



POLICY & ADVOCACY REPORT

VOLUME 4 | ISSUE NO. 20 | July 2021

THIS ISSUE

Lebanon, A Crisis Within a
Crisis: IDPs and Refugees
Struggle Amid Economic
Collapse P.2

U.S. Issue Updates P.4

Around the World in
International Migration P.6

Updates And Events P.7



Lebanon, A Crisis Within a Crisis: IDPs and Refugees Struggle Amid Economic Collapse

By Chelsea Estevez

Lebanon is near economic collapse. The explosion in the Beirut Port in August 2020 killed over 200 people and destroyed swaths of the city, leaving more than a quarter-million residents unhoused. This situation has been exacerbated not only by COVID-19, but also the ongoing financial crisis that has seen a depreciation in the local currency by over 90% and plunged over half of the population into deep poverty. An amalgamation of these factors has created a harrowing situation for the Lebanese residents and internally displaced persons (IDPs), and the Syrian and Palestinian refugees living within the country. In fact, UNICEF reported on July 1 that 77% of all households in Lebanon do not have enough food or enough money to buy food.

For Syrian refugee households, 99% do not have enough food or money to buy food. [1] This lack of income means a lack of access to essentials, like safe drinking water, sanitation, shelter, health, and education. The civil war in Syria left 6.6 million people living in displacement at the end of 2019. Other than Turkey, Lebanon hosts the largest number of Syrian refugees. [2] Over 80% of Syrian refugees do not hold legal residency in Lebanon, as the country prevented UNHCR from registering Syrians starting in 2015 for political reasons. Aiming to stymie the flow of Syrian refugees into the country, Lebanese authorities forbade UNHCR from registering them, stating the country had “reached capacity.” This lack of legal status left about 80% of the 1.5 million Syrian refugees undocumented and remains a key protection issue that limits their freedom of movement and leaves them vulnerable to arbitrary arrest and exploitation. [3]

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon face a similar situation. They number 192,000 and have minimal civil and economic rights. Palestinians in Lebanon are banned from owning property and from working in more than 30 occupations. As of 2015, 89% of Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon are in poverty, meaning they cannot meet their basic food and non-food needs, set at \$6.84/person/day. Another 9% of Palestinian refugees from Syria are living in extreme poverty, meaning they are unable to meet essential food requirements set at \$2.47/person/day. A stark 56% of all Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are jobless. [4]

The pandemic has exacerbated and laid bare the vulnerabilities of refugees and IDPs living in Lebanon. Human Rights Watch reported that the Lebanese government’s COVID-19 vaccination program leaves behind these marginalized communities. [5] Data from the UN shows that Syrian and Palestinian refugees have died from COVID-19 at a rate more than four and three times the national average, respectively. [6] Although these refugees constitute at least 30% of the population, as of April 2021, under 3% had been vaccinated and under 6% had registered to receive vaccines. This large gap can be explained by refugees’ fears of arrest or deportation given their lack of legal residency and mistrust of the Lebanese government. [7]

The fragile economic state of the country, combined with the inadequate healthcare system, points to a potential total collapse of the country. This prospect has grave implications for the future of Lebanese IDPs and Syrian and Palestinian refugees in the country. Major social protection is necessary to ensure the livelihoods of these marginalized individuals.

USCRI recommends:

- (1) Increased funds to go directly to refugees, IDPs, and supporting UN agencies. The bulk of on-the-ground assistance in-country comes from nongovernmental and multilateral agencies. Increased funding to these organizations can support a continuation of their critical work. Direct cash assistance to those struggling also can help alleviate some of the burdens.**
- (2) Reinstatement of registration of Syrian refugees by UNHCR.**
- (3) Other countries besides Lebanon and Turkey, including countries in Europe and the United States, must increase the cap on their refugee admissions.**

References

[1] https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-children-s-future-line#_ga=2.89311067.1303487913.1626093787-1217595498.1622830853.

[2] <https://www.unhcr.org/5ee200e37.pdf>.

[3] <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/VASyR%202020.pdf>.

[4] <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/palestinian-programme>.

[5] <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/06/lebanon-refugees-migrants-left-behind-vaccine-rollout>.

[6] <https://news.trust.org/item/20210216153654-lwurk/>.

[7] <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/06/lebanon-refugees-migrants-left-behind-vaccine-rollout>.

United States Issue Updates

• Texas Judge Declares DACA Unlawful

On July 16, 2021, U.S. District Court Judge Andrew Hanen ruled that the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA) could not accept new applicants. The Obama-era program protected unregistered migrants in the United States who came to the country as children from deportation. There are currently over 600,000 people enrolled in the program. Judge Hanen's ruling does not immediately affect people who are currently protected, but it does mean the Department of Homeland Security can no longer approve new DACA applications or grant applicants the protections DACA provides. To read the full opinion, [click here](#).

• TPS Renewed and Redesignated for Somalia

Today, Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas renewed and redesignated Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Somalia. TPS is a temporary immigration protection that allows nationals of designated countries to stay and work in the United States while conditions in their home countries remain unsafe. Somalia has had TPS since the outbreak of its civil war thirty years ago. According to Mayorkas, TPS is still warranted because Somalia is experiencing "a dramatic upsurge in violence, severe drought, and flooding, which have contributed to worsening food insecurity and internal displacement." Renewal will allow current TPS holders to maintain their TPS, while redesignation will allow newer arrivals to the [United States](#) to apply for TPS protection for the first time. To see the announcement, [click here](#).

• Castro-Tum Overruled by Attorney General

On July 15, 2021, Attorney General Merrick Garland overruled Matter of Castro-Tum in its entirety. Matter of Castro-Tum is a decision issued by Attorney General Jeff Sessions that stated immigration judges and the Board of Immigration Appeals lack general authority to administratively close cases, and restricted administrative closure to circumstances where it is explicitly provided for by regulation or settlement agreement. Administrative closure is a legal practice in which immigration judges and the Board of Immigration Appeals can suspend removal proceedings in appropriate cases. Attorney General Garland's decision allows for administrative closure and will [prevent](#) many deportations in the United States going forward. To read the full decision, [click here](#).

• Democrats Support Pathway to Citizenship in Spending Bill

On July 15, 2021, Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA), chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee's immigration panel, said that it was his "understanding and expectation" that a pathway to permanent status for undocumented immigrants is included in Democrats' budget reconciliation package. With support of the White House, Democrats have included a measure that would provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants as part of their \$3.5 trillion budget plan to support families and spur job growth. Democrats are trying to pass the legislation through a process known as budget reconciliation which allows the bill to pass with a simple majority of 51 votes. In order for a bill to qualify for the budget reconciliation [process](#), it needs to be strictly budgetary in nature. The outstanding question is if the provision will be allowed in the final package by the Secretary of the Senate. To read further, [click here](#).

United States Issue Updates (Cont'd)

• **New ICE Policy on Pregnant and Nursing Women**

On July 9, 2021, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced a new policy prohibiting the detention, arrest, and deportation of pregnant, nursing, and postpartum women. The Biden administration says this will reorient the law enforcement approach of U.S. immigration policy to be more humane. The policy recognizes the developmental needs of babies and the time needed for infant-parental bonding. Acting ICE Director Tae D. Johnson stated, "This reflects our commitment to treat all individuals with respect and dignity while still enforcing our nation's laws." Similarly, the Biden administration ended family detention earlier this year, and is releasing most migrant families within 72 hours to await a hearing in immigration court. An updated version of the policy can be found [here](#).

• **President Biden Promises to Relocate Afghan Allies**

On July 8, 2021, President Joe Biden announced the United States will relocate thousands of Afghan interpreters, contractors, and other allies who have assisted U.S. efforts and may be under threat as [troop withdrawals](#) from Afghanistan continue. Most of these Afghan allies are eligible for a [Special Immigrant Visa \(SIV\)](#), but approximately 18,000 applicants—as well as their families—remain stuck in the backlog. President Biden shared few specifics on the evacuation plans, but noted that the United States is beginning relocation flights for Afghan SIV applicants and their families who wish to continue their visa process outside of Afghanistan. He also indicated that his Administration had identified military facilities outside the continental United States and third countries that could [host our Afghan allies](#) for the remainder of their visa process. To read the full announcement, [click here](#).

• **Federal Register Notice for Yemen TPS**

On July 6, 2021, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services released the Federal Register Notice for the Extension and Redesignation of Yemen for TPS. This latest order from Secretary [Mayorkas](#) extended TPS for Yemen for 18 months. To read more about TPS for Yemen, [click here](#).

• **Biden Proposes New Asylum Rule to OMB**

On July 6, 2021, The White House Office of Management and Budget released a notice that it will be issuing a proposed rule regarding procedures for credible fear screening and consideration of asylum, withholding of removal, and CAT protection claims by asylum officer. The proposed rule would allow certain asylum seekers to make their cases before Department of Homeland Security officials, rather than an immigration judge. Currently, asylum seekers, who do not affirmatively come forward to present themselves for asylum, need to state the reasons they are seeking [asylum](#) in the United States before an immigration judge. The Biden administration [hopes this](#) new rule will reduce the backlog in the immigration court system. To see the notice, [click here](#).

Around the World in International Migration

• South Sudan Marks 10 Years of Independence Amid Humanitarian Crises

On July 9, South Sudan marked the 10th year of gaining its independence in 2011 when it became the world's youngest nation. But the anniversary highlighted many of the challenges the country still faces. Since conflict erupted in 2013, about 400,000 people have been killed and millions more displaced. In 2020, about 2.2 million people fled South Sudan into neighboring countries like Uganda, Ethiopia, and Sudan—making South Sudan one of the top five **refugee-producing countries** globally. Another 1.6 million people are internally displaced, with more than **half** of them children. The UN Refugee Agency and others used the anniversary to **call** for renewed international commitment to South Sudan's development and stability.

• Displacement Concerns Grow in Afghanistan with Taliban's Advance

The UN Refugee Agency **announced** that roughly 270,000 Afghans have been displaced within Afghanistan since January. Human Rights Watch **reported** that Taliban forces on the offensive in northern Afghanistan are forcibly displacing residents and burning homes in apparent acts of retaliation for cooperating with the Afghan central government. The Taliban have captured numerous district centers across the country, particularly in the Kunduz province bordering Tajikistan. The group's territorial advances have come amid the withdrawal of American and **international troops** from the country—and mounting concerns about ensuring the **safe evacuation** of Afghans who assisted those troops during the war. More than 400,000 Afghans were **displaced** within the country from conflict and violence last year, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre.

• UK's Nationality and Borders Bill Restricts Asylum Access

The British government earlier this month **proposed** a new Nationality and Borders Bill that would change immigration regulations in the United Kingdom. Among the proposed changes, the bill would allow the UK to declare people “inadmissible” if they were coming from a country where they could have claimed asylum. It would also create tougher criminal penalties for illegal entry and allow the UK's Border Force to turn away boats suspected of carrying migrants illegally.

• Myanmar Displacement Situation Worsening due to COVID-19, Coup Aftermath

On July 7, the United Nations' **Special Rapporteur** on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tom Andrews, called for the formation of an “Emergency Coalition for the People of Myanmar” in response to deteriorating conditions in the Southeast Asian country since its February 1 military coup. Hundreds of thousands have been displaced **by fighting** between the military and armed groups on the country's periphery. An “explosion” of COVID-19 cases, including the delta variant, is also contributing to the collapse of the country's health care system, Andrews said.



USCRI in Action

Last week, attorneys from USCRI San Diego and USCRI Mexico came together to facilitate a “Know Your Rights” presentation at a shelter in Tijuana, Mexico. The group has been doing biweekly presentations and individual consultations for several months. In that short time, and with the help of law students from local Mexican universities, USCRI’s attorneys have won humanitarian parole for 45 people.

Last week’s collaboration was unique because the shelter was hosting mainly Mexican internally displaced persons (IDPs) instead of people coming from Central America. Most of these IDPs came from Michoacan State, particularly from Aguililla, where there has been a spike in people fleeing due to cartel violence. Many seeking protection in the United States find themselves stuck in shelters in Tijuana due to Title 42, an obscure provision of U.S. law implemented by the Trump administration to allow the Department of Homeland Security to quickly expel asylum seekers without giving them a chance to seek asylum. The Biden Administration continues to use this harmful practice. To learn more about how you can help end Title 42, see our Call to Action [here](#).

Upcoming Meetings & Events

Supporting Unaccompanied Children in the U.S. Communities Where They Live- July 21

On Wednesday, July 21 at 2:00 PM EST, the Migration Policy Institute will host a webinar examining post-release services for unaccompanied children. USCRI’s Matt Haygood, Director of Children’s Services, will discuss how the recent increase in arrivals impacts the children and communities where they live. To register for the event, please [click here](#).

Gendered Dynamics of International Labor Migration- July 27

On Tuesday, July 27 at 7:00 AM EST, the Gender, Justice and Security Hub will discuss gender discrimination in international labor migration, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. To register for the event, please [click here](#).

Documented Talks: The Future of Immigration Courts- July 23

On Friday, July 23 at 1:00 PM EST, the Immigration Advocates Network will hold an online discussion about the future of immigration courts under the Biden administration with immigration judge Amiena Khan, President of the National Association of Immigration Judges. To register for the event, please [click here](#).

[Click here to donate today!](#)

Interested in joining the USCRI team? [Click here](#) for current job openings!

If you have any questions or comments, please contact the Policy and Advocacy Division at policy@uscrimail.org.