

Tufts Seminar 2019

BEIRUT 2019

Briefing Paper — Delegation of Beirut

Committee:

Maddy Hettler: Head of Delegation

Representatives:

Ben Togut: Committee on Urban Planning

Jack Yuan: Committee on Economic Integration

Ameen DaCosta: Committee on Social Cohesion

Nikola Popovic: Committee on Health

Ava Solo: Committee on Resilience

A. Introduction

Representative: Maddy Hettler

The Lebanese people have long displayed a proud tradition of hospitality. In Lebanon, it is a true honor to have a guest in your home and if you are ever lucky to be the guest yourself, you can be sure to be treated with the utmost respect and generosity. These values that we the Lebanese people hold dear to ourselves also transcend into our government and political atmosphere. Throughout our history, we have graciously welcomed refugees into our home. We have treated them as brothers, piously accepting thousands each day for we too know what it's like to live in a country in turmoil. Lebanon is located in the midst of a migration crisis. Bordering Syria and their current civil war has resulted in an influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon amounting to a staggering 35% of our population, while Palestinian refugees represent an estimated 10% of the population. This combined with our geographical location on the Mediterranean has labeled our nation as a safe middle country in the eyes of migrants on their way to larger European destinations. We currently hold more refugees per capita than any other country in the world making refugees more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of our entire population. In addition, Lebanon is not a signatory of the 1951 United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees meaning there are no laws that require us to take in Syrian refugees, yet being the moral and righteous people we are, we do so anyway. However, while Lebanon has heroically recognized the current crisis and accepted the world's refugees, our country is beginning to feel the impact. While war and conflict fluctuate, the results leftover from events such as the Syrian Civil War will persist for centuries to come. Lebanon is doing all it can at the moment to accept and integrate refugees into our nation but truthfully, the overall cost of the refugee crisis far exceeds the current flow of international aid into our country. Our wish to help can only go so far unless backed by funding

to make significant strides to adapting and attempting to provide solutions for the refugee crisis. The EU has long imposed a pressure on us to limit the amount of refugees moving into Europe but it cannot be done without them lending a helping hand. Together with our international partners we must work to confront this crisis head on for we are all linked together and one country in peril, is all at risk.

B. Demographics

Located on a peninsula at the midpoint of Lebanon, the capital and our city, Beirut, juts into the Mediterranean making it an ideal spot for one of the country's largest and main seaports. Beirut is the "vibrant financial, commercial, and administrative hub of the country", and its tourism as well as banking has become a large part of the Lebanese economy. The 2011 MasterCard index determined that Beirut had the second highest visitor spending in the Middle East and Africa totaling \$6.5 billion. The banking system is the backbone of the local economy and attracts many deposits on behalf of the interest rates in Lebanon being higher than other banks in Europe. The Lebanese pound is also easily exchanged with any other currency, and the government offers income tax exemptions on accounts opened in Lebanese banks, making Lebanon very appealing to foreign investors. In an area dominated by militarist and authoritarian regimes, Beirut has made its name as a "haven of libertarianism" due to our free economic and foreign exchange system, gold backed currency, and favorable interests.

To the Lebanese, leadership unaligned with religion is unacceptable. Though this can pose disagreements, in 1926 and emphasized again in the Taif Agreement of 1989, we wrote coexistence between each religious group into our Constitution and ever since, the leadership of

Beirut has been dedicated to governing cohesively with each religion and sect. A certain amount of seats is set aside in Parliament for each recognized religion to be represented, but must be elected by a plurality of the total vote, not just by those with whom they are religiously affiliated. The aim of this processes is to promote cooperation between religions since each candidate is forced to gain support from those outside his faith.

Because our political system distributes positions according to sectarian affiliation, a census has not been taken since 1930 in an effort to maintain stability and power sharing agreements. All Shias, Sunnis, Maronites and Greek Orthodox claim that they hold a majority in the country, so by avoiding a census we avoid possible denominational conflict as well. However, the estimation of the population count of Beirut is between 1-2 million people. Beirut is one of the most religiously diverse cities in the Middle East with 18 recognized religions-- though the amount of religious groupings make Beirut's religious divisions extremely complicated. Divisions and rivalries go back as far as 15 years and still factor into the political climate today. Up until the Civil War these faiths were well blended but ever since the city has been mostly divided: East and North Beirut is mostly Christian; West Beirut is mostly Sunni Muslim; Southern Beirut is mostly Shia Muslim. Today, however, faiths have once again begun to become more integrated and the number of Christians and Muslims has grown. A 2012 study done by Statistics Lebanon found that of Lebanon's population of 4.3 million, 54% of citizens are Islamic, 40.5% Christian, and 5.5% Druze.

Without a population census, predicting population growth or decline is difficult. Although we have made significant efforts to rebuild our country, repetitive bombings and attacks are a serious threat and force many people to flee. If these trends continue, a decline in

population can be expected to follow through the 2020's. A decline in population could hurt our already weakening labor source and therefore our economy, making it hard to rebuild and support the influx of refugees. A World Bank report suggested that Lebanon's projected GDP growth is to remain sluggish through the coming years due partly to the Syrian crisis. This is even despite a boom in Syrian investments and economic input since 2011, which boosted demand, increased bank deposits and added 36 million US\$ to the economy paid by refugees to the Lebanese property owners every month.

Remnants of the brutal Lebanese Civil War still remain in our nation as it is estimated that 60,000 died in the first 2 years, 600,000–900,000 persons fled the country, and 1 million were displaced. As of 2012, 75,000 people remain displaced within Lebanon. The Lebanese Civil War also brought down the number of Christians in the area since many fled the Syrian occupation making the Muslim religion the majority.

C. Key Points

- The massive influx of migrants into Lebanon have begun to put a strain on the economy. By administering more temporary work permits to displaced persons, Lebanon can take advantage of the labor they provide, turning migrants from a weight to a benefit on the economy.
- Lebanon's economy is performing extremely poorly (Third-highest indebted country in the world), and the sudden influx of one millions Syrian refugees has lowered economic

growth down to 1-2% after four years of averaging 8% growth. The economy has led to issues such as the housing crisis and a lack of political stability.

- At the same time, many of the Syrian refugee households have struggled due to the poor economy and high population density and have continued to lack enough resources to cover their essential needs. We need to make sure that the Syrian refugees are well-integrated economically and to help change the existing situation where one out of two refugee households still lives below the poverty line. In addition, a unified transportation system can help tame the high population density and more evenly distribute displaced persons.
- Without a centralized economic system and a functioning government since elections last May, it has been difficult for the government to utilize all the “brain-power” the refugees are bringing. We must eliminate informal employments as much as possible to collect taxes and create a functioning economic system to integrate the refugees economically.
- This large increase of Sunni Refugees is changing Lebanon’s religious makeup, which is currently balanced between the Christians and the Muslims. We need to make sure that the integration of these large numbers of refugees goes smoothly and is not a source for tension between the local population and the refugees

- Lebanon did not sign the 1951 Geneva Convention, meaning they have no obligation to take in these Syrian refugees. Therefore, all of the Syrians are considered temporary workers, and do not get all the rights and benefits that refugees in other countries would get. Lebanon needs to do a better job to make sure that these Syrian migrants are able to support themselves and their families through benefits and jobs.
- There have been many positive interactions between the hosts and the guests, with many Lebanese people helping out those in need. However, over time the media has portrayed them negatively, talking about the economic and social changes that they are bringing to Lebanon.
- Lebanon's health, nutritional, and sanitation infrastructure has been overburdened by the massive migration from Syria. We must work to create a more efficient framework for dealing with our citizens' health by making healthcare more affordable, increasing the ratio of medical staff to citizens, and by rebuilding the agriculture sector devastated by war.
- Importantly, we must also digitalize Lebanon's healthcare, sanitation, and water management infrastructure to streamline it and to provide our citizens with constant safe drinking water, healthcare with follow-ups, and green methods of dealing with waste.

- While we are one of the most technologically advanced nations in the Middle East/North African region, we are unable to use our resources to abate our rampant food insecurity because many resources are being used to keep stability in the nation in the midst of a refugee influx.

D. Background

Our city of Beirut is one of the oldest cities in the world spanning over 5,000 years of constant conquest and destruction by empires such as the Phoenicians, Hellenists, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Crusaders, and lastly the Ottomans. A myriad of different rulers resulted in the presence of multiple ethnic groups in the region. To rule cohesively with varied ethnic groups and religions, the Ottoman empire enforced the *Millet* system which we still use today. Dividing state power between the religious sects allows for full representation of all citizens while at the same time enforcing compromise over sectarian demands. The fact that many of the neighboring countries were part of the Ottoman Empire as well means that we share similarities in culture, religion, and language making the acceptance and integration of their refugees into our society smoother.

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1926, Lebanon was under French control until our declaration of independence in 1943. Although unwilling, pressure from the United States and Britain forced France to relinquish its control of Lebanon. At this time the Lebanese National Pact was formed in our new government stating that, due to existence of two major religions in the nation (Christians and Muslims), the Christians will renounce the protection of Western powers and the Muslims, union with Syria or other Arab states. It is decided that in

intra-Arab conflicts Lebanon will remain neutral. From then on, Lebanon has dedicated itself to maintaining the balance of power each religion holds.

In 1948 the state of Israel was created and forced the first large migration of Palestinians into Lebanon. This influx drastically changed the demographic of the state as 100,000 refugees fled to Lebanon. In 1964 a series of conflicts labeled the Israeli-Lebanon conflicts ensued as the creation of the Palestine Liberation Organization sought to take back Israel. The PLO grew through recruiting militants in Lebanon from among the families of Palestinian refugees who had been expelled or fled due to the creation of Israel in 1948. The PLO moved in 1971 from Jordan to Lebanon, where factions strayed from the purpose of the PLO and began to carry out terrorism attacks. The PLO became recognized as the sole representation of the Palestinian people by the Arab League in 1974.

Tensions grew over the Lebanese National Pact as the majority of representation in the Lebanese parliament were Maronite Christians, despite the large Muslim population. As a result many Muslims and left-wing groups opposed the pro-western government. In addition, the influx of Palestinians into Muslim dramatically shifted the demographic balance of Lebanon in favor of Muslims, leading to demands of increased representation in parliament and eventually to the Lebanese Civil War in 1975. The PLO united with the left-wing and Muslim-Lebanese groups to form the Lebanese National Movement to fight the Lebanese Front (Maronite Christians). During the war, Lebanon was invaded multiple times by neighboring nations such as Israel, who sought to expel the PLO from Lebanon, and Syria who aligned with the Palestinian effort. In 1989 the Taif Agreement marked the end to fighting and redistributing of parliamentary seats so

that the number held by Muslims and the Maronite Christians were equal and the rest were allocated proportionally to each sect.

It is estimated that 150,000 people were killed in the fighting while 900,000 were displaced from their homes. All militias were dissolved with the exception of the Shia Muslim group, the Hezbollah, which still holds seats in parliament today. Though the civil war had ended, international groups still remained in Lebanon. It wasn't until May of 2000 that we forced Israel to withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon and five more years until Syrian forces were expelled from after a 2004 UN Security Council demand.

However, conflict did not end with the withdrawal of Israel and Syria. In 2006 following the kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers by the Hezbollah, Israel invaded Lebanon and both UN Peacekeepers and the Lebanese military were sent to the southern border; a 34-day war ensued. In 2008 we established diplomatic relations with Syria for the first time since both nations attained independence in the 1940s. In 2011, we enacted an open door policy for Syrian refugees. However, conflict with Syria started up again as the 2011 Syrian conflict spilled into Lebanon and sparked deadly clashes between Sunni Muslims and Alawites in Tripoli and Beirut. Relations were worsened with the combined assassinations of prime minister Rafik Hariri in 2005 and Security chief Wissam al-Hassan in 2012 by Syrian aligned forces. In 2013 conflict intensified as Syria flew warplanes and helicopters into northern Lebanon, firing rockets days after Damascus warned Beirut to stop militants crossing the border to fight Syrian government forces. Not only did the conflict in Syria cause cross sectarian conflicts and brought Syrian rebels into our own country, but it also delayed the 2013 elections five years until 2018 in order to deal with the Syrian conflict and refugee crisis. In 2014 the number of Syrian refugees registered in

Lebanon surpassed 1 million making 1 in 4 people living in Lebanon a refugee from the Syrian crisis.

On May 6th, 2018, our elections that had been delayed three times since 2013, were finally held. The Hezbollah gained an increased number of seats while the Future Movement of Prime Minister Saad Hariri saw its bloc shrink by 40%. The parliamentary bloc of the Lebanese Forces almost doubled in number but it was the Free Patriotic Movement that emerged with the largest bloc.

E. Committee on Leadership and Governance

Representative: Maddy Hettler

1. Political Representation

- Each religious community is allotted a certain number of the 128 seats in parliament.

These seats must be elected by a plurality of the total vote meaning they must draw votes from other faiths and not just their own to be elected.

- This system is put in place to “minimize inter-sectarian competition and maximize cross-confessional cooperation” and protect minority groups.
- The number of Christian seats in parliament equal the number of Muslim and Druze seats (64:64).
- The President (elected by a majority vote in Parliament) is always a Maronite Christian as agreed on in the National Pact of 1943. The Prime Minister is appointed by the President and is always Sunni Muslim. The Speaker of Parliament is always Shia Muslim.

- By giving the most prominent religions each a definite position fosters cooperation and peace.
- Refugees do not participate in elections, but their sectarian affinities are almost always represented in our parliament since we have recognized over 18 religions. In addition, we view the idea of refugees participating in our elections as international interference that may threaten our carefully balanced political system.
 - Refugees as well see themselves as ‘guests’ in Lebanon and find it normal for them to not participate in elections.
- The diaspora population of displaced people in Lebanon also still retain their political voice in their home countries by voting in elections at their home country embassies in Lebanon.

2. Interaction Between City and State Government

- Beirut is Lebanon’s seat of government and from there migration policy is designed. Beirut’s migration policy is very similar if not the same to that of Lebanon.
- Lebanon is split into governorates which are run by a governor representing the central government. Governorates are further divided into districts run by district chiefs supervising the local government.

3. Government Interaction With Non-State Actors

- With light regulation, Lebanon tends to allow NGOs to work as long as they are not engaging in “suspicious activities”.

- NGOs are often created by refugees, for refugees and provide services for refugee youth. Most prominently, educational services.
 - NGOs are a great help to refugees as they tend to receive more social welfare
- Lebanon has a historically vibrant civil society working on a wide range of political and developmental issues. The right to form self-organized associations was declared in Article 13 of the Lebanese constitution.
 - Lebanon has always had hundreds and more recently thousand of associations dedicated to issues of governance, development, and democratization.
 - There are approximately 1.3 associated per 1,000 inhabitants in Lebanon, and the latest data shows the presence of 8,311 registered civil society organizations.
- The EU has worked to promote the participation of non-state actors in Lebanon stressing civil society as an important focus between both of us for cooperation and dialogue.

4. Current Policies Toward Migrants

- Migrants who are not registered with the UNHCR must obtain a residence permit and a work permit for approximately USD 200 and USD 30 USD every year. However, as of February 2017, Syrian refugees registered with the UNHCR before 1 January 2015 can obtain a six-month residence permit free of charge.
- Lebanon has opted for a non-encampment policy for Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in order to be promotive to free movement, employment opportunities and facilitated integration into the host society. We have found that encampment policies only work to further segregate refugees from the native population and workforce.

- This policy also prevents radicalization and potential militarization of refugees.
- Currently Lebanon is not actively working on naturalizing Palestinian or Syrian refugees although 154,931 foreign residents, including more than 65,000 Syrians, were naturalized in Lebanon in 1994. Lebanon stays dedicated to providing support to these refugees and eventually helping them return safely home at the correct time.
 - Granting citizenship to refugees and displaced persons of all different faiths could have the result of upsetting our delicate political balance in Lebanon.
- Foreign laborers in Lebanon must be sponsored by a resident in Lebanon to receive residency. If a migrant enters Lebanon illegally they are subject to detention.

5. Current Policies Toward Undocumented Migrants

- A displaced person must have a work ID within eight days of entering Lebanon, however many never obtain a permit and end up working unregistered.
- According to our laws, undocumented migrants will be detained.

6. Identification for Migrants

- In 2008 the Lebanese authorities moved to give temporary ID card to Palestinian refugees without identification.
- It is believed that tens of thousands of refugees in Lebanon are undocumented however the Lebanese government has not actively worked to provide them with identification. Working to give displaced persons ID cards would help thousands of undocumented refugees gain access to social benefits, employment and other state services.

7. Technology in the Migration Crisis

- Almost all migrants own smartphone, often being their only source of communication to current migrants in host countries and information on border control and available pathways to safety.
 - Free applications like Facebook, Viber, WhatsApp and MAPS.ME, and free Wi-Fi hotspots provided at key locations on migration routes, eliminate the need for people to pay for data packages and SIM cards in new countries they enter.
- Mobile phones and applications like these also help aid workers and humanitarian organizations find and help refugees and migrants.

8. Attitude of Native Residents Toward Migrants

- Tensions have been growing in Lebanon between migrants and natives as many natives fear the Syrian Civil War will spread into Lebanon. The 2014 execution of Lebanese soldiers by radical Syrian Sunni Islamist factions as a part of the battle of Aarsal sparked fear in the Lebanese that the conflict could enter their country too.
 - There is still resentment among the Lebanese toward Syria regarding the Syrian occupation of Lebanon.
- The Syria war has weakened our economy and while there has been no significant violence between the Syrians and host communities, the rising tensions may come to a breaking point if aid is not supported soon.

- Attacks by Syrian religious extremists on police and members of the military have led to curfews being put into place in some cities as a public safety measure.
- Following the 1948 Palestinian War, many Palestinians sought refuge in Lebanon and never left. To this day there is a very high amount of Palestinians in Lebanon and the natives are afraid that the incoming Syrian migrants will do the same.

F. Committee on Urban Planning

Representative: Ben Togut

1. City organization

- Since the 1990's, Beirut has experienced high levels of urban transformation.
 - As a result, there is increased urban sprawl and a lack of an adequate physical infrastructural system.
 - Centralization of services is another significant problem, as programs and resources are concentrated in cities and fewer people have access to them.
 - Furthermore, due to the lack of a unified transportation system connecting the country, many people are settling in urban areas, leading

2. Population density

- Lebanon has a population density of 583 people per sq kilometer, making it the 19th most densely populated country in world.
- In Beirut, there are only .8 square meters of green space per person, far below the WHO recommended minimum of 9 sq meters per person.

- The city's largest park is closed to the public, and the majority of Beirut's open space has been taken over by developers.

Integration (or lack thereof) of Migrant Populations in Beirut

Bourj Hammoud is a refugee camp on the eastern fringe of Beirut

- As a camp for Armenian refugees, it has been able to foster a new sense of community, preventing anyone from feeling like an outsider.
- Bourj has become its own municipality within Beirut

Shatila

- In direct contrast to Bourj Hammad is Shatila, a Palestinian refugee camp that has not been allowed to integrate into Lebanese society
- Although Armenians received Lebanese citizenship in the 1920s, Palestinians still don't have it.
- Shatila and other Palestinian camps are some of the only places where Palestinian refugees can live.

3. Refugee housing

Beirut's high population density complicates the living situation for many migrants

- i. Most migrants live in urban slums or refugee camps at the edge of the city
- ii. Among migrants there is a high rate of homelessness, with whole families even crammed into small rooms or vans.

4. Housing crisis

- The Central Bank of Beirut recently announced they are no longer accepting housing loan applications. Furthermore, the real- estate industry has encountered a lack of incentives to increase demand.

1. A law passed in October 2017 ratifying tax increases on consumption, income and profits in October 2017 has led to a stagnant housing market.

- ii. Instead of a housing shortage, in Beirut many apartments are vacant and unsold

1. To counteract this, developers have cut prices

5. Access to household assets

- Three categories of assets

1. Basic assets, which include gloves, stove, winter clothes.

2. Medium assets, which include the access to a mattress and water heating.

3. Extended assets, which include internet access, the access to a computer, and owning a sewing machine.

- a. Though most people have access to basic assets, much fewer people have access to medium and extended assets.

- b. The access to assets often differs based on housing.

- c. There is a clear disparity of resources between refugees living in residential versus non-permanent structures.

- i. While refrigerators were accessible by 73% of households in residential accommodations, only 60% of migrants had access in non-residential structures. This percentage was even less for people living in shelters.
- ii. While 42% of households in residential accommodations had access to water heaters, only 3% had access in non permanent structures.

6. Electricity + Power

- 97% of migrants have access to electricity and 76% of migrants in Beirut have internet access. Most migrants use power from the national grid through legal or illegal connections.
 - Furthermore, 25% of refugee population in Beirut was found to be in possession of private routers, demonstrating the unreliability of the national grid.

G. Committee on Economic Integration

Representative: Jack Yuan

Background:

- Lebanon's economy is service-oriented and focuses on basic goods:
 - Exports some manufacturing and agricultural products, but its main asset is its service sector (banking, in particular)
 - Main export partners include: China, UAE, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, and Syria
 - Main import partners include: EU, China, Italy, Greece, Germany, and the U.S.
 - Has strong free-market tradition

- Lebanon's economy is performing poorly
 - Below average economy
 - Lebanon is the third-highest indebted country in the world in terms of the ratio of debt-to-GDP
 - \$19,439 per capita & 1.2% growth
 - Ranked 12th among 14 countries in the Middle East and North Africa region

- Lebanon has also been without a functioning government since elections in May to put forward the much needed financial reforms.
 - Problems for private sectors: corruption, cost of finance, tax rates, electricity and the legal system
 - Lebanon's currency, the lira, is losing value.

Problem:

- The sudden influx of nearly one million Syrian refugees into Lebanon has not helped to improve the economy.
 - World Bank estimates that 200 thousand Lebanese have went under the poverty line due to the influx of Syrian refugees
 - Heightened competition for low-skill jobs and public services
 - Economic growth dropped to 1-2% after four years of averaging 8% growth
 - Conclusion: Lebanon needs foreign aid and investments to rebuild a functioning system to incorporate the incoming refugees.

- Syrian refugee households continued to lack enough resources to cover their essential needs.
 - 69% of the refugees remain below the poverty line.
 - 9 out of 10 households acquired debt
 - 82% borrowed money
 - One out of two refugee households still lives in poverty and unable to meet minimum needs.

- Without a functioning economic system and robust economic conditions, it has been difficult for the government to integrate the refugees economically
 - Lots of informal employment → Difficult for government to collect taxes.
 - High unemployment rates among both the locals and the refugees.
 - Refugees cannot fully contribute to the economy without functioning economic systems in place

Proposals:

Traditionally, the Lebanese people have been very welcoming towards the Syrian people. Over the past few years, we have taken in more refugees than our capacity. In order to improve the daily lives of the refugees and the Lebanese people, we need to create a much stronger economic system that is able to fully utilize all these brain powers in Beirut.

- We strongly support the creation of an Arab free trade zone to support countries hosting refugees.
 - 29-item economic agenda (Arab Economic and Social Development Summit.)
 - The most important problem is that there are no foreign investments to help us establish a functioning economy that could utilize the resources we have.
- We desire the repatriation of all Syrian refugees to the Assad-controlled region and normalization within the region.
 - The West and other countries might use the ‘carrot’ of normalization to get some concessions from the Assad region, which will ultimately slow down the repatriation process.
- We believe that politics should not influence the repatriation process in order to have the state return to its normal status as soon as possible.
 - Our own economic growth has been stagnated by the volatile geopolitics and regional security conditions.
- We must create legislation on improving the tax and regulatory environment for economic development to attract foreign investment and to create policies that would address our current debt problems
- We must focus on economic development rather than political battles to resolve the current refugee crisis.

H. Committee on Social Cohesion

Representative: Ameen DaCosta

1. Background

- Civil War in Syria has divided families, destroyed houses and the livelihood of the people—has forced Syrians to move away.
- Most of the Syrian Refugees are Sunni but there are some Christians, since there is a Shia led government.
- There are around 1 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon are registered with the UNHCR, and there are estimated to be 1.5 million refugees. This is the highest per capita proportion of refugees in the world at around 25% of the total population.
- There are around 245,960 refugees in Beirut.
- Around 54% of these refugees are below the age of 18, and 44% are between the ages of 18 and 59. There is a 50-50 male to female ratio.
- The household size is currently 4.7 people in Beirut, has been decreasing over the last few years.
- Both wealthier and poorer Syrians have migrated to Lebanon throughout this wave.

2. History of Migration in Lebanon

- Syria and Lebanon share a similar culture, as they used to be part of the Ottoman Empire and have a long and complicated history together. As an example, Syria occupied parts of Lebanon in the 1990s.
- Lebanon has taken in its fair share of migrants. It took in a lot of Armenians in the early 1900s from the Armenian Genocide, and Palestinians after the creation of Israel, and their descendants remain in Lebanon to this day.

- They never signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, and therefore have no obligation to take refugees in.

3. Experience of Migrants/Refugees in Lebanon

- 94% of Refugee households described their relationship with the host community as neutral, positive, or very positive.
- Religious and Cultural differences are not a big issue, the biggest issues are competition for jobs and resources.
- Lebanon does not have any formal refugee camps, and 66% of refugees are living in residential buildings, such as apartments or houses.
- Wealthier Syrian refugees have set up NGOs to help their poorer counterparts, since there aren't that many government services to help them.
- All Syrian refugees are considered temporary guests, not refugees. This makes it harder for them to get jobs and other necessary services.
- The Syrian border has been closed since 2015, and it is hard for Syrians already in Lebanon to renew their visas, which needs to be done every 6 months. Many Syrians end up having to work illegally, and 76% of Syrian refugee households live below the national poverty line.
- 81% of refugees said that they received information about services for refugees through text messages, and another 15% said that they found out through humanitarian hotlines. 14% said that they hadn't found out anything about government services that could help them.

- 79% of refugee households were active on social media, such as WhatsApp or Facebook.
- 76% of refugees had Internet access.

4. Religion of Migrants and Religion of Lebanon

- Lebanon does not have a single majority religion, instead it has large minorities of Christians and Muslims. It is made up of around 28% Sunni, 28% Shiite, 40% Christian, who are mostly Maronite, with some Greek Orthodox and other Christian sects, and 4% other religions, which is mostly made up of Druze, a local religion.
- There are some issues with large numbers of Sunni Syrians moving into Christian areas of the country in terms of social discrimination, but in mixed Muslim and Christian areas they have been treated much better.

5. How the Media Shapes the perception of Migrants/Refugees

- The media has had an important part in shaping the perceptions of migrants and refugees in Lebanon.
- When the Syrian Civil War first started and refugees started going to Lebanon, the media highlighted how bad of a humanitarian situation it was.
- As years went by and the refugees remained in Lebanon, the media started to talk more about the impact that the refugees had on Lebanon, such as economic changes, social changes, and how the refugees are messing with the religious breakup of Lebanon by changing the proportions of Sunnis, Shiites, and Christians, and the security of the

country, as some people are saying that some of the Syrians entering Lebanon are terrorists.

- There are still some sympathetic stories about the refugees, but the mainstream media has become more negative over time.

I. Committee on Health

Representative: Nikola Popovic

1. How would you describe the health care available to your citizens?

- Our healthcare system for our citizens is on par with European nations like Estonia and Portugal.
- Private and public hospitals are available, but many have stopped accepting those who are uninsured. 50% of the population is uninsured due to the high prices, and the more expensive private hospitals outnumbering public hospitals limit economic choices.
- There is a dire lack of supplies and staffing in hospitals. We currently have 7,000 nurses, while we need 29,000. We cannot keep up with the demand for new supplies and doctors with the increasing population of Syrian migrants.
- We have created the National Social Security Fund through which we allow all those who work to receive healthcare aid. The fund covers 10% of hospital costs, 20% of medicine and exam costs, and 100% of costs to patients who are terminally ill.
- The Ministry of Public Health covers up to 85% of a patient's emergency visit to the hospital, but people are now abusing the system, resorting to hospital visits for treatment. Consequently, healthcare expenditure has been on the rise and hospitals are becoming

overburdened. Poor people resort to public hospitals' emergency rooms as they charge a minimal fee.

- We are in the process of evaluating hospitals and determining which are up to standard but closing those hospitals not up to standard would remove the important care people outside of Beirut desperately need.
- Cost—whether of service, treatment/medication or transportation—also remained one of the main barriers to accessing health care services, and access varied by governorate.
- We need to work on making public hospitals efficient and creating greater culture of going to primary care doctors first instead of directly to specialists, who can prescribe unnecessarily expensive or drastic treatment.

2. How would you describe the health care available to migrants/refugees?

- Many migrants live in unsafe and unofficial settlements filled with health hazards.
- Migrants struggle to find health providers and money to pay for healthcare services. Because of this, they crowd emergency rooms where treatment is heavily subsidized.
- At the beginning of the refugee crisis, due to the increasing strain on medical supplies, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) became a free provider of healthcare for Syrian migrants. Soon after, the massive influx of migrants forced the organization to begin charging patients a two-dollar fee for care. The UNHCR also formerly covered 85 percent of healthcare costs, but now only covers 75 percent.

3. What is the quality of health care in your city?

- Lebanon is a destination for medical tourism and its status as the best performing country in healthcare in the Middle East.
- Over the past 12 years, we have improved the quality of care tremendously, the number of women who died giving birth was reduced from 84 to 16 out of 100,000.
- Citizens, however, are burdened by high costs.

5. Do your citizens have easy access to food, especially nutritional food?

- Citizens can buy fresh produce at markets in Lebanon, but the agriculture industry is overburdened to produce food of the maximum quality.

6. Do migrant communities face food insecurity? Why or why not?

- The nutritional status of Syrian migrants is acceptable, with less than 6% of Syrians at risk of malnutrition
- Action Against Hunger has had a presence in Lebanon since 2006 helping the Syrian migrants. They deliver emergency aid and provide food and nutrition programs to migrants.
- One in three migrant families has eliminated one meal each day in an effort to save money.
- The World Food Programme through the U.N. has developed an electronic food voucher system, similar to a food stamp card, that is providing refugee families with \$27 per person per month to spend at approved vendors that include both stores with

non-perishable goods, and markets with locally produced food. Syrians use these cards to supplement the food they are distributed or buy with their own earnings.

- Our ministry of Education and Higher Education is working with the WFP to distribute locally sourced snacks in schools, addressing short-term hunger and incentivizing children to enroll and stay in school.

7. What resources currently exist for mental health and trauma treatment? Will those need to be expanded with the influx of migrants?

- 17% of citizens suffer from some form of non-war related mental illness and 49% suffer from war-related trauma (often victims of combat). We only have three dedicated psychiatric facilities that cannot provide our people with mental care up to Western standards, but still provides better access to mental care than Israel and neighboring countries.
- Our Mental Health and Substance Use-Prevention, Promotion and Treatment-Strategy 2015-2020 launched by the Ministry of Public Health aims to create effective and comprehensive mental health treatment infrastructure in Lebanon. In 2016, we established the “Embrace Lifeline,” the first suicide prevention hotline in Lebanon.
- Our citizens and migrants in Lebanon rely on either the public water supply or purchased water. The water however is usually not safe for drinking and only 13% of people reported that they treat the water before consumption. Our priority in this regard is to provide citizens with more knowledge on safe water.

8. What is your current system for addressing sanitation?

- We estimate that only half of Lebanon is connected to official water supplies as a result of the wars and overloading of the infrastructure.
- The official water supplies have become unsafe though because of pollution and urbanization.
- To bring our water supplies to a safe drinking level and to digitalize the system, we need to continue to receive aid from our Western partners and Arab neighbors.

9. Have you had any recent public health scares/concerns?

- 20% of the population suffers from diarrhea as a result of unclean drinking water.
- We have had a trash crisis since 2015 when the sudden increase in population due to the Syrian migrants overloaded the trash collection system. As a result of the primary landfill closing after far exceeding capacity, city governments have resorted to dumping trash on coastal landfills, and even burning it on the streets and on the beaches, posing a health to people and the ecosystem.
- The trash crisis poses a major threat to national health because of the landfills' proximity to citizens and the unhealthy fumes from burning. We must also reform the trash collection system to focus more on recycling and green methods of trash disposal, in order to bring Lebanon into the 21st century.

10. How can you use technology to prepare for, mobilize around, and address the health issues of migrants in your city?

- The healthcare system in Lebanon needs to be fully digitalized to verify what patients have healthcare coverage.
- The digitalization will also be useful in tracking patients' treatment plans and following up with them to ensure a full recovery.

J. Committee on Resilience

Representative: Ava Solow

1. Humanitarian Law:

- The Lebanese Government is not a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention for refugee status. However, the government implements provisions on their own discretion.
- The Lebanese government does not consider themselves a country of asylum or a final destination for migrants.
- Residential renewal is challenging to obtain, and many refugees gradually lose their legal status. When their legal status expires, migrants are legally required to leave the country. This has not been enforced.
- The 2015 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR) showed that the percentage of households living under the poverty line (3.84\$/person/day) is at 25%.
- There is not enough of humanitarian funding to mitigate the issue, and assistance only covers 5-10% of refugees.

- The World Food Programme (WFP) reduced food aid by 50% and only provides US\$13.50 per person per month.
- The Lebanese Government created a Crisis Cell deal with policy that lists three primary focuses:
 - Limiting the number of refugees
 - Providing increased security
 - Reducing economic burden for Lebanon by preventing Syrians from working unlawfully
- Section B of the Lebanese Constitution states the following. However, the government has not passed legislation to aid refugees.
 - Lebanon is a founding and active member of the United Nations Organization and abides by its covenants and by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Government shall embody these principles in all fields and areas without exception.
- Because the government is lacking in refugee law, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Lebanon and UNHCR which is supposed to issue temporary residence permits for three months.
- Lebanon has banned the construction of formal camps for Syrian refugees, forcing the migrants to live in garages, warehouses, tents, and animal sheds.
- 4.8% of Syrian refugee children aged 5 to 17 are working.

2. Technology Sector:

- Lebanon ranks #1 in the Middle East North Africa region for Technological Readiness, AND #2 for Innovation.
- Lebanon exported \$32 million in high technology exports in 2016.
- The Lebanese government financially supports business development, allowing them to thrive.
- Lebanon has well developed medical and health infrastructure, with health expenditures accounting for 7% of Lebanon's GDP.
- The medical devices market has reached 339.4 million USD in 2019
- Lebanon has the highest ratio of doctors to population in the region (35 per 10,000)
- 50 universities and higher education institutions host the majority of the technological advances

3. Food Security:

- Lebanon has the highest proportion of cultivable land, per capita, in the Arab world.
- 60% of the citizens outside of Beirut rely on agriculture and related industries for household income.
- Around 300,000 people are unable to meet their basic food needs
- New cost-effective, on-the-farm technologies are being developed such as hydroponics which allow for safe non-soil vegetable production and an increase in marketable production. The new technologies being developed reduce costs and improve yields.

- Agricultural product development labs have around 750 tests a month. Because of this, international exports from Lebanon increased by \$71 million, 1,416 percent increase between 2009 and 2011.

4. Emergency Response

- The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) supports Lebanese roads, water and waste infrastructure, creates jobs in communities, supplies cash assistance, and supports hospitals.
- Their Strategic Objectives include ensuring the protection of displaced Syrians as well as Lebanese refugees. They seek strengthen basic public services.
- Although the Lebanese Government suggests that these are their objectives, they do not actively support the refugee population.
- 70% of the refugees in Lebanon live under the poverty line and 52% face extreme poverty
- NGOs are the most active in emergency response because the Lebanese government is not as involved
 - NGOs provide cash transfers food and fuel vouchers, free legal services, psycho-social support, tuition fees, and mental health services