



وصول
معاً من أجل الحقوق

DISCRIMINATION IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF AID

TO THE SYRIAN REFUGEE VICTIMS OF THE BEIRUT EXPLOSION



DONATE



Discrimination in the Distribution of Aid to the Syrian Refugee Victims of Beirut Explosion

Beirut – 29 September 2020

Following the explosion in the port of the Lebanese capital Beirut on 4th of August, which caused infrastructural damage to large areas of the capital, leading to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of citizens and foreigners, killing hundreds, and injuring thousands of those near the scene of the incident. In addition to the aggravation of economic issues caused by the economic collapse accompanying this incident, we hesitate the exacerbation of social conditions due to discrimination in aid distribution between citizens and foreigners, by individual activists/volunteers, and some civil society organizations, without close monitoring by the relevant ministries. The Beirut explosion killed more than 200 people, injured more than 7,000, and left approximately 300,000 people homeless. According to



the World Bank, the damage amounted to approximately \$ 4.6 billion.¹ The rate of extreme poverty has risen to 23 percent which will negatively impact residents and marginalized groups, especially Syrian refugees. Meanwhile, Lebanon is witnessing sharp fluctuations in the Lebanese pound exchange rate against the US dollar, resulting in a significant rise in prices and a decrease in the value of employees' salaries, and the economic situation further deteriorated amidst the COVID-19 pandemic since the beginning of the second quarter of this year.

Syrian refugees are among the groups affected by this explosion, as 200,000 refugees are estimated to be residing in Beirut and the neighboring affected areas. Even prior to the economic collapse and the worsening of security conditions, Syrian refugees were enduring poor living, economic, social and psychological conditions, which have worsened as a result of recent events, especially since the majority

1 World Bank, "Decisive Action and Change Needed to Reform and Rebuild a Better Lebanon," 31 August 2020.
<https://tinyurl.com/yy2xaaxh>



200,000

Syrian refugees and residents live in Beirut and the neighboring affected areas.

of refugees depend on seasonal or daily work that has been negatively affected (decreased or ceased) by the spread of COVID-19 and by the Beirut explosion, affecting both citizens and refugees, as many have lost a relative, injured, or their house suffered damage or even lost their only shelter and

were forced to flee, another time, to another area.

Following the incident and the pleas for aid, several Syrian campaigns and initiatives were created in support of the victims of the explosion. Local and international civil society organizations were quick to provide aid and pledges



without any discrimination and voluntary initiatives were formed to provide in-kind assistance to victims.² Since the start of the blast until August 28th, UNHCR in Lebanon has distributed approximately 4,458 weatherproof materials to those whose homes have been damaged, including about 25 percent of Syrian beneficiaries.

25 %

Of the affected Syrians benefited from the weatherproof materials

2

Access Center for Human Rights, "Death in explosions follows Syrians to Lebanon," Video, 16 August 2020.
<https://www.achrighs.org/2020/08/16/11381/>



The European Union,³ and multiple countries including:

- France,⁴
- United Kingdom,⁵
- Canada,⁶
- Norway,⁷
- The United States,⁸ and many others pledged in-kind and cash assistance to the civil society and the Lebanese Red Cross, in response to

3 European Commission, "Lebanon: EU delivers additional emergency assistance following the explosion in Beirut," 31 August 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y3d0x7yq>

4 Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, "Explosion in Beirut – France is taking action to help Beirut and the Lebanese people," 8 August 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y3sy5cnw>

5 UK Department for International Development, "UK medics fly to Beirut following deadly blast," 7 August 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y3qqupn3>

6 Government of Canada, "Canada's response to the crisis in Lebanon," Last Access: 27 September 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y2vr47av>

7 Government of Norway, "Norway pledges additional NOK 45 million in aid to Lebanon," 15 August 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y2jzcp4>

8 USAID, "United States Provides Humanitarian Assistance in Response to Explosions in Lebanon," 7 August 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y2qxy3au>



the humanitarian and medical needs of victims, as well as, infrastructure restoration. In addition, the “International Conference on Assistance and Support to Beirut and the Lebanese People” was held on 9 August 2020, where participants pledged EUR 252.7 million in support of victims of the explosion.⁹

29 CASES

of discrimination based on nationality during aid distribution

Despite local and international movements to assist victims of the explosion, Syrian refugee victims still find themselves with no support or aid. Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR) documented

29 cases of discrimination based on nationality during aid distribution, including 27

9

BBC, “Beirut explosion: Donors pledge aid for Lebanon but want reform,” 9 August 2020.

<https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-53717904>

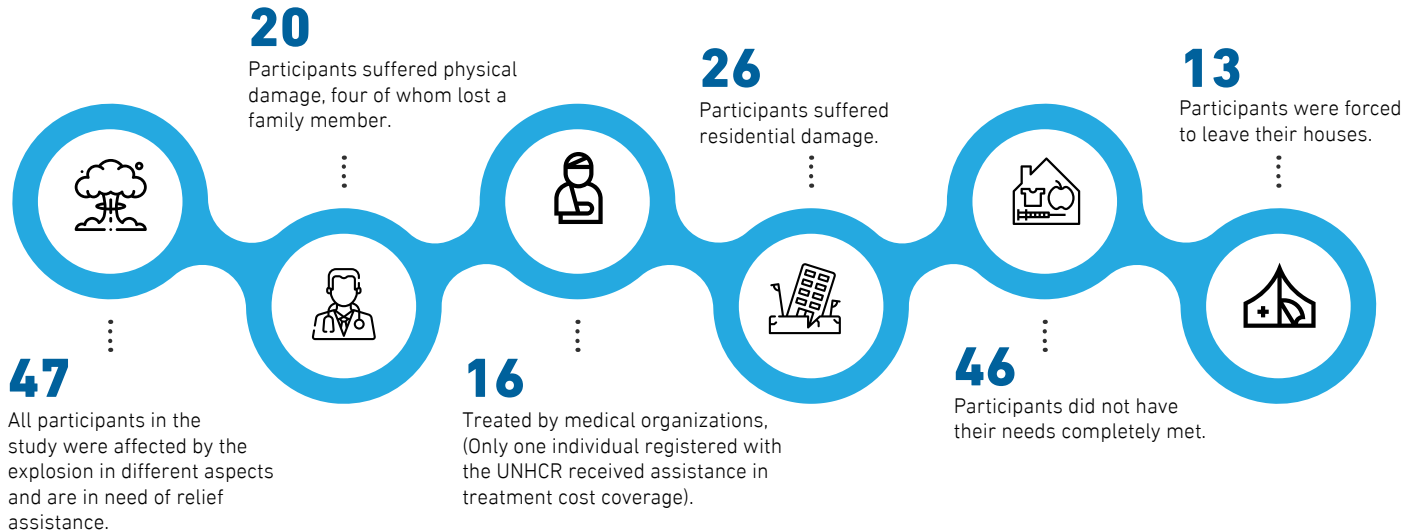


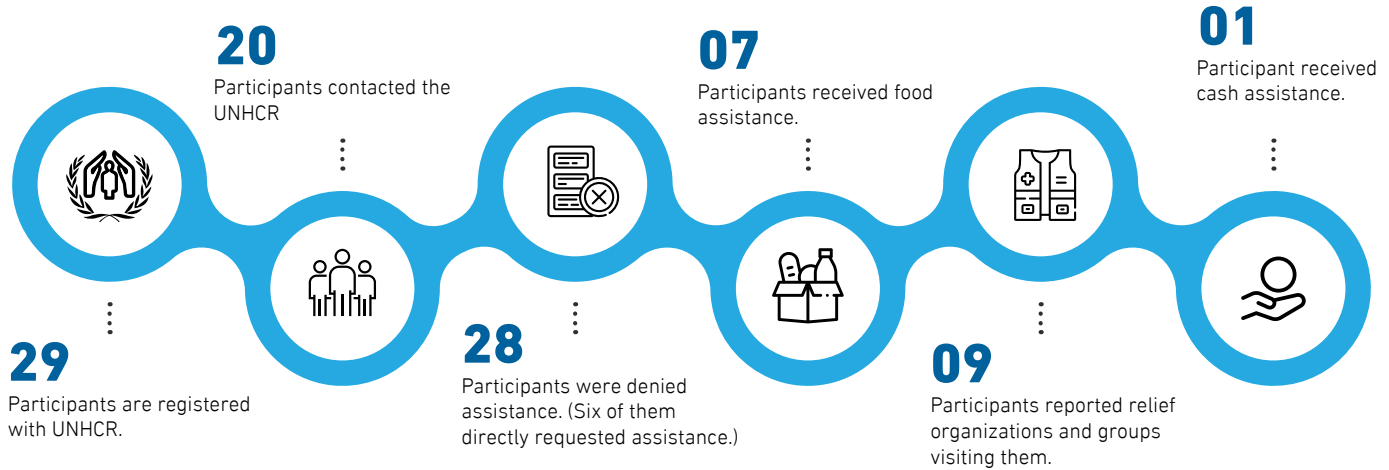
families and two individual cases. In each of these cases, civil society organizations were the discriminators and in four of these cases, it was the Lebanese army.

It should be noted that out of these cases, 21 hold valid legal residency, while 20 of the total number of cases are registered with UNHCR. All of these cases were affected by the explosion on different aspects including residential damages; while 14 cases endured physical damage, including 13 families and one individual case.

To ensure double verification of information which ACHR adopts in its work, the team conducted a field study targeting 47 randomly selected refugees affected by the explosion, including number of cases documented on ACHR database. The study contained various questions regarding their experience with discrimination in aid distribution and receiving and/or sponsoring aid, without requesting any personal information to encourage them to participate without fear. The results were as follows:

FIELD STUDY TARGETING 47 RANDOMLY SELECTED REFUGEES AFFECTED BY THE EXPLOSION







As for the reluctance of voluntary personnel/teams or civil society organizations to provide assistance; 28 participants in the study were denied assistance despite their need, based on their nationality, while three participants are unaware of the reason for being denied aid. Additionally, 25 participants were refused food assistance in the form of materials or food baskets, nine participants were refused cash assistance and eight participants denied medical aid, while 13 were denied house rehabilitation.

Moreover, 14 individuals out of the 28 denied assistance indicated that “Organizations” and “Associations” are responsible for denying aid and 10 identified the “Lebanese Army”, while two individuals identified “United Nations Agencies,” and one individual identified the “Mukhtar of the area,” and another the “Mosque.”



The situation of Syrian refugees has worsened after they have been marginalized by those responsible for providing assistance to those affected by the explosion, and the needs of refugees have increased because they have not been prioritized on the UNHCR response plan.



Recommendations

The Beirut explosion did not discriminate between refugee and citizen nor the damage did discriminate according to nationality or race or belief, and in spite of that, it appears that Syrian refugees are experiencing discriminatory practices from organizations, local authorities, political parties and citizens. For this reason, the Access Center for Human Rights recommends the following:

Local authorities

- Adhere to the Lebanese Constitution and the international laws ratified by Lebanon regarding non-discrimination on the basis of race or nationality, even during states of emergency; and
- Municipalities should monitor the distribution process to ensure that they reach the affected people without discrimination and hold



accountable the organizations that violate this principle.

Local and international organizations

- Adhere to the humanitarian responsibility towards all individuals affected by the explosion in aid distribution without discriminating on the bases of race, nationality, or belief; Adopt effective and clear monitoring policies by organizations on their employees and those working with them, to ensure full commitment to the principle of non-discrimination and to educate them accordingly; and
- The UNHCR must assume its responsibilities towards Syrian refugees affected by the explosion, follow-up on their circumstances and provide them with the necessary assistance. We also ask to prioritize Syrian refugee beneficiaries of aid in its response plans to the Beirut explosion.



Donors

- Insure the inclusion of marginalized groups, including refugees, within its agreements regarding funding targets, provided that this inclusion is clear and explicit; and Adopt strict monitoring policies on the organizations and associations funded by them to ensure that aid reaches those affected without discrimination.