in the 1990s as the country embarked on its post-war neoliberal reconstruction projects. However, after the Syrian war started and with the growing size of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, using nationality and the sponsorship system was deemed no longer enough by the Lebanese government to subjugate and contain this “surplus” population. Additional security, residency, and labour regulations slowly started to be implemented.

LEBANON'S RESPONSE TO THE NEW REFUGEE LABOUR

In April 2015, the Lebanese government asked the UNHCR to stop registering Syrian refugees who had arrived in Lebanon after 2014. In addition, the government decided to deny refugees the right to legally reside and work in the country. Imposing extremely difficult conditions for residency and work permits resulted in a situation where even refugees registered with the UNHCR were unable to obtain legal residency. For example, only 30% of refugees who are registered with UNHCR have legal residency permits (IFI 2020), and refugees with residency permits make up only 17% of all Syrian refugees in the country (VASyR 2022). Some municipalities started imposing curfews against Syrians, who were not allowed to go out from sunset to sunrise, while other municipalities set up banners advertising the maximum daily wage Syrian manual workers are allowed to charge. These measures made it difficult for Syrian refugees to find work and forced them into more difficult conditions as they fend for themselves in the informal economy (HRW 2014).

Syrians constituted 17% of the Lebanese labour force before the Syrian war. According to existing analyses, most Syrian refugees who came to Lebanon are classified as low-skilled workers (David et al. 2020) and as such compete with other low-skilled workers, most of whom are migrant workers from different nationalities.

When it comes to international aid, the UNHCR and other international aid organisations increased their presence in Lebanon in response to the mass displacement of Syrians, providing different forms of support such as healthcare and cash assistance. In addition, the Lebanese government received multiple grants from the European Union (EU) and other parties to supposedly support local infrastructure and improve Lebanon's ability to support Syrian refugees in the country. This resulted in an increase in foreign currency into Lebanon which contributed a 1.3% increase in the GDP in 2014 according to the UNDP (2015). However, this increase was of course not enough to offset the negative effects of the major decrease in tourism, exports, and foreign capital flows. Some analysts have demonstrated that foreign aid can have a positive impact on the Lebanese economy if the money was used for investment development.

This means facilitating the labour inclusion of Syrian workers, allowing for business investments that support the establishment of businesses that can absorb and utilise a large number of low skilled workers, create more high-skilled jobs, increase exports, and attract tourism. For Lebanon, this could be in the sectors of agriculture, energy, communications, transport, and entrepreneurship. We can see this demonstrated in the case of Turkey, which hosts the largest Syrian refugee population in the world. Instead of barring refugees from working, as is the situation in Lebanon and Jordan, the Turkish government facilitated the inclusion of refugees and their labour mobility, resulting in an increase in exports and a positive GDP growth attributed to refugee workers (Altındağ, Bakış, and Rozo 2020) despite anti-refugee sentiments still prevailing (Navruz and Çukurçayır 2015).

In fact, the EU and Lebanon were engaging in negotiations in 2016 for a compact agreement where Lebanon would boost its agribusiness and food sectors through a foreign investment that would create 300,000 jobs mostly using Syrian workers (Seeberg 2018). However, this plan was not carried out as the Lebanese government wanted to maintain an exclusionary xenophobic position towards Syrian refugees even at the expense of national economic growth for the whole country. Since the Lebanese national budget is always in deficit, Gebran Bassil, Lebanon's minister of foreign affairs, used the "refugee crisis" as a card to pressure the west for more financial support, arguing that Lebanon is keeping Syrian refugees away from Europe and needs support if it is to continue doing that (Facon 2018). The response of the EU fell in line with this strategy of keeping refugees away from the 'imperial' centre and supporting their containment in the 'periphery' (Zetter 2021), as additional funding was received by the Lebanese state in recent years to reinforce its border management and securitization (Tholens 2017).

Despite Bassil's anti-Syrian efforts, the response of the Lebanese government to the increasing refugee presence was relatively weak between 2012 and 2015. During this period, many Lebanese landlords and middlemen benefitted from the influx of refugees and the increased demand for housing especially in urban areas (Fawaz 2017). This period was followed by increasingly tighter border controls and legal residency restrictions by municipalities between 2015 and 2019.

However, media representations of refugees during this period were not all negative despite the rise in scapegoating narratives (Sadaka, Nader, and Mikhael 2015) and the relationship between the Lebanese and Syrians during that period was characterised as somewhat socially stable (Madoré 2016).

From the beginning of the Lebanese revolution and economic crisis in 2019, we notice increased attempts by ruling parties to blame refugees for the failure of the Lebanese economy in order to curb dissent and redirect public anger. However, these attempts were not fully successful (BBC News 2019; Patuck 2020). Lebanese protestors would often mock Gebran Bassil in the streets as chants against him became one of the most popular chants in the revolution (Ayoub 2019; Orient News 2018). Most people read his speeches against Syrians as his diversion tool and refused to see Syrians as their main enemy or the main cause of the crisis. Anxieties and some incidents of violence against refugees still existed of course, but the predominant public discourse and drive at the time was mainly against the ruling class, the target of the revolution, and not a hyperfixation on refugees.

However, the Lebanese revolution failed to materialise into structural change, the pandemic came, then the 2020 Beirut Blast, and the country plummeted more deeply into the most severe economic crisis in its modern history. A couple of years after the crisis, we witnessed a dramatic transformation in the Lebanese public's relationship with Syrian refugees and an intensification of hate, as many Lebanese seem to now be in alliance with the ruling class against refugees. *Is this just a result of scapegoating and labour competition, or is there more to it?*

THE SYRIANIZATION OF THE FORMER LEBANESE MIDDLE CLASS

First, we have to emphasise that there has been a transformation in the economic position of refugees after the crisis, as refugees now became more of a surplus population. Rajaram (2018) describes surplus populations as a population that struggles to valorize its labour power – or to turn its “body-power” into “labour power”. This can occur when the labour market does not want your labour, or when your “body power” is not easily translated to fit the existing “value regimes” of the market. By creating and maintaining an unproductive economy that does not create jobs, and a labour market that is not open to Syrian workers or their investments even after the crisis, Syrian workers started increasingly being managed as a surplus population, and not just as an excluded labour force. They become subjects for the security sector to keep at bay, prevent their political organising, keep them from getting to Europe, while trying to drive them back to Syria.

Although the unemployment rate among Syrian refugees in Lebanon stood at 39% in 2020 (VaSyR 2021), 90% of Syrians were living under the poverty line and were in need of humanitarian assistance. The United Nations’ Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (2022) mentions that more than two thirds of Syrian refugees are living below the poverty line and are unable to afford basic necessities for survival, triple the number in 2021. For the state, Syrian refugees are no longer just a source of very cheap labour, but became unwanted labour. In 2022, Lebanese security forces started their still-going campaign of raiding Syrian refugee camps and confiscating wireless routers, mobile phones, TVs, and solar panels in addition to carrying out mass arrests of undocumented workers – knowing that 95% of refugees do not have valid work permits (ILO & Fafo 2020). Reports documenting mass deportations of Syrian refugees, including many who were registered with UNHCR, started coming up, detailing how deported refugees are often met with lethal consequences by the Syrian regime as a survey conducted among 350 Syrians who returned to their homeland revealed that 75% of them faced harassment, torture, or arrest by Syrian authorities (Loveluck 2019). Human Rights Watch (2023) stated that the Lebanese security forces deported more than 1800 refugees during just a few months in 2023.

According to the Access Center for Human Rights (2024), deportations increased by 496% in 2023 compared to the previous year. Security checkpoints targeting Syrian refugees started becoming even more frequent, limiting their mobility, as Syrians were turned into a demonised security threat and economic saboteur mentioned on a daily basis in news reports on Lebanese media. Strangely, it appeared that the ruling class, previously an enemy to the people, was now being an ally with the people against a new enemy. *But how do we account for the intensity of this anger and dehumanisation? To answer that, we have to consider the transformation in the composition of the Lebanese working class.*

A major economic and social transformation took place in Lebanon a few years into the economic crisis. Poverty rates stood at just 8.4% in 2007 (UNDP 2007), rising to 32% by 2014 (IMF 2014), which are problematic figures but seem less dire when compared to the current crisis situation where an estimated 60% of households consider themselves to be poor or very poor (World Bank 2023). Lebanese people who were previously middle class or lower middle class suddenly find themselves part of the working class, and having to look for and take working class jobs that were previously mostly reserved for the cheap labour of Syrian workers. This created a conflict: Lebanese workers are now forced to be in the precarious positions they had previously reserved for Syrians in Lebanon, having to take up their abject jobs and bad working conditions, and have to defend against being in the place of the abject worker they had previously exploited. It appears that these new workers (skilled labourers who were part of the middle class) are fighting for the right not to live in the conditions and jobs of the working class. For them, it is easier to identify with their Lebanese employers (upper class, vertical solidarity) than it is to identify with other Syrian workers. Within the current economy and given the failure of the revolution, exploiting what makes them special on the market by virtue of their Lebanese nationality seems to be the only choice left if they want to fight against being pulled down into the position of the proletariat.

Cultural examples of this are plenty. In the past few years, we started seeing more and more small new cleaning and repair companies marketing themselves as only staffed by Lebanese people, as if being Lebanese affects the quality of the services they provide.

This is more prominent in sectors that were previously reserved for cheap and non Lebanese labour, such as manual jobs, cleaning, and some services. On Instagram, you get ads from a young Lebanese plumber telling you that there is “no shame” in being a plumber as a Lebanese man before he advertises his services (Darbet M3allem 2023). Somewhat humorously, a Lebanese popular media personality by the name of Nidal Al Ahmadih made a TV statement complaining about buying ice cream from a Syrian worker who did not speak French or know how to prepare a local Lebanese dessert (SBI 2023), where she emphasised that there is a “fundamental difference” between being Lebanese and being Syrian, insinuating that the Lebanese is more valuable qualitatively by virtue of being Lebanese. After even the Minister of Labour encouraged the Lebanese to take over cheap labour jobs previously occupied by migrants (Hayek and Ammar 2022), workers now try to valorize their “Lebaneseness” on the market, attempting to squeeze more value out of this identity where possible, creating a dynamic of the middle class Lebanese who would not accept to be reduced to a “dirty” proletariat position without trying his luck in selling his identity on the market first.

To understand this, we have to keep in mind that the political interests and demands of the middle class, seeking better positions within the existing system and wanting to preserve their status, is different from that of the working class, whose structural demands necessitate a radical change in how the system works and to whose advantage. There is a tendency in media and academic accounts to misrepresent what is going on in Lebanon by framing it as a matter of:

- ‘hate speech’ where the suggested solutions would be to help people “accept difference” which is not what the conflict is really about as people accept their difference and try to exploit their difference on the market,
- a depoliticized humanitarian approaches that mystify causes and just zoom in on Syrian precarity,
- an issue of simple labour market competition which is reductive and cannot explain the opposing class interests and strategies of the people involved,

-
- an issue of scapegoating which does not tell us anything about why the public (and not just the state) is having this level of anger and implies that people are just naive – for they are just misplacing the real enemy, or
 - studies that mention the economy but don't examine class relations or the social component of what is going on.

Examining class relations and class interests should not be left out if we are to have a proper understanding of the existing level of hate speech as people have to make conscious or unconscious strategic decisions to advance their interests in a new economy. This is important because it helps us identify where the problem really is and how it manifests, for us to be able to then devise potential solutions. More work needs to be done in order to understand the economic and social components underpinning the recent rise in hate speech in Lebanon, but giving enough attention to the class interests at play is key.

TODAY, THE CONFLICT CONTINUES TO BOIL

In February 2023, a major earthquake hit Turkey and Syria leaving tens of thousands of casualties in both countries, including more than 7000 deaths in Syria (IMC 2023). According to the ILO (2023), around 170,000 people in Syria were left without employment as a result of the quake. Many of these workers and their families were displaced within Syria while others are assumed to have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. Given the absence of official figures as UNHCR in Lebanon is not allowed to continue registering refugees since 2015, it is difficult to have an accurate assessment of the impact of the earthquake on refugee displacement from Syria to Lebanon. However, municipalities in several areas in Lebanon stated that their Syrian refugee populations doubled at the end of 2023 (Amal Khalil 2023), but more information, potentially through conducting dedicated fieldwork, is needed if we want to understand the impact of the earthquake in particular on refugees in Lebanon.

Given that there have been very little efforts of Lebanese-Syrian solidarity and community building in the past years, workers are often segregated by nationality even within the same job. For example, app-based delivery workers are aware of the pay inequalities and bad working conditions their colleagues live with (The Policy Initiative 2023), but many mentioned that they have different WhatsApp groups for Lebanese workers and Syrian workers for example. The Lebanese state has also been targeting organisations assisting Syrian refugees if they don't have "Syrian refugees" in their official mandate with the government. Political organising is of course prohibited for Syrians in Lebanon (SFCG 2014), but the Lebanese are also targeted if they want to politically organise with Syrians. Many activists state that they are even afraid of going on TV or being very public with pro-Syrian speech for fear of being publicly targeted and defamed. In fact, videos depicting Lebanese protestors chanting refugee-inclusive chants during the 2019 revolution resurfaced in 2023 on social media as more people were shocked and angered by the fact that some Lebanese people were defending refugees. This year, a Lebanese security guard killed a refugee at a checkpoint, and the guard was met with a celebratory protest in his name as he got released from custody shortly after (Megaphone 2024). No protests were held calling for justice against the perpetrator.

For many leftist activists in Beirut, the most jarring and intense incidents of violence took place at the beginning of October 2023, where news reports and footage surfaced showing hundreds of Lebanese men, many of them armed but not in police/army attire, going around at night in mostly Christian-dominated neighbourhoods and cities in Lebanon to beat up Syrian men on the streets and to evict Syrian people who were in their apartments (Orient News 2023), often using racist discourse that conflates Syrian refugees with the army of the Syrian regime that occupied parts of Lebanon from 1976-2005. The footage was violent and it quickly spread fear even among many Lebanese. A few days later, the Israeli aggression started and the attention put on this died down as the media followed the events in Gaza.

History teaches us that fascist practices do not pass without resistance and generate bloody conflicts, if not wars. The Lebanese government's strategy of dealing with Syrian refugees as a surplus population and employing increasingly fascist practices risks the situation further escalating to a conflict that will not leave the Lebanese unharmed. However, it seems like the ruling class has already decided that taking the risk of going into a more serious confrontation with millions of refugees in the country is preferable to implementing structural changes in the economy against their interests. With the lack of collaborative Lebanese-Syrian community building efforts or leftist social organising for a more just economy, the situation will likely continue to spiral.

CONCLUSIONS

Having an accurate assessment and understanding of the problem of the Lebanese economy and the causes of the economic crisis is important for us to translate that knowledge into working class demands that we can build more support for in the next years. The issue of anti-Syrian hate may be a good entry point for this political work since it is a symptom that shows you how the whole system works, and it is something that many Lebanese people are interested in addressing since it is understood as something that affects their livelihoods. There are usually different fantasies that are used to fuel racism against a particular community. There will always be Lebanese people who believe in Lebanese supremacy and want to degrade Syrian and other migrant workers in the country, but stripping the racist Lebanese of their economic argument and stressing on how their rhetoric is dangerous for the Lebanese and for the future of Lebanon as a country may be a strong tool to use in the space of public discourse.

The alliance between the ruling class and working class Lebanese against Syrian labour is seen by many workers as an attempt to further valorize Lebaneseness in the local labour market, something that they hope would work to their benefit. Against this, some voices try to fight anti-Syrian racism by stressing how Lebanese people benefit from cheap Syrian labour in fields like agriculture, saying that the prices of fruits and vegetables would double if not triple for everyone if the Syrians were to be replaced with Lebanese workers who would charge more for the same work. Although these organisers may have good intentions in wanting to oppose anti-Syrian hate, their campaigns consist of different versions of “let’s accept the slaves because we can exploit them” instead of finding a way out of slavery as a system, and as such they do not address the real problem. Today, the economy that led to the crisis is being presented as the only viable solution for surviving the financial crisis. The Lebanese economy continues to be based on a foreign trade imbalance, profit-driven real estate, and a precarious service sector as more families rely on remittances from relatives abroad to afford basic necessities (Salemeh 2023). The Lebanese working class continues trying to make ends meet in an economy that does not produce jobs or fit the needs of the local labour market, which continues to be the main cause of precarity.

Cheap migrant or Syrian labour can be used to fill up cheap labour jobs in this economy, but the Lebanese are not struggling to find jobs because the Syrians took their place, but because there are no jobs being produced to begin with. Lebanon has a very low economic complexity index (Fadlallah 2022), which means that the economy is not diverse in its sectors and is composed of low-complexity jobs that offer low return on investment relative to the real human potential of the labour market.

It is true that many employers try to cut costs by employing non-Lebanese labour in precarious jobs, but most Lebanese do not want these precarious jobs which should not exist for anyone. Thus, the frustration should be redirected at the need for better jobs and for the state facilitating investments in productive sectors that are inclusive is one example of steps in that direction. Building a better economy necessitates building connections between the Lebanese and Syrian working class in Lebanon for an economy that works to their advantage. As mentioned previously, Lebanon has historically relied on Syrian workers, making huge profits on their backs especially in construction and agriculture. Examples from other parts of the world show us that the presence of Syrian labour can be a driver for a stronger economy if used up in the processes of production and industry instead of being formally excluded (e.g. Matsangou 2018). Investing energy in opposing Syrian refugees will not produce more jobs, but will only raise the possibility of rapidly escalating levels of conflict taking place within the different factions of the new working class in the near future while maintaining the interests of the Lebanese ruling class who continue to run this economy and make significant profits even after the crisis.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER ENGAGEMENT

Based on the above, we suggest the following questions for further engagement:

- A deeper exploration of the problem of productive and unproductive economic sectors, especially when it comes to the (non-)production of surplus value in the form of tangible commodities, based on economies like Lebanon. Can a service sector sustain the value of a currency or is there no other option but to turn back to manufacturing and agriculture as the main producers of value?
- Information about the productivity of labour in Lebanon is vague. What does it mean that wages form only 20% of the GDP, and how can we identify the current share of profits that can be attributed to the labour of workers as opposed to rentism? Which workers matter the most for the production of capital in Lebanon at the current time and have power to disrupt the interests of the ruling class?
- What forms of political organising, or even knowledge sharing, about this struggle can be arranged within the existing hostile environment against refugees and various forms of labour organising in Lebanon? What kind of preparation do organisers need to go through ahead of meeting Lebanese people who are hostile to refugees? What information and strategies need to be developed? Part of answering this question involves reviewing similar social conflicts in other parts of the world, paying particular attention to what we can learn and develop from similar conflicts in different contexts.
- In addition to the aforementioned class conflicts, what other factors and dynamics do we need to be aware of to accurately explain and confront the rise in hate speech against Syrian refugees in Lebanon?
- Which local municipalities or groups are essential or more open for us to reach out to for further engagement to better address this conflict? What security plans can activist groups and organisers put in place in order to feel safer? What resources are available and what resources are needed?

- Based on more analysis of the Lebanese economic system and crisis, how is the crisis likely to develop if no efforts were made to change how this economy works? What would be the situation of Lebanese workers and cheap labour in 10 years, and how might that affect Lebanese-Syrian labour relations?
- In a different context, how is the social antagonism against Syrian refugees in Turkey developing and how does it relate to the current class relations in the Turkish economy? Can we identify major differences in the forms of anti-Syrian hate in Turkey compared to the situation in Lebanon? If yes, how can these differences be explained?

REFERENCES

- ACHR. 2020. "Unwrapping the Rights to Work for Syrian and Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon." <https://www.achrightrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Final-REP-3-2.pdf>.
- . 2024. "What Happens after the Deportation of Refugees from Lebanon? Exposing the Forced Deportations of Syrian Refugees and Their Handover to Syrian Authorities." January 29, 2024. <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/what-happens-after-deportation-refugees-lebanon-exposing-forced-deportations-syri-an-refugees-and-their-handover-syrian-authorities-enar>.
- Altındağ, Onur, Ozan Bakış, and Sandra V. Rozo. 2020. "Blessing or Burden? Impacts of Refugees on Businesses and the Informal Economy." *Journal of Development Economics* 146: 102490.
- Amal Khalil. 2023. "عدد النازحين يتضاعف خلال شهر." *Al-Akhbar*, December 6, 2023. <https://al-akhbar.com/Politics/373886>.
- Amnesty International. 2019. "We Want Justice for Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon." Amnesty International. April 24, 2019. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2019/04/lebanon-migrant-domestic-workers-their-house-is-our-prison/>.
- Assouad, Lydia. 2017. "Rethinking the Lebanese Economic Miracle: The Extreme Concentration of Income and Wealth in Lebanon." <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.32682.44485>.
- Ayoub, Elia. 2019. "A Look at the Lebanon Uprising through Its Chants." *Shado Magazine* (blog). 2019. <https://shado-mag.com/web-stories/what-is-circularity/>.
- Baumann, Hannes. 2019. "The Causes, Nature, and Effect of the Current Crisis of Lebanese Capitalism." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 25 (1): 61–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2019.1565178>.
- BBC News. 2019. "مظاهرات لبنان: أصوات مرعبة باللاجئين." *BBC News*, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-50475414>.
- CAS & ILO. 2022. "Lebanon Follow-up Labour Force Survey." Beirut.
- Chaaban, Jad, Hala Ghattas, Rima Habib, Sari Hanafi, Nadine Sahyoun, Nisreen Salti, Karin Seyfert, and Nadia Naamani. 2010. "Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon." *Beirut: American University of Beirut*.
- Darbet M3allem. 2023. "المعلم اللبناني منو أقل شأن من غيره." Instagram. October 22, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cys02erMll5/>.
- David, Anda, Mohamed Ali Marouani, Charbel Nahas, and Björn Nilsson. 2020. "The Economics of the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Neighbouring Countries: The Case of Lebanon." *Economics of Transition and Institutional Change* 28 (1): 89–109.
- Facon, Clothilde. 2018. "The Power-Interest Nexus in Responses to Syrian Refugee Arrivals in Lebanon: Tensions and Interactions between the State and the International Community." *Migration Studies*, 1310–26.
- Fadlallah, Abdelhalim. 2022. "الأزمة وسوق العمل في لبنان: تصدعات عميقة." *Al-Akhbar*, 2022. <https://al-akhbar.com/Issues/345857>.
- Fawaz, Mona. 2017. "Planning and the Refugee Crisis: Informality as a Framework of Analysis and Reflection." *Planning Theory* 16 (1): 99–115.
- Hassan, Nizar. 2017. "Lebanon's 2015 Protest Movement: An Analysis of Class (and) Power." PhD Thesis.
- Hayek, Imane, and Zeina Ammar. 2022. "Domestic Work in Lebanon Post-2019: Reflections on Emerging Trends."
- HRW. 2014. "Lebanon: At Least 45 Local Curfews Imposed on Syrian Refugees | Human Rights Watch." 2014. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/10/03/lebanon-least-45-local-curfews-imposed-syrian-refugees>.

- . 2023. "Lebanon: Armed Forces Summarily Deporting Syrians | Human Rights Watch." *Human Rights Watch* (blog). July 5, 2023. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/07/05/lebanon-armed-forces-summarily-deporting-syrians>.
- IFI. 2020. "Timeline of Major Policies Influencing the Livelihoods of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon." American University of Beirut. https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/Documents/publications/infographics/2019-2020/20210208_Timeline_of_major_policies_influencing_the_livelihoods_of_Syrian_refugees_in_Lebanon_infog.pdf.
- ILO. 2014a. *Palestinian Employment in Lebanon - Facts and Challenges: Labour Force Survey among Palestinian Refugees Living in Camps and Gatherings in Lebanon*. http://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS_236502/lang-en/index.htm.
- . 2014b. *Assessment of the Impact of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and Their Employment Profile*. http://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS_240134/lang-en/index.htm.
- . 2015. *Towards Decent Work in Lebanon: Issues and Challenges in Light of the Syrian Refugee Crisis*. ILO.
- . 2016. "Intertwined: The Workers' Side. A Study of the Working and Living Conditions of MDWs in Lebanon." Beirut.
- . 2023. "Impact of the February 2023 Earthquakes on Employment and the Labour Market in Syria." March 28, 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/impact-february-2023-earthquakes-employment-and-labour-market-syria-technical-note>.
- . 2024. "ILO Modelled Estimates Database." ILOSTAT. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>.
- ILO & Fafo. 2020. "Facing Multiple Crises: Rapid Assessment of the Impact of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Workers and Small-Scale Enterprises in Lebanon."
- ILO and Committee for the Employment of Palestinian Refugees. 2012. "Palestinian Employment in Lebanon: Facts and Challenges." Beirut.
- IMC. 2023. "Situation Report #8." https://cdn1.internationalmedicalcorps.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/IntlMedCorps-SyriaTurkeyEarthquakeResponse_SitRep08.pdf.
- IMF. 2013. *International Financial Statistics Country Notes 2013*. International Monetary Fund.
- . 2014. "Lebanon: Selected Issues." Washington, D.C. <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/downloadpdf/journals/002/2014/238/002.2014.issue-238-en.pdf>.
- . 2021. "IMF Data Mapper." Lebanon Datasets. 2021. <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/profile>.
- IOM. 2023. "Migrant Presence Monitoring." <https://dtm.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1461/files/reports/MPM%20report%202023.pdf>.
- Longuenesse, Elisabeth, and Paul Tabar. 2014. "Migrant Workers and Class Structure in Lebanon: Class, Race, Nationality, and Gender." <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01305367>.
- L'Orient Today. 2022. "Shura Council Ruling Halts Implementation of Ministerial Decree Expanding Palestinian Labor Rights." L'Orient Le Jour. February 10, 2022. <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1290457/shura-council-ruling-halts-implementation-of-ministerial-decree-expanding-palestinian-labor-rights.html>.
- Loveluck, Louisa. 2019. "Assad Urged Syrian Refugees to Come Home. Many Are Being Welcomed with Arrest and Interrogation." *Washington Post*, June 2, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/assad-urged-syrian-refugees-to-come-home-many-are-being-welcomed-with-arrest-and-interrogation/2019/06/02/54bd696a-7bea-11e9-b1f3-b233fe5811ef_story.html.

- Madoré, Marianne. 2016. "The Peaceful Settlement of Syrian Refugees in the Eastern Suburbs of Beirut: Understanding the Causes of Social Stability." *Civil Society Knowledge Center* 3 (1).
- Marashdeh, Hazem, and Ali Salman Saleh. 2006. "Revisiting Budget and Trade Deficits in Lebanon: A Critique."
- Matsangou, Elizabeth. 2018. "Refugees Are an Economic Benefit, Not Burden, to Europe." *World Finance*, 2018. <https://www.worldfinance.com/special-reports/refugees-are-an-economic-benefit-not-burden-to-europe>.
- Megaphone. 2024. "جريمة مقتل الشاب السوري محمد الحريري." Instagram. February 28, 2024. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3526VFLlyS/>.
- Najib. 2014. "More Racism Against Syrian Refugees In Lebanon | Blog Baladi." *Blog Baladi* (blog). September 13, 2014. <https://blogbaladi.com/more-racism-against-syrian-refugees-in-lebanon/>.
- Navruz, Mucahit, and M. A. Çukurçayır. 2015. "Factors Affecting Changes in Perceptions of Turkish People towards Syrian Refugees." *International Journal of Social Sciences* 4 (4): 75–85.
- Orient News. 2018. "متظاهرو لبنان يردون: باسيل برا برا لاجئين جوا جوا (فيديو)." Orient News. 2018. http://127.0.0.1/ar/news_show/173104.
- , dir. 2023. "ضرب وإهانة عمال توصيل سوريين في لبنان على يد زعران مسيحيين وهذه شهادتهم لأورينت." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zmnNXOSJc4>.
- Patuck, Helen. 2020. "Refugees and the Lebanese Revolution." *MENA Solidarity Network* (blog). April 18, 2020. <https://menasolidaritynetwork.com/2020/04/18/refugees-and-the-lebanese-revolution/>.
- Persen, William. 1958. "Lebanese Economic Development since 1950." *Middle East Journal* 12 (3): 277–94.
- Rajaram, Prem Kumar. 2018. "Refugees as Surplus Population: Race, Migration and Capitalist Value Regimes." *New Political Economy* 23 (5): 627–39. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2017.1417372>.
- Sadaka, George, Jocelyne Nader, and Tony Mikhael. 2015. "Monitoring Racism in the Lebanese Media: The Representation of the 'Syrian' and the 'Palestinian' in the News Coverage." *Lebanon: Maharat Foundation & UNDP*.
- Salemeh, Maher. 2023. "الاعتماد المفرط على الخارج." *Al-Akhbar*, 2023, sec. قضايا. <https://al-akhbar.com/Issues/364502>.
- SBI, dir. 2023. "الشوكولامو" يكشف جهل ورجعية السوريين برأي نضال الاحمدية! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hp01Cads5w>.
- Seeberg, Peter. 2018. "EU Policies Concerning Lebanon and the Bilateral Cooperation on Migration and Security – New Challenges Calling for New Institutional Practices?" *Palgrave Communications* 4 (1): 136. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-018-0192-7>.
- SFCG. 2014. "Dialogue and Local Response Mechanisms to Conflict between Host Communities and Syrian Refugees in Lebanon." <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/41354>.
- Slaybi, G. 1999. *Fî Al-Ittihad Kuwwa*. Dar al-Mukhtârât.
- The Policy Initiative. 2023. "Platform Work in Times of Crisis: Fairwork Lebanon Ratings 2023." The Policy Initiative. 2023. <https://www.thepolicyinitiative.org/article/details/329/platform-work-in-times-of-crisis-fairwork-lebanon-ratings-2023>.
- Tholens, Simone. 2017. "Border Management in an Era of 'Statebuilding Lite': Security Assistance and Lebanon's Hybrid Sovereignty." *International Affairs* 93 (4): 865–82. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix069>.
- Thomson Reuters Foundation. 2017. "Batman Befriends Syrian Boy: Refugee Video Named Best Charity Ad." *Arab News*, December 9, 2017. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1206401/middle-east>.
- Turkmani, Nur, and Kanj Hamade. 2020. "Dynamics of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon's Agriculture Sector." *Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at The American University of Beirut*.
- UNDP. 2007. "Poverty, Growth & Inequality in Lebanon." Beirut, Lebanon.

<https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/lb/38a0845f2dc87e4ee886de58f33fa87c5dea72b90d4e9fb9e431ef59c019f0cd.pdf>.

———. 2015. "Impact of Humanitarian Aid on the Lebanese Economy." UNDP. 2015.
<https://www.undp.org/lebanon/publications/impact-humanitarian-aid-undp-unhcr-0>.

UNHCR. 2023. "Situation Syria Regional Refugee Response." 2023.
<https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71>.

VaSyR. 2021. "2021 Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR)." UNHCR Operational Data Portal (ODP). 2021. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/90589>.

VASyR. 2022. "Lebanon - Preliminary Results of the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees - VASyR 2022."
<https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/100844>.

World Bank. 2011. *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011*. The World Bank.

———. 2022. "Migration and Development Brief 37."
<https://www.knomad.org/publication/migration-and-development-brief-37>.

———. 2023. *Lebanon Economic Monitor-Spring 2023: The Normalization of Crisis Is No Road for Stabilization*. World Bank.

———. 2024. "World Bank Open Data." World Bank Open Data. 2024. <https://data.worldbank.org>.

Zetter, Roger. 2021. "Theorizing the Refugee Humanitarian-Development Nexus: A Political-Economy Analysis." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34 (2): 1766–86.

APPENDIX

Some statistics about Syrian, Palestinian, and migrant labour in Lebanon

Longuenesse & Tabar (2014)

- 50% of the labour force is estimated to be non-Lebanese in 2011 according to the World Bank (2011).
 - around 15% migrant workers and 35% Syrian workers
- Average wage of foreign workers in Lebanon was estimated to be around \$270-370 in 2014, but it varied depending on the nationality and type of work. See below for more specific information.

CAS & ILO (2022)

- Where do residents of Lebanon work? (Lebanese and non-Lebanese workers)
 - The branch of economic activity with the highest share of employment remains wholesale and retail trade (about 19% to 20%), followed by public administration and defence (about 10% to 12%) and manufacturing (also, about 10% to 12%).
 - Employment in the informal sector has increased by 13.1 percentage points, from 35.2% in 2018-2019 to 48.3% in January 2022.

Syrian Refugees

World Bank (2011)

- Syrian workers constituted around 17 percent of the total labour force before the refugee crisis.
- In 2013, the World Bank projected that Syrian refugees would constitute between 27 percent and 35 percent of the Lebanese labour force in 2014, because the influx of refugees would increase the labour supply by 30-50% (based on an assumption of 1.6 million Syrian refugees).

ILO (2014b)

- 30 percent: Unemployment rate of Syrian refugees active in Lebanon's labour market.
- 68 percent: Unemployment rate among Syrian refugee women active in Lebanon's labour market.
- 88 percent: Syrian refugees in Lebanon employed in either unskilled or semi-skilled jobs.
- 418,000 LBP (US\$277): Average monthly income for a Syrian refugee worker, as opposed to Lebanon's minimum wage of 675,000 LBP (US\$448).
- 432,000 LBP (US\$287): Average monthly income for a male Syrian refugee worker.

- 248,000 LBP (US\$165): Average monthly income for a female Syrian refugee worker.
- 92 percent: Syrian refugees in Lebanon working without a formal contract. Note that Syrians can obtain work permits within a limited number of sectors (agriculture, cleaning services, and construction).
- 56 percent: Syrian refugee workers in Lebanon employed on a seasonal, weekly or daily basis.
- 74 days: The average time a Syrian refugee worker requires to find employment.

ILO (2015)

- The estimated number of unemployed Syrian refugees was 79,200 – more than half of all unemployed persons in the country at the time.
- The overall estimated unemployment rate for Syrian refugees was 33 percent, about four times the average rate for Lebanon
 - unemployment among female refugees was about 68 percent

Table 21: Estimated Syrian refugee economic activity distribution in Lebanon, 2013–2014⁷³

Economic activity	Employment	Share
Agriculture	38 521	28%
Industry	6 420	4%
Construction	19 260	12%
Commerce	24 075	15%
Services	64 201	36%
Other	9 630	6%
Total	160 503	100%

ILO & Fafo (2020)

- 95% of Syrian refugees who participated in a survey conducted in Lebanon in the spring of 2020 reported working without a valid work permit.

UNHCR (2023)

- Total Registered Refugees: 784,884 (the rest are unregistered with UNHCR, 23% refugees per capita in Lebanon). The registered refugees are living in 186,151 households.
 - Note that as of 6 May 2015, UNHCR suspended registration as per the Government's decision, hence this low number compared to the actual figure which can only be estimated (no accurate data)

- By 2016, over 1.0 million registered Syrian refugees resided in Lebanon with official estimates at over 1.5 million, over a quarter of Lebanon's estimated 4.3 million native residents.
- Current estimates of the number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon bring the number over 1.5 million. Palestinians and Syrians with refugee status constitute almost a quarter of Lebanon's population.

Palestinian Refugees

Chaaban et al. (2010)

- Between 260,000 and 280,000 Palestinian refugees reside in 12 camps and 42 gatherings all around Lebanon, representing between 6.8% and 7.4% of the total population of Lebanon at the time.

TABLE 4.1 DISTRIBUTION OF THE EMPLOYED BY SECTOR AND SEX (%)

	Male	Female	Both
Agriculture	4.5	2.3	4.1
Manufacturing	11.6	13.3	11.9
Construction	28.6	1.5	24.0
Commerce	27.3	19.3	25.9
Hotels and restaurants	2.4	0.6	2.1
Transport and storage	5.6	1.2	4.9
Education	1.6	16.4	4.2
Health	2.9	17.0	5.3
Other	15.5	28.3	17.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

ILO & Committee for the Employment of Palestinian Refugees (2012)

- 60% of Palestinians in Lebanon live inside camps
- Employment restrictions force Palestinians to obtain informal, short term and poorly paid jobs. They also force them to rely on remittances from family members abroad.
- The average monthly labour income of Palestinians – LBP 537,000 (about US\$358) – was about 20 percent below the national minimum wage of LBP 675,000 (about US\$450) in 2011. Some three-quarters of Palestinian employees earned a monthly wage at or below the minimum wage.
- Lebanese law restricts the access of Palestinians to the labour market and prevents them from engaging in several occupations, including “liberal professions” such as medicine, engineering and the law.
- The size of the Palestinian labour force in Lebanon is around 110,000. This represents

around 5% of the total labour force in Lebanon and less than 15% of the foreign labour force in Lebanon.

- Educational attainment among employed Palestinians is generally lower than the Lebanese workforce. While Palestinian rates of primary and intermediate educational attainment are above those of the Lebanese, secondary and tertiary attainment rates for Palestinians are far below those of their Lebanese counterparts.

ILO (2014a)

- The size of the Palestinian labour force in Lebanon is estimated at about 86,670. Palestinian employment is estimated to constitute about 5.6 percent of total employment in Lebanon (for those 15 years and older).
- The Lebanese private sector accounted for 85.5 percent of total Palestinian employment, followed by UNRWA at 4.6 percent, Palestinian political organisations at 3.8 percent, and civil society organisations (NGOs) at 3.5 percent. About half of employed Palestinians work in construction and commerce activities (wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles, repair of household goods), where there are very high levels of informality, longer than average working hours and where the bulk earn less than the Lebanese minimum wage. In fact, commerce, construction, and agriculture, which are activities that collectively occupy more than half of Palestinian employment, all have disproportionately high informality rates.

Migrant Workers

ILO (2016)

- No reliable data on salaries of migrant workers in general is available, with the exception of research done on women migrant domestic workers (who constitute the majority of migrant workers in Lebanon) where the average wage was \$180/month in 2016 according to ILO.

IOM (2023)

- The number of migrants (not refugees) identified in 2023 was 160,738, representing an 18% increase compared to the number recorded in 2022, which was 135,420.
- The largest migrant (non-refugee) groups identified in Lebanon are Ethiopian (37%), Bangladeshi (22%), and Sudanese (9%).
- Women constitute 65% of the migrant population, while men make up 35%. The female-to-male ratio varies by nationality, with 94% of Ethiopians and 98% of Filipinos being women, compared to 12% of Egyptians and 9% of Sudanese.



حركة مناهضة
العنصرية



Anti-Racism
Movement

The logo for the Anti-Racism Movement consists of three vertical bars of varying heights and widths, arranged in a row. The leftmost bar is the tallest and widest, the middle bar is shorter and narrower, and the rightmost bar is the shortest and narrowest.