



**ALEF act for human rights (LEBANON)- Panel Intervention**  
**Thematic discussions for the global compact on refugees**  
**Measures to be taken at the onset of a large movement of refugees**  
October 17-18, 2017

Statistics on the Syrian refugee situation in Lebanon alone defy comprehension and give a sense of the scale of the crisis. Lebanon is the country with the highest concentration of refugees per capita and ranks at the first place in absolute number of Syrian refugees. As of June 2017, more than 1,000,000 Syrian refugees were registered with the UNHCR, the equivalent to a growth in around 25% of Lebanon's population. The international community and UN agencies have acknowledged the huge and manifold impact this crisis has on Lebanon as a country, praising Lebanon for its solidarity and resilience.

In this context, there is a compelling necessity to design rights based solutions to address the numerous problems Syrian refugees face in Lebanon, solutions that take into account Lebanon's specific challenges resulting from this acute humanitarian crisis. Considering this reality, and based on ALEF's previous and ongoing work documenting the plight of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, this written intervention focuses on the solutions to be envisaged and provides a framework for relevant stakeholders, notably the Lebanese authorities, to implement such solutions. This is particularly critical as there is no end in sight to the war in Syria, and the persistent lack of progress for alternative solutions increases the risk of Lebanese authorities taking decisions undermining refugees' rights and protection. However, to date some may see the discussions over solutions to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon as an attempt to square the circle due to a combination of factors. This note will also seek to present positive experiences from the mass-influx in Lebanon to be identified as good practices and feed in the current debate on localization and support to host communities.

ALEF considers it essential to take into account the lessons learnt from previous State practice in cases of mass influx in order to rethink the current debate on solutions to the refugee crisis in Lebanon. Furthermore, the limited applicability of international refugee law makes the reference to other bodies of norms, notably international human rights law (IHRL) even more relevant in the case of Lebanon. Most importantly, the present *statu quo* is not sustainable and bears the risk of undermining Lebanon's social cohesion and of creating conducive environment for extremism. It is paramount to stress that the situation of mass influx cannot be invoked by Lebanon to violate the principle of *non-refoulement* and core IHRL obligations. Equally important, the international community has a responsibility to assist Lebanese authorities and host communities in dealing with this crisis. Such assistance should take the form of out of the box solutions such as temporary evacuation or resettlements as previous mass influx crisis have showed. Accommodating such responsibilities, UNHCR should intensify the efforts and the advocacy to insure the satisfaction of durable solutions to the crisis.

Within that situation, host communities in Lebanon, whether citizens or civil society organizations, became at the forefront of the crisis and their resilience has been a positive factor in alleviating the pressure and urgent protection refugees were in need of. While humanitarian organizations designed emergency responses within the available resources and paradigms of humanitarian principles, hosts responded largely filling several gaps. Additionally local and national organizations reflected on an early stage on the importance of working on structural gaps in policies. The impact of archaic policies in Lebanon has soon generated exponentially growing protection needs. National NGOs and human rights groups in particular were able to present solutions, policy recommendations and advocacy strategies to address the structural gaps in the Lebanese governmental system since the beginning of the crisis. On the hand, humanitarian and development organizations in Lebanon were also able to detect and identify development gaps in water management, healthcare management, education and other sectors. Such early identification facilitated the change from emergency support to resilience and long-term interventions. As many assistance needs were essentially developmental gaps and need for the Lebanese communities at large.

**Recommendations to the Panel:**

- In cases of mass influx, in situations similar as that in Lebanon, a human rights approach should be designed in parallel to emergency humanitarian aid. It is important to resolve and advocate for

solutions for structural policy shortcomings and legislative gaps. Such response will allow further protection and a more focused rights-based approach in protracted situations.

- Decentralization of decision-making with regard to the response, allowing as such local governments and local communities to identify needs, and design responses that could enhance the protection of refugees in mass-influx. One solution-fits-all approach will tend to create further resentment among communities that are “first-responders” to the crisis.
- Intensify advocacy and plans for durable solutions. Situation of mass influx often relies on burden sharing from the international community. Delays and inefficient plans in that regard will often lead to a shrinking of the protection space for refugees, an increase in the resentment of both refugees and host communities alike.
- Reiterate the principles of temporary protection in cases of mass influx as elaborated in ExComm Decision 22.
- Design humanitarian protection programs with focus on grass root and community based protection.