

# Access Center for Human Rights



## Annual Report 2019

This report was produced to summarize the activities of  
"ACHR" in Lebanon for the year 2019

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## The Struggle in the Falsehood of Human Rights

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Us Syrians are forever in debt to the world for what we have provided them. We were a valuable experiment for the countries that sought to test their military and security capabilities. We continue to be a good experiment for the economic development of countries that hosted us in fabric camps which they called “refugee housing”. We were a great argument for any catastrophic failure in State politics and the justification for its citizens’ disappointments and the largest part of Syria remains a battlefield for States settling accounts between one another, while the other part of Syria was occupied.

Human rights in our country are “missing”, searching for these rights is “forbidden” and working on them is “a crime punishable by law.” This is a summary of the definition of human rights in our country where human rights defenders are forced to carefully contemplate entering a battlefield for basic rights inherent in humanity.

The belief and work in the human rights field is a true struggle in the search for ways to live, everyone should know them and know how to claim them from ruling authorities and struggle to obtain them. We cannot compare the respect for human rights in our country to other countries in the world, because the tools of repression differ from one country to another, and from one continent to another except for the middle east where it is quite similar, at least in the methods used to repress the freedom of opinion and expression.

With our absolute belief in our rights as “refugees”, we took our first steps in establishing “Access Center for Human Rights” in July 2017. It was undoubtedly a difficult phase causing an indisputable concern in our decision to establish such a project. However, the moral support and assistance that we received from dozens of friends who are human rights defenders from multiple countries played a huge role in pushing us to move forward to get ACHR on its desired path, and these people played a great role in what we have accomplished.




Thus, “Access Centre for Human Rights” raises awareness on human rights violations against Syrian refugees in Lebanon, seeks to make the voices of refugees loudly heard and supports them as it can. ACHR also seeks to provide defenders with mechanisms to defend fundamental rights and freedoms, given that advocacy as individuals and as groups is essential in achieving any change in Lebanon’s policies regarding its treatment of fleeing refugees in search of a safe space attempting to survive.

This report is simple in its form and content, but behind every word there are long stages that we underwent to overcome the enormous psychological pressures. This report was produced by the ACHR family, a team of young men and women with complete faith in the ability of the youth in changing the world, with limited experience following a bitter experience of working on institutionalizing the “Access Center for Human Rights.” For this reason, we persist with this work to achieve our goals, regardless of how long it takes.

The war will end one day, and every refugee will return home, and on the other side, there will be someone trying to “access human rights.”

**Mohammad HASAN - The Founder and Director of ACHR**

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After two years of working as a researcher in the social field, I engaged about a year ago in the human rights field and specialized in human rights violations against Syrian refugees in Lebanon, which allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of their difficulties and direct pressures.

Advocating for human rights in Middle Eastern countries is a high-risk activity, where individuals who take this path may be target for government entities and security agencies and sometimes of private groups within the local community if they support a specific political party involved in the government.

Defenders are exposed to numerous violations, starting from threats and/or harassment to security prosecution and/or arbitrary detention and/or threats of deportation. For this reason, many defenders (especially those who were effectively active in raising voices demanding public rights and freedoms), have been forced to leave the country seeking safety and protection in other countries. Therefore, we are witnessing a decrease in activity in this field due to fear and obstacles they encounter during their work; the least of which is the lack of freedom of opinion and expression.

The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted by the United Nations in 1998, was a historic achievement for the need to protect human rights activity and considered the first tool of the United Nations recognizing the legitimacy of human rights defenders' activity as well as their protection. As article 9 of the aforementioned Declaration states: "In the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the promotion and protection of human rights, everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to benefit from an effective remedy and to be protected in the event of the violation of those rights."

However, despite all the treaties and conventions that enshrine the protection of human rights defenders in public and binding on states, the course to be undertaken in the field of human rights' defense remains long ahead in most countries.

The Access Center for Human Rights focuses on supporting human rights defenders and provide young adults with the space to engage in its team and have an influential and active role in human rights issues which ACHR works on.

**Nabila AL-HAMWI - Senior Researcher**



## Mission Statement

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Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR) is a non-governmental, non-profit, civil society organization, founded in 2017 to monitor and advocate for human rights, beginning with the rights of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The center comes at a time of increased tension and physical, emotional and social abuse in refugee communities and the center aims to specialize in supporting the cases of refugees and arbitrary detainees in legal aspects.

The Center strives to be a point of reference for refugees and marginalized members of society, especially those populations who are not always aware of their legal rights. The Center seeks to improve individual and collective awareness of their fundamental human rights and to raise awareness of human rights violations against refugee communities and arbitrary detainees, through documentation and by monitoring their development and working with the victims to seek legal redress.

Importantly, ACHR aims to raise awareness and support through media campaigns and transparent activism. By increasing public awareness of the daily human rights violations that exist in refugee and marginalized communities, the organization hopes to deter these acts and prevent repeated abuse.

The Center aims to be a reliable and active hub in the region, monitoring refugee rights and the rights of arbitrary detainees. ACHR relies on the methodology of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in regards to human rights violations, collecting information and research.



### Core goals:

- Providing legal representation for refugees
- Reactivating accountability mechanisms to enforce laws
- Ensuring protection and social support

### The vision

To protect the rights of refugees and arbitrary detainees.

### The mission

To provide the necessary legal tools to exercise, defend, and protect the rights to personal integrity and decent work, and freedom of opinion and expression in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

## Background

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ACHR has always been focused on raising legal awareness among refugees in camps, as well as, monitoring and documenting human rights violations against refugees fleeing Syria, highlighting and advocating for collective refugee cases that affect personal integrity, decent work, freedom of movement and the right to form peaceful associations. ACHR was able to collect primary data that allowed it to design additional projects serving its goals, in order to establish a work methodology and enable a team of expertise its field of work.

The Center first began its work in 2018 with volunteer activities following several months of planning meetings. Initially, its founders provided legal support in Syrian refugee camps in the Bekaa region, before officially its launching at the beginning of 2019 upon receiving its first funding in December 2018 (more information in the following sections). This funding, in turn, allowed ACHR to support



formal operational expenses and establish the Legal Support Unit, which mainly conducted legal awareness sessions in refugee camps and provided legal consultations to many refugees. Additionally, ACHR followed closely the issue of forced deportations of Syrian refugees from Lebanon beginning in 2019, ultimately creating a concentrated media campaign to shed light on the various international treaties and laws Lebanon was breaking with these proceedings. Following this, the center launched the Monitoring and Documentation Unit in June 2019, establishing the first database of human rights violations faced by Syrians in Lebanon as well as publishing an in-depth report on the forced deportations of Syrian refugees from Lebanon.

The organization obtained official recognition from the Lebanese Ministry of Interior with license No. 1716 in September 2019. Prior to that, the team members of the working groups were active under their personal names until the center signed a memorandum of cooperation with the Lebanese Center for Human Rights to carry out joint activities.

The launch of ACHR was necessitated by the lack of specialized independent non-governmental organizations to follow the human rights affairs of refugees directly. In an atmosphere of increased tension and mounting physical, psychological and social violations throughout refugee communities, ACHR aims to be a credible source in monitoring human rights, especially those of refugees, in order to ultimately limit human rights violations. The Center also provides direct legal and juridical support for the cases of refugees. As such, ACHR aspires to offer direct legal representation before the appropriate authorities by pursuing arrest conditions and specific cases in official departments as well as offering legal defense in court. In addition, the Center seeks renewed legal accountability through its development of a violation database and its investigation of cases of infraction and arbitrary arrest. Finally, in order to empower and educate vulnerable groups about their rights, the Center maintains means of collective and individual protection, as well as providing training and sessions to raise awareness of legal and social issues for both refugees and the broader public.





## Challenges Faced by ACHR Team

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Initially, ACHR encountered great difficulties in obtaining recognition from the Ministry of the Interior of its request under the association name “Access Center for Human Rights.” The team was unable to obtain any of the official documents to begin its work, from the lack of recognition by the donor community through to our inability to carry out activities as a registered association. Thus, ACHR initially began its work as a team of individual actors until such time as the organization received support from the Lebanese Center for Human Rights for legal coverage of some activities prior to the Center’s work in 2019.

ACHR’s founding team worked as volunteers at the beginning to provide legal awareness sessions, as the Center had great difficulty in obtaining seed funding for its work – the most important aspect of the organization’s launch. In addition, the lack of a designated management team in the early stages of the Center prolonged this launch period. Finally, in mid-2018 an expert in strategic planning joined the team as a volunteer and began working to formulate strategic goals for 2019-2020.

ACHR received seed funding at the beginning of 2019 from Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders, through which the Center was able to establish a team of five part-time members and field activists. After the initial launch, ACHR benefitted greatly from the experience of partners who supported the team, including training, advice, and guidance concerning institutional procedures. Nevertheless, with funding scarce for civil society organizations working with refugees, ACHR continues to face difficulty in obtaining the funding to advance its goals.

The ACHR team does its best to respect the standards of impartiality, objectivity, accuracy and integrity with respect to the information included in its publications, despite a number of serious challenges facing the team’s work. Such challenges include the risk of being subjected to harassment or arbitrary prosecution by the Lebanese security services, as has been known to happen to human rights



activists, both Lebanese and Syrian, who reside in Lebanon and openly criticize the ongoing systematic violations against Syrian refugees' rights.

Such harassments ranges from arbitrary summoning to investigation offices without legal justification, where those called are deprived from their legal rights guaranteed by Article 47 of the Lebanese Code of Criminal Law (the right to contact their families and lawyer). Also, foreign activists are being denied from obtaining or renewing legal residency permit in Lebanon, noting that the Lebanese General Directorate of General Security formally flagged this residence denial policy in a statement published on its official website on June 17, 2019, in which the government branch threatened associations that denounced the deportation procedures for Syrian refugees stating that it would “take all legal measures and review the relevant judicial procedures to stop the actions and members of certain organizations.”

### Summary of the Refugee Situation in Lebanon

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Since the beginning of the Syrian uprising, Lebanon has hosted the highest number of refugees per capita in the world. Due to the complicated political situation in Lebanon, the country has no policy plan based on protecting rights to address refugee issue. With the different stances of the Lebanese parties, the rights of refugees who have sought refuge in informal settlements in Lebanon have not been internationally protected and therefore are subject to the reckoning of political parties and municipal whims. In addition to economic inflation in Lebanon, the low GDP rate and high unemployment have led many Lebanese to consider refugees a threat encroaching on already scarce resources, which in turn has caused a concerning increase in discrimination and violence against refugees.

As Lebanon is a country marked by unemployment and poverty, as well as weak infrastructure in terms of providing basic services, its capacities are restrained at a political, economic and social level, especially in this turbulent period of crisis and protests. In addition to challenges faced in the labor market, infrastructure in Lebanon has struggled to meet the everyday needs of the country's Syrian and Lebanese populations, including in the health and education sectors where service providers are few and the budget is not sufficient to meet increasing needs. Currently, Lebanon hosts a population of 1.5 million refugees who have fled Syria. However, 73% of these refugees live under the poverty threshold according to the 2019 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR). They exist in dire conditions, as 92% of Syrian refugee families live with some level of food insecurity and 66% live in conditions greatly below shelter standards (including accommodations that are substandard, physically dangerous and overcrowded) according to the same study<sup>1</sup>. As these problems increase, tensions continue to rise between host and refugee communities in most areas around Lebanon, creating xenophobic responses toward Syrian presence. Some reporting by media outlets has

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<sup>1</sup> 2019 October Statistical Dashboard of Inter-Agency Coordination (Lebanon): <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/72913>



included coverage that constitutes hate speech and the Lebanese state is complicit in endorsing racism as evidenced by opinions and statements of various politicians as well as the decisions of the state and its actions regarding Syrians in Lebanon.

All of this has contributed over the years to haphazard legal procedures, arbitrary arrests that require robust legal support and representation for refugees, constraining procedures and governmental pressure on organizations working with Syrians, and ongoing funding cuts for NGOs that directly affect the economic status of refugees and their access to health care and aid. It is within this environment that ACHR seeks to protect, defend and promote Syrians' human rights, not only in the light of the problems highlighted above, but also with regard to deportations to Syria, arbitrary arrests, detention conditions, as well as ill-treatment, torture, and other violations. ACHR prioritizes work on ensuring and promoting the rights to personal integrity, decent work and freedom of speech and expression.

ACHR's research, field examinations, and the observations of its partners who work in the camps have come to conclusion that there is a severe lack of information and protection concerning legal frameworks among Syrians in Lebanon. For example, only 22% of Syrian individuals hold legal residency,<sup>2</sup> which is especially troubling as lack of legal residency hinders work rights, the freedom of movement, and puts Syrians at risk arrest. There is a clear need for assistance, legal counseling, and representation with regard to the legal right to stay. There is also the same need regarding personal status matters and civil registration, including birth registration and marriage. According to the 2019 VASyR, only 30% of births by Syrian mothers have been registered with the Foreigners' Registry while 83% of families reported having at least one member with special needs, including pregnant and lactating women.<sup>3</sup> Thus, legal awareness and support are crucial to enable Syrian refugees to cite and make use of local laws that protect their fundamental human rights.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



## Legal Support Unit

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ACHR seeks to support and empower Syrian refugees in Lebanon through in-person consultations that make precise information concerning the legal code accessible to the most marginalized communities in the camps, as well as those living in informal settlements and disadvantaged areas. To this end, in 2018 the Center began conducting legal support workshops on a voluntary basis. Additional legal support activities were also carried out from December 2018 to December 2019 thanks to the Center's seed funding.

Based on the increasing need for refugees to be informed of their legal rights and duties according to local and state laws in Lebanon and the unjust proceedings that authorities have used to target refugees, ACHR's mobile Legal Support Unit provides awareness-raising sessions and legal representation. These sessions highlight violations and enable Syrian refugees to abide by local laws, including labor, residency and civil status laws, in order to recognize marriage, legalize divorce, and proof of paternity, and custody of children or official family records in general. The sessions also provide general legal counsel for refugees.

These legal support activities have taken place mainly in the Bekaa region where an activist from the ACHR team would conduct a field visit to assess the conditions of refugees in the area to ascertain the most pressing matter on which they needed legal consultation. Once this is completed, the date and place of the session would be determined, based on the need of the target group. ACHR also coordinated with a number of local organizations working directly with refugees in the area to address the lack of legal information in refugee camps. The Legal Support Unit also liaises with different local organizations that are in contact with Syrian



refugees on a daily basis in order to understand the needs. Through collaboration with these groups, ACHR is able to reach the Syrian population more effectively by holding legal support sessions at the centers of organizations in the region.

In 2018, the Access Center for Human Rights team worked in cooperation with a number of local institutions to provide 26 legal awareness sessions. These sessions were mainly devoted to the topics of civil status, labor laws and legal residency papers. About 520 people, mostly men, benefited from these sessions. In 2019, the Center provided 17 legal awareness sessions that benefited approximately 283 people (218 women and 65 men). That there are more women than men is due to the fact that women are often more available to attend awareness sessions than men, who are more likely to be busy working outside during the day. In addition, the ACHR team provided direct legal aid to refugees via social and email, advising on approximately 150 cases concerning a range of topics.

The two-hour-long sessions dealt with the legal structures pertaining to personal status, such as how to register births and prove marriages, lineage, and pregnancy, issues of divorce, alimony, and separation, as well as how to legally obtain residency status and how to renew one's residency. All sessions were updated regularly to take into account new policies and administrative decisions issued by the General Directorate of General Security. The sessions were usually structured around providing general information regarding these legal processes before opening up to questions raised by attendees. At each session, the lawyer would also take time to look at specific cases and answer individual questions.

The ACHR received positive feedback from those who participated in these mobile legal clinics and many requests for more other support sessions. The team



noted through its direct contact with refugees the urgent need for legal support and the importance of providing such sessions. It is hard for marginalized communities to access general legal information and through ACHR's efforts, many of those living in camps and informal settlements along the border have also received direct help with their specific cases.

The different organizations with whom the Center works in the region have also expressed a need for legal help in camps, especially legal representation in courts and government departments, based on their observations and the direct expressions of the refugee populations. In the coming period, ACHR aims to focus on providing direct legal support, including consultations and legal representation, for refugees in Lebanese government office and courts.

The legal aid provided by ACHR through its workshops was crucial and has helped these marginalized communities not only to settle their own unique cases but also to obtain a better general legal awareness. The sessions conducted in 2019 have increased the number of Syrians in Lebanon that have knowledge of their rights and duties as well as administrative procedures, which eventually strengthens their ability to deal with many challenges they face as refugees.



## Monitoring and Documentation Unit

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In addition to its work to inform refugees of their rights and support their legal challenges, in 2019, ACHR established itself as a central figure in the monitoring and documenting of refugee rights violations at camps and informal settlements across Lebanon. Emerging from the efforts of the Legal Support Unit, with help from donors, the Center was able to establish a specialized Monitoring and Documentation Unit in June 2019 to consolidate its efforts to create a comprehensive database of abuses experienced by refugees as well as to connect victims with larger networks of support so that they can receive justice.

Violations monitored include arbitrary arrest and detention, conditions of detention, torture, forced disappearance, forced deportation, forced eviction, abuse, incitement to violence and hate speech, medical negligence, withholding of official documents, discrimination based on race, thought, and belief, as well as neglect by The Commission.

The Access Center for Human Rights played an important and central role in shedding light on refugee issues in Lebanon, where ACHR documented 283 individual violations and 24 collective human rights violations against refugees. ACHR intervenes in situations in which victims are facing immediate threats, especially those involving journalists and human rights defenders. The victims of such violations are introduced to the in-office team via personal contacts, organizational networks, the field team, or social media platforms. Once victims have made contact with the Monitoring and Documentation Unit, the team conducts an investigation and studies the case to see how best to help them. The Monitoring and Documentation Unit often refers particular cases of human rights violations to larger organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or other relevant human rights organizations. In this way, the





team connects victims to larger networks with the tools to ensure justice for victims. The Center's monitoring and documentation efforts in 2019 led to awareness regarding human rights violations faced by Syrian refugees in Lebanon, as the Center became involved in 39 individual cases that underwent different types of violations. The Center did not succeed in most of its interventions, but it succeeded in saving some cases from forced deportation or arbitrary arrest.

The Center has a strong network of relationships in most Lebanese regions, and a team of volunteers of different nationalities, with whom the team coordinates to provide daily access to victims of rights violations or situations could result in serious violations – such as the decision of the High Defense Council of Lebanon to demolish concrete houses that at that time would have displaced thousands of refugee families – and document these violations following the model of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. ACHR also intervenes in larger cases by launching advocacy campaigns at the international level, such as the Center's efforts to shed light on cases of forced deportation of Syrian refugees from Lebanon throughout the year 2019.

In addition to this advocacy work, the Monitoring and Documentation Unit compiles these violations and registers them on a secure database. In July 2019, the Monitoring and Documentation Unit received training in archiving data on specific software which is being used to create a far-reaching record of rights violations in the country. This database has been cited as evidence on human rights abuses experienced by Syrian refugees in Lebanon and referred to in writing of research papers, reports, press releases and statements, and when undertaking other advocacy activities such as briefings and meetings with stakeholders. In the fall of 2019, the database was key to ACHR's work to spread awareness on abuses in meetings with the Lebanese authorities and international governmental and non-governmental bodies in both Beirut and Geneva.

## General Methodology for Research and Documentation



ACHR relies on “accuracy”, “objectivity” and “impartiality” in all of its outputs, in consistency with the international standards for monitoring and documentation. Field investigations and calls, using open source secured programs, are conducted with refugees who were directly subjected to violations, or with their families or relatives, one-on-one and in a manner that secures independency and anonymity in their testimonies. The interviews are based on a specific list of questions regarding the facts to ensure that the accuracy of the information is provided. They are conducted in the original language of the interviewees, and without any exchange for money.

ACHR relies on multiple research methods for issuing reports and databases related to the unit, most notably the descriptive and desk review. The Center conducts data analysis of information collected from multiple sources, using research mechanisms including interviews held with the victims or their families or relatives of the first degree, surveys and reliable electronic sources such as previous reports and research. ACHR consults with Lebanese, Syrian and foreign partners regarding the database. The Center also analyses media reports and official data after verifying its authenticity and accuracy. Additionally, ACHR relies on its database established in July 2019, and the Center continuously works on maintaining direct communication with UNHCR, foreign embassies and different organizations capable of assisting in advocacy campaigns or pushing in the same direction.

ACHR uses its own terminology, you can view it on the website [here](#)



## Violations Against Refugees

The Access Center for Human Rights recorded many violations in 2019, summarized in the following infographic, and to view the details of the violations, please visit the website [here](#), and it should be noted that the Violations Monitoring and Documentation Unit is a unit to monitor and study the human rights conditions of Syrian refugees and is not an observatory of human rights violations.

## Violations Recorded in 2019

### Individual Victims 158

133 25

Number of individual victims: Most of them were interviewed either directly in the field and/or through secure, encrypted and open source communication programs, or indirectly through their first degree relatives

14

Hold valid residency

80

Registered with UNHCR

10

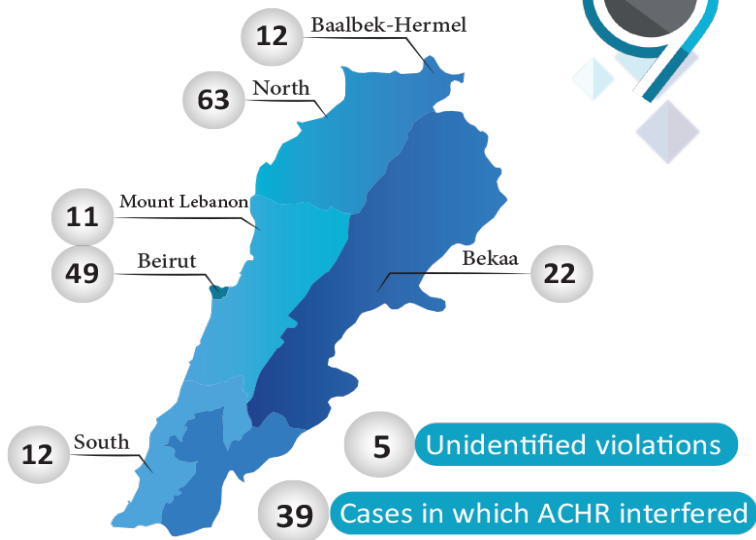
Civil Society Activists

8

Lack legal residency papers

10

Hired a lawyer to follow-up



## Violations According to their Responsible Parties



### Medical Neglect

Lebanese authorities 7

7

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## Important Reports and Publications

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### 1. “Report on Arbitrary Deportation of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon,” August 2019

This report, published on August 9, explains how forced deportations from Lebanon have been carried out and analyses the systematic policy of the Lebanese authorities to pressure refugees to leave the country and return to Syria. It clarifies the role of the media in shaping negative public opinion with respect to Syrian refugees, highlighting how media outlets have increasingly presented Syria as safe for return counter to logical analysis and facts on the ground.

The report also presents international laws and conventions that should legally prevent the state of Lebanon from forcibly deporting Syrians from its territory. The research work took approximately 5 months. The publication of this report was followed by pressure and advocacy campaigns direct at an international level. The Center continues to work with its local and international partners on this issue, which it is still considered to be a direct threat to refugees as Lebanon continues its forced deportations to Syria.

Before publishing its in-depth research, ACHR issued several statements aiming to highlight the serious issue that began to deteriorate in early 2019, since its follow-up to the issue of the forced deportation of the five refugees in January, until it published an urgent joint statement with the organization. Human Rights Watch, the Lebanese Center for Human Rights, the Legal Agenda, and "rights pioneers" condemned the arbitrary measures against refugees who were forced to sign "voluntary" return forms.

### 2. “The Ongoing Difficulties Syrian Refugees Face in Lebanon – Education,” November 2019

On November 26, ACHR published a research report summarizing the challenges Syrian student faced in receiving their education certificates as well as the difficulties they had in enrolling for the next academic year on the government’s website. First the report was sent directly to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, urging it to review its policies and practices in schools as well as to find solutions that



would help students obtain their graduation certificates and complete their enrollment in Lebanese public schools; drawing on complaints submitted to ACHR and field visits to schools in the Bekaa and Arsal regions, which outlines the consequences of complex procedures and conditions imposed on students by the ministry.

### **3. “Unwrapping the Right to work for Syrian and Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon:**

In July, the Ministry of Labor launched a campaign to combat illegal foreign labor in conjunction with the deteriorating living conditions for refugees, in addition to the worsening economic situation in Lebanon and donation cuts to organizations. In October, ACHR began working on the right to work for Syrians, Palestinians and Palestinian Refugees from Syria.

The report presents an overview of the international laws which Lebanon must abide with, as well as, the bilateral agreements between Syria and Lebanon that guarantee the right to work for Syrians and the conditions of decent work. The research also demonstrates the applicable Lebanese laws and how they contradict and hinder the right to work. Moreover, the research shows that the absence of valid residency directly impacts the enjoyment of the right to work, as it renders men more vulnerable to arbitrary detention and thus leading to fear of checkpoints and increasing responsibility of women and children to provide livelihoods.



## Refugee Rights Advocacy

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One crucial element in ACHR's work to promote human rights of refugees is its effort to shed light on the subject in the broader public. In this vein, the Center engages in public advocacy to raise awareness on the situation facing Syrian refugees in Lebanon through public statements and social media campaigns, as well as meetings with government officials and international governing bodies. By providing detailed and accurate information regarding human rights of refugees and instances of their violation both in the public and official sphere, the Center advocates for change to better living conditions in Lebanon and to protect marginalized populations there.

As part of its work to promote knowledge of refugee rights among government and international groups, in 2019 representatives of ACHR attended international events and met with officials to share their expertise on issues of human rights and life conditions of refugees in Lebanon

Further, in an unprecedented step at the end of September and beginning of October, ACHR and the Syrian American Council (SAC) came together to form a delegation of human rights defenders from several countries. This group consisted of representatives from local and international NGOs as well as independent activists and lawyers. The delegation paid an official visit to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to draw attention violations of rights such as deportations. The delegation also visited foreign embassies in Lebanon in order to offer a perspective on the human rights of refugees, in particular concerning freedom of movement and the abuses refugees face, such as torture and illegal detention. This gave ACHR the opportunity to expand its advocacy networks and establish contact with potential donors. The delegation also visited the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Social Affairs to highlight specific issues that concern refugees, especially the right to work and the right to education. This event was



covered in local and international media, shedding light on refugee rights to a wider audience and increasing the visibility of ACHR and its work.<sup>4</sup>

In September, during the forty-second session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva and under the auspices of the European Union, the Access Center for Human Rights was part of a delegation organized by the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM) to discuss the deteriorating living conditions of refugees in countries neighboring Syria, and the violations that refugees face on a daily basis as well as the risks of returning to Syria. Over the course of two days, the director of ACHR participated in several high-level meetings with representatives from regional and foreign countries as well as United Nations bodies. Along with representatives of organizations from Turkey, Jordan, Syria and the occupied Golan, the delegation expressed the need to monitor violations of rights and public freedoms and made urgent recommendations to improve the situation for Syrian refugees.

In addition to these efforts to educate officials about the rights of refugees and the threats they face in Lebanon, the Center also worked throughout 2019 to draw attention to specific cases of human rights violations through its reports and social media. These included coverage of assaults on refugees in Aarsal, the detention of Syrian refugees at Addis Ababa Bole International Airport in Ethiopia and Rafic Hariri International Airport in Beirut, tension at camps in Der Al Ahmar, and illegal detentions and deportations of Syrians in Lebanon. In addition to statements issued on the ACHR website as well as the Center's social media page informing the public about such incidents, ACHR coordinated with the Lebanese government, foreign embassies, and international governing bodies to draw attention to rights abuses and called on the appropriate agencies to take action. Throughout the year, the team followed up to ensure that such violations would not go ignored. Without the advocacy work of ACHR, these issues would have remained in the shadows.

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<sup>4</sup> Access Center for Human Rights, "Refugees Rights Defenders Initiative – Post governmental and diplomatic visits. The deteriorating human rights situation of refugees in Lebanon will have disastrous consequences", 08/10/2019, <https://www.achrrights.org/2019/10/08/refugees-rights-defenders-initiative-post-governmental-and-diplomatic-visits-the-deteriorating-human-rights-situation-of-refugees-in-lebanon-will-have-disastrous-consequences/>





## ACHR in the Media

January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· <a href="#">لبنان يرخل سورين إلى نظام الأسد..مصير مجهول يواجههم</a></li></ul>	April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· <a href="#">توضيحات بخصوص محتجزين سورين في لبنان تم ترحيلهم خارج البلاد</a></li><li>· <a href="#">تفاصيل عملية ترحيل الأمن اللبناني للاجئين سورين بينهم نساء</a></li></ul>
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· <a href="#">Des ONG accusent le Liban d'avoir "sommairement expulsé" 16 Syriens</a></li></ul>	June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· <a href="#">لبنان يرخل سورين منشقين.. بالتنسيق مع السفارة السورية؟</a></li><li>· <a href="#">التعهدات الدولية "مجرد كلام".. إجلاء لاجئي "دير الأحمر" إلى أرض نائية دون خدمات</a></li></ul>
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· <a href="#">Syrian refugees panic as threat of deportation rises in Lebanon</a></li></ul>	August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· <a href="#">Lebanon's Politicians Want Syrian Refugees to Leave</a></li><li>· <a href="#">Time Is Running Out for Syrians in Lebanon</a></li><li>· <a href="#">Syrians deportees allege torture: rights group</a></li></ul>
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· <a href="#">Analysis of Tweets Showcases Hatred Towards Syrian Refugees Among Lebanon's Elite</a></li></ul>	October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· <a href="#">سوريان معتقلان يشنقان نفسيهما في سجن رومية بلبنان...ماذا عن مصير الباقيين؟</a></li><li>· <a href="#">وفد "مبادرة المدافعين عن حقوق اللاجئين" يعتبر الترحيل القسري للسورين "انتهاكاً"</a></li><li>· <a href="#">Plight of Syrian refugees in Lebanon</a></li><li>· <a href="#">Siriani in Libano: tra deportazioni e ritorni (in)volontari</a></li></ul>



## Local and International Partnerships

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Access Center for Human Rights believes in the importance of cooperation between civil society organizations to achieve its goals to defend the rights of the oppressed wherever they are. In order to advance its work and promote its goals, ACHR works closely with international NGOs and agencies associated with governing bodies to ensure the recognition of refugees' rights and to support victims of rights violations.

Committee for Justice

Gulf Center for Human Rights

Humana Human Rights and Civil Participation.

Lebanese Center for Human Rights

Lebanese Institute for Democracy and Human Rights

MAPs - Multi Aid Programs

Operazione Colomba

Sawa for Development and Aid

Syrian American Council

Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression

Violations Documentation Center

**"ACHR" is a member of Aswat Forum for the Displaced Syrians.**



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