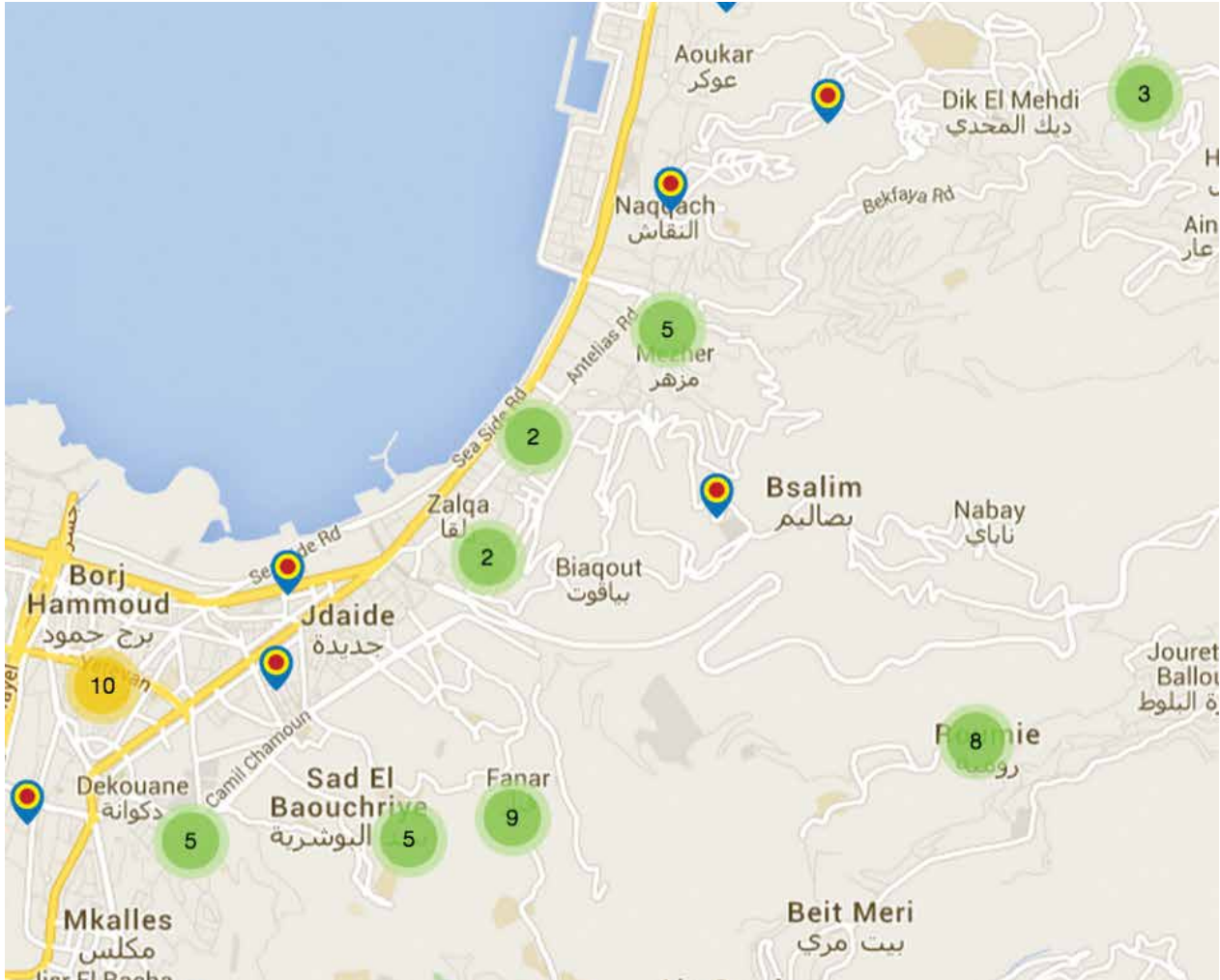# Conflict Analysis Digest, August 2015

Focus on Matn from Conflict Analysis & Mapping map, cskc.daleel-madani.org/cma

دعـم لبـنـان
LEBANON
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Conflict Analysis Digest, August 2015

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About the Conflict Mapping and Analysis Project

The Conflict Mapping and Analysis project is an initiative by Lebanon Support in collaboration with the Peace Building Project at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This project, implemented and developed by Lebanon Support, aims at providing different partners involved in peace-building, humanitarian and stabilisation activities in the country with accurate data and relevant information on areas or actors of involved in conflicts. It provides a sophisticated, impartial and pragmatic understanding of the inner workings of tracked conflicts, the specific underlying social fabric, the political minefields, as well as the opportunities for positive action. It has two main components:

1. The conflict map, which tracks incidents–whether between armed groups, government entities, or on individual levels–protests and mobilisation, as well as conflicts at the borders, and maps their location throughout Lebanon. It is continuously updated by a team of experts and researchers cross-checking and triangulating data. The incidents are categorised following a conflict typology (classification), which, together with a number of additional filters (for example, the categories of incidents), enables users to access the information most relevant to their respective programmes/research.

2. The conflict analysis adds a more qualitative element to the project, analysing conflict dynamics and particular trends, with different outputs produced regularly, focusing on a specific geographic location or conflict type every time.

While conflict modeling still cannot be considered an accurate science, this project relies on a multidisciplinary team that goes beyond mere quantifiable factors and statistical data (which have proved over the last decades, and other experiences in other contexts, their limits when it comes to identifying, for instance, a potential tipping point into violence). It provides, based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork, an in-depth look into the social, economic and political dynamics in Lebanon today, which may account as factors in creating auspicious conditions for conflict.

Over time, this information and analysis system allows one to define trends in tensions and conflicts. It also allows one to understand underlying causes of tensions and conflicts so as to better tailor interventions and enhance coordination between humanitarian and development actors in Lebanon. And ultimately, it constitutes a tool for reflection for policy makers, researchers, and other experts, to better inform the process of policymaking and public action in Lebanon.

This Conflict Analysis Digest is composed of:

I. Current conflict trends

1- Overview of mapped conflict incidents in Lebanon, with the villages where most incidents are mapped for each classification. (Between 1 July 2014 and 28 June 2015)
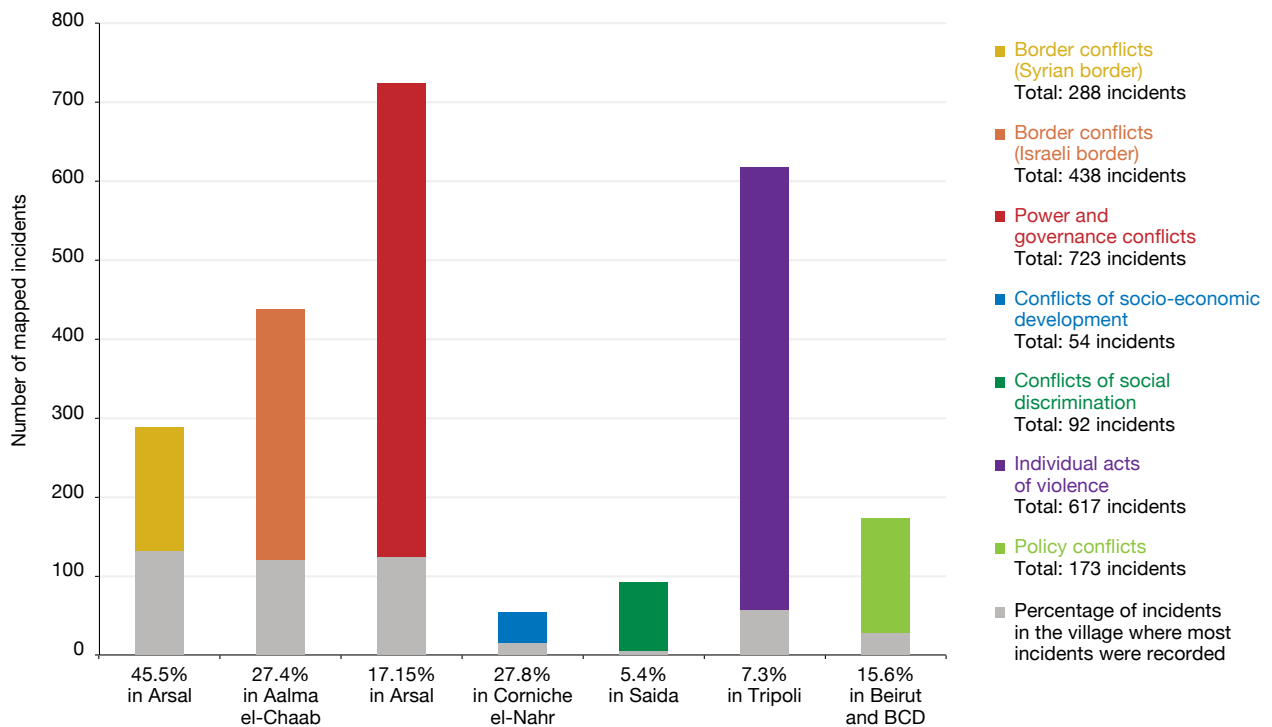
This graph clearly shows – while corroborating past trends – that most mapped conflict incidents classified as of "power and governance" are occurring in Arsal, Bekaa. Unsurprisingly, Arsal is also the region where most "Syrian border conflicts" are reported. Most "individual acts of violence" (mainly shootings, murders, brawls/disputes) are being mapped in Tripoli, which is telling of the ongoing unrest in the Northern city, however the relatively low percentage incidents fitting this category downplays the general impression of an open conflict in the city. As could be expected, most "policy conflicts" are mapped in Beirut as the governance, administrative, and political centre of the country. Finally, most conflicts of "socio-economic development" are concentrated in Corniche el-Nahr, where daily workers have been protesting in front of the Electricite du Liban as part of their ongoing social struggle.

2- Mapped air strikes/ armed conflicts and violations classified as *Syrian border conflicts*. (Between 1 July 2014 and 28 June 2015)
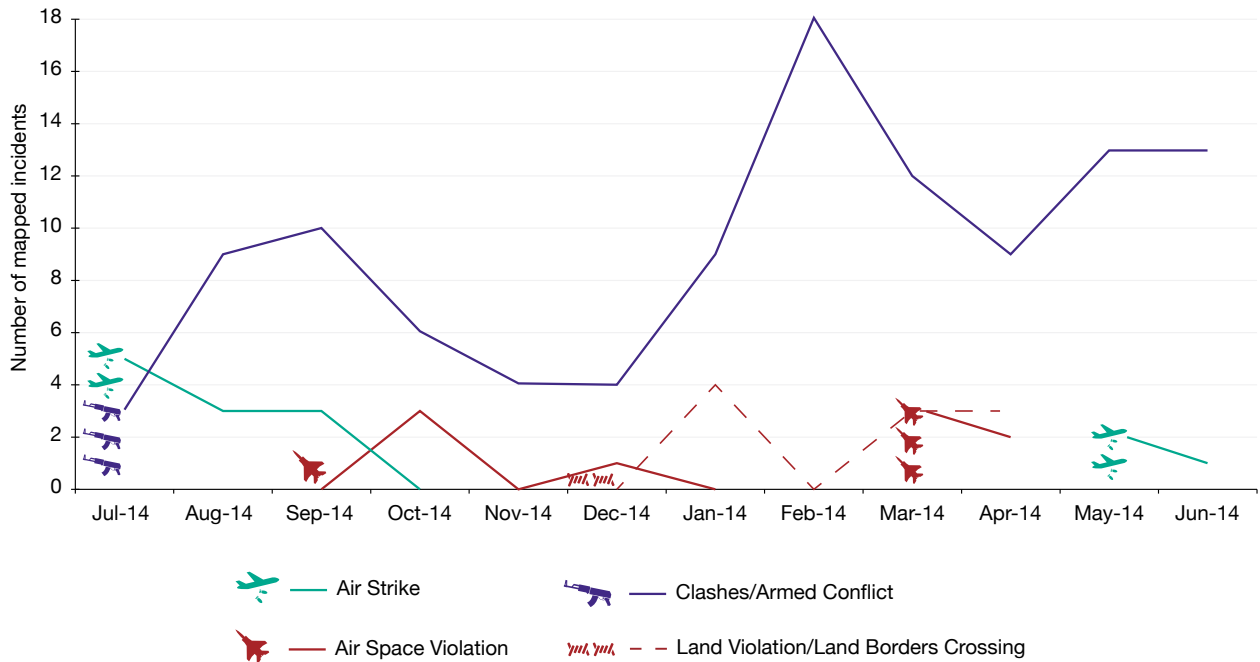
Last spring witnessed ongoing border incidents, notably cross-border incursions and hence violations of the Lebanese sovereignty. While air strikes and airspace violations have for the most part been committed by the Syrian regime, clashes/armed conflicts as well as land violations/border crossing are generally associated with the opposition forces. Therefore these fluctuate according to the situation on the ground.

3- Overview of mapped conflict incidents in the Matn

Overview of conflict incidents mapped in Matn caza, between 1 July 2014 and 28 June 2015
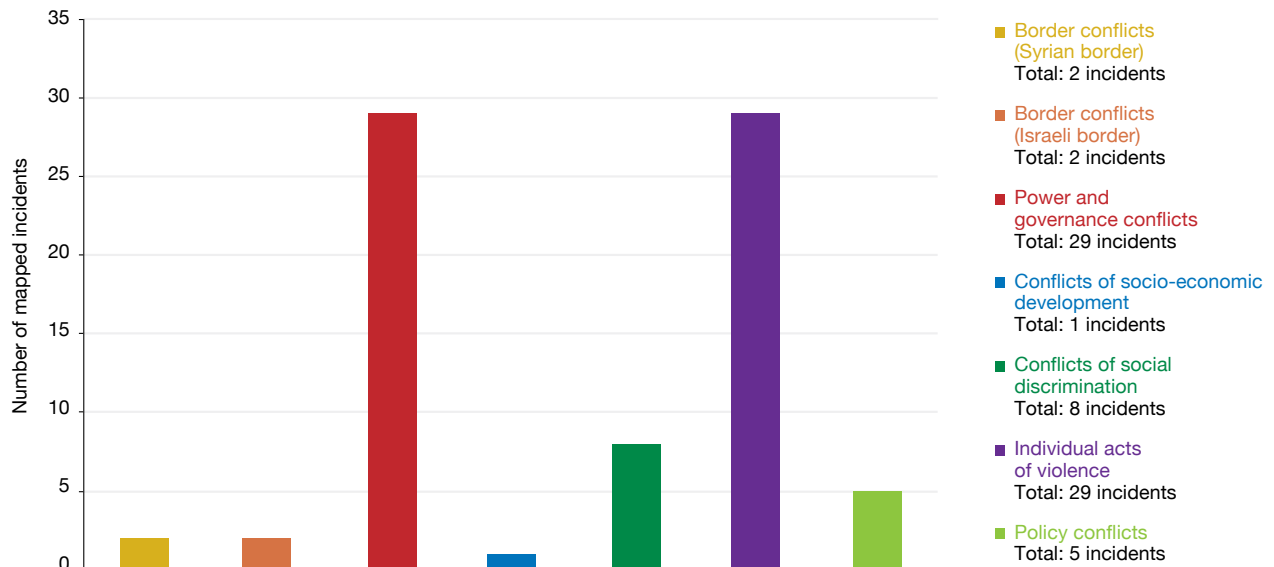
The above graph illustrates the main conflict incidents mapped in the Matn caza between the 1st of July 2014 and the 28th of June 2015. Based on the conflict typology developed as part of the project, the most frequently mapped incidents are those categorized as "power and governance conflicts", and "individual acts of violence". In spite of the "conflicts of socio-economic development" and "border conflicts" (on the Israeli border or the Syrian border) seeming to be less prevalent, the data graphed above contradicts the general idea of the Matn being considered as a rather "safe" area. However, this quantitative data is nuanced by more in-depth qualitative analysis, as is shown in the subsequent brief report.

II. Brief thematic report

Politics of security, discourses of fear and economic fatigue: the conflict dynamics in Matn

Abstract

This short report provides an analytical summary of the conflict context, actors, and dynamics in the Matn area of Mount Lebanon. This report sheds light on the main actors, topics of contestation and conflict and its historical becoming as well as current expressions. A special focus lies on the relationship between the Lebanese host community and Syrian refugees and its development within the last four years (since 2011).

Introduction

The caza of Matn is one of the six cazas of the Mount Lebanon governorate. It extends from the east of the Lebanese capital, Beirut, to the Mount Sannine, west of the Bekaa region. The region is confessionally mixed, consisting of a predominantly Christian population (Maronites, Greek-Orthodox, Greek-Catholic as well as Orthodox and Catholic Armenians) and a relative number of Shi'ites and Druze residents.

Looking at the recent literature and media reports dealing with current conflict dynamics in Lebanon, it is striking that the most part focuses on regions with a high number of violent incidents, protests and potential for mobilization like the northern region of Akkar or the Beqaa plain.[1] The Mount Lebanon regions, like Matn, received less attention and are only mentioned in the local media when actual conflict incidents occur (*c.f.* figure 1).[2] Hidden or long-lasting dynamics of conflict and/or resilience/coexistence have been rather disregarded. This report focuses on the region of Matn because it is understudied in terms of its conflict dynamics and can likewise – as a confessional, political and social mixed region with a complex and conflict-laden history – give new insights into current developments of conflict dynamics in Lebanon.

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1   See *e.g.* Charles Harb and Rim Saab, "Social Cohesion and Intergroup Relations: Syrian Refugees and Lebanese Nationals in the Bekaa and Akkar – Save the Children report", *Save the Children*, 2014, available at: http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=5807 [last accessed on July 22nd, 2015]; Nathalie Bekdache, "Resilience in the face of crisis. Rooting resilience in the realities of the Lebanese experience", *International Alert*, 2015, available at: http://international-alert.org/resources/publications/resilience-face-crisis [last accessed on July 22nd, 2015]; Mercy Corps Lebanon, *Policy Brief: Engaging Municipalities in the Response to the Syria Refugee Crisis in Lebanon*, March 2014, available at: http://d2zyf8ayvg1369.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/Mercy%20Corps%20Lebanon%20Policy%20Brief%20Engaging%20Municipalities%20%28English%29.pdf [last accessed on July 22nd, 2015]
See also the Conflict Mapping and Analysis project on Lebanon Support's Civil Society Knowledge Center (CSKC), available at: http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/cma [last accessed on June 29th, 2015].
2   As an exception to this see Jamil Mu'awad's unpublished report on Mount Lebanon: Jamil Mu'awad, *An-nazihun as-suriyun fi Jabal Lubnan ash-shumali bayna nakran "al-luju' wa r-riqabat al-mintaqa". Taqrir hal an-niza'a, mintaqat Kisirwan, Jbayl wa l-Matn*, (unpublished) UNDP report, Beirut, January 26th, 2015.
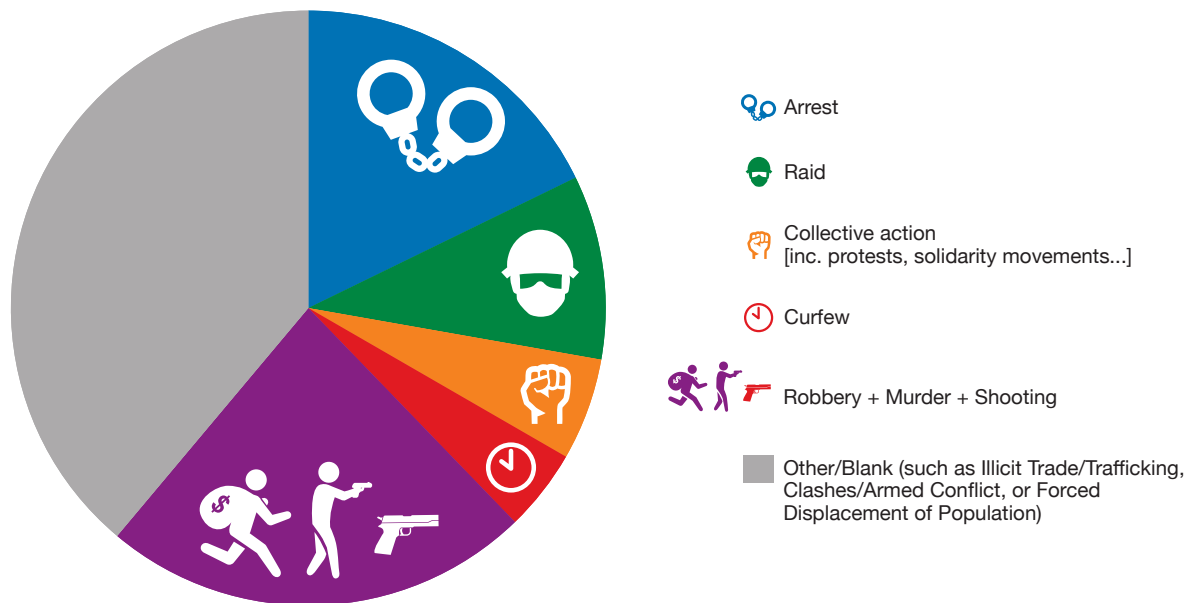
Figure 1: *Conflict categories trends in Matn caza (based on conflicts mapped until 28 June 2015.)*

Methodology

This report seeks to give a contextual and analytical summary of the diverse conflict dynamics in the region of the Matn caza in the Mount Lebanon governorate of Lebanon. It is based on a month of intensive fieldwork in three selected neighbourhoods of the Matn district, namely Bourj Hammoud, Bikfaya and Sin el-Fil. The report is based on fifteen in-depth interviews conducted in May and June 2015 with mainly three groups of actors: (i) political actors: representatives of political parties and municipalities; (ii) representatives of national and international NGOs and (iii) citizens (refugees and host community) of the three respective regions.

The report focuses on the three Matn regions of Bikfaya, Sin el-Fil, and Bourj Hammoud. The selection of the three regions has been done based on the following criteria:

The town of Bikfaya, birthplace of Pierre Gemayel, has been a political stronghold of the Kata'eb party for decades and is therefore one of the main centres of denouncement of and opposition to the Syrian military presence from 1976 to 2005. The question of the renewed Syrian presence in Lebanon, this time as refugees, raises the possibility of conflict and resilience anew.

Sin el-Fil is a suburb east of Beirut known for its small and middle-scale enterprises which have attracted businessmen and likewise lower class workers since the 1990s to settle in – or its surrounding areas (Bourj Hammoud, Naba'a *etc.*) – for work.

Bourj Hammoud, originally populated by fleeing Armenians from Turkey after 1915 , is today a residential and commercial district located next to Sin el-Fil. It was chosen for its confessionally- and ethnically-mixed population and its rather old history of (labour-) migration which has caused multiple demographic changes since the 1990s. Bourj Hammoud, and especially its neighbourhood Naba'a, is moreover an area that has often been characterized as poor, overcrowded and conflict-laden.

All the respondents' names have been changed to ensure the anonymity and protection of research participants.

Likewise, the report is also based on a desk and literature review of key reports and available literature on the topic as well as some monitoring of Lebanese media during the time of research.

Historical Context: Migration, war and political affiliations

The Eastern part of the Matn, that constitutes suburbs of Beirut (like Bourj Hammoud and Sin Elfil), have notably been affected by rising internal labour migration movements mainly coming from the rural regions of the South and the Bekaa since the end of 1950s/beginning of 1960s. Most of these migrants moved to Bourj Hammoud and specifically to the neighbourhood of Naba'a. Next to the growing employment opportunities in the area within the rather low-paid Lebanese labour market, these new residents who were mainly Shi'ites also got involved in new cultural and religious activities, as was nitiated by the Lebanese Shi'ite Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah after his return from Najaf/Iraq in 1966.[3]

"The Eastern suburbs of Beirut (especially Bourj Hammoud) emerged out of the civil war in 1990 consisting of a rather confessionally and socially mixed, often displaced and impoverished population. The inhabitants – despite their usual living proximity – did live rather in a rather segregated manner on a social level."

In her early work, the Lebanese sociologist Suad Joseph emphasised the social and confessional heterogeneous character of relationships and interactions in the Bourj Hammoud area due to the informal working-class networks that had been established as a result of these population movements. She likewise mentions the gradual disappearance of these networks during the Lebanese war, from 1975 onwards, due to intensified attempts among Christian leaders to re-organise the neighbourhood along sectarian lines.[4]

Despite these tendencies of homogenization during the civil war, they were likewise subverted by further and intensified migration movements due to different displacement processes caused by the war itself. These processes also led to further impoverishment, economic decline and/or demotion in the course of the war.

The Eastern suburbs of Beirut (especially Bourj Hammoud) emerged out of the civil war in 1990 consisting of a rather confessionally and socially mixed, often displaced and impoverished population. The inhabitants – despite their usual living proximity – did live rather in a rather segregated manner on a social level.[5]

In the 1990s, these suburbs witnessed further demographic changes due to the arrival of additional migrant workers mainly from Syria and Egypt, and later increasingly from Eastern Asia and the subsaharian-Africa. The post-war policy trend of the Lebanese government to focus rather on large-scale infrastructure projects rather than on social development intensified the processes of displacement and poverty in the Eastern suburb.[6]

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3   Joanne Randa Nucho, "Bourj Hammoud: Seeing the City's Urban Textures and Layered Pasts", *Jadaliyya*, 18 March 2014.

4   Souad Joseph, "Working-Class Woman's Networks in a Sectarian State: A Political Paradox", *American Ethnologist*, 1983, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 1-22.

5   Jihad Makhloul andMary Ghamen, "Displaced Arab families. Mothers' voices on living and coping in Postwar Beirut", *Journal of Middle East Woman's Studies*, August 2009, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 54-73.

6   *Ibid.*

Other than the intensification of displacement and migration processes during and after the civil war, the regions of the Matn caza were also centres of different conflict dynamics within the war itself. In the predominantly Armenian quarters like Bourj Hammoud, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation tried to avoid direct conflict and chose to keep a rather neutral position, a decision that ended their prior political alliance with the Maronite Kata'eb party and even led to several attacks from their sides on Armenian quarters including Bourj Hammoud, in order to put pressure on the Armenian parties to side with the Lebanese Forces.[7]

On the contrary, Sin el-Fil and Bikfaya were centres of ongoing conflict. The armed struggles in these areas evolved amongst others around the Shi'ite-Palestinian presence in the Matn (*e.g.* in the camp of Tell el-Za'tar and the neighbourhood of Naba'a). As a consequence several rounds of conflict took place in the area between the pro-Palestinian Lebanese National Movement (LNM) together with the PLO and the Christian forces (Kata'eb, Tiger Militia "*an-numûr*" of the national liberal Party, Guardians of the Cedars) contesting areas with a predominant Palestinian presence. These conflicts were ended by the Syrian intervention on the side of the Christian militias in April 1976. Still, the Syrian-Christian alliance ended soon after that and led to the Hundred Days' War between 1977 and 1982 in which the Christian Lebanese Forces (LF) fought against the Syrian troops of the Arab Deterrent Force (ADF). The severe opposition of the Lebanese Forces to the continuous Syrian military presence in Lebanon (including the Matn) continued during and after the civil war and was expressed in several military conflicts.

Rising number of refugees, political stalemate, weak governance, and deteriorating security: the main trends since 2011

In the last decade, the Lebanese political scene has witnessed an intensified division between the two camps of March 8th and March 14th, a division that led to repetitive conflict situations in different regions of Lebanon. Since the outbreak of the uprising and militant struggles in Syria in 2011 and especially since Hezbollah's open military involvement there alongside the Syrian regime and the further intensification of fights and violence in the war, this divide has been further rigidified. Although the rift is usually framed as a Shi'ite–Sunnite sectarian divide, in accordance with regional implications and repercussions, the Christian parties seem to be separated between the two camps. Likewise, the Matn area experiences different lines of political division and affiliation. While the Christian Free Patriotic Movement and the Armenian Tashnag Party, both popular in the Matn areas among the Christian and Armenian population, belong to the March 8th camp, the two other popular Christian parties (Kata'seb and Lebanese Forces) belong to the March 14th coalition. Similarly, the predominantly Shi'ite Bourj Hammoudian neighbourhood of Naba'a is mainly supporting the March 8th coalition in general and Hezbollah in particular.

"Although the rift is usually framed as a Shi'ite–Sunnite sectarian divide, in accordance with regional implications and repercussions, the Christian parties seem to be separated between the two camps."

The solidification along the two camps' lines led to a political deadlock in the last years with a presidential vacuum that has been ongoing since May 2014 and the absence of parliamentary elections since 2008 (but a two-time extension

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7   Ohannes Geukjian, "The Policy of Positive Neutrality of the Armenian Political Parties in Lebanon during the Civil War, 1975-1990: A Critical Analysis", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 2007, Vol. 43, No. 1, pp. 65-73.

of parliamentarians' present term). A consequence of this stalemate is a weak governance performance in general which reinforced the prevalent neglect of the state for social issues like poverty and development as well as for the improvement of basic infrastructural services which especially affects the areas outside of Beirut like the presently studied areas of the Matn.[8]

"The influx of refugees did lead to profound demographic changes in Lebanon in general and in some areas in particular. It moreover also led to the creation of new lines of conflict that exceed the above mentioned bifurcation along the pro-regime and anti-regime positions. The majority of the refugees belong to the lower and lower-middle class and are therefore equally affected by the above mentioned social and economic shortcomings in the country."

Due to the Syrian crisis, Lebanon is faced with a rising number of refugees coming from Syria. The total number of registered refugees in Lebanon amounts to 1,174,690, as reported in June 2015, from which around 62,000 are registered in the Matn caza, which equals a total of 5,3 % of the area's population (statistics from March 2015). According to the UNHCR's statistics, the municipality of Bourj Hammoud hosts around 19,477 registered Syrians, the number in Sin el-Fil amounts to 3,627 while in Bikfaya there is no single registered Syrian.[9] Our interlocutors confirmed to us a number of about 300 Syrians in Bikfaya which shows the usual discrepancy between the number of registered Syrians and actual Syrian residents in the area. Nonetheless, the numbers make Bourj Hammoud the area with the highest number of refugees among those considered in this report, while Bikfaya seems to be the area least affected by the crisis and the arrival of refugees.

The influx of refugees did lead to profound demographic changes in Lebanon in general and in some areas in particular. It moreover also led to the creation of new lines of conflict that exceed the above mentioned bifurcation along the pro-regime and anti-regime positions. The majority of the refugees belong to the lower and lower-middle class and are therefore equally affected by the above mentioned social and economic shortcomings in the country. Those are also worsened by the rising number of residents in Lebanon and the insufficient national and international response to the associated challenges. Thus, most Syrian refugees live and work in precarious conditions in Lebanon, as has been emphasised by many reports in the last couple of months.[10]

8   Jihad Makhloul and Mary Ghamen, "Displaced Arab families. Mothers' voices on living and coping in Postwar Beirut", *Journal of Middle East Woman's Studies*, August 2009, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 54-73; Nathalie Bekdache, "Resilience in the face of crisis. Rooting resilience in the realities of the Lebanese experience", *International Alert*, 2015, No. 17, available at: http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Lebanon_ResilienceFaceOfCrisis_EN_2015.pdf [last accessed on July 23rd, 2015]

9   For the numbers and further information, see UNHCR, "Lebanon Beirut and Mount Lebanon Governorates. Distributed of the registered Syrian refugees at the Cadastral Level", August 29th, 2013, available at: https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=2777 [last accessed on June 20th, 2015]; UNHCR, "Registration Trends for Syrians in Lebanon: Overview", March 26th, 2015, available at: http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=8585 [last accessed on June 20th, 2015]. The actual numbers of Syrians living in the respective areas are higher due to the number of unregistered individuals.

10   See *e.g.* Alef – Act for Human Rights, *Two Years on: Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*, September 2013; International Crisis Group, "Too Close for Comfort: Syrians in Lebanon", *Middle East Report*, No. 141, May 13th, 2013; Care International in Lebanon, *Inter-Community Relations: A study of the Impact of the Syrian Refugee Influx on the Lebanese Host Community and its Repercussions on the Social Cohesion Context: North and Mount Lebanon: T 5 and Chouf*, March 2015; Charles Harb and Rim Saab, "Social Cohesion and Intergroup Relations: Syrian Refugees and Lebanese Nationals in the Bekaa and Akkar", *Save the Children report*, 2014; Yazan al-Saadi, "Restrictions, perceptions, and possibilities of Syrian refugees' self-agency in Lebanon", *Civil Society Knowledge Center, Lebanon Support*, February 24th, 2015, available at: http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/content/restrictions-perceptions-and-possibilities-syrian-refugees-self-agency-lebanon [last accessed on June 30th, 2015].

The Lebanese government adopted a policy towards the refugees which switched from a rather ostrich-like approach from 2011 until 2014 (that even denied the existence of refugees in the first place) to a gradually more confrontative and regulatory policy since approximately mid-2014. Its overall objectives are twofold: (i) to reduce the number of refugees in the country and (ii) to get more external help in order to cope with the high number of refugees.[11] Before this policy switch, the response to the refugee influx was mainly left to the municipalities, a large number of which have reacted at some points with the legally and morally questionable measure of curfews for foreigners (meaning Syrians) at night.[12] At the end of 2014, mainly three central government decisions were taken that profoundly affected the Syrians residing in the country: the new labour law restricting work possibilities for Syrians in Lebanon, the new entry regulations constraining for the first time the entry of Syrians into Lebanon and the new General Security regulations on the renewal of residencies for Syrians in Lebanon.[13] Contrarily to the declared state objective of those measures to cope with the high number of refugees, the presumable outcome on the long-term is a further economic and social marginalization and illegalisation of the refugees residing in Lebanon.

A further trend in the last years that has often been attributed by the media and political actors to the presence of the Syrian refugees in the country is the deterioration of the security climate. This degradation manifests itself in smaller conflict incidents like kidnapping, small-scale street fights and other individual acts of violence, but also in larger incidents like border conflicts, car bombs and recently direct clashes inside Lebanese territory. These acts of conflict have mainly been limited to certain areas but effectively led to a securitisation of politics within the whole country manifesting itself in the erection of military checkpoints and the increased presence of the different agencies of the state's security apparatus in the streets. This securitisation of politics goes along with a rising securitisation of the Syrian refugee issue, as manifested in a discourse mainly used by the media and political actors which identifies the refugees as the main cause of security threats in the country.[14]

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11   See Dr. Karim El Mufti, "Official response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, the disastrous policy of no-policy", *Civil Society Knowledge Center, Lebanon Support,* January 10th, 2014, available at: http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/paper/official-response-syrian-refugee-crisis-lebanon-disastrous-policy-no-policy [last accessed on June 30th, 2015].

12   About 45 curfews were imposed on Syrians in different Lebanese municipalities. See Human Rights Watch, "Lebanon: At least 45 Local Curfews Imposed on Syrian Refugees", available at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/10/03/lebanon-least-45-local-curfews-imposed-syrian-refugees [last accessed on June 30th, 2015]; Yazan al-Saadi, "Examining curfews against Syrians in Lebanon", *Civil Society Knowledge Center, Lebanon Support,* November 25th, 2014, available at: http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/content/examining-curfews-against-syrians-lebanon-0 [last accessed on June 30th, 2015]; Conflict Mapping and Analysis Project, part of Lebanon Support's Civil Society Knowledge Center (CSKC), *inter alia* documenting human rights violations against Syrian refugees in Lebanon including imposed curfews, available at: http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/cma [last accessed on June 29th, 2015].

13   For more information on the Lebanese policy towards the Syrian refugees and the new measurement since the end of 2014 see: Ghida Frangieh, "Lebanon Places Discriminatory Entry Restrictions on Syrians", *Legal Agenda,* January 22nd, 2015, available at: http://english.legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=679&lang=en [last accessed on June 20th, 2015]; Nizar Saghiyeh and Ghida Frangieh, "Aham malamih as-siyasiya al-libnaniya fi qadiyat al-luju' as-suri: min siyasat an-na'mah ila "siyasat an-na'imah", *Legal Agenda,* December 9th, 2014.

14   See Muzna al-Masri, *Between Local Patronage Relationships and Securitisation: The Conflict Context in the Bekaa Region. Conflict Analysis Report,* Lebanon Support, January 2015, 13th-14th, available at: http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/resource/conflict-analysis-report-between-local-patronage-relationships-and-securitisation-conflict [last accessed on July 23rd, 2015]. On the Lebanese perception of security and conflict see the two reports of International Alert, "Citizens' Perception of Security Threats stemming from the Syrian Refugee Presence in Lebanon", *International Alert,* February 2015, available at: https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=8915 [last accessed July 23rd, 2015]; International Alert, "Perceptions and Prescriptions: How

Actors involved

This section gives a short overview of the actors who are politically and socially active in the three respective areas. It also looks at their role in relations to actual and perceived conflict dynamics prevalent in the last years. In the subsequent section, some of the conflict dynamics are elaborated more alongside specific themes that emerged as relevant within the fieldwork in the selected areas.

"Citizens"[15]

The Matn area in general and the areas considered in this report in particular are mostly described as predominantly Christian. Having a closer look at the demographic distribution within those areas, especially the Eastern suburbs of Beirut (Bourj

"Social and economic problems are mainly described in the Eastern suburbs as stated in the above interview made in Sin el-fil. Asked about the social composition in the area, our interlocutors defined the areas as mixed but consisting of predominantly lower class (Bourj Hammoud) and lower middle class (Sin el-fil) with increasing poverty and social problems in the domains of healthcare, public services, education and employment."

Hammoud, Sin el-Fil), shows theycan today rather be seen as a confessionally mixed area that includes Armenians, Maronites, Orthodox Christians, Catholics, Sunnites and Shi'ites. Still, as described earlier, some kind of geographical segregation along confessional lines exists today within these areas. Most of our interlocutors made the distinction between the "native" inhabitants of the area and the newly settled segments of the population. This goes especially for the Eastern Beirut suburbs. In Sin el-Fil, a representative of the municipality expressed this fact in the following way:

> "Before, we used to say Sin el-Fil is a village, but today the natives of Sin el-Fil do only constitute about 8 % of the inhabitants. The rest are Lebanese who bought land and built houses or businessmen, bank or hospital employees. Today, there are about 100,000 inhabitants in Sin el-Fil, and we – as the natives constitute less than 10 %. The inhabitants of Sin el-Fil who are not Lebanese are the 'maids' from different nationalities, and in addition to this, the refugees. […] The number of poor refugees amounts to about 5,000, and this number poses a danger to us, a serious threat. 5,000 who live in the poor areas of Sin el-Fil. There is only a small number of Syrians who rented expensive houses and have money. The rest live in the poor areas."[16]

In Bikfaya, those distinctions were equally made in our interviews but do not seem to be considered as relevant due to the rather confessionally and politically uniform character of the village:

> "The number of inhabitants in Bikfaya according to unspecific statistics that have been

Lebanese people view their security", *International Alert*, February 2015, available at: http://www.international-alert.org/resources/publications/perceptions-and-prescriptions [last accessed July 23rd, 2015].

15   The term "citizens" in this context refers to the Lebanese community of the Matn area referring to the fact that those interlocutors carry the Lebanese citizenship. The term is nevertheless put in quotation marks to emphasise the limitations, exclusions and differences a Lebanese citizenship can imply for some of its holder (like women and certain excluded and/or vulnerable communities). Having these limitations in mind, we still refer to the term 'citizen' in order to draw a preliminary distinction between Lebanese citizens and the foreign/refugee community in the area. See on this topic Lina Khatib, "Gender, Citizenship and Political Agency in Lebanon", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies,* December 2008, Vol. 35, No. 3, pp. 437-451; Laura van Waas, *Citizenship, statelessness and the numbers game in Lebanon*, Report of the Middle East and North Africa Nationality and Statelessness Research Project, December 2014, pp. 1-22.

16   Interview with a representative of the municipality of Sin Elfil, June 2015.

conducted this year by several NGOs amounts to 3,000 families. Most of them originate from Bikfaya. There is a small number of people who come from outside of Bikfaya but they have lived here for 15 years."[17]

Social and economic problems are mainly described in the Eastern suburbs as stated in the above interview made in Sin el-Fil. Asked about the social composition in the area, our interlocutors defined the areas as mixed but consisting of predominantly lower class (Bourj Hammoud) and lower middle class (Sin el-Fil) with increasing poverty and social problems in the domains of healthcare, public services, education and employment.

One of our interlocutors described the social and demographic situation in Naba'a, Bourj Hammoud as followed:

"Bourj Hammoud has Lebanese people first of all, who have mostly come from the Bekaa and the South, and who are mostly Shi'ites. There are about 18 other nationalities. There are Syrians, Egyptians, Pakistanis, Philipino, Indian, African, people from many different origins. They are all living in this tiny area because it is a poor area to begin with and 7 to 10 people live in every room that is rented. This is the situation. There is confusion about identity in terms of social belonging. There are also Lebanese from Shouf, from Eastern Bekaa. Basically, you have people from all over Lebanon and all over the world."[18]

Although the Lebanese citizens in those areas cannot be described as a united group of stakeholder a certain perception can be detected in which a sense of unity contrasts with diverse groups of newly settled inhabitants. This perception is conferred to the rising presence of Syrian refugees in the areas in the last four years.

Syrian and Iraqi Refugees

"As one citizen of Bourj Hammoud recounts in an interview, "there were always Syrians and Kurds in the area", however he emphasised that the main difference today was that "they increased more as families"."

Within the citizens of the respective areas, the Syrian and (to a lower extent) Iraqi refugees still constitute a rather separate group of stakeholders. Most of them are perceived mainly in regards to their growing number and their precarious and vulnerable situations in terms of work, health, education and legal status. As will be shown later, this perception does create tensions but it leads to a certain degree of empathy and interactions. Again, these issues and the concomitant emotional response to them have mainly been brought up in interviews conducted in Bourj Hammoud, with its remarkably big number of refugees, while to a lesser extent they mattered in interviews conducted in Sin el-Fil. In Bikfaya, it was mainly stressed that these are the problems prevalent in other areas while they are not dominant in Bikfaya due to the fact that only a small number of Syrians reside here.[19]

As one citizen of Bourj Hammoud recounts in an interview, "there were always Syrians and Kurds in the area", however he emphasised that the main difference today was that "they increased more as families".[20]

Interestingly, the presence of Iraqi refugee was hardly mentioned in our interviews or only in relation to numbers but not in relation to issues – or perceptions of conflict.

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17   Interview with a representative of one of the political parties in Bikfaya, June 2015.
18   Interview with a teacher at a school in Naba'a, Bourj Hammoud, June 2015.
19   Interview partners state a number of 1.500 to 2.000 Syrian residents in Bikfaya.
20   Interview with one of the citizens in Bourj Hammoud, June 2015.

In an interview, a young Syrian worker in Bikfaya described the difficulties he faces in Bikfaya on a daily basis due to the fact that "here they hate Syrians".[21] As examples, he cited the imposed curfews, daily insults and occasionally incidents of physical abuse from agents of the State (*e.g.* General security, municipality, *etc.*) as well as from inhabitants of the village.

In general, the Syrian and Iraqi refugee population is a rather passive and deprived group of stakeholders who are left without any serious political or social representation nor any legally valid status in Lebanon. This puts them into a precarious dependency status in front of most other groups of actors like the Lebanese host community as well as the State and local and international aid agencies.

Political Parties

The socially and confessionally mixed population in the studied regions reflects the presence of different political parties active there. Still, most of the parties' followers choose their affiliation mainly along their confessional origins. Therefore, the largely Armenian part of Bourj Hammoud is mostly dominated by the existing Armenian parties, especially the Tachnag Party, while its neighbourhood of Naba'a, whose population is mainly Shi'ite, is a Hezbullah stronghold with a small following of the Amal Movement and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party. In Sin el-Fil, the three dominant Christian parties, Kata'eb, Lebanese Forces and Free Patriotic Movement exist and are equally active. Among the selected areas, Bikfaya is probably the only one that is mostly associated with one party – the Kata'eb Party, mainly due to the historical meaning of the village to the foundation of the party.

Although the mentioned parties are certainly divided into the aforementioned polarisation polarisation of the country (March 8th and March 14th coalitions), and are, therefore, active agents in the ongoing political stalemate, most of our interlocutors downplayed the role of parties in general and in conflict situations in particular in the selected areas. Most arising conflicts were described as "only related to values"[22] while "politically, the Armenians get along very well with the Kurds."[23]

However, some of our interlocutors mentioned patronage and clientelist-based structures, surveillance and control measures, as well as corruption and bribery practices in the areas that in their perception was connected to the presence of the political parties, and their associated power structures and affiliations in the respected area. This correlation has also been made by a couple of media reports in the last two to three years.[24] A citizen of Bourj Hammoud described these tendencies as follows:

> "So basically Bourj Hammoud is run by Armenians, the Tachnag party specifically, as any other region, it's all run by mafias (sic), each group has their hands on everything. From Internet services to amusement centres... You need to know someone who knows someone to get access to services. […] They sector the area, each guy has his own area, if someone takes a customer from his area it creates fights, you know, just like with drug

21   Interview with a Syrian man (20 years old) in Bikfaya, June 2015.
22   In these incidents the presence of groups of young guys in the street, public drinking of alcohol, noise in the streets and buildings, fights about women etc were mentioned.
23   Interview with a representative of one of the Armenian parties in Bourj Hammoud, June 2015.
24   See for example "Hizb Tashnag al-Armani al-Lubnani yuhajim al-Kurd as-Suriyeen fi mintaqat Burj Hammoud fi Beirut", *al-Arabiyya*, Arabic, 2014, [last accessed on June 21st, 2015]; "Fi n-Naba'a: Hizbullah yudghatu 'ala 'a'sab al-masihiyeen", *Now Lebanon*, Arabic, October 8th, 2013, [last accessed on June 21st, 2015].

dealers. […] Some of them have connection with political parties, and some of them just pay them off."[25]

While the position of the political parties in regard to national in the national stalemate is rather clear in the areas presently studied, it is rather difficult to state their role in the local conflicts and their dynamics. The role of the different parties in regards to the refugee presence and the political answer to it is rather uncertain, and information from interlocutors has mainly been expressed as rumours. Still, for many of the Lebanese interlocutors the parties serve, next to the municipalities, as an important point of reference regarding political and social belonging in the respected areas.

Municipalities

"We are underfunded, underpowered, and underauthorised, and also underequipped."[26] This is how one of our interlocutors, a representative of one of the selected municipalities in this report, summarises his perception of the role of the municipalities. Similar statements have been collected in our fieldwork when interlocutors were asked about the role of the municipalities in their respective area. Although, many municipalities in Lebanon have tried to show agency in the light of the refugee crisis by imposing curfews on Syrians at night or issuing resident cards for Syrians in the area, those policy measures were not only seen as legally and morally doubtful but even their impact and success was questioned. Some interlocutors also credited those measurements to creating more tensions and conflict potentials. In most of our interviews, municipalities are seen as over-challenged and underequipped to accomplish the tasks assigned to them, a tendency that seems to have been worsened with the increasing challenges in most of the areas (*i.e.* rising number of refugees, overcrowding and growing poverty).

The lack of sufficient power of the municipalities causes clear frustration among many citizens and the representatives of the municipalities themselves. Yet the municipalities were less criticized and attacked for corruption and patronage and clientelist structures than the political parties. On the contrary, the need to strengthen the municipalities in light of their present challenges and tasks was frequently expressed and hoped-for among our interlocutors who had previously conducted policy reports on the topic.[27] Also for the refugee community the municipalities often serve as the first point of reference for legal and social issues after arrival in Lebanon as many interlocutors confirmed to us.

""We are underfunded, underpowered, and underauthorised, and also underequipped." This is how one of our interlocutors, a representative of one of the selected municipalities in this report, summarises his perception of the role of the municipalities."

NGOs and the aid community

While Lebanon has been a country with a high density of national and international NGOs since the 1990s,[28] this tendency has been further strengthened since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis and the seemingly massive quantity of material and non-material aid and potential from different national and international

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25   Interview with one of the citizens in Bourj Hammoud, June 2015.
26   Interview with a representative of one of the municipalities, June 2015.
27   See Mercy Corps Lebanon, *Policy Brief: Engaging Municipalities in the Response to the Syria Refugee Crisis in Lebanon*, March 2014.
28   See Karam Karam, *Le Mouvement Civil au Liban: revendications, protestations et mobilisations associatives dans l'après-guerre*, Paris/Aix en Provence, Karthala/IREMAM, 2006.

actors that has been channelled through these NGOs to the vulnerable victims of the crisis. As already emphasised by other reports, the role of those NGOs remains below public expectations due to lack of coordination, knowledge and management facilities.[29] In our interviews, most interlocutors affirmed the existence of old and new NGOs as well as new (mainly international) funding sources available to those NGOs since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis.[30] They also stressed the lack of cooperation and knowledge and therefore impact those NGOs have on the ground and the frustration this causes among the beneficiary population. This frustration has been expressed quite explicitly by some of our interlocutors:

> "Go check how many interventions [the NGOs] have done and in how many schools. Let them not give only success stories, but give accurate data in terms of exact numbers of schools and cases. And double check if they are actually able to implement interventions. […] They are not accountable to me or to the Lebanese government. They are accountable to their donors and the international organisations funding them. […] Anyway, of course accountability will decrease when there are dozens of NGOs operating without the minimum coordination and the minimum transparency, things get disorganised."[31]

Representatives of NGOs in the examined areas confirmed their work overload, lack of funding and difficulties in the last years in light of the refugee crisis. A representative of one of the NGOs in Bourj Hammoud expressed this in the following way:

> "We are doing the best we can. There is definitely more work now, but we do what we can. […] We are always in need of more funding not just now. […] The issue and the fact that we are understaffed have been there for a long time. Each one of us works as much as two people. Of course the workload increased as well."[32]

Most of the refugee community and a big part of the deprived segment of the Lebanese are essentially dependent on the aid provisions of different NGOs which naturally leads to the aforementioned tensions between the misconceptions and knowledge gap among the beneficiaries and the workload and funding issues among the different NGO representatives.

"The majority confirmed the rising presence of state and non-state groups which began undertaking the task of guaranteeing security in the selected Matn areas."

State and non-State security apparatuses

Most interlocutors in selected areas did not speak of any real security threats or a rise in crime and violence, however the issue of the presence or lack of presence of state and non-state security apparatuses has been brought up in most interviews. The majority confirmed the rising presence of state and non-state groups which began undertaking the task of guaranteeing security in the selected Matn areas. Non-state groups mainly refer to guarding groups belonging to political parties or influential political actors in the areas.[33]

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29   See *op. cit.* 14.

30   On the topic of funding policies and potentials/challenges in light of the Syrian crisis see Dalya Mitri, "Challenges of Aid Coordination in a complex crisis: An overview of funding policies and conditions regarding aid provision to Syrian refugees in Lebanon", *Civil Society Knowledge Center, Lebanon Support*, May 23rd, 2014, available at: http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/paper/challenges-aid-coordination-complex-crisis [last accessed on June 21st, 2015].

31   Interview with a representative of the municipality of Bourj Hammoud, June 2o15.

32   Interview with a representative of one of the NGOs active in Bourj Hammoud, June 2015.

33   There has been a lot of literature dealing with the recent tendency of the privatisation of security related

In addition, different groups of guards and police forces belonging to the municipalities have been mentioned. Due to their perceived lack of legal authority from the state, both groups are seen as rather powerless and with no real influence:

> "[...] in Lebanon you have more than a 1,000 municipalities with its police force that has absolutely no authority. And this police force is scared of intervening because they might go to jail. Therefore, on average, if each municipality has 15 police members, that means there is a minimum of 15,000 policemen on the payroll who, under these critical security situations, where you actually need them, are unable to do anything because they are not given the authority."[34]

Our interlocutors maintained there was a presence of the gendarmerie ("*darak*") that regularly intervenes in scenes of conflict and violence. These gendarmerie forces are predominantly seen as corrupt, violent and turning to illegal methods, while also perceived as protected and rendered immune by the state.

One member of the municipality of Sin el-Fil expressed his frustration with the handling of the security situation in his area:

"When the gendarmerie intervenes, even if they go overboard, such as by being violent and doing things against the law, they are immune and they have the authority. They are also legally armed. If the municipal policeman intervenes outside of the bounds of what a regular citizen would do, he can go to jail, and they are not legally armed."[35]

In general, a lack of monopoly on the side of the state as well as a lack of coordination among different state and non-state actors seems to be prevalent in the handling of a situation that is described by those actors themselves as threatening and insecure.

Nevertheless, the measures taken seem to paradoxically cause more insecurity and ambivalences towards those actors than the actual objective – i.e. guaranteeing safety and security – implies.

> **"In general, a lack of monopoly on the side of the state as well as a lack of coordination among different state and non-state actors seems to be prevalent in the handling of a situation that is described by those actors themselves as threatening and insecure. "**

Incidents of conflict and topics of contestation

Incidents of conflict and violence

As mentioned earlier, the areas studied in this report have hardly been mentioned in the last years in connection to large-scale incidents and conflict dynamics (in contrast to areas like the Southern suburbs of Beirut and the Beka'a) and are in general regarded as "safe areas". An exception from this perception is in certain regards Bourj Hammoud, which

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to different case studies. In the Lebanese case, there are less private enterprises that commence the task to guarantee security but rather established political actors like parties and notables, a process that has been rather under-studied in the Lebanese case. On the topic of privatisation of security as a global trend in general see Deborah Avant, "The Privatisation of Security and Change in the Control of Force", *International Studies Perspective*, 2004, Vol. 5, pp. 153-157. On the topic of privatisation of security in an authoritarian political context see Elizabeth Picard, "Armée et sécurité au cœur de l'autoritarisme", *Autoritarismes démocratiques et démocraties autoritaires au XXe siècle*, ed. O. Dabène, V. Geisser, and G. Massardier, Paris, La Découverte, 2008, pp. 303-306. Moreover, a lot of research dealt with the privatisation in the context of Iraq. See Joakim Berndtsson, *The Privatisation of Security and State Control of Force. Changes, Challenges and the Case of Iraq*, 2009.
34   Interview with a representative of the municipality of Sin el-Fil, June 2015.
35   *Ibid.*

has been in the media since a couple of years for repetitive small-scale incidents of vio-lence and crime usually connected to poverty and overpopulation. Among those inci-dents were some street clashes in May 2014 between Kurdish and other groups in the area, a case that received a lot of attention in local media and brought the topic of the high number of Syrian refugees in the area to the forefront.[36] As a result, authorities imposed the above-mentioned curfew on Syrians in the Eastern suburb banning them from walking in the street after 8pm. The curfew that was also imposed by other municipalities in the Matn area (among them Bikfaya) was declared by many NGOs and the media as against the Lebanese domestic law and "Lebanon's international human rights obligations".[37] According to our interlocutors in the three selected areas, these curfews are in theory still effective but they were in fact only implemented for a couple of days and then largely neglected.

Other than the above-mentioned incidents in May 2014, most of our interviewees in Bourj Hammoud declared small-scale incidents of violence, fights and criminal acts and charac-terized those as frequent and recurring happenings in the area. These impressions go along with some media reports in the last months that resumed the conflictual and tension-filled relationship between the different groups of inhabitants in Bourj Hammoud.[38] Still, in our interviews, most interlocutors attributed those occurrences to the mixture of overpopula-tion, poverty and the ethnic and religious diversity of people living in the area and less to incidents and developments happening on the national and regional scale.

In contrast, in Sin el-Fil and Bikfaya, our interlocutors emphasised the absence of prob-lems in the streets and even named Bourj Hammoud and especially the neighbourhood of Naba'a as the counter-example to their own rather trouble-free situation.

Nevertheless, when asked about conflicts in Sin el-Fil, most interlocutors brought up the topic of the Sunday Market (Souq al-Ahad), a rather big flea-market next to the river and the highway. The dispute goes back to the 1990s and revolves around the legality and the property rights of the market. It is staged between the municipality of Sin el-Fil and the Ministry of Energy and Water which both claim the legality and property of the market to be theirs and which both have differing projects for the area. While the Ministry wants to keep the market, the municipality of Sin el-Fil demands to remove the market and trans-

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36   See "Tension against Kurds runs high in Burj Hammoud", *The Daily Star*, English, May 18th, 2014, available at: http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/May-18/256911-tensions-against-kurds-run-high-in-burj-hammoud.ashx [last accessed June 22nd, 2015]; "Ethnic tensions erupt in Burj Hammoud", *The Daily Star*, English, May 20th, 2014, available at: http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/May-20/257075-ethnic-tensions-erupt-in-burj-hammoud.ashx [last accessed June 22nd, 2015]; "Ishkal Bourj Hammoud", *MTV Morning News*, Arabic, May 20th, 2014, available at: [last accessed 22.06.15]; Firas Abou-Mosleh, "Lebanon: Economic conditions pit oppressed minorities against each other", *Alakhbar English*, May 12th, 2014, available at: http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/19889 [last accessed on June 22nd, 2015]; Douja Daoud, "Bourj Hammoud al-Libnaniyya: Shijar al-Arman wa al-Akrad yurith khawfan bi sh-shara'a". *Al-Araby al-Jadeed Araby,* Arabic, May 31st, 2014, available at: [last accessed on June 22nd, 2015].
37   See Human Rights Watch, *op. cit.* 12; Sara Wansa, "'Iqab jama'i yufradu 'ala s-suriyeen: balaydiyat Bourj Hammoud fi Lubnan tamna'u tajawilahum ba'd as-sa'a th-thamina masa'an", *Al-mufakira al-qanuniya*, Arabic May 22nd, 2014, available at: [last accessed June 22nd, 2015]; Maya El Helou, "Refugees under Curfew: The War of Lebanese Municipalities Against the Poor", *Legal Agenda*, English, December 22nd, 2014, available at: http://english.legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=674&folder=articles&lang=en [last accessed on June 22nd, 2015].
38   This was expressed in a flyer circulating in Bourj Hammoud, demanding the disappearance of Syrians in the area and signed with the youth of Bourj Hammoud" ("Shabab Bourj Hammoud") in response to the kidnapped Lebanese soldiers in the Beqaa. See "Shabab 'Bourj Hammoud' al-Lubnaniyah yutalibuna s-Suriyeen mughadira mintaqatihim", *Roayah News*, Arabic, September 8th, 2014, available at: [last accessed on June 22nd, 2015].

form the area into a public garden. The conflict between the two state authorities has not been solved until today. Although the conflict about the legality and ownership of the market is an old one it has been renewed in the last years by increasing talks about internal tensions and divisions within the market itself mainly evolving around the "'illegal' expansion of the market". It is within these talks that the two camps of the conflict meet again and both agree on the fact that the "illegal expansion" is a consequence of the presence of Syrian refugees who erected their stands there.[39] Interventions from the side of the Ministry of Interior a couple of months ago ended the "illegal extension" of the market and reduced it to its old borders. The Syrians either gave up their stands or were integrated into the old structures of the market. In our interviews our interlocutors mainly downplayed the conflict of the market, describing it as old and in principle only solvable if state authorities would seriously intervene.

"Talking about direct conflicts and incidents of violence in the three selected areas, the prevalent discourse is barely dichotomous, neither blaming nor excluding the Lebanese native and the foreigner or Syrian immigrant/refugee."

Safety and fear – perceptions and discourses

"Like all other areas of Lebanon that have a mix of groups living together and that is over-populated, sometimes fights erupt from minor things. It happens if people live together."[40] The sentence sums up the basic impression our interlocutors communicated to us when they were asked about conflicts in the three selected areas. Most interviewees (citizens as well as NGO and state representatives) emphasised that there have not been any notable incidents of conflict in the last years. Moreover, most of them stated that the prevalent conflict dynamics have been there for a long time and are not necessarily new or related to developments in the region or the country. In all three areas, interlocutors stressed that the prevalent conflict dynamics were not different from other regions in Lebanon. Some also recalled earlier conflictual incidents ("a couple of years ago") but assured that things were now largely under control. Talking about direct conflicts and incidents of violence in the three selected areas, the prevalent discourse is barely dichotomous, neither blaming nor excluding the Lebanese native and the foreigner or Syrian immigrant/refugee. Similarly, the perception of conflict is hardly expressed along confessional and/or political line. Rather, problems and conflicts are usually related to personal and socio-economic dynamics and stated as occurring everywhere and among all groups.

Conversely, the issue of the arrival of strangers in general and refugees in particular is a topic that has been raised in nearly all interviews and in connection to all three areas. Most of the interviews conducted in the neighbourhoods themselves among citizens and refugees likewise mentioned fear and expressed a feeling of instability and insecurity when talking about the daily life in those neighbourhood and related these feelings to the challenging situation (*i.e.* poverty, overpopulation, lack of public services) they are facing. In this situation, the refugees are credited by many Lebanese interlocutors as creating those social problems on the one hand due to their large number and on the other hand, as suffering from the same challenging conditions as the Lebanese do. A general feeling of sitting in the same boat seems to be prevalent, thus leading to a tendency to rather blame state and political authorities or the international community and NGOs for this miserable situation rather than the other.

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39   Marieke Krijnen and Richard Pelgrim, "Fractured Space: The Case of Souk al-Ahad, Beirut", *Jadaliyya*, English, July 23rd, 2014, available at: http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/18638/fractured-space_the-case-of-souk-al-ahad-beirut [last accessed on June 22nd, 2015].
40   Interview with a representative of a NGO in Bourj Hammoud, June 2015.

Beyond this perception of a general social and economic fatigue among Lebanese and Syrians likewise, another more diffused discourse on the topic of refugees draws rather on vague fears and uncertainties and seems to contradict the above-mentioned perception in certain ways. Many interlocutors mentioned the high and unknown number of refugees and feared tendencies of ghettoisation of their area due to the high numbers of refugees inhabiting certain neighbourhoods. Words like "occupation of space", "outnumbering" and "overpopulation" are frequently mentioned – and usually connected to some unknown and threatening future scenarios. In this aspect, fears of militarisation of the refugees in the future are also broached. Within this discourse, many interlocutors differentiated between the Syrian worker and the Syrian refugee. While the first one resides in Lebanon mainly to work, the second one "wants to eat",[41] and therefore constitutes a far-reaching danger in the future. In general, this second dimension of the refugee discourse is much harder to grasp and more difficult to verify or falsify than the more concrete one of economic and social fatigue. A diffuse fear of the future and possible negative change seems to be prevalent, and is often tied to the very existence of refugees. Being challenged on this perception, many interlocutors mentioned the influence of the media and politics on their opinion-making.

In general, interlocutors hardly ever mentioned current developments on the regional or national levels, such as the heavy clashes in and around Arsal, the kidnapping of Lebanese soldiers, the militant presence of Hezbullah, or the presence of Islamist Sunni groups like the Nusra Front or the Islamic State in general. Likewise, references to the tension-filled history between Syrians and Lebanese in the civil war or the historical issue of Palestinian refugees are hardly ever made. When asked directly about this connection, most interlocutors downplayed this factor in current conflict dynamics, mentioning that they were mainly forgotten today.

In interviews in Bourj Hammoud, frequent references have been made to the general situation of Armenians as a minority and their historical experiences of persecution and oppression. These experiences were often related to the special status Syrian Armenians enjoy in Bourj Hammoud, justified by the fact that no one else helps them. This is compared by some media reports to trans-border solidarity among Armenians in Lebanon and Syria in light of the war in Syria.[42]

> **"Likewise, references to the tension-filled history between Syrians and Lebanese in the civil war or the historical issue of Palestinian refugees are hardly ever made. When asked directly about this connection, most interlocutors downplayed this factor in current conflict dynamics, mentioning that they were mainly forgotten today."**

Surveillance and securitisation: whose control and whose power?

As mentioned earlier, the general deterioration of the security situation in Lebanon within different areas combined with discourses of internal and external threat to the stability of the country and the dangers of spillover from the Syrian civil war led to a gradual and nationwide securitisation of Lebanon in the last years, *i.e.* political measures were implemented by different state and non-state actors in an attempt to avoid and manage swelling conflict dynamics. These security measures have also impacted the areas treated in this report. Though implemented nationwide, every area has its focus and special orientation of security measures, a result of the actual reality of incidents, lack of coordination, and political affiliations in the area. Nevertheless, in line with a prevalent discourse within the

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41   Interview with a representative of the municipality of Bourj Hammoud, June 2015.
42   See Lebanon Channel Youtube: Bourj Hammoud tadamuna ma'a balada Kasab as-Suriya wa tasinkura siyasat Turkiya. April 1st, 2014, available at: [last accessed on June 23rd, 2015].

Lebanese media and political networks that focuses on the alleged security threats emerging from the refugees, the implemented security measure are in general usually directed at Syrian refugees. In line with the discourse of securitisation, these measures aim at controlling and monitoring the refugee community.[43]

"Neither issues of security nor the different social and economic problems seem to be addressed by different state authorities in an inadequate way. However, on the contrary, the presence of different "guards" as well as the implementation of security measures by municipalities often seem to increase feelings of insecurity."

In the Matn areas of Bourj Hammoud, Sin el-Fil, and Bikfaya, these measures consisted mainly of the aforementioned curfews for foreigners as well as resident papers issued to Syrians living in the area, both imposed about a year ago. Moreover, most interlocutors described different security apparatuses emerging from the municipalities and political parties in the area who are commencing to solve security related problems and conflicts. As mentioned before, the state gendarmerie forces also play a role in the securitisation of areas.

In our interviews, these securitisation measures were looked at with some scepticism in terms of their legal and moral legitimacy as well as their efficiency in promoting security and safety. As mentioned before, most interlocutors have been rather unsatisfied with state authorities and their handling of the crisis that they experience on different levels.

Neither issues of security nor the different social and economic problems seem to be addressed by different state authorities in an inadequate way. However, on the contrary, the presence of different "guards" as well as the implementation of security measures by municipalities often seem to increase feelings of insecurity.

When asked about the right approach to those problems, most interlocutors wished that more legal and political authority be given to the respective municipalities as well as more coordination among the different state apparatuses.

Vulnerability, poverty and competition over jobs and resources

"In reality, the tension today is socio-economic. The influence of the refugees is on the economy and the social fabric of the country. There is also a drain of Lebanon's resources and a stress put on the Lebanese public services such as water, electricity, and garbage services, these caused negatively. But this is not their fault either."[44]

As shown in the previous sections of this report, most conflicts arise out of issues of poverty, social and economic vulnerability and resulting perceptions of fear and insecurity. It is within those living conditions and the emerging perceptions and discourses that the issue of the refugees' influx becomes a topic discussed and debated. Nonetheless, it would be a shortcut to conclude with a dichotomous picture of hate and conflict between the Lebanese host community and the refugee community and depicting a relationship determined by mistrust. Although those sentiments certainly exist and have been patent through our fieldwork, they can still be counteracted by notions of resilience. Our interlocutors usually draw a differentiated and complex picture of the various existing problems and conflict dynamics.

43   See Jamil Mu'awad, *An-nazihun as-suriyuun fi Jabal Lubnan ash-shumali bayna nakran "al-luju' wa r-riqabat al-mintaqa". Taqrir hal an-niza'a, mintaqat Kisirwan, Jbayl wa l-Matn*, UNDP report, Beirut 26.01.2015.
44   Interview with a representative of the municipality of Bourj Hammoud, June 2o15.

It is within this framework that this last section looks into the topic of poverty, economic and social conditions, and fatigue that Lebanese as well as Syrians are exposed to. Likewise, it deals with the often-mentioned topic of "competition" between Syrians and Lebanese over available jobs, resources and aid.

While most interlocutors agree on the fact that economic and social hardship is experienced by everyone, they also mainly blame those hardships for the conflicts arising in their neighbourhoods in the last years.

In general, accounts collected in our fieldwork relayed those burdening challenges to the prevailing aid approach of the Lebanese state, but also the UNHCR as well as different NGOs which got involved in humanitarian aid in the last few years. As said before, this critique has partly been accepted by representatives of the state (*i.e.* municipalities) in addition to representatives of NGOs interviewed for this report, and it has been explained by the increasing workload and challenges, as well as the lack of funding and/or authority to handle the situation.

Some of the Lebanese interlocutors mentioned the fact that Syrians were being favoured by humanitarian organisations but emphasised as well that this was not the fault of their Syrian counterparts, but was rather inherent to the dominant practices among NGOs and aid agencies. The following fieldwork quote refers to Lebanese citizens' perceptions of aid provision and shows how the lack of exact knowledge about aid can contribute to increased tensions among both communities.

> "I don't know. I think each family receives according to its need, on condition that the family comprises of five people that is with a minimum of three kids. Though there are families of two people who do not have any source of income and they need financial support, just as any other family of five people does, the UN has decided to help only families with five people. Imagine that the mother of a family with two kids decided to get pregnant with the third child for the purpose of receiving the financial support from the UN."[45]

"Some of the Lebanese interlocutors mentioned the fact that Syrians were being favoured by humanitarian organisations but emphasised as well that this was not the fault of their Syrian counterparts, but was rather inherent to the dominant practices among NGOs and aid agencies."

Similar critiques of mismanagement and failing measures have been expressed about the attempts of the Lebanese government to undermine competition for jobs in the last couple of months. Interlocutors referred to the new Labour law issued in October 2014 and the recent measures undertaken by the Council of Ministers and the General Directorate of General Security aiming at limiting the influx of Syrian refugees by hardening their conditions of work and residence in the country.[46] While most interlocutors emphasised that those measures heightened the precarious situation the Syrians are exposed to in the first place and were therefore highly questionable on the legal and humanitarian levels, they also mentioned that those measures did not seem to address the issues of poverty and economic hardship that were caused by underpayment and high unemployment in the labour market.

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45   Interview with a representative of a NGO in Bourj Hammoud, June 2015.
46   See on those measures Nayla Geagea, "Syria's crisis may force Lebanon to look at its foreign labor regime", *The Daily Star*, English, June 9th, 2015, available at: http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Opinion/Commentary/2015/Jun-09/301150-syrias-crisis-may-force-lebanon-to-look-at-its-foreign-labor-regime.ashx [last accessed on June 23rd, 2015].

For many Lebanese businessmen, the measures of the Ministry of Labour raised difficulties on a rather practical level as expressed by one of our interlocutors:

> "There are jobs that Lebanese no longer do, like Lebanese no longer work as black-smiths. [...] I wish I could find a Lebanese, I ask all my friends if they know any, Lebanese or Armenian, but I can't find even one. The law forbids us from hiring Syrian blacksmiths or electricians. The Ministry made a list of jobs that Syrians can do. They can work in construction, in cleaning, in bakeries, and restricted jobs like this, such as farming. But they cannot work as electrical engineers or in offices, this is illegal. If we decide to be the bail of our workers and decide to get work permits for them, we have to register them as cleaners. The risk here is that the Ministry will start wondering why our factories need so many janitors. We can have one, two, or four, but how will I register 20? And I can't register them as electrical engineers or technicians. The Lebanese law is not well thought out; it forces us to work in illegal ways."[47]

"To work in illegal ways" seems to be the dominant manner to undermine restrictions, measures and challenges imposed by state- and non-state actors on the Syrian and Lebanese community in the Matn area. It involves the above-mentioned clientelistic structures with their practices of bribery, blackmailing, exploitation and corruption involving different actors as well as arbitrariness in dealing with challenging situations and conditions caused by policy measures.

Conclusion

This brief report attempts to provide an analytical summary on the conflict actors and dynamics in the Matn area, with a particular focus on the complex relationship between the Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees. On the one hand, fieldwork findings mainly highlight that the refugee crisis in Matn, acted as a magnifying glass of the structural and pre-existing conflictual dynamics in the region (mainly socio-economic); on the other hand, it shed light on the structural shortcomings of the Lebanese state. The latter seems to have undergone a shift in its policies towards Syrian refugees, consecrating a tendency to further control their presence in Lebanon. However, as this report shows, increased securitisation of the refugee crisis has also contributed to unleash reminiscent privatised security networks organised around traditional notabilities or political parties.

Recommendations for action:

• *At the State level:*

- Advocate for the development of policy measures that do not only include security concerns but put a serious and realistic emphasis on the economic and legal challenges faced by both refugees and host communities as a result of the Syrian crisis. These policy measures should likewise take into account that the crisis might continue for a long time and cannot be solved by focusing solely on security measures.

- Advocate for the review of the new foreign labour regime and residency restrictions facing Syrian refugees.

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47   Interview with a businessman in Bourj Hammoud, June 2015.

- Advocate for the State to control re-emerging privatised non-state security apparatuses and reinforce their own control.

• *At the local authority level:*

Strengthen decentralised political structures, mechanisms, and institutions (for example, municipalities) in order to implement those policy measures on a regional level and in accordance with the local political actors and residents of the area.

• *At the judiciary level:*

Support legal mechanisms and processes that address issues of corruption, bribery, and exploitation as well as abuse and harassment towards any resident on the Lebanese territory (*i.e.* refugee, foreigner or Lebanese citizen).

• *At the associative level:*

- Strengthen coordination and transparency mechanisms among humanitarian and development organisations and their cooperation with local and state actors.

- Focus on more intensified awareness campaigns on their different aid programs to avoid misconceptions and gaps of knowledge among beneficiaries.

• *At the grassroots community level:*

Reinforce the resilience potential among the Lebanese and Syrian communities by integrating it into an all-encompassing discourse. Resilience does not imply the ability to adapt to worsening circumstances but rather refers to "an engagement in a process of developmental investment and strengthening, to become better equipped with the decision-making power, skills, infrastructure, and the material resources that allow communities to proactively address and manage adversities."[48] This might be done by coordinated awareness campaigns, as already conducted by several NGOs.

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48   Nathalie Bekdache, *op. cit.* 1.