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Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

School of Sociology and Public Policy

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Dissertation submitted as a partial requirement for the conferral of

Master in International Studies

Supervisor:
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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank ISCTE-IUL, who, in 2016, took me in and welcomed me to Lisbon. I would also like to thank all the Professors I had the honour to interact with and learn from throughout the Masters programme; they constantly inspired me and led me in the way of endless curiosity.

This thesis would not have seen the light of day without the help of my advisor, Professor Bruno Cardoso Reis. His invaluable academic support, guidance and promptness to deal with my questions and doubts have made this project a reality.

Finally, I wish to thank my whole family for their continuous encouragement. I thank, in particular, my parents who have relentlessly worked to provide me with all the great opportunities and experiences I was fortunate enough to have throughout my life. They taught me the values of strength, persistence and hard work, and unconditionally stood by my side. They transmitted me the principles of humanity and compassion, which have come to shape the person that I am today. If it was not for them, I would not have come this far. I would also like to thank my sister, who, with her unique sense of humour and perspicacity, has made life much more interesting and amusing. I am deeply grateful for them and therefore dedicate this thesis to them.

"When we live in a world that is very unjust, you have to be a dissident."

Nawal El Sa'adawi, Egyptian feminist, writer and psychiatrist

Abstract

Starting in 2014, the arrival and impact of Syrian refugees in Europe has been the focus of much attention by national and international media. However, the impact they have had in neighbouring countries is much more significant and notable than in the European continent, namely due to the fact that they are more numerous in the former than in the latter. In early 2011, civil war broke out in Syria giving rise to one of the most violent conflicts currently still underway. Nearly half of the Syrian population has been forcibly displaced, with more than a million persons seeking refuge in neighbouring Lebanon, a country already struggling with entrenched social, political and economic problems of its own. Hence, despite the centralisation of the problem in Europe by mainstream organs, the neighbouring countries are the ones most affected by the crisis, and Lebanon specifically can be seen as the most affected one as 1 in every 4 people living there are refugees. Although not a signatory to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, the Lebanese Government initially applied an open-border policy in line with its long historical relationship with Syria, but shifted its approach in late 2014, imposing much more restrictive entry requirements on Syrians fleeing the conflict. The sponsorship system (entailing the payment of high fees) became the only way of legally entering the country, which has led to unbalanced and at times exploitative relations between the refugee and the sponsor. Coupled with the protraction of the war and the depletion of resources, the majority of Syrian households, in particular women-headed households, are unable to renew their residency in Lebanon, further increasing their vulnerability. Consequently, they have been pushed to resort to negative coping strategies, such as engaging children in labour, marrying off daughters or accepting risky jobs. We argue that, due to normative reasons and also because of higher levels of effectiveness, the Government should lift all obstacles impeding refugees from regularising their stay in the country, and the international community must step up its in-kind assistance and resettlement efforts in order to share the burden placed on first-asylum countries.

Keywords: Syrian refugees; Lebanon; humanitarian crisis; negative coping mechanisms; refugee protection.

Resumo

A partir de 2014, a chegada e impacto dos refugiados Sírios na Europa têm sido alvo de muita atenção por parte dos *media* nacionais e internacionais. Contudo, o impacto que estes tiveram nos países vizinhos é muito mais significativo e notável do que no continente europeu, nomeadamente devido ao seu maior número na primeira região do que na segunda. No início de 2011, iniciou-se a Guerra Civil na Síria, a qual deu origem a um dos mais violentos conflitos que ainda decorre na atualidade. Cerca de metade da população Síria foi forçosamente deslocada, com mais de um milhão de pessoas a procurar asilo no Líbano, um país que já apresenta profundos problemas sociais, políticos e económicos. Efetivamente, apesar da centralização do problema na Europa por órgãos convencionais, os países vizinhos são os mais afetados pela crise, e o Líbano especificamente pode ser considerado o mais afetado, já que 1 em cada 4 habitantes do país são refugiados. Apesar de não ter ratificado a Convenção de 1951 relativa ao Estatuto de Refugiados, o Governo Libanês adotou inicialmente uma política de fronteiras abertas no seguimento da sua longa relação histórica com a Síria. No entanto, em finais de 2014 alterou a sua abordagem, impondo regulações mais restritas à entrada de refugiados Sírios. O sistema de patrocínio, o qual implica o pagamento de taxas altas, tornou-se o único meio de entrar legalmente no país, o que levou ao desenvolvimento de relações desequilibradas e por vezes exploratórias entre o refugiado e o patrocinador. Devido ao prolongamento do conflito e ao esgotamento de recursos, para a maioria dos agregados familiares Sírios, em particular para aqueles que são chefiados por mulheres, não lhes é possível renovar as autorizações de residência no Líbano, o que aumenta os seus níveis de vulnerabilidade. Consequentemente, as famílias têm sido obrigadas a recorrer a mecanismos de enfrentamento negativos, tal como trabalho infantil, casamento infantil ou o recurso a trabalho arriscado. Nós demonstramos que, devido a razões normativas e a maiores níveis de eficácia, o Governo devia remover todos os obstáculos que impedem os refugiados de regularizar a sua estadia no país, e a comunidade internacional tem de aumentar o provisionamento de assistência material, bem como os seus esforços de relocalização, de modo a dividir as responsabilidades suportadas pelos primeiros países de asilo.

Palavras-chave: refugiados Sírios; Líbano; crise humanitária; mecanismos de enfrentamento negativos; proteção de refugiados.

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List of acronyms

AI	Amnesty International
BCPs	Border Crossing Points
CEDAW	Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CLDH	Lebanese Centre for Human Rights (*Centre Libanais des Droits Humains*)
DGGS	Directorate General of General Security (sometimes referred to as General Security Office (**GSO**), or General Security (**GS**) only)
EU	European Union
FSA	Free Syrian Army
GoL	Government of Lebanon
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
ILO	International Labour Organization
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISF	Internal Security Forces
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (also known as **IS** or **Daesh**)
LAF	Lebanese Armed Forces
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
LS	Lebanon Support
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs of Lebanon
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PRS	Palestine Refugees from Syria
SAA	Syrian Arab Army
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
TFF	The Freedom Fund
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
US	United States of America
US DoS	United States Department of State
VASyR	Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees
YPG	People's Protection Units (*Yekîneyên Parastina Gel*)

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1. Relevance, key concepts and purpose of the dissertation

This dissertation analyses the Syrian refugee crisis and its impact on Lebanon. It does so from a normative point of view, analysing the degree of legal protection that refugees benefit from and the strategies they adopt when livelihood opportunities are scarce. It also studies the responses that the Government of Lebanon and the relevant international and non-governmental organizations have developed and put into practice to tackle the emergency. The resort to negative coping mechanisms (strategies that cause some form of harm to one or several members of the family) as a means of survival is the particular emphasis of this study.

As Jussi Hanhimäki argues, "there is nothing new about people fleeing for their lives" (Hanhimäki, 2017), and refugees are "an ageless phenomenon" (Hanhimäki, 2017). Migration is a permanent feature of human history, as people move from one place to another in search of sustenance and better opportunities. The phenomenon of globalization and the growing social and economic inequalities, conflicts and natural disasters that shape today's world tend to make movement more frequent and recurrent. International migration is also a reflection of the process of global integration, and large-scale movements are not isolated phenomena, since they follow the flows of commodities, capital and ideas (Castles et al., 2014). The intensification of cultural interchanges and the development of the means of transport and the media also rank migration as one of the most crucial aspects in today's societies and public policies (Castles et al., 2014).

Migration can be voluntary (for instance, a student moving to another country to pursue his studies) or forced. Throughout this study, we will focus on the latter. Forced migration or displacement can be caused by persecution, conflict, violence, poverty and climate change (natural disasters). Indeed, there have been multiple refugee crises in the past, although the one that we are currently witnessing is considered to be the worst since World War II (Sharma, 2015; Egeland, 2014). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of June 2017, there were 65.6 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, of which 22.5 million[1] are refugees[2], persons in refugee-like situations and returnees. More than a quarter of them, totalling almost 5.7 million people[3],

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[1] UNHCR website, data as of June 2017
[2] The terms 'refugee', 'migrant', 'Internally Displaced Person' (IDP), and others relevant to this thesis will be further explained in item 4. "Refugee protection: main concepts, basic principles" of this Chapter.
[3] UNHCR website, data as of April 2018

comes from Syria, a country that has been ravaged by civil war since 2011 and where peace prospects seem to fade by the day. The vast majority of these refugees has settled in neighbouring countries, such as Turkey, Lebanon (our area of study), Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, with a small percentage of them seeking refuge elsewhere, predominantly in Europe.[4] These large population influxes have placed unprecedented strain on the host countries' economies, infrastructures and public services, causing, in some cases, political unrest[5] and a general sense of discrimination and insecurity among the host communities too.

The focus of this study is the negative coping strategies that refugees adopt in contexts of destitution and depletion of resources and their connection to the international regime for refugees. In an attempt to generate or increase their income, or to protect family members from (possible) harassment and abuse, it is a common practice for displaced persons to engage in risky and negative behaviours, such as child labour, child marriage, sexual exploitation, among others. Very often, this is accompanied by the lack of legal residency/stay in the country, which renders refugees even more vulnerable. The purpose of this dissertation is to better understand the circumstances that lead them into these conditions, their livelihoods and the measures and policies that are being implemented at the institutional level in order to tackle the emergency. Our key question is "How and why do refugees adopt negative coping mechanisms in contexts of destitution and depletion of resources and what are the responses provided by the competent institutions, namely through the international regime for refugees?". The answer hypothesis is that refugees find themselves in deeply unsafe and precarious situations, not being able to legally access the labour market or guarantee their sustenance, so they are forced to resort to such strategies. The lack of legal status and the obstacles that the Lebanese government has implemented on its acquisition further hamper their livelihoods, perpetuating their vulnerable condition. The overall response to this crisis has been weak and inadequate, given the scale of the problem, and the international community must increase its support to the host countries and communities as being one of the principal actors in the international regime for refugees. Indeed, we can relate this to the regime theory, as it offers an opportunity to "better understand the international relationships by underscoring the importance of specific

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[4] In 2015, there were 1 257 610 first time asylum applicants in the European Union (EU) Member States, of which approximately 600 000 (or almost 1/2) hailed from Syria, the most represented nationality among all applications (Eurostat, 2018). In 2017, this figure decreased to 649 855, and Syrians accounted for 16% only (Eurostat, 2018).
[5] This instability and political clashes are particularly noteworthy in the European continent, where populist and far-right parties have recently gained considerable electoral support, reshaping Europe's political landscape. Some of the key features of these parties are an anti-establishment rhetoric, the pursuit of 'more traditional values' and the opposition to multiculturalism and immigration (Muis & Immerzeel, 2017). Public opposition to mass immigration, cultural liberalization, and the perceived surrender of national sovereignty to distant and unresponsive international bodies also boost populist leanings among the electorate (Galston, 2018).

attributes of international, multinational, and nongovernmental groups" (Hopkins & Meiches, 2018).

In terms of the structure of the thesis, we will start with a brief background of the Syrian conflict, briefly exposing its timeline, causes, main actors, as well as its impact so far, including its spillover into Lebanon. This will be followed by an analysis of the social and political scene of the host country, in an attempt to contextualize the environment in which the refugees must now settle. The last item of the First Chapter deals with the central concepts and principles relevant to the field of Refugee Protection under International Law, i.e., the basis for the international regime for refugees. We then proceed to Chapter 2, shifting the focus to the negative coping strategies and the role that the competent Lebanese authorities' response plays in such behaviours. In item 2 we study the impact of the lack of legal residency in refugees' livelihoods and their mobility (or lack thereof). Finally, the remaining pages of the dissertation are devoted to the analysis of solutions and recommendations proposed by organizations who work in the field that are directly relevant for the revision of the international regime for refugees and of the national responses. This dissertation aims to pave the way for a better understanding of – and response to – the negative coping mechanisms that Syrian refugees adopt in order to alleviate their poverty and vulnerability while in exile.

There are few studies focusing solely on the exploitation and precariousness they go through after crossing the border into Lebanon, hence the importance of such research. This study points out and addresses policy shortfalls and the gaps that persist in the protection sector in the humanitarian response put into place by the Lebanese government and the relevant organizations. Moreover, it provides an overall perspective into the legal deficiencies and ensuing abuses that refugees have to face daily, alongside interventional measures implemented to combat exploitative conditions of labour and human trafficking situations. This thesis aims to summarize, from the protection spectre, the living conditions of refugees who have fled Syria and the flaws or deficiencies that persist in the Lebanese reaction to the emergency.

Briefly, we argue that the war in Syria and the consequent refugee influx into Lebanon have placed massive strains on the country's already crumbling infrastructures and provision of services. Having initially applied an "open-border policy", in early 2015 the Government of Lebanon started imposing further restrictions on the entry of Syrian refugees, making it practically impossible to enter the country on the basis of "flight from conflict" and "persecution" or the need for international protection. The sponsorship system, which entails the payment of considerable fees, has replaced humanitarian permits, and this has severely deteriorated refugees' living conditions and their protection, as cases of exploitation frequently emerge out of this bondage. The lack of a sponsor leads to the lack of legal status,

which hinders livelihoods and encourages the adoption of harmful coping strategies. Since these two aspects are deeply interconnected, and as the mass return of refugees to Syria still seems unlikely in the near future, given the on-going fighting and the danger that it poses to civilians, the need to resume free registration and espouse a more open and rights-based approach arises. This is the main recommendation that organisations working in the field bring forward, in addition to the substantial increase in funding from the international community.

1.1 Research question and hypothesis

This study's main question is "How and why do refugees adopt negative coping mechanisms in contexts of destitution and depletion of resources and what are the responses provided by the competent institutions, namely through the international regime for refugees?". We will attempt to demonstrate that situations of exploitation, abuse and trafficking are ongoing in Syrian settlements across Lebanon, and child marriage, child labour and sexual and labour exploitation practices have increased and become more evident with the conflict, both among Syrian exiles and the host communities. Furthermore, we will also try to prove that this vulnerability is aggravated by the lack of legal residence and status and general policy flaws.

1.2. Structure of the thesis
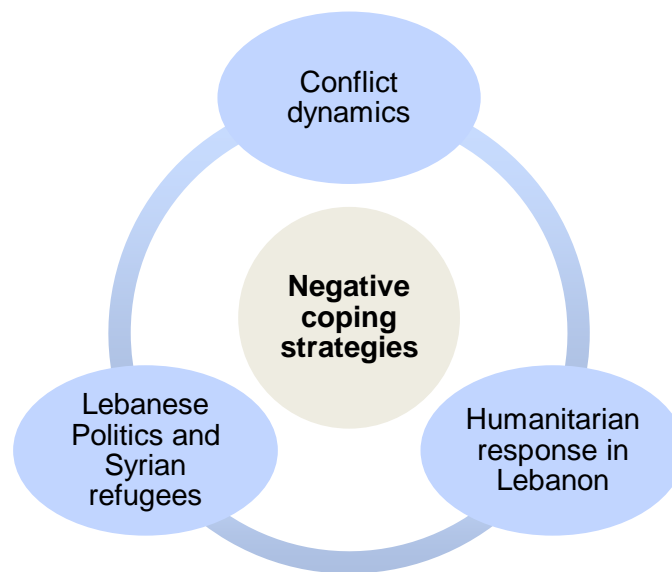
Figure 1 – Structure of the thesis

The thesis' structure takes into account three main dimensions: the conflict dynamics (origins of the current conflict in Syria and its main characteristics), the relation between Lebanese Politics and Syrian refugees (principal features of the host society and its longstanding, sometimes troubling, relations with Syria), and the Humanitarian response in Lebanon carried out by the State and other organs (as a result to the war in the neighbouring country and the subsequent refugee influx into Lebanon). All of the three factors will be analysed in the various parts of this thesis; however, we will dedicate more space and energy to the study of the last one, discussing it more thoroughly. We will also explore the interconnectedness between them in a way to yield a holistic and comprehensive approach to the subject.

1.3 Methodology and sources

We have primarily resorted to qualitative methods whilst gathering information and some quantitative data. More specifically, we focused on the analysis of documents and texts, both academic and non-academic, authored by field experts or issued by government bodies, international organizations, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field, as well as think tanks and public policy organizations. On the other hand, we gathered already-collected quantitative data too (secondary data), mostly through the collection of figures regarding refugee settlements,

refugee registration trends and protection indicators, both in Lebanon and in Syria. For this, we consulted UNHCR databases (the Syria Regional Refugee Response portal[6]) and some previously published studies and papers as well.

2. The Syrian Civil War: conflict dynamics

The Syrian civil war is widely considered to have begun in March 2011, as part of the so-called 'Arab Spring' revolts, which virtually hit almost every Arab country. The 'Arab Spring' refers to a period of protests and uprisings that took place in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in the end of 2010 and throughout 2011, leading to regime changes in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Yemen; civil uprisings in Bahrain and Syria; major upheavals in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco and Oman; and minor demonstrations in Lebanon, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Western Sahara (Koser, 2012). A full-blown civil war erupted in Syria in 2011, and in Yemen in 2015, after tumultuous and largely non-successful attempts at political transition, originating massive humanitarian crises, human displacement and the breakdown of state institutions. Our area of concern for this study is Syria and its ongoing conflict.

Syria became an independent state in 1946, after, under the Sykes-Picot Agreement, being under French direct control or influence for almost 30 years. After independence, for roughly 10 years, the country witnessed the rise and development of Ba'athism, an anti-imperialist, Arab nationalist ideology defending pan-Arabism and Arab socialism. The urban Sunni political elites dominated the government, albeit with "rampant instability [and] sectarian turmoil" (Council on Foreign Relations, 2011). A total of eight coups took place from 1946 until November 1970 (Phillips, 2015), when Hafez al-Assad, former Defence minister and father of current president Bashar al-Assad, seized power. The Assad family is Alawi[7], hailing from the Alawi-dominated governorate of Latakia, in the Mediterranean coast, and they have been ruling Syria, a Sunni majority nation, for more than 40 years. Bashar took power in 2000, after the death of his father, adopting his governing method and having prominent pro-reform activists and members of parliament detained ("Syria profile – Timeline", 2018). Both Hafez and Bashar were known for the brutality with which they ruled the country, instilling fear upon the people, and continuously taking on torture and other

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[6] Available at http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria
[7] The Alawi or Alawite sect is an offshoot of Shi'ite Islam, more specifically a sect of the Twelver branch of Shia Islam. They are for the most part concentrated in Syria.

forms of ill treatment as means of dominating the populace.[8] Indeed, "absolute violence was the preferred tool to maintain control of the various ethnic groups that make up the country" (Spindel, 2011, p.4), with these being Sunni Arabs (64%), Alawis (12%), Christians (9%), Kurds (10%), Druze (3%), other Shia (1%), Circassians and Armenians (Phillips, 2015). The issue of sectarianism will be analysed more in depth in the next pages of this Chapter.

In the years and months prior to the uprisings, Syria, like much of the MENA region, had been facing a number of challenges, ranging from unemployment (particularly youth unemployment) to climate change. The *age* dimension is a very important one, since in 2010, that is, before the advent of the war, the median age of Syria's population was 21 years old (Roudi, 2011), which means that half of the population was 21 years old or less. School enrolment rates, especially for girls, and university attendance patterns have gradually increased, placing considerable strain on the job market. In fact, according to Nabil Sukkar, a Syrian economist formerly with the World Bank, in the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the country's labour supply was growing at 4.5% a year, the equivalent of a quarter of a million youngsters entering the labour market every year (Lyon, 2010). Considering that the government efforts into boosting job creation have not produced the desired results and reached all layers of the society equally, this translates into growing *unemployment* rates, especially when there is a weak investment climate and lack of economic growth too (International Labour Organization, 2011). It should also be noted that employment opportunities in the private sector are limited (generally speaking, Arab countries tend to boast high proportions of public sector employment among its working forces), working conditions are poor, and there is a prevailing mismatch between the demand and supply of labour ("Youth unemployment in the Arab world", 2011). These conditions are unfavourable to the creation of a 'stable future' for the younger generations, which breeds discontent and anger. On the other hand, further education also entails "more cognitive capabilities to question the spoken word" (Spindel, 2011, p.2) among the young population, thus giving rise to a more (politically) conscious generation, willing to speak up for their rights. So far, we have presented more structural justifications for the protests. However, there are other factors that should not be overlooked. For instance, the soaring food prices also fuelled popular uprisings (Spindel, 2011), and so did the cuts in key subsidies for ordinary Syrians (mostly affecting the Sunni-majority peasantry) (Phillips, 2015), and the severe droughts that the country went through between 2006 and 2010. The Assad government failed to provide

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[8] Large-scale disappearances and extra-judicial killings were common practices carried out by security forces during Hafez's ruling (Human Rights Watch, 2010), and the *Mukhabarat*, one of Syria's most feared security agencies under his rule, remains up until today a dreadful entity in the country. Moreover, repression of political and Human Rights activism, restrictions on freedom of expression and the recurrent repression of Kurds are measures still imposed nowadays under Bashar's presidency (HRW, 2010).

the necessary support to the communities that were hit the hardest, and, in effect, this drought caused an "unprecedented migration of 1.5 million people from rural areas to urban centres" (Holland, 2012), which in turn increased poverty and inequality in the cities. This population exodus also exacerbated ethnic and religious strife, as it affected the nation's social fabric. All of these factors have reinforced and amplified each other, creating a hostile environment. Nevertheless, perhaps the most important reason for the development of such a large-scale conflict remains with the regime's oppressive and brutal treatment of its people. This is the factor we will analyse next.

In March 2011, at the height of widespread popular discontent and demands for political reforms throughout the Arab world, the city of Daraa in southwest Syria (see *Annex A – Political map of Syria*) became the birthplace of the uprising, when a group of teenage boys were arrested by the Syrian secret police for spray painting revolutionary slogans on a wall. They were summarily rounded up, sexually abused, beaten and burned (Spindel, 2011), with one boy dying while in custody (Macleod & Flamand, 2011). Before they were liberated, several members of the public peacefully rallied in the local town for their release, only to face a brutal response by the security forces, as they opened fire on the protesters (Spindel, 2011). Further outrage grew, laying the foundations for bigger and more intense revolts, which quickly spread to other parts of the country, namely to more populous cities like Homs and Hama, which saw the gathering of hundreds of thousands of protesters (Lucas, 2016). Large scores of soldiers defected from the Syrian military and joined the newly formed Free Syrian Army, an armed group that attempted to "provide a structure of defence for the opposition" (Lucas, 2016, p.13). The regime's response remained violent and oppressive, and mass arrests and torture became recurrent ways of 'dealing' with the insurgence. The government forces and troops were frequently sent in to these 'hotbeds' of political and social unrest in order to restore order, increasing the death toll.

Meanwhile, in an attempt to further destabilize the political environment and fragment the opposition, the regime decided to release Islamist political prisoners, whose actions and influence, Assad hoped, would undermine the opposition's endeavours and change its nature (Lucas, 2016). According to David Keen (2017), by "actively encouraging fundamentalist elements, the regime was able to present itself (internationally and domestically) as a 'lesser evil'" (Keen, 2017, p.iii), and the 'global war on terror', initiated and conducted by the US and its allies after 9/11, provided incentives for pursuing this strategy. This would cultivate fears among the more politically liberal classes of an ultraconservative Islamic government taking power, which would ultimately curb their personal liberties. Indeed, a political reform leading to a more open and 'democratic' form of government would be in the interest of extensive parts of Syrian society, both belonging to majority and minority groups, as many yearned for more political freedom and civil rights. However, the fear of radical Islamism kept some of

these segments, especially Alawites or other Shia, Christians, Druze and other minorities, from pursuing change, since they reckon they would be persecuted, should such groups take power. As Spindel, puts it, the "anarchy-like" cases of Libya and Yemen work in Assad's favour, because they make the people fear sectarian violence, which could end up resulting in a "Lebanese-style civil war" (Spindel, 2011). This is one of the regime's ways of 'legitimizing' Assad's stay in power, by instrumentalising sectarianism, as they basically narrow down the future of Syria to either 'unity and nationalism' under his command, or ethnic persecution and division, should the "terrorists" seize power. Nonetheless, although there have been multiple cases of ethnically motivated sexual violence, kidnappings, killings and looting of property, in most of the cases directed at Sunnis (Phillips, 2015), the conflict in Syria should not be summarily dismissed as sectarian. In reality, the existence of a multiplicity of sects in the country is just one of the roots of the war, with economic motivations, political ideology and the generalized brutality of the regime also inciting it. When the protests started in early 2011, they were "decentralized and local, but with national goals" (Phillips, 2015, p.359), pushing for nation-wide change and not contemplating ethnic or religious elements. Later on, however, this inclusiveness was challenged when some actors, namely the long discriminated Syrian Kurds, started drawing on ethno-sectarian agendas. Other belligerents who mobilised along ethnic lines are Hezbollah, the Lebanon-based Shia militant group, various Iraqi Shia militias, and radical Sunni sectarian groups, such as Jabhat al-Nusra, now known as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), also known as Daesh (many of these fundamentalist Sunni fronts were, up to a certain point, made up of the previously mentioned Islamist prisoners that President Assad released soon after the conflict erupted). Despite the existence and pro-activism of these groups, the Syrian civil war ought not to be seen in a simplistic way as a confrontation between Shias and Sunnis. In fact, a considerable amount of Assad's supporters are Sunnis who decided to stick by his side due to economic benefits or because they are heavily dependent on the state (Phillips, 2015). On the other hand, opposition forces also garner support from Alawis, Christians and other minorities who wish to see the political system in the country change. There is also the sub-state identity beyond sect, an important factor capable of determining a whole community's allegiance, particularly in regions such as Daraa, where "tribal customs and traditions take precedence over government rule" (Spindel, 2011, p.1). Furthermore, it should be noted that the conflict has not affected the entire country in an equal manner. For instance, the city of Homs[9], a mixed city bringing together

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[9] Homs is Syria's third largest city and a strategically important element for both Assad and the opposition forces. It is the country's most relevant transport hub, as the North-South highway between Aleppo and Damascus runs through it (Lund, 2014). It links the Capital and the coast, which is essential for Russia in order to resupply the regime (through the port of Latakia), and also connects several pipelines and electric infrastructures (Lund, 2014). For the rebels, in addition to all these

many ethnicities and which is a major battleground, has been hit much harder than the Alawi-dominated governorates of Latakia and Tartous in the Mediterranean coast. Therefore, the importance of sectarianism as the driver of conflict differs from place to place. In this way, one should not disregard the dimensions of space and time when analysing the conflict due to the inconsistency of experiences. The civil war should thus be deemed 'semi-sectarian', as Phillips suggests (Phillips, 2015).

2.1 Main belligerents

Syria's civil war is characterized by the intervention of multiple actors, both internal and external (proxy warfare), some with overlapping and at times conflicting agendas. Two main fronts can be outlined: pro-regime forces, and the opposition forces, with some groups not fitting neatly in either of them, such as the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and Daesh.

On the regime forces' side, the central national actor is the Syrian Arab Army (SAA), which is heavily dependent on pro-government militias, both national and foreign. At the beginning of the war, its forces amounted to an estimated 220 000 troops, but in December 2017, the SAA manpower under direct government control was as low as 25 000[10] (Lister & Nelson, 2017). This has made Assad rely on the support of militias and loyalist gangs, many of them highly sectarian and sometimes subservient to interests beyond Syria, such as Iranian-backed Hezbollah and other Shia militias linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). However, at the present time, much of the Syrian regime's strength stems from Russia and its armed forces. The country officially entered the conflict in September 2015, stating that its aim was to deter ISIS. It bombed a few of their positions, but the vast majority of attacks has taken place at opposition-held territory, causing mass civilian casualties. Iran is also an important player, providing assistance and training to the multiple pro-regime forces acting in the battlefield.

The opposition forces comprise an array of groups and actors, both secular and Islamist, foreign and national. The main group and the first one to emerge was the Free Syrian Army (FSA), created shortly after the war erupted, who advocates for a democratic and pluralistic Syria. Made up of former (mostly Sunni) Syrian Army conscripts, it is backed

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factors, Homs constitutes a 'lifeline' because it is part of a smuggling route which has its start in Qusayr, a town near the northern Lebanese border (Hove & Mutanda, 2015).

[10] This shrinking is due to war casualties, desertions, and the fact that many of the soldiers that made up the SAA are Sunni, which Assad sees as possibly posing loyalty questions or not being trustworthy (Lister & Nelson, 2017), hence becoming 'inoperative'.

by some Arab States, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan[11], as well as Turkey and France, with the US and the UK pulling out its support in 2017. Today it is largely irrelevant in many parts of the country, except in the South, where it still holds territory and power, in alignment with the Southern Front (CFR, 2017). On the other side of the political and ideological spectre, there are the Nationalist Jihadis, groups who wish to make the "state and society adhere [to] fundamentalist principles of Islam" (CFR, 2017). Among the many factions that can be included in this group are Jaysh al-Islam, the predominant opposition group in the Damascus suburbs, and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS; a merger between Jabhat Fatah al-Sham, formerly known as Jabhat al-Nusra, and other smaller same-ideology factions), which has on and off pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda. Most of them receive official and/or private funding and support from Arab Gulf States, and they fight Assad's forces and allies, sometimes clashing with other opposition forces as well (CFR, 2017).

The 2 central actors that do not fit into either category are ISIS and the YPG. ISIS emerged in 2013, in Iraq, as a result of a merger between the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI, previously known as Al-Qaeda in Iraq) and its Syrian ally, the al-Nusra Front. Initially linked to the militant Sunni Islamist multinational organization, it later became an independent group fighting and holding territory in both Iraq and Syria. It has become known for its brutality and extremism, and also for the genocide it carried out against the Yazidi religious minority in the Sinjar Mountains region of Iraq. It has mostly fought the Kurdish forces, other (Islamist) opposition groups and up to a certain extent the Assad regime. The YPG, the militia arm of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), a Kurdish party that *de facto* governs the Kurdish-majority region of northern Syria (known as Rojava), is the United States' main ally in the fight against Daesh, Washington's main purpose in the region. It is also the lead-party in the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). With US air support and the provision of military advisers (CFR, 2017), they have been successful in retaking much of the land that had previously been under the Caliphate's control, almost extinguishing its dominance in the country.

2.2 Latest developments

Since its start, the civil war in Syria has caused more than 500 000 casualties[12], and the displacement of nearly 12 million people (both internally and externally), that is, almost half of its pre-war population (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website, data as of 2016; UNHCR website, data as of 2016). The state does not control the integrity of its

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[11] Jordan supports the FSA in its positions in Southern Syria, close to the Jordanian border.
[12] http://www.iamsyria.org/death-tolls.html

territory, and numerous armed groups, both Islamist and non-Islamist, have taken control of large swathes of it. The Syrian territory is currently divided between 3 main actors: the Syrian government forces, who control the majority of the country[13]; the opposition/rebel forces, which rule scattered pockets of land, predominantly in the West, such as the north-western province of Idlib and some territories south of Damascus, in the governorate of Daraa; and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), present in the Northeast of Syria, in cities like Raqqa and Al-Hasakah.[14] Daesh still holds small enclaves in mostly Kurdish-dominated areas, and also in the Golan Heights, in proximity to Israel, but their power has been steadily decreasing.

There have been massive violations of Human Rights perpetrated by government-controlled forces, Russian forces, rebel and jihadist groups, and the International Coalition forces (Syrian Network for Human Rights, 2018), as well as situations that amount to war crimes ("UN: Both sides committed war crimes", 2017) and crimes against humanity ("All sides in Syria killing thousands of detainees", 2016). The majority of these violations were committed by the SAA or its allies. Indeed, the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime is reported to have taken place on multiple occasions, such as in the Damascus suburb of Ghouta in August 2013, and in Khan Shaykhun, in the Idlib governorate, in April 2017 (Henriksen & Schack, 2014; Arms Control Association, 2018). ISIS has resorted to this type of armament as well (Hessey, 2017). In addition to chemical weapons, cluster munitions and victim-activated improvised explosive devices, for instance (IEDs; e.g. landmines), have been used by the Syrian state and non-state actors ("Syria: Banned Soviet-made cluster munitions", 2017; "Syria: Booby-traps and landmines", 2017). This represents a violation of International Humanitarian Law, since these weapons are indiscriminate in nature, thus targeting indistinctively combatants and civilians alike. The use of such arms has increased since Russia further engaged in the conflict, stepping up its military presence in the country (Solvang, 2016).

After entering the war in late 2015, in order to support Assad and his regime's efforts to deter rebel and Islamist expansion, Russia has been Damascus' key ally, shifting the course of the conflict and assisting, mainly through air support, in the recapture of large and important parts of the country. Russia's interest in Syria derives from the fact that the Arab nation is the only long-standing Russian ally in the Middle East, and also from the existence of (and wish to maintain) its naval facilities in the Mediterranean port of Tartous, in western Syria. In fact, this is Moscow's last outpost in the Mediterranean, only making it more

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[13] In late 2017, the government held more than 50% of the country's territory, up from 19% earlier in the year. Most of Syria's provincial capitals are under regime control, including Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Latakia and Hama, its five main cities (Haaretz, 2017).
[14] To see who controls what in the Syrian civil war, visit
https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2015/05/syria-country-divided-150529144229467.html

paramount (Tharoor, 2015). Political analysts go further, though, stating that the main reason why Russia has intervened in the war lies with Putin's "fear of state collapse" (Hill, 2013) and his "aversion to forcible regime change" (Hill, 2013), which frequently gave rise to "disparate and leaderless opposition forces, which over time came to include extremist Sunni Islamist groups" (Hill, 2013). These, in turn, according to Hill, can cultivate fundamentalist (and secessionist) agendas among Russia's own Muslim majority regions, such as Chechnya, where a bloody civil war already took place (Hill, 2013). Regardless of its main motivations, it is certain that Russian support has been decisive to hold Assad in power (Heller, 2016), and "the course of Syria's war hinges on what Russia does next" (Heller, 2016). Several scenarios arise amid the current circumstances. The fragmentation of Syria into multiple zones of control (for example, the Kurdish-dominated northern region) is solidifying, making *de facto* partition more likely (Karlin, 2018). In the government-controlled areas, Assad's remain in power appears to be a given, and previously staunch opposers to the Syrian regime, like Turkey, Jordan or even Saudi Arabia, have now come to accept this outcome, resuming talks with Damascus (Chulov, 2017). Indeed, this "normalisation with a bitter foe" (Chulov, 2017) is the product of international fatigue in relation to the protraction of the conflict and all its regional and global impacts, namely the refugee crisis. Nevertheless, "violence will not cease in the coming years nor will efforts to unseat him [Assad]" (Karlin, 2018), as many Syrians will seek justice for the crimes committed, refusing to accept impunity. Should this be the case, this 'solution' will only postpone further fighting, making the future more uncertain and unstable. Having entered its seventh year of conflict, the civil war can now be considered a protracted conflict, as per its typical definition. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (Slim & Morey, 2016, p.10), protracted conflicts are fragmented and mutated, involving "the rise of new armed groups, splintering armed forces and recurring political factionalism", as well as the emergence of new goals and ideologies, namely military and terrorist ones. They are episodic and internationalized too, in the way that "the intensity of conflict is not usually constant but is often seasonal" (Slim & Morey, 2016, p.10), and with international actors entering the conflict (other States, via proxy warfare, for instance, alongside international organisations). Finally, "it gradually degrades infrastructure, services, living conditions and, with them, human dignity" (Slim & Morey, 2016, p.10), causing enormous and cumulative impact in all sectors of society. This engenders extreme fragility in basic social services (e.g. provision of education), which are vital for the civilian population, and may provoke further conflict. It usually leads to massive displacement trends, both internally and across borders. The Syrian case illustrates this type of conflict, as we have already demonstrated, and will continue to demonstrate in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

In the humanitarian and migration fields, it is noted that displacement within Syria is still taking place today[15], and the movement of Syrians back to Syria (mostly from neighbouring countries) is becoming more commonplace, even if it remains small when compared to the overall returns movement, which includes the return of IDPs to their original area of residence (ACAPS, 2017). There are widespread concerns that some of these 'return' movements are somewhat forced, or that people are coerced to go back due to the lack of viable alternatives in their current place of residence (e.g. increasing hostility from host communities, lack of income opportunities and/or access to legal stay, among other factors). However, some do return voluntarily as they perceive the security situation in their home country to have improved in the last months and there is a growing rhetoric that the conflict could be in its final stages (ACAPS, 2017). This narrative is explored by some politicians in the neighbouring countries, especially in Lebanon, where "[l]ong standing public and government hostility towards Syrian refugees has intensified in the lead up to the May 2018 [parliamentary] elections" (ACAPS, 2017, p.4). The Lebanese political and historical backgrounds are the subject of the next sub-chapter, where we will try to depict the environment where Syrian refugees had to settle upon seeking exile.

3. Lebanese Politics and Syrian refugees

Lebanon has been an independent state since 1943, having previously been under French control. It is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, bringing together Arabs and Armenians, and, in religious terms, comprising a total of 18 recognised religious sects, such as Sunni Muslims (27%), Shia (27%), Maronite Christians (21%), Greek Orthodox (8%), Druze (5,6%), among others (Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook, data as of 2012). Being a confessional state[16], religion in Lebanon is of paramount importance in virtually every aspect of society, including politics and the civil service (Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East, 2007). Populism and political clientelism or patronage are also very much entrenched to the extent that "ethno-sectarian populisms have deepened societal

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[15] In the first half of 2017, there were 692 000 new displacements due to conflict and violence within Syria (IDMC website, data as of 2017).
[16] Confessionalism can be understood as a "system of government that proportionally allocates political power among a country's communities – whether religious or ethnic – according to their percentage of the population" (Harb, 2006). It is a form of consociationalism, a broader Political Science concept developed by A. Lijphart, which is also based in the sharing of power in states that are composed of several distinct 'sub-societies' (with multiple ethnicities, religions, languages, or political stances, for example). It stands in contrast to the notions of centralisation and majoritarian democracy, while still working to "establish a democracy that works to preserve the autonomy of groups, while maintaining a sense of a collective nationhood" (Salamey & Tabar, 2012, p.500).

divisions, raising the spectre of separatism and autonomous authoritarian-based groups which directly challenge the national authorities and institutions" (Salamey & Tabar, 2012, p.500). An example of such a group in Lebanon is Hezbollah, whose role in internal affairs (promoted by international actors) has been escalating, especially since they led the operation to expel Jabhat Fatah al-Sham fighters from the Lebanese town of Arsal, in the northeast of the country (Porter, 2017; see *Annex B – Political map of Lebanon*). Sectarianism has resulted in an "unwavering struggle for power" (Salamey & Tabar, 2012, p.500), which has come to hinder the development and institutionalisation of the state of Lebanon and reinforce the fragmentation of its social and economic fabric (Salamey & Tabar, 2012). The Lebanese Parliament illustrates this division in a straightforward way, since it is proportionally represented, as established in the Ta'if Accords of 1989 [17] – the 128 parliamentary seats are equally divided between Muslims and Christians, with each filling 64 of them. Furthermore, since its early years as a sovereign state, more specifically, since the National Pact[18] laid the foundations of Lebanon as a multi-confessional state in 1943, it has become publicly acknowledged that the nation's President must be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of the Parliament a Shia Muslim. These measures have elevated sectarianism to the official level, and possibly perpetuated it, at least in the political sphere.

The Lebanese political scenario has been marked by several fully-fledged wars and occasional milder conflicts and instability. The most important conflict that can be somehow related to our thesis topic is the 1975-1990 civil war and the ensuing Syrian occupation. The civil war started in 1975, and the Syrian troops entered Lebanon in June 1976 with the aim of restoring peace, but also to curb (Sunni) Palestinian growing influence and mobilization.[19] They were militarily present in the country until 2005, when, in the wake of the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, although it was never proved that Syria had been behind his death, they were forced to leave Lebanon. This triggered "huge anti-Syrian demonstrations in Beirut" (Whitaker, 2005), part of a wave of peaceful, civil resistance protests that became known as the Cedar Revolution. However, several UN member states and the Lebanese opposition claimed Syrian influence and presence in internal affairs was

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[17] The Ta'if Accords sought to end the Lebanese civil war by extending Lebanese sovereignty and authority to South Lebanon, previously occupied by Israel. They set the division of the parliament at 50:50 for Christians and Muslims and called for the disarmament and disbandment of all Lebanese and foreign militias (UN Peacemaker).

[18] The National Pact was a power-sharing unwritten agreement between Lebanon's Maronite, Sunni and Shia communities that rendered the country a multi-confessional state. It was adopted in 1943, with some of its core proposals and elements being later altered with the Ta'if Accords.

[19] After the expulsion of many Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) fighters from Jordan in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Organisation largely moved its base to Lebanon. Palestinian penetration into Lebanese politics grew further, increasing tensions with Christian militias. This instigated the Lebanese Civil War, which lasted for 15 years.

still very much alive, particularly when it concerned the intelligence network it had built in Lebanon (Whitaker, 2005). Nowadays, Syria's power and clout in Lebanon are mostly exercised through Hezbollah, the Iranian proxy in the region, and also through the support for Syrian-aligned Lebanese parties, such as the Syrian Social Nationalist Party in Lebanon, the Ba'ath Party, along with other March 8 Alliance[20] parties. In the Syrian civil war, excluding Hezbollah's overt interference by side-lining with the Assad regime, the official stance of the Lebanese government has to a great extent been neutral, with no direct military interventions or incursions into Syrian territory by the Lebanese Armed Forces.[21] In mid-2012, all national parties adopted the Ba'abda Declaration, "which formally stated Lebanon's dissociation policy from regional and international conflict as part of its National Dialogue framework" (Dionigi, 2016, p.10). It aimed "to preserve the delicate political balance between the various sectarian forces which, as political factions, were unable to come to agreement" (Janmyr, 2016, p.60). Despite refraining from participating in or supporting any faction in the conflict, the "importance of the 'right to humanitarian solidarity'" (Dionigi, 2016, p.10) was acknowledged in the Declaration.

The Government of Lebanon recently held parliamentary elections, after postponing them several times due to political stalemates over electoral reforms, and also because of the impact of the Syrian crisis that started hitting the country in 2011. In fact, the same legislature had been in place since 2009, the government collapsed twice (in 2011 and 2013), and the presidency remained vacant for 29 months, until Michel Aoun took office in 2016 (Ajroudi & Chughtai, 2018). These most recent elections and previous electoral campaigns were marked by an anti-Syrian rhetoric, with Human Rights Watch (HRW) calling for the running parties to strengthen Human Rights protection measures, including those related to refugees' rights and women's rights. However, few candidates have committed to all of the proposed reforms, and none of the 'establishment parties' (for example, Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement, or Hariri's Future Movement) pledged to adopt the reforms (only independent parties and candidates, mostly from the civil society sector, have done so) ("Lebanon: Political Parties Shun Rights Issues", 2018). The topic of refugees and the wish to see them return to Syria can be seen as the one "election issue that unites most Lebanese in this fractious, stressed-out country" (Reguly, 2018). In fact, politicians and other social groups are increasingly "calling for refugees to go home" (HRW, 2018, p.1) and they "have

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[20] There are two main party alliances in Lebanon: the March 8 Alliance (traditionally Syrian-aligned), which comprises the Free Patriotic Movement (mainly Maronite), the Amal Movement (mainly Shiite), Hezbollah, and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party; and the March 14 Alliance (commonly anti-Syrian), consisting of the Future Movement (mostly Sunni), the Lebanese Forces (Maronite) and the Kataeb Party (Maronite).
[21] In practice, given the weakness of the central government and its inability to present itself as one unified, undivided body, the reality on the ground is different, with some political actors becoming deeply implicated in the struggle (Barnes-Dacey, 2013).

been quick to blame displaced Syrians for a host of social and economic ills, many of which predate the Syrian refugee influx" (HRW, 2018, p.1). This reflects the rising refugee-host fatigue, which results from two main factors. The first is the fact that Lebanon has harboured refugees since the conflict started 7 years ago, which has placed enormous strain on the national government, public services, territory and resources. This factor will be further analysed in Chapter 2, along with the additional hardships that refugees encounter when such exhaustion from the host communities reaches 'unbearable' stages. The second is the lack of international support for the Syrian refugee crisis, more specifically the shortage of funding that the region has had to grapple with in the past years.[22] These conditions have created a hostile environment for refugees to live in, and this symbolic (and very often physical and psychological) violence has manifested itself through the eviction of refugees from homes and municipalities throughout Lebanon, particularly in the Bekaa Valley (HRW, 2018). President Aoun has also said that the country "can no longer cope with the social and financial costs" (HRW, 2018, p.1) that derive from hosting refugees for such an extended period of time, further displaying the level of tiredness that characterizes Lebanese society at the moment. Therefore, as we previously pointed out, Syrians have reported facing growing hostility and discrimination, as well as being pressured or coerced to leave Lebanon, both from the authorities (for example, the municipal police, the army, or certain politicians whose agendas are considered to be xenophobic) and also from landlords, employers and neighbours (HRW, 2018). However, in line with the historical background that we provided on Lebanon, it should be mentioned that Syrians have very often been frowned upon by many people in the country.

Before the war in Syria erupted in 2011, causing massive displacement into Lebanon, and to other nearby nations, Syrians were already present there, mostly performing low-skilled jobs, in labour-intensive sectors of the economy (such as in agriculture). In truth, the name "Syrian" was often associated with "vulgarity, [and] low social and economic status" (Mroueh, 2014), being often used as an insult too. A myriad of other factors has further denigrated their 'image' among the Lebanese, such as the infiltration of ISIS and Jabhat Fatah al-Sham militants from Syria into the outskirts of Arsal, from August 2014 until late July 2017 (Chehayeb, 2017). During this period of time, several Lebanese police officers and soldiers were kidnapped, with some being later killed by Islamists, and suicide bombings also took place, killing 5 people and wounding 30 more (Chehayeb, 2017). This, in turn, caused

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[22] In 2017, the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), "a multi-year plan between the Government of Lebanon and its international and national partners to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable" (LCRP 2017-2020, 2018, p.5), including Syrian refugees, vulnerable Lebanese populations, and Palestinian refugees both from Syria and Lebanon, requested 2.75 billion USD for its funding, of which they were only able to obtain 43%, a decrease in 3 percentage points from 2016 (LCRP 2017-2020 Update, p.10).

the displacement of Lebanese citizens to other areas of the country, exercising even more pressure on the authorities and aid agencies, as the region is already stretched to the limit by the high number of Syrian refugees that sought shelter from the conflict across the border. Nowadays the town and its suburbs are free from ISIS and other Islamist groups' presence, after Hezbollah and the SAA, in coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces, who avoided the infiltration of Jihadist militants into Lebanon, conducted a joint operation to clear the area. Consequently, resentment towards Syrian refugees (there were around 55 000 of them in Arsal in 2017 (Ghaddar, 2017)) increased, since the Syrian war was seen as spilling over into Lebanon, with three Syrian refugee settlements in the Bekaa Valley being set on fire as 'revenge', with no arrests made (Ghaddar, 2017). It should be noted as well that the Bekaa, particularly the region towards the South of Lebanon (Hezbollah's historical stronghold), is mostly inhabited by Shiites who support Hezbollah and the role it has played in the Syrian civil war. This becomes problematic due to the fact that Syrian refugees coming to these areas are typically Sunni, which has the potential to fuel sectarian clashes in an already-fragmented society, like the Lebanese (Al Tabbaa, 2017). It may also be perceived as the idea of 'the enemy coming in to my territory', as, in the conflict in Syria, Hezbollah backs the Syrian regime, and not the opposition, which is predominantly Sunni as well.

Furthermore, as laid out before, the Lebanese territory was under Syrian occupation for almost 30 years and much of its political scene was (and still is) controlled by Damascus, which may still today breed animosity towards the refugees, especially among the older generations ("Catch-22 for Syrian migrants in Lebanon", 2012). The fear that the Syrian opposition might settle and establish itself in Lebanon, pursuing its endeavours like the Palestinian resistance did in the lead-up to the Lebanese Civil War, is seen as potentially bringing further conflict to the nation as well. Finally, there is a lingering fear that the influx and stay of Syrian refugees in Lebanon might destabilise the religious fabric in favour of Sunnis, therefore making them the majoritarian sect and reinforcing sectarianism. Indeed, according to Hove and Mutanda (2015, p.560), "it was undeniable that the sectarian violence in Lebanon was dormant before the Syrian conflict but was revived as a consequence of the conflict". Bahout (2014), on the other hand, believes that "[t]he fault lines that threaten to inflame Lebanon in the wake of the Syrian cauldron were visibly at play well before the 2011-12 Arab Awakening", and places their origins at the time of the Ta'if Accords, as they were associated with a "slow, seemingly irreversible accumulation of crises and feuds waiting to explode" (Bahout, 2014, p.2). They might have been 'silenced' or not so apparent to the public eye, but the conflict in Syria "only added fuel to an already stoked fire of instabilities and divisions" (Bahout, 2014, p.2). Despite this slender divergence between authors, it can be agreed that this 'religious equilibrium' concern largely stems from Christian and Shia communities, with Christian politicians warning "voters that the overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim

Syrian refugee population is a threat to Lebanon's national identity" (Lamb, 2018). In this regard, the parliamentary elections that were held in May 6th, and which saw Christian parties and Hezbollah's coalition emerge stronger[23], pose even more challenges for the refugees.

These incidents "stirred anti-refugee sentiment across Lebanon, prompting an array of related attacks" (Ghaddar, 2017), and the implementation of further impositions and restrictions on the freedom of movement of Syrian refugees. Lebanese authorities are known to have carried out numerous raids in refugee camps throughout the region and in other parts of the country, having enforced curfews, expelled many refugees from their homes because they are deemed "a security threat" (Wood, 2017), and increased the number of detentions at checkpoints. In the political sphere, demands for Syrians to be sent back to their home country are intensifying, with almost all political parties and politicians calling for the return "to Syria as soon as possible, without waiting for a political solution to the conflict" (Wood, 2017). One of the strategies proposed by Lebanon itself and the international community too was to establish safe zones in Syria, near the border with Lebanon, but this has never been done[24]. Thus, refugees remain in extremely precarious conditions in terms of living standards (safety, livelihoods, healthcare and education are not guaranteed), but also in legal terms. In fact, the vast majority of them does not possess valid legal residency permits in Lebanon, which severely conditions their freedom of movement (hence, their livelihoods), renders them highly vulnerable to exploitation, and restricts their protection and status to the extent that, for example, if assaulted, Syrian refugees cannot press charges or seek justice, and they may actually face imprisonment themselves for they are not in the country legally. All of these factors combined define the environment where refugees must live, and which ultimately comes to shape their livelihoods and resilience.

This hostile and unfavourable environment has often forced them to resort to negative coping strategies, such as the sale of lands and/or property back in Syria, contracting debts or engaging in further indebtment, skipping meals or decreasing the daily food consumption, removing children from school, engaging children in labour (child labour situations), prostitution, forced (child) marriage, human trafficking (for the purpose of forced labour or sexual exploitation), among others. This is the focus of the next sub-chapter, where we will

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[23] In the last held parliamentary elections, in a reflection of the Syrian political situation and the regional political trends, Hezbollah and its parliamentary allies won more than a third of the total 128 seats, becoming the largest parliamentary bloc (Loveluck, 2018). Hariri's Future Movement came out weaker, losing 14 seats, and Christian parties were generally successful, maintaining their original number of seats or adding more (Rizkallah, 2018). Non-sectarian civil society groups, running as part of a campaign known as Kollouna Watani, managed to obtain 1 seat. More than 7000 violations were recorded on the election day by the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (Rizkallah, 2018).

[24] So-called "safe zones" are very often not considered safe, having proved to be largely unsuccessful in previous war zones, such as in Bosnia, Rwanda, or Iraq (Wolfe, 2017). Experts say that because conflict zones can be "very fluid", safety, stability and the provision of basic services and protection to civilians/refugees cannot be guaranteed (Wolfe, 2017).

introduce the basic concepts and instruments of the international legal framework protecting refugees, the role of the States and that of UNHCR in the protection of these vulnerable people, and other relevant principles.

4. International regime for refugee protection

When States fail to uphold the rule of law in their territory, persons (not just its national citizens, but often immigrants as well) are usually forced to leave to seek safety and protection[25] in other countries. If this happens, a second country has to step in to ensure that refugees' basic rights are respected. This is known as "International protection", and it is a central issue to International Law, International Human Rights Law and, more specifically, International Humanitarian Law (IHL, also known as the law of war) and International Refugee Law. It was developed mostly after World War II, when Europe had to cope with a large-scale refugee and humanitarian crisis. The most important instruments in International Refugee Protection is the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and its 1967 Protocol. The Convention defines the term "refugee", his/her rights and obligations in the country of asylum and, perhaps most importantly, established the principle of *non-refoulement*, according to which "refugees should not be forcibly returned to a territory where their lives or freedom would be threatened" (UNHCR, 2017a, p.16). It also outlines States' obligations, including to cooperate with UNHCR. Since the definition of refugee under the Convention applies only to persons who became refugees as a result of events occurring before January 1st 1951, the need to broaden the concept led to the drafting and adoption of the 1967 Protocol, which removes the temporal and geographic limitations set out in the Convention. Although related, these 2 documents are independent of each other, in such a way that a few countries have acceded to the Protocol but not the Convention (e.g. the United States of America). Currently, 148 countries are parties to one or both of these instruments, with the most notable exceptions being the majority of South and Southeast Asian countries, alongside the Middle Eastern ones (neither Lebanon nor Syria signed them). The reasons for this remain unclear, however, we can speculate that most likely it is not related to the wealth or Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country, since Yemen, the poorest country in the Arab world, signed both documents and so did the majority of African

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[25] Protection can be understood as the "full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of human rights, refugee and international humanitarian law" (UNHCR, 2017a, p.261). It involves "creating an environment conducive to preventing and/or alleviating the immediate effects of a specific pattern of abuse, and restoring human dignity through reparation, restitution and rehabilitation" (UNHCR, 2017a, p.261).

nations, including poorer Sub-Saharan ones. It can be argued that most Arab nations did not sign the 1951 Convention because it dealt solely with European refugees being displaced due to World War II. Still, they are not party to the 1967 Protocol either, which encompasses all nationalities. This can probably be related to the 1967 Six-day War, which opposed Israel to its Arab neighbours, displacing 250 000 Palestinians (from the West Bank and Gaza), 100 000 Syrians (from the Golan Heights) (Wazir, 2017), as well as several thousand Egyptians from the Sinai Peninsula (Machairas, 2017). Many of these displaced people made their way to other Arab countries, namely Lebanon, which had already received a large number of Palestinians in 1948 after the so-called *Nakba*. Thus, the ratification of any convention dealing with displaced people would mean that Lebanon would have to host more refugees in case another conflict took place in the region. Being a small, deeply divided country, their presence would be seen as bringing further tension, like the Syrian refugee crisis is seen nowadays. Despite not having signed any of these core refugee protection documents, Arab countries, like all countries, are still somewhat conditioned by some of the Convention's basic principles and by international law.

According to the 1951 Convention, a *refugee* is "[a]ny person who, '…owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his [or her] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him [or her]self of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his [or her] former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it'" (UNHCR, 2017a, p.262). *Internally Displaced Persons* (IDPs) are, according to the *United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border" (UNHCR website). On the other hand, a *migrant* is someone who chooses to move in order to find work, pursue further studies, reunite with his family, among other reasons. He does not fear persecution in his home country and benefits from its protection. An *asylum-seeker* is someone who is seeking international protection but has not yet been given a final decision on his claim. Like refugees, they cannot be sent back to their countries while their process is being analysed as they are protected by the principle of *non-refoulement*. Not every asylum-seeker will ultimately become a refugee (such status can be denied to him), but every refugee is initially an asylum-seeker.

It should be mentioned that this basic IHL principle is part of customary international law, therefore it applies to everyone who claims to be in need of international protection,

whether this person's country has signed the 1951 Convention and its Protocol or not (it is binding on all States). This means that while his process is being analysed, the asylum-seeker cannot be returned to his home country. Consequently, in reality, when a man's life or freedom are threatened, he should never be forced to return to a country where his life or freedom would be at stake, nor should he be denied entry into a state or be punished for entering it 'illegally', if he is discovered by authorities. In fact, no human being should be considered 'illegal' (as sometimes they are named by the law enforcement organs and/or the media) – the term 'irregular' is more appropriate. These global, UN-developed instruments are sometimes complemented by other declarations, principles or regulations, specific to a certain region of the world. In the Middle East, our area of study, there are no binding regional instruments relating to refugee protection. The Arab Convention on Regulating Status of Refugees in the Arab Countries was adopted in 1994 by the League of Arab States (also known as Arab League), but it never entered into force (UNHCR, 2017a). In 2017, in partnership with UNHCR, it signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) "aimed at establishing a global cooperation framework for an effective response to the needs of refugees in the Arab region and to facilitate better humanitarian access and emergency response" ("UNHCR and League of Arab States sign", 2017). In addition, in 2012, Member States of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation adopted the Ashgabat Declaration, confirming the "'importance of respecting the principles and values that underlie these instruments' [the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol]" (UNHCR, 2017a, p.21). However, this is a non-binding document, which, despite being relevant and having the potential to exercise some degree of influence on the signatory countries' policy-development and implementation projects, does not have the same legal value as instruments in other regions (for example, the Common European Asylum System, created in 1999, which applies to EU nations, and is now facing difficulties too).

But what does *asylum* involve? Although not defined in international law, it is "a process that starts with the admission of someone to safety and concludes when the refugee becomes a citizen of his or her new country [local integration, which may lead to naturalization], or is able to return voluntarily, in safety and dignity, to his or her country of origin [voluntary return/repatriation], or gain admission to and a durable solution in another country [resettlement to a third country]" (UNHCR, 2017a, p.28). The right to seek and enjoy asylum has been established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and it has been historically present in all civilizations over time, thus constituting "a general principle of international law that is legally binding when it comes to the interpretation of the nature and scope of states' obligations towards individuals seeking protection" (Gil-Bazo, 2015, p.3). It includes the refugees' and asylum-seekers' duty to abide by the law of the host state, its responsibility to guarantee the civilian, peaceful and humanitarian character of

asylum, refugees' access to UNHCR, their treatment following Human Rights and refugee law standards, and their access to fair and effective processes to determine their status and protection needs (UNHCR, 2017a). The official position of the Government of Lebanon regarding the ultimate solutions to asylum-seekers does not contemplate any form of local integration, as this is considered "unconstitutional, and therefore not an option"[26] (LCRP, 2018, p.16). Rather, the only durable solutions in their perspective is the safe return to one's country of origin, or the resettlement to a third country.

UNHCR is the main UN organ dealing with refugees and their plight.[27] It is a subsidiary organ of the UN General Assembly, seeking solutions to refugees' conditions, and providing international protection to refugees, IDPs, returnees, and stateless persons. It can only exercise its mandate in cooperation with States, as these are the actors that have the power to address the root causes of conflict and displacement, (re)implement the rule of law, and also because solidarity and burden-sharing are of paramount importance in this sector.[28] This protection encompasses material assistance (which helps states deal with the financial and social strains that hosting refugees for relatively long periods of time can bear), along with legal assistance. Indeed, assistance and protection are "mutually reinforcing" (UNHCR, 2017a), in the way that refugees simultaneously require both – they need support to meet their basic needs (shelter, food, medical care…), but they are dependent on international protection too, whether they are still in areas with on-going conflict or not.

UNHCR is responsible for supervising the implementation of international instruments on refugee protection, such as the 1951 Convention. As we previously mentioned, Lebanon has not signed either of the two central instruments. However, UNHCR is present in the country, coordinating the refugee response in the wake of the Syrian crisis, working with over 60 organizations (multiple Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), other UN agencies, and the Lebanese Government) to provide essential relief supplies. In fact, multiple International Relations actors are involved in the response to the crisis, with international

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[26] As settling in the host community is not a possibility in Lebanon (and in many other countries that host large numbers of refugees), onward movement, that is, to States further afield, tends to be a preferred choice. This desire emerges as there are "limitations on the availability and standards of protection; lack of assistance or other means of survival and importantly, the lack of any prospect of a durable solution" (UNHCR, 2017a, p.80). The prospect of family reunification and re-establishing community links may also play a part in this decision.

[27] Many other UN organizations work with refugees as well, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA). The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) often steps in to coordinate UN assistance in multiple countries in humanitarian crises that go beyond the capacity and mandate of any single humanitarian agency (like the Syrian crisis, which affects not only Syria, but also Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt).

[28] Upon fleeing, the vast majority of refugees remains in the countries neighbouring their war-torn homelands, and these are mainly low or middle-income states already facing serious hardships of their own. Despite this, international support has been waning, hampering refugee livelihoods and their protection ("Poorer countries host most of the forcibly", 2017).

organisations (both intergovernmental and non-governmental) coordinating their actions with the State, and with other charitable institutions and sometimes with private corporations too (Charles, 2017).

Its main tool in this coordination is the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), an integrated humanitarian and stabilization plan which aims to address the protracted refugee situation. Such a situation takes place when "refugees are in a long-lasting state of limbo" (UNHCR, 2017a, p.261; UNHCR usually considers a refugee situation to be 'protracted' when refugees have been in the asylum country for 5 years or more), and, although their lives may not be at risk, "their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years in exile" (UNHCR, 2017a, p.261). They are frequently heavily dependent on external aid, not being able to improve their resilience capabilities or build sustained livelihoods. This is the case of many refugees in Lebanon, not just Syrians, but also Palestinians, who have long been outcasted from mainstream Lebanese society and endured extremely arduous living conditions.[29] Refugee protection in Lebanon, like in any other country, must foresee measures that safeguard the security of the host country and protect refugees at the same time, providing them with access to education and other social services, livelihoods, alongside "programmes fostering self-reliance and interaction with host communities" (UNHCR, 2017a, p.74). This interaction should have a central role in States' response to population movements (be them refugee influxes or the entry of migrants who are not in need of international protection), since they promote social cohesion, facilitate their integration, and prevent precariousness, boosting their role as full and equal members of society (UNHCR, 2017a). When such inclusion is not guaranteed or even encouraged by the host State, when there are restrictions to the access of asylum-seekers to a safe country, or when regular migratory routes are closed, this aggravates the humanitarian situation, shifts migrants' movements to other (unsafer) routes and contributes to the businesses of human smuggling and human trafficking (UNHCR, 2017a; Alexandridis & Dalkiran, 2017). Moreover, it exacerbates refugees' destitution and vulnerability, often compelling them to resort to negative coping strategies, particularly emergency coping mechanisms[30]. In an attempt to

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[29] To know more about the condition of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, visit "Unwelcome guests: Palestinian refugees in Lebanon" at https://electronicintifada.net/content/unwelcome-guests-palestinian-refugees-lebanon/8917 and, for more detail, *The Situation of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*, a document issued by UNHCR, based on information provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), at http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/56cc95484.pdf.

[30] According to the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR) report, livelihood coping strategies are classified into 3 categories according to their severity: stress (spending savings, buying on credit, incurring debt); crisis (withdrawing children from school, reducing non-food expenses, marriage of children under 18 years); and emergency (child labour, begging, accepting high-risk jobs; selling house or land) (VASyR, 2017).

clarify these often-misunderstood concepts, we will now further explain them, before delving into the case of Lebanon.

According to the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air (also known as the Migrant Smuggling Protocol), human or *migrant smuggling* is a crime consisting in the "procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident" (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, n.d.). It is a *voluntary* action, although Human Rights (HR) violations are known to occur and the conditions under which the transportation takes place are often dangerous and degrading (UNHCR, 2017a). This is the case, for example, of migrants who pay human smugglers to cross the Aegean Sea from Turkey to Greece. *Human trafficking*, on the other hand, is a more serious crime and a violation of HR. It is understood as "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons [the act], by means of the *threat* or use of *force* or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits [the means] to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation [the purpose]" (UNODC website, n.d., emphasis added).

Both migrant smuggling and human trafficking take place in Lebanon, and this has been the case even before the influx of Syrian refugees into the country in 2011 and afterwards, as it is an origin country (it has historically been a country of emigration) and a destination one too, for economic migrants, mostly domestic labourers (European Commission, 2016) and refugees (Syrians, Palestinians and Iraqis). It is a transit country as well, with many Syrian refugees looking to be smuggled out of Lebanon to try to reach Europe (European Commission, 2016). However, in January 2015 the Government of Lebanon (GoL) introduced new border regulations which have reportedly made the number of arrivals of persons from Syria to the country decrease (LCRP 2017-2020, 2018; before it used to run an open border policy, and Syrians were able to enter by land using one of the four Border Crossing Points (BCP)). Consequently, this has pushed people to resort to other (irregular) means in order to reach safety. For example, they turn to migrant smuggling, use false documents (e.g. visas to third countries that serve as 'proof' of onward travel, making their stay in Lebanon temporary, i.e., a transit location), bribe authorities or use unofficial entry points situated along the Syria-Lebanon border (European Commission, 2016). These new regulations may enhance the potential for exploitation and make refugees' journeys to safety more perilous. The impact they have in their safety and protection will be further analysed in the next Chapter.

Exploitation may include forced labour, sexual exploitation (prostitution, for instance), slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. *Forced labour* can

take place in every economic sector, and it refers to "situations in which persons are coerced to work through the use of violence or intimidation, or by more subtle means such as accumulated debt, retention of identity papers or threats of denunciation to immigration authorities" ("The Meanings of Forced Labour", 2014). Although it affects both genders, sexual exploitation and *Sexual and Gender-based Violence* (SGBV) in general are much more prevalent among women, and particularly in conservative, male-dominated and conflict-affected communities, like the Syrian refugees' in Lebanon (Awad, 2017). SGBV refers to "any act that is perpetrated against a person's will and is based on gender norms and unequal power relationships" (UNHCR website, n.d.), taking emotional, physical, psychological and/or sexual forms. Very often it is exacerbated in displacement circumstances, as a "consequence of the breakdown of family and community structures" (UNHCR website, n.d.), due to the overcrowding of housing spaces and consequent lack of privacy, or because of the loss of financial and social assets (UNHCR, 2015). Another form of exploitation and possibly violence is child labour. *Child labour* is an increasing practice among Syrian refugees in Lebanon, consisting of "work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development" (ILO website, n.d.). It interferes with their schooling (or deprives them of the opportunity to attend or continue school), and can be mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous (ILO website, n.d.). The so-called "worst forms of child labour" include, for instance, "children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illnesses and/or left to fend for themselves on the streets of large cities [often through child begging]" (ILO website, n.d.). All of these types of exploitation, forced labour and child labour are considered "*negative coping strategies*", that is, "survival stratagems to which vulnerable people may resort, even though they may be illegal, morally reprehensible and in the long-run damaging" (Dionigi, 2016, p.16). Child marriage, the reduction of non-food essential expenditures, the removal of children from school, survival sex, among others, as we previously mentioned in the first pages of this thesis, also fit into this category. The adoption of such mechanisms by displaced Syrians' households is gradually increasing, as a result of the protraction of the conflict, the depletion of resources and overall lack of protection and assistance. Before proceeding to the analysis of these harmful practices and the scenarios under which they occur in the context of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, we will briefly outline the main legal instruments that regulate migration in the country.

Migration legislation in Lebanon is not contained in one single document (International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), 2017). Rather, it is a body of laws and other legal instruments that regulate the entry, stay and exit of foreigners in the national territory. In legal terms, Lebanon signed (2002) and ratified (2005) the Migrant Smuggling Protocol, but it was never transposed into law. Indeed, the most important law

instrument applied in this field is the July 1962 "Law on the entry and stay of foreign nationals in Lebanon, and their exit from the country" (ICMPD, 2015). In line with the principle of *non-refoulement*, it "grants any foreigner the right to seek asylum if her personal life or freedom are threatened for political reasons" (European Commission, 2016, p.60). Among other aspects, it stipulates the documents and information that should be provided when a non-Lebanese enters the country (such as valid proof of identity and other specific documents to support the stated purpose of stay in Lebanon (ICMPD, 2017)), and it delineates the occupations that can only be performed by Lebanese, which ultimately denies access to livelihoods to many refugees, including those hailing from Syria. However, according to Dionigi (2016), this law applies to political asylum only, and its effectiveness has not been confirmed.

The *non-refoulement* principle is also upheld through the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, to which Lebanon acceded in 2000. Other important legal instruments for our study are the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both ratified in 1972. In the field of gender equality, in 1997 Lebanon ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), hence "being specifically obliged ... to ensure that refugee women are not exposed to violations of their rights under the Convention, such as gender-based violence, irrespective of whether those violations are committed by state actors or private persons and other non-state actors" (Amnesty International (AI), 2016, p.11). The country has equally ratified key international conventions concerning child labour, such as the ILO's Minimum Age Convention (relating to the minimum working age for labourers; 2003), the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (2001) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC; 1991). It has also signed (2002) and ratified (2005) the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially in Women and Children, thus being bound by its measures and directives. Another important instrument is the Memorandum of Understanding the GoL and UNHCR signed in 2003 (in light of the Iraqi refugee crisis), which states that "asylum-seekers will be tolerated, but only for a limited period of time, pending resettlement or voluntary repatriation" (UNHCR Global Appeal 2010-11 Lebanon, n.d.).[31] In 2011 the Anti-Trafficking Law was passed, setting out what exploitation consists of in the eyes of the GoL, as well as the penalties that entail in case an infraction is committed. These instruments (theoretically) guarantee the protection of everyone's Human Rights, such as the

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[31] In this MoU, the GoL accepted UNHCR's role in conducting registration of refugees and protecting them as long as they are resettled to a third country within a six-month period. This period can be extended once by 3 months, thus allowing refugees to obtain a temporary "circulation permit" of up to 12 months (there is an initial 3-month period for determining the asylum-seeker's status; Janmyr, 2016).

right to live free from discrimination and violence and to have access to justice and adequate standards of living. In this way, despite not having signed the 1951 Convention nor its 1967 Protocol, the normative importance of the international regime on migrants and refugees is still upheld by Lebanon, as it signed and ratified key legal instruments that deal with the issue, such as the previously mentioned Conventions, Protocols and Covenants.

However, the government has repeatedly refused to adopt the internationally acknowledged notion of "refugee", instead opting for the term "displaced person" for fearing to undertake obligations that such a status could bring about (Dionigi, 2016). The term "displaced" is also "suggestive of a less permanent status" (Janmyr, 2016, p.61), which is compatible with Lebanon's consideration of itself not as a country of asylum, but of transit, where local integration and eventual naturalisation are not an option. Moreover, "refugee" is usually heavily associated with "Palestinian", which bears strong significance for many Lebanese due to the 15-year civil war that ravaged the country in the late 20th century, partly because of Palestinian presence in the territory. Lebanon is not obliged to adopt such terminology, however, since it did not sign the 1951 Convention nor its 1967 Protocol (HRW, 2016). It should also be noted that, due to a deep political deadlock (which led to the postponing of parliamentary elections twice) and the historical relations between Lebanon and Syria, no specific legislation or policy relating to the status of Syrian refugees in the country had been issued until October 2014 (approximately 3 years after the start of the refugee influx), when the Council of Ministers adopted a comprehensive policy on Syrian displacement (Janmyr, 2016). The timing of this decision is probably related to the incursion and attacks Daesh and other jihadist fronts perpetrated in Lebanon too, which caused the deaths of several Lebanese soldiers and an overall tightening of the security situation. Lebanon was suffering the effects of the spillover of the war in Syria, and "looming threats to the country's security, and political, economical, and social stability appeared to be good reason to put a halt to the influx of refugees" (Lebanon Support (LS), 2016, p.8). Indeed, "[t]his impasse within constitutional institutions has paralysed public policy on Syrian displacement, and in fact led to the Government having no strategy at all to respond to the influx of refugees in the early stages of Syrian displacement" (Janmyr, 2016, p.60).

Finally, it should be remarked that the UN Refugee Agency is not permitted to freely register Syrian refugees without interference from the GoL, and, in reality, it resorts to "recording" them rather than "registering" in an attempt to maintain some level of protection, despite the limitations imposed by the GoL (Janmyr, 2016). The principal authorities responsible for enforcing the current migration policies, including the legislation relating to migrant smuggling, are the Directorate General of General Security (DGGS; the essential

stakeholder, part of the Ministry of Interior)[32], the Internal Security Forces (ISF), the General Customs, and the Lebanese Army. The Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) is also involved "in providing services and registration for Syrian arrivals and cooperates with UNHCR in terms of assistance to Syrian refugees" (European Commission, 2016, p.61).

Chapter 2 – Negative coping strategies of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and the International regime for refugees

1. The refugee and humanitarian emergency in Lebanon: the government's policies and approaches in dealing with the crisis

Lebanon has had the fastest growing refugee population among the neighbouring countries who have taken in Syrian refugees. This may be due to the "[g]eographic proximity, familiarity with the local environment and loose border control" (Dionigi, 2016, p.12), but also the (generally) close relationship that has existed for decades between the Lebanese and the Syrian peoples. Nonetheless, the country has not resorted to the official encampment of refugees (like Jordan or Turkey have to a certain extent, for instance), and this is not an option for the GoL.[33] In fact, the official governmental approach to the crisis has been described by the "unwillingness from the political elites to engage directly with the issue, for fear of increasing polarisation in an already complex political landscape" (Dionigi, 2016, p.17). In this way, Lebanon has refrained from directly tackling the problem since it emerged in late 2011. This absence of political will has left a vacuum in the coordination of the humanitarian response, which was gradually filled by international agencies, their local partners (including civil society organisations, which play "a fundamental role in tempering the impact of refugee presence on the everyday life of host communities" (Dionigi, 2016, p.27)) and social networks. Given Lebanon's difficulty in promptly reacting to fast-moving

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[32] The DGGS is the "implementing arm in terms of controlling border points (including airport and sea ports), granting visa and stay permits, [and] dealing with and processing violations of migration rules in Lebanon" (ICMPD, 2017).

[33] After the encampment of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon in the wake of the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, and their politicization and militarization by the Palestine Liberation Organization, refugee camps in Lebanon have been widely recognised as a symbol of segregation, and a symptom of a fragile state (Dionigi, 2016). Even nowadays, being characterized by extraordinarily high levels of poverty, these camps are often considered unsafe areas and breeding grounds for radicalization, where Lebanese authorities have little power. Thus, the creation of refugee camps came to be seen as an unsuitable strategy by almost all political factions in Lebanon, in an attempt to prevent the emergence of militarized groups.

crises (Dionigi, 2016), this has allowed non-state actors to work relatively autonomously throughout the country, which may have actually prevented a quick worsening of the refugee emergency, or the stalling of the humanitarian response. A high degree of autonomy was given to municipalities as well (historically they always benefited from some form of self-government (Janmyr, 2016)), allowing them to adopt whatever measures they perceived to be the most adequate, given their funds, which has fragmented the management of the crisis, rendering it uneven throughout the nation. This means that the way Syrians in Baalbek are treated (their access to services and rights in general, the imposition of curfews on them) can be different from their counterparts' in Beirut, for example. However, in accordance with the policy paper approved in October 2014 by the Government, lately it has been more 'active' in dealing with the situation, having set out new entry and stay requirements for Syrian refugees, both those who wished to enter Lebanon and those who were in the country already (registered with UNHCR or not). Before the implementation of these new regulations, Syrian refugees who entered the country through an official BCP with a valid national Syrian identity card or passport were given an "entry coupon" and "entry stamp" that granted free legal residence for a period of 6 months, with the possibility of renewing it for an additional 6 months at no extra charge (Janmyr, 2016). After 1 year, they had to renew their residency by paying a 200USD fee per person (15 years old or above)/per year. From October 2014 onwards, Lebanon also decided to cooperate with the UN in the development of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan. Under the new policy paper, the local authorities aimed to reduce Syrians' access to Lebanese territory and encouraging refugees' return to Syria; it increased security regulations on them, and eased the burdens on local and national authorities, aiming to protect the national workforce and develop the Lebanese economy and its various sectors; and it ceased to consider people who, for any reason, had temporarily returned to Syria as "displaced" (Tınas, 2017; Mansour, 2017; AI, 2015; International Rescue Committee (IRC) & Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), 2015). Indeed, stricter measures were already being implemented before, first targeting, in Summer 2013, Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) who were seeking refuge in Lebanon, and then all other asylum-seekers who did not come "from areas bordering Lebanon where there was fighting" (AI, 2015, p.8; Janmyr, 2016). Implemented by the DGGS, these measures were intended at preventing or dissuading Syrians from seeking refuge in Lebanon and formalising and controlling the presence of those who were in the country already (LS, 2016). Reportedly they have been successful so far (LCRP, 2018; Mansour, 2017; Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR), 2017), with a drop of 80% in the number of registrations in the first three months of 2015 (AI, 2015, p.11). Following these new directives and their respective application in January 2015,

Syrians[34] who enter Lebanon have to fit into one of 7 categories of visas (Dionigi, 2016). The most relevant for our thesis is category 4 (the one that includes humanitarian admittance), which states that those with the status of "displaced" are not to be admitted in Lebanon, except if they meet the conditions drawn by MoSA, which are rigorous and not inclusive. The asylum-seeker must be:

- under 16 years of age, and his parents and legal guardians be confirmed to be displaced in Lebanon;
- persons with disabilities dependent on family and relatives confirmed to be in the country;
- persons in need of life-saving medical treatment not normally available in Syria;
- individuals pursuing resettlement in another country or transitioning through Lebanon (LCRP, 2018)).

Documentation to prove one's identity and eventual medical needs must be provided, including the visas granting access to the third country (onward movement). This is one of the reasons why the demand for forged documents has peaked, as many Syrians do not possess identification papers and are desperate to seek safety, therefore decide to obtain whatever type of 'documentation' exists. In practice, however, almost no-one is admitted under these criteria, making it clear that Lebanon is unwilling to receive people in need of international protection, despite its obligations under customary international law (respect for the principle of *non-refoulement* in particular). Thus, Syrians fleeing persecution, conflict and/or violence in Syria who wish to enter Lebanon must fill one of this strict criterion to be officially admitted in the nation. It should be noted that some refugees have also entered the country under a tourism or shopping visa and have prolonged their stay past the expiry date, remaining there irregularly.

However, there exists another way of legally seeking refuge in Lebanon: the sponsorship system (which stems from the *kafala* system[35]). As the name indicates, the person can obtain legal entry if he is sponsored by a Lebanese citizen, family or entity (HRW, 2016). This approach can be challenging in at least two ways. Firstly, it can be difficult to find

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[34] These restrictions are applicable to Syrian nationals only, which makes them discriminatory in essence.

[35] The *kafala* is a sponsorship system which regulates the relationship between employers and migrant workers. It exists in the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain), but also in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. It is frequently associated with situations of exploitation, as the migrant worker's immigration status is legally bound to the employer's (sponsor) wishes, and he/she cannot change workplaces or leave the country without the former's permission. The sponsorship of Syrian refugees entails such a bondage too, as the refugee is highly dependent on the sponsor's actions, and his will to maintain the sponsorship and keep his responsibilities or not (CLDH, 2016; HRW, 2016). Although they are refugees and not migrant workers, with an important difference existing between both categories, the GoL does not recognize such a status, as we previously mentioned, so refugees are forced to resort to this sponsoring mechanism.

a 'reliable' sponsor (he would have to be responsible for the refugee's legal status, housing and other living expenses (HRW, 2016), and would have to agree to a pledge of responsibility for his actions (Favier, 2016), including for any criminal offences he may commit; the sponsor is also charged with finding/providing work for the refugee and taking the required steps to regularize his status with the Ministry of Labour and the General Security, which requires attending several meetings with both the authorities and the refugee present; lastly, sponsoring a Syrian refugee can put the sponsor under observation by the GSO, "an inconvenience few Lebanese are willing to take" (Janmyr, 2016)). Secondly, the bondage or indebtment that may ensue from this act might result in cases of abuse, since refugees "are vulnerable to those to whom they owe their legal status" (HRW, 2016, p.2) and "informal fees" are often requested by potential sponsors (LCRP, 2018). This creates a power differential between both parties, which increases refugees' vulnerability even more, especially among women and children and females heading households. These "fees" can translate into labour exploitation (with-holding of wages, underpayment, long working hours, unsafe working conditions) and/or sexual exploitation (survival sex, forced prostitution, among others). These abuses and strategies will be further analysed in the next item of this Chapter. Furthermore, the sponsorship system promotes a differentiation in the treatment of refugees according to their financial situation, since it only accepts wealthier Syrians (Syrians who are able to pay the 200USD fee and the multiple additional costs it usually entails) to legally reside in the country (Janmyr, 2016). Overall, the total cost for a legal permit renewal based on sponsorship can range from 600USD to 1400USD, which includes the 200USD fee that every refugee must pay, the expenses for the necessary documents and the charge that the sponsor may impose (Lebanese Centre for Human Rights (CLDH), 2016). This constitutes a tremendous and very often prohibitive cost for most Syrians, many of whom can barely afford paying rent or acquiring basic household items. Unsurprisingly, these new regulations have developed a fully-fledged black market in which, as noted in an interview conducted by Janmyr (Janmyr, 2016, p.67), "'[g]uys are renting out money at the border for 100 USD. And not only on the border, they are also available on all General Security points for entry and renewal. Businessmen are taking advantage of this and exploiting any deficiency in the legal system'". Indeed, many Lebanese have turned the influx of Syrian refugees and the governmental restriction of entry requisites into a profitable business, and the authorities seem to turn a blind eye to it.

On the other hand, Syrian refugees who are already in Lebanon, who were registered with UNHCR prior to January 5th 2015, and who wish to renew their legal status have to, every 6 months:

- pay a 200USD fee;

- provide a "housing pledge", which confirms where the person lives[36];
- present valid identification, as well as entry slip and return card;
- have two photographs stamped by the *Mukhtar* (Lebanese local official)[37];
- sign a pledge to abide by Lebanese Law[38];
- provide UNHCR registration certificate.

Syrian refugees who are in Lebanon but are not registered with the UN Refugee Agency have to, in addition to the first 4 requisites, obtain a pledge of responsibility (a sponsor, basically) from a Lebanese citizen, family or entity, "who commits to obtain a work permit for the Syrian individual or group of Syrians, or to sponsor and host a family" (AI, 2015, p.14). Refugees cannot register with UNHCR because the GoL ordered the agency to stop doing so in May 2015, because "a new mechanism for registration of refugees was to be established" (CLDH, 2016). This new mechanism was never materialised, so they can only resort to the sponsorship system. Sometimes certain documentary requirements are adopted by the DGGS but not officially announced, i.e., they are not made public, or are divulged only months after. This is the case, for instance, of the need for proof of financial means to support oneself. It was issued in March 2015 and divulged within the General Security Offices' staff only, being a "widely applied" practice as of mid-2015 (AI, 2015). This lack of information has made refugees being turned back upon attempting to renew their residency since they were not in possession of all of the necessary documents. Furthermore, the situation for those who crossed into Lebanon illegally (not through an official BCP[39]) should also be considered, as it is even more restrictive and concerning than that of the previous groups. If one is found to have entered through an irregular entry, he will have to pay a 633USD fee and leave the country within 5 days. The individual will be able to re-enter Lebanon (through an official BCP) *if* he meets the entry requirements (either through obtaining sponsorship or fitting into some category of the new regulations). If he does not pay the fee, he will be permanently banned from getting in Lebanon (AI, 2015). Thus, in reality, the sponsorship method seems to have become the most viable way of securing (legal) residency in Lebanon, despite the risks it entails. These tough measures and regulations are

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[36] The "housing pledge" is a document the landlord or tenant must sign. It confirms that the person signing (a Lebanese national) is hosting a Syrian household and commits to notify the local General Security Office when the occupancy ends (AI, 2015). Refugees who are living in informal tented settlements have to provide a residency statement from the local Municipality declaring this (AI, 2015). This was not the case prior to June 2016, when these refugees could not get access to the renewal process. Either way, it is "impractical" as most refugees (82%) who pay rent do not have written lease agreements with their landlords (AI, 2015).

[37] In addition to the 200USD fee, the NRC estimates that refugees must spend more 75USD in transportation charges, photocopies, and public notary services (HRW, 2016).

[38] This condition was introduced in June 2016, replacing the "pledge not to work" requisite.

[39] As of 2016, some of the reasons why refugees did not enter Lebanon through an official BCP are the fear of the Syrian and Lebanese Armies, the lack of money to obtain a permit or sponsor, and the fact that the border is closed (CLDH, 2016).

deliberately imposed by the government in an attempt to "dissuade and prevent Syria's refugees from seeking protection in Lebanon" (AI, 2015, p.6). The sponsorship strategy is particularly encouraged because, according to several international aid workers, this paves the way for Syrian refugees to be closer to being considered and treated as "economic migrants" (HRW, 2016). In a Human Rights Watch report which studies the consequences of the lack of legal residence for refugees (HRW, 2016, p.13), one international aid worker was quoted as saying that "'[i]t is more acceptable to force migrants back to Syria than refugees fleeing persecution" and that authorities may be "'re-categorizing refugees as migrants to facilitate their return to Syria in the future'". Indeed, in the same publication, many refugees (23 out of the 40 who were interviewed) tell their stories about trying to renew their residence at the local General Security office but having their requests denied by the authorities on the basis that they need to find a sponsor, despite having valid UNHCR documents and satisfying all the other requirements, namely the payment of the 200USD fee (HRW, 2016). The procedures to renew one's legal stay based on previous UNHCR registration seem to be arbitrarily imposed by the GSO, that is, being at their discretion, which is in line with the GoL's approach stating that the "Syrian refugee crisis [is] not to be governed by law, but by governmental decisions" (Janmyr, 2016, p.66).

Indeed, since early 2015, Lebanon has altered its approach to the Syrian influx, abandoning its open-border policy, based on the 1993 bilateral agreement it signed with Syria for Economic and Social Cooperation and Coordination, that granted citizens of both states freedom of stay, work, employment, and practice of economic activity (ILO, 2013). In the first years of the influx, refugees were able to enjoy easy access to the services and support of UNHCR, a right they are entitled to under international law. However, from January 2015 until nowadays, the guidelines regulating their admittance (for 'new' refugees) and residency (for refugees who were already in the country) became very strict, which has prevented the majority of them from regularizing their stay and even obtaining proper documentation that grants them access to much-needed services and work and some form of protection as well (AI, 2015). This tightening of border and national security can be partly justified by the infiltrations of armed and Islamist groups into Lebanon in the wake of the Syrian conflict, and particularly since August 2014, when clashes between the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and Daesh and Jabhat al-Nusra took place in Lebanese territory. Several LAF soldiers were killed, which motivated the government to endorse a harsher response and boost security measures, by conducting "raids on refugee settlements, arrests of refugees without legal status, and the establishment of [both regular and *ad hoc*] checkpoints by Lebanese security forces" (HRW, 2016, p.15). Until June 2016, all Syrian

nationals who had a UNHCR registration certificate[40], i.e., who were registered with the agency, had to sign a pledge not to work, which severely conditioned their livelihoods. If they were found to be working, they were required to secure a sponsor, or they would face possible imprisonment (HRW, 2016). However, after this month, this pledge was replaced by the pledge to abide by Lebanese Law (LCRP, 2018), which has been in place ever since. It should also be noted that in February and March 2017 the Lebanese Government decided to "waive the renewal and overstay fees of legal residency … for Syrians who were registered as refugees with UNHCR before 1 January 2015 and who had not renewed their residency previously based on tourism, sponsorship, property ownership or tenancy in 2015 or 2016" (LCRP, 2018, p.128; this waiver did not apply to PRS either). Although this facilitated the process of regularisation for the refugees who met the criteria, the vast majority of Syrians – 74% of them aged 15 and above, as of 2017 (VASyR, 2017)[41] – remains nowadays without valid legal residency, which places them at even more considerable risk of exploitation and precariousness. This curbs their ability to move freely (since they are not in possession of a valid residency permit, they avoid crossing checkpoints for fear of being arrested), and thus sustain themselves. It hinders their ability to register their marriages and births too, which bears extremely high risks of statelessness for the new-borns, since there's no proof of their existence under the law, and makes their enrolment at school much more complicated (VASyR, 2017).

For most refugees, the main obstacle to obtaining legal residence lies with the 200USD fee that must be paid, as for many this is an exorbitant value, or they would rather invest these resources in other ways, like healthcare (AI, 2016a). The inability to find a sponsor comes as the second most common reason (CLDH, 2016). As of the end of April 2018, there were 986 942 *registered* Syrian refugees in Lebanon and the figure has been decreasing since April 2015, when almost 1.2 million refugees were registered (UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response data portal website, 2018). Other accounts placed the total at around 1.5 million individuals, however, which translates into approximately 1 refugee for every 4 persons currently living in the country (Favier, 2016; Tınas, 2017). Given that there still is a war running in Syria, the most probable justifications for this reduction in the number of *registered* refugees are the deterrent effect that the new regulations have had on 'prospect refugees' (AI, 2015) and the fact that legal residency became costlier and more cumbersome, hence more difficult to obtain. This rapid population growth in Lebanon (it grew more than 30% in less than 5 years (Favier, 2016)) has placed enormous strain on the

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[40] The certificate does not constitute a replacement for the residency permit issued by the General Security. It is not a formal identification document either (CLDH, 2016).
[41] In 2015, 20% of the Syrian households in Lebanon had no members with legal residency; this figure increased to 29% in 2016, and to 55% in 2017 (VASyR, 2017). This reflects the adoption of the new legal residency policy adopted by the GoL in 2015.

national state and its infrastructures and provision of (public) services, which were already inadequate before the crisis (ICMPD, 2015). The real estate and job markets have been particularly affected, because the massive influx of Syrians has meant an increase in the demand for housing, and consequently a hike in rents (ICMPD, 2015). As the situation back in Syria did not seem to appease, refugees started searching for more permanent accommodation options too, although many, unable to cover the renting expenditures, had no choice but to live in makeshift tented settlements (Tınas, 2017). This type of shelter is particularly common in the governorates of Baalbek-Hermel (East), Bekaa (East) and Akkar (North), where, respectively, 50%, 38% and 22% of the households live in informal settlements (VASyR, 2017). Overall, 57% of all Syrian refugee families live in substandard shelter conditions (2018 April Statistical Dashboard – Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon, 2018) whether in rural (e.g. Bekaa) or urban areas (e.g. Beirut).

As of late April 2018, 87,9% of registered refugees were concentrated in just 3 regions of Lebanon: Bekaa, Beirut, and the North (UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response data portal website, 2018). The economic burden caused by their presence is particularly severe in the first and third regions, which were characterized by high rates of poverty and underdevelopment even before the Syrian crisis started (van Vliet & Hourani, 2014).[42] When it concerns the labour market, the pressure posed by the higher supply of workers and the fact that, due to their heightened deprivation, refugees are willing to accept lower incomes and work with less benefits, has made the wage and working conditions deteriorate (Tınas, 2017; ICMPD, 2015). This presents a direct challenge for Lebanese job seekers, who already face difficulties with the lack of job creation by the government and the slowing down of economic growth. Despite this, Syrians face mounting discrimination when looking for a job, and are very much concentrated in low-skilled sectors, like construction and agricultural activities (VASyR, 2017). Few women tend to work (only 8% of the registered refugees, according to the 2017 edition of the VASyR report), but when they do it is especially doing informal work (for instance, seasonal agricultural jobs or cleaning). Sometimes children work as well (also in the agriculture and services sectors (VASyR, 2017)), in order to raise the family's income. In some cases, women and/or children are the sole bread-winners in the household, as their hourly wages are smaller (VASyR, 2017), so some employers prefer to hire them. Child labour is on the rise in many refugee communities because children are less likely to be stopped at checkpoints for documentation verification, which grants them greater freedom of movement, hence more probability of finding and

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[42] Historically, Lebanon has shown considerable regional inequalities relating to the access to employment, public services and infrastructure. North Lebanon (including the governorate of Akkar), the Bekaa and Baalbek-Hermel are particularly impoverished and vulnerable.

maintaining a job. These work practices and dynamics will be further exposed in the next sub-chapter.

Lastly, it should be noted that decreasing funding trends and support (namely from the international community) have made the distribution of aid and other basic services even more difficult, further hindering the humanitarian response (LCRP, 2018). As a result of the protraction of the conflict and the shortage of funds, host communities and almost all political groups in Lebanon are increasingly calling for the return of Syrians to their home country and the tightening of regulations by the state. Indeed, the government itself is inhibiting refugees' freedom and livelihoods, pushing them to resort to negative coping mechanisms. These are means of survival they would not adopt in case they had better access to legal status and to the formal labour market. The Lebanese state can therefore be seen as placing Syrian refugees in an increasingly precarious situation, where they must either face exploitation and further deterioration of livelihoods or 'choose' to return to Syria. The negative survival strategies are the main focus of the next item, where we will examine the most severe ones and the impacts the latest regulations have in refuges' wellbeing and subsistence.

2. The consequences of the lack of legal residency

The percentage of Syrian refugees in Lebanon who currently do not possess valid legal residency has been increasing since the new and tighter regulations were imposed in early 2015. This has severely hindered their sense of safety and livelihoods, placing them at even bigger risk of ill-treatment wherever they go. This hike in the rate of persons not legally staying in the country can be considered both a direct cause and consequence of the deterioration of refugees' living conditions, ultimately creating a vicious loop (see Figure 2). Indeed, with the protraction of the conflict and the subsequent fatigue of the host and international communities, Syrians' lives in Lebanon have been deeply affected, with depleting financial resources, worsening health and education conditions, and fewer prospects of improvement and of finding means of sustenance. This prevents them from regularizing their status in Lebanon, which, in turn, only makes their situation worse, perpetuating their destitution.
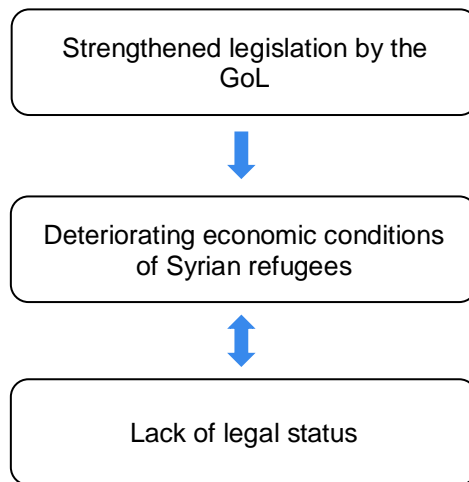
Figure 2 – The vicious loop of the strengthening of legislation and the renewal/acquisition of legal stay in Lebanon
source: CLDH, 2016

When refugees do not have valid residency permits, they are exposed to multiple threats and face increasing abuses, both from the Lebanese authorities and the Lebanese society. Their freedom of movement is usually the first and most affected right, causing a number of negative repercussions, namely negative coping mechanisms, that can only be tackled by regularizing one's legal stay. Since many refugees were not able to renew or obtain their permits, they avoid leaving their areas of residence, for example to go to work, for fear of being arrested at checkpoints or being stoped by the Lebanese Army or even assaulted by civilians (CLDH, 2016). Indeed, the most frequent places of arrest are checkpoints, and, although they affect both women and men, temporary arrests are more common among males, especially young adults or even older children, who are sometimes regarded as potentially belonging to armed groups. While in prison, Syrians have reported being tortured physically and psychologically, even if they tend to be held under arrest for less time than other refugees, such as Sudanese or Iraqis (CLDH, 2016). The reasons for being taken into custody vary, but the main ones are the lack of legal residency and of personal identification. Therefore, we can establish a clear link between being in possession of legal stay documents and the possibility of being arrested, in the way that, if an individual is in Lebanon legally, the chances of him being detained are smaller than if he is not. However, this should not be seen as a linear relation, as arbitrary arrests have also taken place, with the aim of obtaining a bribe from the incarcerated person in order for the authorities to release him (CLDH, 2016). This type of "economic violence" is also adopted by Lebanese civilians, who have been reported to stop undocumented refugees in the street, threatening to take them to the closest checkpoint if they did not give them money (CLDH, 2016). Psychological violence as a threat is also common, perpetrated by Lebanese officials

and civilians alike. It is important to note that abuses involve those refugees who have legal stay and those who do not, although they are much more frequent among the latter. Consequently, although having a residency permit decreases the likeliness of being arrested at checkpoints, this status does not necessarily entail a feeling of safety among Syrian refugees. Essentially, the issues of security and vulnerability are "embedded in the system", with more than half of the respondents in a study conducted by the CLDH (CLDH, 2016) declaring that they have been a victim of "psychological, physical and economic violence, especially from Lebanese nationals", despite holding a legal residency permit. The majority of the registered refugees who have been harassed choose not to report the incidents to the police, despite having the right to, since they possess legal residency. This is because they are afraid of going to the authorities or even being further harassed by them, or because they feel they will not be of any assistance to them, as there is a serious lack of trust and belief that they will "effectively and impartially investigate complaints filed by refugees" (AI, 2016a, p.8). Refugees who do not hold valid stay simply do not report mistreatment to the police, because they may face arrest by doing so and authorities might refuse to help them too, due to their irregular status (AI, 2016a). Abuses and exploitation occur in many other sectors, such as the housing one, with landlords often demanding higher rents for Syrian families because of their nationality and vulnerability (CLDH, 2016). Landlords can also exploit their tenants by requesting that their children work for them for free if they are late paying rent. This constitutes exploitation and child labour.

Child labour is one of the most worrying issues in the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, with some estimates saying that it affects between 60 and 70% of Syrian refugee children throughout the whole country (The Freedom Fund (TFF), 2016), while others disclose much lower figures (the data according to the LCRP 2018 report is 7% in 2016, having increased 3 percentage points from 2009 (LCRP, 2018)). It is, nonetheless, becoming more evident and commonplace, and this is strictly related to the depletion of resources and the lack of legal residency of the children's families (particularly the parents), because, since they are not able to move freely in the country, or even in the towns where they settled, they are not able to actively seek a job without having to go through checkpoints. If they risk crossing a checkpoint, they may be arrested, as we previously mentioned, so parents are forced to withdraw their children from school and send them to find work and earn money instead, because they are less likely to be stopped by the authorities in order to verify their documentation (TFF, 2016; AI, 2015).

The reduction in aid services, especially from UNHCR, but also in the provision of food vouchers by the World Food Programme (WFP), have forced families to opt for more drastic coping measures too (Terre des Hommes, 2016). Women are also known to have replaced men in the task of providing for the family for the same reason (CLDH, 2016).

Indeed, in a study conducted by UN Women in Jordan in 2013, the researchers concluded that "the more the situation of displacement is prolonged, the greater the likelihood of higher rates of child labour for boys and early marriage for girls" (ICMPD, 2015, p.108). Child labour becomes thus more prevalent in contexts of protracted displacement, more specifically among boys, and the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon is no exception to this pattern, nor the Lebanese host community (the rate of child labour among the most vulnerable Lebanese increased from 2% in 2009 to 6% in 2016 (LCRP, 2018)). Aside from children's higher mobility and escalating household poverty, child labour is on the rise because children are much cheaper to employ than adults and they are more compliant too, being less likely to complain about the with-holding of wages, long hours of work or unfavourable working conditions, for instance. They work in multiple occupations and in different sectors, such as agriculture (mostly in the Bekaa), in markets, factories, vehicle repair shops, aluminium factories, grocery and coffee shops, in the construction sector and as delivery workers, as well as working on the streets[43] begging, selling flowers or other products, shining shoes or cleaning car windscreens (TFF, 2016). Many of these amount to the "worst forms of child labour", as children are exposed to dangerous substances and machinery without wearing protective gear, which harms their physical and mental development, potentially causing severe, life-long psychological damage (HRW, 2016).

There are reports of children who work 11 hours a day in unsafe and unsupervised environments for as little as 15USD a week (HRW, 2016), or others, in agricultural activities, who are double exploited – by the farmers who own the fields where the informal tented settlements where they live are located, and by the individual who coordinates these settlements (known as *shawish*; TFF, 2016). The children and their families live there and the *shawish* serves as the intermediate between the employer (the farmer) and the labourers (the children who live in the camp, but also their parents). The farmer is said to pay the children's wages to the *shawish*, who takes a portion of it for himself, delivering only part to the 'workers'. He is described as acting like a "'gangmaster' profiting from the supply of child labour" in a report by an NGO dedicated to ending slavery (TFF, 2016, p.8). Many of these minors are coerced to work in the fields, and it is practically impossible for parents to refuse

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[43] Syrian street-based children have always existed in Lebanon, including well before the influx of Syrian refugees (over school holidays, Syrian children would be sent by their parents to Lebanon to beg), although their number has increased since the start of the conflict (ILO et al., 2015). The majority of these children are boys, but there are cases of girls too. The reason why children work in the streets is mostly poverty, but the loss of the family breadwinner, of a family member, home, job, or savings can also lead to this phenomenon, along with the inability of adult members to work (ILO et al., 2015). Sometimes children are also forced to act as head of their households in contexts of war or displacement, so they resort to this coping mechanism. It should be noted, however, that children living and working in the streets *in Syria* was evident before the conflict erupted and that this type of work is frequently controlled by organized criminal networks, often headed by male adult members of the households (ILO et al., 2015).

it. Parents themselves are forced to work there too as a condition of living on that land, and the *shawish* takes a large proportion of their pay as well, instead of rent. This translates into forced labour, since they have no choice but to participate in agricultural work, or they face eviction.[44]

In the vast majority of the cases where children in the household are found to be working, it is not with an exploitative purpose, but rather out of need or even out of despair, because the parents (traditionally the father) cannot find work (TFF, 2016; HRW, 2016). The children themselves recognise this, so they accept it, even though they wish they could attend school (HRW, 2016). Children have been engaged in commercial sexual exploitation too, although details concerning these abuses are difficult to collect and hard to verify (TFF, 2016).

Syrian girls are known to be forced to engage in prostitution in Lebanon, namely in contexts where they have got married to Syrian men in Syria (either in a consensual or forced union) but were later sent by their husbands to Lebanon to be sexually exploited in prostitution (ICMPD, 2015). There have been reports of Lebanese pimps working with Syrian intermediaries to traffic Syrian girls and women into Lebanon to be sexually exploited, since they are more familiar with the communities back in their home country (ICMPD, 2015). Some *shawish* also benefit from this type of exploitation, by organising contacts with sex buyers and keeping a part of the women's earnings (ICMPD, 2015). Despite the fact that sexual exploitation is more common among, and associated with, females all over the world, including in Lebanon, men and boys are affected as well, with many boys being forced to engage in it in order to receive their salaries (UNHCR, 2017b). In fact, sexual exploitation of boys in the work environment is much more common than girls', because parents recognise that if they send their daughters to work they are placing them at high risks of being sexually harassed by employers (UNHCR, 2017b). Child labourers' vulnerability is compounded by their age, poverty, precarious legal status, and informal working conditions (UNHCR, 2017b), alongside "familial pressure in conjunction with a culture of silence around SGBV [sexual and gender-based violence] [which] increases the vulnerability of boys and men to sexual exploitation" (UNHCR, 2017b, p.34). Moreover, since many of these children are in reality the primary or sole providers for their families, they have to endure hard and abusive working conditions to secure a living for their households.

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[44] Exploitation of Syrians in agriculture in Lebanon also took place before the outbreak of the conflict in 2011, and they were equally excluded from the protection of labour laws, as much of the work was occasional, informal and low-skilled, like it still is nowadays. However, back then Syrians were able to return to their country if they experienced coercion or deception at work, whereas for the moment that is not a possibility. Furthermore, before 2011, Syrian migrants working in this field were usually adult men, while now there are women and children being exploited too.

Syrian refugee children are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, abuses and trafficking because their protection in Lebanon is not always guaranteed by state institutions nor non-state actors. Indeed, in addition to the legal challenges in obtaining valid residency permit and continuous impoverishment, the lack of access to birth registration, to education[45] and the fact that they sometimes migrate alone severely affect them and worsen their humanitarian situation and protection (ICMPD, 2015). This may lead to them facing risky situations, such as child labour, as we have already mentioned, but also child/early marriage, which, too, is on the rise. Child marriage is a reality for both girls and boys, although the first are disproportionally affected (VASyR, 2017; LCRP, 2018). The situation of protracted displacement has had an impact in the practice of early marriage in such a way that its prevalence among Syrian displaced girls in Lebanon has increased 9% over the last 6 years (LCRP, 2018), with 41% of Syrian displaced women aged 20-24 years having married before their 18th birthday (LCRP, 2018). [46] Also, a study carried out by MoSA and UNICEF concluded that 27% of sampled Syrian girls aged 15 to 19 years old are currently married or in union (LCRP, 2018). This does not necessarily mean that these women were victims of forced marriage, nor that the conflict has played a role in them getting married. Indeed, child marriage has been reported as a cultural practice in some rural areas of Syria and within some groups of the Lebanese community (TFF, 2016; LCRP, 2018). However, "assessments and focus groups discussions [[47]] with adolescent girls and caregivers highlight that girls are increasingly being forced to marry at an early age, and that marriage is increasingly used as a harmful coping mechanism to protect girls and/or to alleviate financial burden" (LCRP, 2018, p.131). Among the host communities and Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon and PRS, child marriage also occurs, albeit to a lesser extent, and it is becoming more frequent (in 2016, 4% of Lebanese girls and Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon aged 14-19 were married, in comparison with 2.6% in 2009, and 13% of PRS were in such a union in 2016 (LCRP, 2018)). This corroborates the hypothesis that conflict enhances the probability of girls being married at younger ages, as they are less protected (including by the competent child

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[45] In 2017, only 17% of families registered the birth of their new-borns with the competent Lebanese civil registration authority, which poses high risks of statelessness for the remaining since they did not complete the whole process (VASyR, 2017). In terms of education, 70% of children aged 6-14 were enrolled in school, an increase from the 52% figure registered in 2016 (VASyR, 2017). Difficulties in enrolling children in school due to the lack of legal stay have been reported, despite efforts and measures imposed by the GoL to allow access to education to all minors regardless of their or their parents' status (HRW, 2016).

[46] It should be noted that, in Lebanon, marriage before the age of 18 is permitted by all 15 confessions (religious courts), with children being able to marry from as young as 14 years, or even less if the court allows it, in exceptional cases (TFF, 2016; LCRP, 2018). There is no civil marriage in the country.

[47] Focus group discussions are one of the methods used in qualitative research. Moderated by a group facilitator, they gather people from similar backgrounds or experiences to discuss topics of interest, such as domestic violence or familial dynamics. These topics are very often not discussed under normal circumstances due to social stigma and taboo, so focus group discussions allow for the collection of more relevant data.

protection authorities), and more vulnerable to physical, verbal and sexual harassment. Amnesty International reports that girls are not able to leave their residence at times because they are verbally harassed by young men, even when they are accompanied by male relatives (AI, 2016b). Girls cannot work either, due to the high risk of being sexually attacked by their employers or on their way to work, so they are increasingly entering into early marriages, particularly in regions such as the Bekaa and Akkar, the poorest among all districts of Lebanon, which indicates that poverty is linked to this practice as well.

Education is unaffordable for many families and there is constant pressure to reduce household expenses. Early marriage is seen as a survival strategy by families (parents or guardians of the children), and they resort to it in order to reduce the economic burden on the household and to 'secure' their daughters' futures.[48] The lack of education and vocational opportunities may also encourage such practice (Mourtada; Schlecht & DeJong, 2017). Furthermore, "[f]inancial dependency coupled with traditional family structures and religious laws which grant decision making power in family matters to male guardians can leave refugee women unable to challenge decisions that men in the family make" (AI, 2016b, p.50). Parents may refuse to resort to such coping mechanism initially (AI, 2016b; Mourtada, Schlecht & DeJong, 2017) but, "[f]or families who are struggling to pay the rent and provide sufficient food for everyone" (AI, 2016b, p.50), some of them come to accept it, despite the dangers it entails, such as potential abuse, control (sense of "ownership" of the girl), and health impacts (resulting from early pregnancies, for example; UNICEF, 2017; Mourtada, Schlecht & DeJong, 2017).

The situation becomes even more severe when the girls' fathers are not present, since they have no "male protector" (HRW, 2016), which leaves them more exposed to assault. UNICEF also reports that girls among certain societal groups are taught from the beginning that marriage itself "is related in the girl's mind to her honour; [and that] it will be her destiny no matter what and where" (UNICEF, 2017, p.10). Consequently, it is viewed by many as being "both inescapable and beneficial" (UNICEF, 2017), especially in contexts characterized by displacement and lack of hope and other ways out of poverty.[49] Indeed, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) is usual in these scenarios (LCRP, 2018; The Irish Consortium on Gender-Based Violence, 2016), and early marriage is one of its manifestations, as well as domestic violence, sexual abuse and physical assault, exploitation

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[48] In a study conducted in the Bekaa, the practice of early marriage was found to be deeply connected to the concept of "*al Sutra*", which means the protection of the woman's honour or reputation. Following the principle that "[a]dolescent women's reputation, as well as that of their families depend greatly on maintaining the women's virginity until they marry" (Mourtada; Schlecht & DeJong, 2017, p.58), Syrian families increasingly resort to this strategy in order to protect their daughters from "community gossip" or unwanted attention.

[49] Cultural and social norms are embedded in this thought, which perpetuate community support for the practice and curb the efforts of tackling it, namely those carried out by UN agencies and NGOs working in the field (UNICEF, 2017).

and trafficking. The populations that are most at risk are married girls, child mothers, adolescent girls, unaccompanied and separated boys and girls, women and girls with disabilities, older women, female heads of households and socially marginalised groups, such as the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community (LCRP, 2018).

Women and girls in Lebanon accounted for an average of 90% of all SGBV victims since 2015 and domestic violence remains the pervasive case, with 76% of incidents taking place at the survivor's and perpetrator's home, meaning that often these are family members (LCRP, 2018). Due to the widespread acceptance of violence, religious beliefs, fear of retaliation, belief that nobody can help, and the lack of valid legal residency, these incidents often go unnoticed and unreported, exacerbating refugees' vulnerability and their precarious condition. The shortage of humanitarian funding and the limited availability of specialized services, namely safe shelters (a particular concern in Lebanon), mental health or legal support, further hinder the response and keep women from seeking help and addressing their problems. The environment and characteristics of informal settlements render them especially vulnerable to sexual harassment because of the lack of privacy and overcrowdedness of rooms and shelters (ICMPD, 2015). It can thus happen wherever women go, either in public or private spaces, either alone or accompanied by other people, and even perpetrated by police officers and government office employees in charge of residency permits' renewal, as some women have described (AI, 2016b). There have been instances of Lebanese men offering financial or other assistance to women in exchange for sex or marriage (AI, 2016b), especially when they know that women's husbands or other adult male relatives are not present in the country. Women have come to Lebanon alone or with their children only because their husbands died in the war or before, are currently missing, have been forcibly disappeared or detained in Syria or have either remained in Syria or sought refuge in other countries, namely in Europe. In fact, households headed by women make up one fifth of all Syrian refugee households in Lebanon, and almost one third amongst PRS (AI, 2016b). These families are one of the most vulnerable groups, experiencing high levels of deprivation and exploitation, especially when they are not in possession of legal residence permit, which accounts for most Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Women who are heads of their households are more likely to work than those whose husbands are present, since they have fewer sources of income or other people to rely on for financial support (AI, 2016b). Hence, they endure harsher living conditions, namely underpayment of wages, as employers know they will agree to whatever low wage they are offered because refugees are acutely in need and will not be able to seek legal redress if they are underpaid, exploited, or facing unsafe working conditions. A considerable power imbalance emerges out of these situations, which leads women to increasingly adopt harmful coping strategies, such as

involving school children in income activities (child labour), begging or accepting high-risk jobs.

Hefty power differentials arise in other contexts too, like in rental payment instances and informal housing in general, with refugees constantly facing threats of eviction and unexpected and sudden increases in rent (not permitted under Lebanese Law), which they are unable to address through the courts, due to the irregular nature of their stay in Lebanon. Landlords are reported to pressure women who are heads of their households to engage in survival sex in exchange for decreased rent or for not paying rent at all (AI, 2016b). Abuses like this also occur in the distribution of aid (this is particularly the case with women-headed households, where women are provided aid, or in-kind assistance, if they agree to see the people who distribute it "later on" (AI, 2016b)), and incurring from the sponsorship system and the contraction of debt. As mentioned above, sponsorship is *the de facto* way of obtaining legal entrance/stay in Lebanon, since humanitarian permits are issued only in very exceptional cases. For those refugees who were registered with UNHCR (which, from May 2015 up until now, in conformity with the directives of the GoL, is no longer possible), the renewal of registration certificates is dependent on, among other conditions, the payment of the 200USD fee, which most of them cannot afford. However, in reality, this method is often not enforced by authorities, and refugees are instead required to obtain a sponsor (HRW, 2016). Consequently, they place themselves in situations of high vulnerability, entering relationships that can assume an exploitative and deceitful character. This can be interpreted from the sponsor's perspective as the refugee owing his time and legal status to the sponsor, who in turn can take advantage of his situation and abuse him, for example, through forced labour or demanding that he undertakes certain tasks. Further harassment can be exerted by threatening to withdraw the sponsorship, thus leaving refugees with no valid residency in Lebanon, spiralling down their living conditions. This leaves them with no other solution but to accept the conditions the sponsor delineates. This bondage can amount to cases of human trafficking if a person is recruited, transported, transferred or harboured by means of threat or force, with the purpose of being exploited.

Although the effects of the war and subsequent refugee crisis place people at higher risks of being trafficked (namely when they are smuggled from their country of origin to seek refuge in another country), there has been no significant increase in the identification by the national authorities of cases of trafficking in persons (TIP) related to the conflict (ICMPD, 2015). This applies to all neighbouring countries that took in large numbers of refugees, including Lebanon, where between 2010 and 2012 a larger share of the officially identified trafficking victims hailed from Syria (ICMPD, 2015). This demonstrates, too, how displacement leaves them more at risk, and how it breeds TIP. However, internal trafficking without major geographical movement was more common than trafficking across borders,

meaning that Syrians usually reach Lebanon willingly but are then exploited in the country through multiple means, such as debt bondage[50], described as a "'common phenomenon'" in an interview conducted by the ICMPD (ICMPD, 2015, p.131). Non-government-related studies depict an entirely different situation, however, mainly due to the lack of identification of (potential) victims of trafficking by the law enforcement or state social services. In our country of study, this stems from the lack of institutions for protection, but also from the fear of arrest, detention or deportation that the victims may face if they come forward (for reasons of lack of legal residence or because, instead of being seen as victims, they might be perceived as having committed a crime), the social stigma they may endure and the lack of income generating alternatives, which leads trafficked people "to consider that their conditions would be even worse if they were to be removed from the trafficking situation" (ICMPD, 2015, p.132).

According to the Lebanese Ministry of Justice, in 2014, the most common forms of trafficking in Lebanon were child trafficking for labour exploitation and trafficking for sexual exploitation in prostitution (ICMPD, 2015). The first largely happens in the contexts of agricultural work and street work, where children perform an array of tasks, such as begging, selling flowers, among other activities, as we have previously mentioned. Although much of this work consists in some form of the worst forms of child labour, it does not necessarily add up to trafficking of children for the purpose of labour exploitation, as some of them are not coerced into doing the job or financially exploited by their parents. As an NGO worker clarified in an interview with ICMPD, these situations have to be analysed on a case-by-case basis because "it is difficult to generalise elements of child labour, child labour exploitation and/or child trafficking by parents or caregivers" (ICMPD, 2015, p.175). Nevertheless, ILO reports that many children engaged in street work are organised and controlled by criminal networks, who are involved in the business of human trafficking of persons in general, or who run illicit activities, like arms smuggling (ILO, 2015). These networks are often headed by the fathers or other male relatives of Street-Based Children, who exploit them with the intent of earning money. The exploitation of children in agriculture is carried out by the owners of the farms or the *shawish*, as pointed out above. When it concerns trafficking for sexual exploitation in prostitution, the vast majority of victims is female, although men and boys also experience this, and their percentage has actually increased (ICMPD, 2015). Syrian women and girls in Lebanon are exploited in various ways, namely by their Syrian husbands, who bring them to the country for the purpose of prostitution, or by other Syrian nationals within criminal networks or not. For instance, women have been reported to be trafficked and exploited by Syrian men at seaside resorts in Mount Lebanon, while others have integrated

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[50] According to HRW (HRW, 2016), nearly 90% of refugees in Lebanon are trapped in a vicious cycle of debt, heightening their susceptibility to exploitation and trafficking.

prostitution rings in nightclubs, namely in the so-called "super nightclubs"[51], Lebanon's high-end sex industry. Trafficking can also take place in the context of housing and work, as most refugees cannot seek help from the authorities due to their irregular stay in the country, so they withstand often ruthless treatment.

The Lebanese government is stepping up its response by "prosecuting and convicting more traffickers and identifying and referring to protective services an increased number of victims" (US Department of State (US DoS), 2017, p.248). The passing of the 2011 Anti-trafficking law has improved the overall response to this crime and, in late March 2016, a human trafficking network which had been torturing and sexually exploiting 75 Syrian women in a suburb of Jounieh (northeast of Beirut) was uncovered by the Internal Security Forces (ISF), with 23 people being charged with multiple crimes (Shaheen, 2016). However, victims are still being arrested and accused of taking part in prostitution, and the identification and ensuing investigation of cases of TIP remains low, despite the intensification of trainings for the ISF and the DGGS (ICMPD, 2015). Most judges also "lacked understanding of the anti-trafficking law and knowledge of best practices for handling trafficking cases" (US DoS, 2017, p.248), which illustrates the need for continuous training and awareness-raising among all groups of society. The risk of Trafficking in Persons among the Syrian refugee community is indeed considerable, with women, children and men at constant risk of sex trafficking and/or forced labour.

To sum up, the lack of legal residence permit has multiple negative consequences in the lives of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, starting from the restrictions to their freedom of movement, due to the existence of checkpoints. The Lebanese Army and other governmental entities have escalated their control over refugees' presence in the country, frequently conducting raids on informal settlements, imposing curfews and enforcing evictions. These result in numerous protection challenges for displaced persons, such as the risk of being forced into an exploitative housing arrangement or the risk of trafficking (LCRP, 2018). The most important factor increasing their vulnerability is, however, the lack of valid residence, which severely constrains refugees' mobility and their livelihoods. A Syrian refugee was quoted as saying she "wouldn't be afraid of checkpoints" if she had a residence permit, and that it "would give us [Syrian refugees without valid permit] higher morale and we

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[51] Super nightclubs are clubs where women, usually from Eastern Europe or Morocco, work under "artist" visas, i.e., visas issued mostly to women to work as "entertainers" in nightclubs. This "entertainment" actually translates into sex work and, possibly, into sexual exploitation by the owners of the clubs, as women are expected to engage physically with clients. Lebanese law stipulates that these women can only enter the country after signing an employment contract, which has to be approved by the General Security (Anderson, 2012), who is also charged with supervising their working conditions and their health status. However, Syrian women who are exploited in this business do not hold such a visa (and respective benefits), and their sexual services reportedly cost less than those of Eastern Europeans (ICMPD, 2015), which renders them more vulnerable to abuses by clients and employers.

would feel more psychologically comfortable in moving around. We would feel like any other residents of the country" (AI, 2016b). In this way, unable to access the labour market (in some cases not even informal jobs), refugees increasingly adopt negative coping mechanisms, like the resort to savings, protraction of debt, removal of children from school, and, more critically, their involvement in income activities (child labour) or their engagement in marriage. Adults are affected as well, with many facing exploitation at work, forced labour and sexual exploitation, namely by sponsors and/or employers. For this reason, obtaining legal residency permit is a priority for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, as the majority thinks their safety is hindered without legal status (CLDH, 2016; IRC & NRC, 2015). When comparing the need for legal assistance among those who have legal stay and those who do not, 58% of the latter say that it is a priority for them, whereas only 22% of refugees who have legal permit consider it to be necessary (CLDH, 2016). This reflects the importance refugees place in regularising their status in the country and obtaining valid residency as a way of improving their freedom and living conditions. Despite this valorisation, the majority of them is not able to secure such status because of the high costs it entails. Therefore, they remain "in breach" of Lebanese Law (AI, 2016b; IRC & NRC, 2015), vulnerable to detention, deportation (which up until now has not been enforced in compliance with the principle of *non-refoulement*), exploitation, abuse and trafficking, all of which are currently taking place.

The GoL's response to these problems has been unsatisfactory and insufficient for the most part, not least because of the lack of international support allocated to the Syrian crisis, according to the evaluations carried out by NGOs in the field (TFF, 2016; AI, 2015). For example, The Freedom Fund reports that, as of 2016, no particular official interventions or projects were being implemented in order to end situations of forced labour among Syrian refugees, and those aimed at combating child labour and eliminating its worst forms have not been very impactful either (TFF, 2016). In fact, when it concerns informal and forced labour, although Lebanon imposed the new rules with the purpose of formalising and controlling Syrian presence in the country (after a long period with no policy at all) and protecting the Lebanese workforce, it actually seems that it had a contrary effect. This is because the "new policy indirectly promotes informal employment, subjecting Syrians to financial exploitation, including long working hours, little-to-no benefits, low salaries, and no protection" (LS, 2016, p.21). This "environment, coupled with the need for more self-reliance among Syrians, provided the private sector with a non-compliant labor force, cheaper than Lebanese labor. This, in effect, has created further competition between Syrian and Lebanese labor and has had the adverse effect; failing to protect the Lebanese work force" (ALEF & PAX, 2016, p.20). Faced with the obligation of paying the 200USD fee to renew their residence visa (plus the additional charges imposed by sponsors) – an absolute condition for legally accessing the labour market –, but unable to do so due to the lack of financial resources, refugees find

themselves in a dilemma which is essentially a "'catch-22' situation": they "require access to work to afford the fees to obtain legal stay in Lebanon, but with limited legal status they are less likely to access work" (IRC & NRC, 2015, p.27). Moreover, this enforced resort to precariousness and irregular work has translated into a deterioration of the working conditions and the wages, which has affected both Syrians and Lebanese, who were already facing a difficult economic situation in the country. This new regulation thus proves to be incoherent and counterproductive.

Relating to child marriage, it is also reported that Lebanon should do more, starting by signing the UN Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, where the State should delineate a minimum age for marriage and enforce its practice (TFF, 2016). Once again, NGOs and UN agencies are the most important actors in the fight against such habit, although many of the programmes still reach small segments of the population and are available only in selected locations (Mourtada; Schlecht & DeJong, 2017). Sexual and Gender-Based Violence ought to be one of the top concerns and priorities in contexts of displacement, and many national and international NGOs, in some instances in partnership with MoSA, focus on this issue, targeting mostly Syrian refugees but also the host communities. Indeed, SGBV-related programmes are the ones where the Government's presence seems more noticeable. Together, these organisations implement prevention and protection programmes using a holistic, multi-sectoral approach, which incorporates legal services, information provision and awareness raising and medical and psychological health services (Anani, 2013). Safe shelters are also operated by several NGOs (e.g. ABAAD, in collaboration with UNICEF and MoSA), where victims and their families can seek safety from abusive treatment at home, while benefitting from the support of the organisation in finding a new, longer-term solution (Anani, 2013). Another way of tackling SGBV is through the development and implementation of community activities that aim to empower women and girls (ABAAD website, n.d.). These activities range from support groups and focus group discussions to awareness raising initiatives, and aim to reach everyone, including males, in an attempt to create a more equal and less symbolically violent[52] environment for women. Like in all Protection-related issues (child marriage, child labour, SGBV, among others), the GoL's role in these interventions is mostly fulfilled via MoSA. Still, efforts are underway to ensure a multi-sectoral response strategy, bringing together several organs of the Government, including the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (which encompasses the GSO and the ISF), and the Ministry of Justice, for instance. The Protection sector in the LCRP is itself linked with other areas of intervention,

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[52] Symbolic violence, a term coined by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, can be understood as "the imposition on subordinated groups by the dominant class of an ideology which legitimates and naturalizes the *status quo*" (Oxford Reference website).

such as Shelter and Basic Assistance. Despite this interconnectedness, the GoL's focus seems to be more directed at the reinforcement of the capacities of the national system, that is, maintaining the sustainability of public services that already existed in Lebanon prior to the Syrian crisis, and guaranteeing that they are in practice available to all refugees and to the Lebanese. This is the case of healthcare (which includes SGBV-specialised staff, for example) and education. This is done, however, in close partnership with the UN, through the LCRP.

The protection activities that are currently in place aim at "strengthening existing national systems to address the needs of all those affected by the protracted nature of the Syrian crisis and its impact on the Lebanese community" (LCRP, 2018, p.135). All humanitarian interventions carried out are aligned with national programs, such as the National Social Development Strategy, to guarantee sustainability and durability of the results, both for Lebanese nationals and refugees. Despite the existence of such initiatives and the partnerships between governmental and non-governmental organisations, UN, NGOs and other agencies' reports all mention that the requirement of a sponsor (the sponsorship system as *the* main way of obtaining legal residency/refuge in the country) and the payment of the respective fees in order to regularise one's legal situation are the two main factors hampering the protection of refugees and deteriorating their livelihoods and lifestyles in Lebanon (HRW, 2016; AI, 2016b). These are conditions many of them cannot meet, however, as they are already overwhelmed by the depletion of resources, including savings, and the protraction of the conflict. The elimination of such regulations constitutes one of the principal recommendations presented by UN agencies, NGOs and other institutions dealing with the crisis, alongside the recognition of "displaced" Syrians as *refugees*, as per international law standards (CLDH, 2016; TFF, 2016; IRC & NRC, 2015). These recommended measures will be further analysed in the next item.

3. Enhancing refugees' protection and decreasing their vulnerability – further measures to combat discrimination and abuse

The adoption and enforcement of the new entry and stay regulations according to the October 2014 policy paper has meant that Syrian refugees have two ways of renewing their residency permit in Lebanon: through UNHCR, if they were registered with the agency before January 2015; or by finding a sponsor. In both cases, a 200USD fee must be paid, and several officially approved documents have to be presented as well, which means that no

renewal process costs less than 275USD.[53] In practice, however, only the second option is feasible, as the arbitrary application of the rules and measures by the General Security makes it nearly impossible to renew legal stay based on UNHCR certificate. As already mentioned, the sponsorship system entails several difficulties because, firstly, it can be challenging to obtain a sponsor and, secondly, the likeliness of exploitation incurring from the power differential between both parties is high. These factors have kept the majority of Syrian refugees from regularising their status in Lebanon, which further complicates their situation and condition in the host country, especially when there seems to be no end in sight to the conflict and when support from the international community shrinks by the day.

Negative and harmful coping strategies thus emerge, severely affecting refugees' lives and futures. In this context, UN agencies and national and international NGOs have delineated a set of measures that should be applied by the GoL and the international community to improve refugees' standards of living while in displacement. The multifold humanitarian crisis that developed in the region must be jointly tackled and dealt with by all stakeholders in the region and in the world, in accordance with international human rights standards and in the spirit of *burden-sharing*, a fundamental principle of refugee protection in the international system. Yet, over the last years, the international response to the crisis has been marked by a steady decrease in funding trends, with only 43% of the sum required by LCRP for 2017 being met (LCRP, 2018). When it concerns *resettlement* to third countries, theoretically necessary in Lebanon since the country does not envisage local integration as a durable solution for the plight of refugees, the reality is that very few of them have benefitted from such measure, even those considered to be "vulnerable" according to UN criteria (e.g. refugees with serious medical needs, women and girls at risk, survivors of torture, among others).[54] Increasing the number of refugees who are resettled to a third country is one of the main recommendations that NGOs give, along with the provision of more funding for agencies so that they are able to meet the basic needs of refugees and they do not have to resort to negative coping mechanisms. This assistance (financial and material) towards Lebanon should be made conditional on the continuous respect for human rights and protection of refugees (ALEF & PAX, 2016), so that international standards are met.

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[53] This value is based on the 200USD fee that must be paid by any Syrian wishing to renew his residency in Lebanon, plus 75USD, which is the approximate cost of all the additional documents and services he must resort to in order to have the required documentation (HRW, 2016).
[54] As of 2015, UNHCR estimated that 10% of all Syrian refugees living in the five neighbouring host countries (approximately 450 000 individuals) fit these criteria. However, in the same year, only 1% of all refugees were resettled, with 7 318 of them coming from Lebanon (AI, 2016b). Between 2013 and 2017, there were only 67 314 Syrian resettlement submissions filed in Lebanon, of which 42 807 were accepted (UNHCR, 2018). Despite the increase in the number of Syrian refugees, the overall number of resettlements has been decreasing since 2016 (only 36 988 requests were registered in 2017 in *all* 5 countries (UNHCR, 2018)).

The lifting of the obstacles that prevent Syrians from regularising their stay in Lebanon and from working is also of paramount importance (AI, 2016b). The GoL should ensure that, until the situation in Syria does not change, with significant improvements in civilians' security being achieved, all refugees have access to an "effective, fair, speedy and transparent" renewal process, which means the fees and sponsorship system associated with such renewal should be eliminated (AI, 2016b). UNHCR should also be allowed to resume registration of refugees to make sure that their status and rights as persons in need of international protection are fully respected and upheld. In fact, such suspension goes against Lebanese rules and operating procedures, which clearly state that, in the maximum period of 1 year, asylum-seekers should be resettled to another country or safely returned to their country of origin. If there is no formal registration with the UN refugee agency, resettlement becomes much harder, as these processes fall under the agency's mandate, and can only be carried out in partnership with them. Ending this suspension would also facilitate their official recognition as refugees, setting the path for Lebanon to deal with this large influx in a more "humanitarian way", rather than considering them as somewhat economic migrants. This should naturally be a step forward in identifying these people as *refugees* and not "displaced", granting them the protection they are entitled to under international law, such as the protection from *refoulement*. This basic principle has, however, been violated in some instances by the authorities, although deportations were never actually materialised (Janmyr, 2016).

Deportation notices have been issued, with refugees being told that they have a given number of days to leave the country (AI, 2015; Janmyr, 2016), but they were never expelled. Nonetheless, at border crossings, Syrian nationals who do not fit into any of the humanitarian exception criteria (the majority of them) or who do not have other types of entry visas or the required documents (that prove the existence of a sponsor in Lebanon, for instance) are denied entry into the country, even though they claim to be persecuted in Syria (ALEF & PAX, 2016). No screenings or reviewing processes take place in order to clarify if the individual is in need of international protection or not, so, effectively, it is a violation of the principle of *non-refoulement*. This process of identification should be carried out by the GSO and MoSA, with the latter being responsible for analysing if the "displaced person" fills the humanitarian criteria in order to be allowed to enter the country. However, it has been reported that no representatives of the Ministry are present at the border, which ultimately makes their identification "non-operational" (CLDH, 2016). Therefore, we can conclude that relevant legislation is being sidestepped, namely the Lebanese Constitution, with refugees not being registered and resettled as regulated, and the 1962 Law of Entry and Exit, which states that those who flee conflict can seek refuge in Lebanon (LS, 2016).

The role of UNHCR in the country has been affected by the GoL's constant changes in policy. The last MoU signed between both parties dates back to 2003, when the Iraqi refugee crisis began. As Janmyr puts it, "[t]he lack of an updated MoU pertaining to the Syrian refugee influx is currently problematic as the Lebanese Government does not generally give legal effect to the UNHCR's recognition of refugee status and treats most Syrian refugees as illegal immigrants liable to arrest" (Janmyr, 2016, p.64). Indeed, when refugees present their valid UNHCR certificates to authorities, they hardly verify them and often disregard the validity of such documents (CLDH, 2016; LS, 2016). In a report produced by HRW, a Syrian refugee recounted an episode of an LAF soldier telling him to "[g]o pay a sponsor some money or return to your country. We [the LAF] are the state, you obey our laws. The UN means nothing" (HRW, 2016, p.17). The renewal process is characterized by high levels of incoherence, informality and insecurity, "which causes Syrians to sidestep authorities, deepening the gap between them and the government" (LS, 2016, p.21). It also breeds corruption and the development of the black market, eventually leaving both Syrians and Lebanese unprotected and at risk of precariousness. Hence, a new agreement between UNHCR and the GoL concerning the Syrian refugee crisis should be signed, giving legal status to all asylum-seekers and refugees on Lebanese territory. Such an agreement started to be negotiated in 2011, at about the same time as the influx of Syrians into the country, but "appears unlikely to materialise in the near future" (Janmyr, 2016, p.64). The current UNHCR-GoL relationship does not seem to be favourable to the signing of a new MoU either, so it is predictable that registration of refugees will not be resumed in the near future.[55] Consequently, as we previously argued, since there is no category in the new regulation for "people fleeing war and persecution", the sponsorship system is the only alternative for Syrians to seek safety in the neighbouring country. This represents, again, a violation of the core principle of international protection, which is binding on all States, including those, like Lebanon, who have not ratified the 1951 Convention nor its 1967 Protocol.

It is argued in some publications that refugees are intimidated, intentionally exploited and ill-treated by the authorities with the aim of creating conditions under which they *want* to leave Lebanon (LS, 2016; Janmyr, 2016). In this way, they are not driven out of the country *per se*, they are rather abandoning it 'willingly'. This can be considered a strategy to reduce the number of displaced Syrians, as living conditions become unbearable and livelihoods

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[55] The relationship between UNHCR and the GoL has been deteriorated by the Agency's "discouraging" of Syrian refugees' decision to return to their home country ("Lebanon and UN in spat over", 2018). According to Gebran Bassil, the Lebanese Foreign Minister, UNHCR has been emphasizing the lack of security guarantees back in Syria, the possible destruction of homes and the compulsory military service that refugees might have to face if they return. In a period when host community fatigue is reaching higher levels and politicians are calling for refugees' return *en masse*, UNHCR's actions and presence are seen as having the contrary effect.

drained. Thus, another major recommendation is that Lebanon signs the Convention and its Protocol, as to grant refugees more rights, in accordance with international norms. It should ensure as well that "the review process for the status of refugees already in Lebanon is in line with international standards and done on a case-by-case basis" (ALEF & PAX, 2016, p.33), since the approval of the renewal of Syrian refugees' residence in the country has been left, for the most part, at the authorities' discretion. The GoL should essentially develop a clear legal framework for displaced persons based on well-defined protection criteria. At the executive level, refugees' access to public services, namely the possibility of seeking redress in case they are victims of a crime, should always be guaranteed. For this, authorities ought to be held accountable in case they do not investigate offences and corruption should be prevented at all levels of the state (CLDH, 2016). Security services should put an end to arrests and detentions of refugees based on their lack of legal residence and stop imposing curfews too, since these severely hinder their livelihoods, rendering them much more vulnerable to exploitation. In fact, their imposition violates not only human rights but also Lebanese domestic law, as there is no legal basis for it and local municipalities do not have the right to infringe on the authority of the state-wide security forces, as former Interior Minister, Marwan Charbel, stated (ALEF & PAX, 2016). Local informal security networks are also known to, under municipality protection, 'patrol' localities in an attempt to identify security threats (ALEF & PAX, 2016). This, too, goes against the national law.

Regarding the harmful coping mechanisms we analysed above, there are measures that should be taken to tackle their adoption or minimise their effects, in addition to the increase in international pressure coming from States and specific Inter-Governmental Organisations, like UNHCR. Statelessness should be one of the most addressed issues, as the lack of an identity may prevent children from attending school or receiving medical treatment, and it has dire consequences in adulthood. When it comes to child marriage, it should be noted from the beginning that, among Syrian refugees, it "is extremely difficult to address because child marriage is a symptom of much more pervasive underlying issues unique to the refugee situation" (UNICEF, 2017, p.10). It is also, up to a certain extent, a cultural practice among specific social groups, which means that tradition plays an important role and will not be disregarded, despite solid efforts by NGOs or other organisations working on child protection. Nevertheless, Lebanon should sign the above-mentioned Convention on consent to marriage and age for marriage and enforce its practice. In arduous times, like during conflict and while going through financial difficulties, child marriage becomes even more common, so "[t]he only way to make effective and sustainable change is to provide these families with what they need in order for them to stop using marriages of young girls as a way to secure their economical positions in the informal settlements" (UNICEF, 2017,

p.10). This approach equally applies to child labour and to all other types of forced labour too, for displaced people would not endure such abusive conditions if they had other, less adverse ways of coping.

The Lebanese Authorities must also step up investigations and prosecutions of employers and companies known to resort to forced labour, and not allow them to walk away unpunished, since this promotes and legitimises exploitation. The GSO and the ISF must likewise improve efforts to better identify and investigate cases of TIP and proceed to their prosecution, while ceasing to consider identified *victims* as having breached the law by engaging in sex work or by entering Lebanon illegally. Victims should instead be protected in a human rights-based approach. Trafficking in Persons should also receive its due attention in the programming of the LCRP in order to mainstream awareness about the subject and to advance its response (TFF, 2016). In the case where residency permits were easier for refugees to obtain, they would be more protected from such abuses of power and would be able to seek redress if harassed. If international support to the neighbouring countries that host millions of Syrian refugees was more consistent, and if humanitarian aid provision matched the needs of the affected communities, women would not have to engage in survival sex or prostitution to be able to pay the rent, and men would not have to risk their safety while going out or crossing checkpoints. Parents, for instance, would not be forced to withdraw their children from school and send them to work. Hence, two essential recommendations should be materialised immediately: the removal of all obstacles and fees that are necessary for renewing legal stay; and the substantial increase in funding and support from the international community. Given that the Syrian refugee crisis costs approximately 8 billion USD a year for Lebanon, according to its authorities ("Lebanon and the UN in spat over", 2018), and that, in 2017, only 1.186 billion was raised out of the 2.75 billion that the LCRP required, the decrease in aid given to households was expectable. Notwithstanding, this does not justify Lebanon's latest approaches to the crisis, nor does it make its demands to (forcefully) return refugees to Syria legitimate and acceptable under international law.

Lastly, some organisations also call for the collection and gathering of more data on Syrian refugees' adoption of negative coping mechanisms, namely concerning the involvement of children in the sex industry and the overall sexual exploitation of displaced Syrian women (and men) (TFF, 2016). This comprises the prevalence of survival sex among the affected communities, as well as the occurrence of human trafficking with the purpose of sexual exploitation in prostitution, and the extent of the presence of refugees in the entertainment sector (in the so-called 'super nightclubs', for example). In terms of SGBV in general, the GoL should, according to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), "seek technical support for the establishment of a system to

collect data on incidents of gender-based violence against women, in particular sexual violence, and incidents of child and/or forced marriage of refugee women and girls, and provide victims with medical and psychosocial assistance and access to justice" (CEDAW, 2015, p.14). Further data should also be collected regarding situations of forced labour, and the living conditions of refugees not registered with UNHCR. It can be particularly difficult to reach them due to their irregular status in Lebanon; however, since they are the most vulnerable populations, the need for such information only becomes greater (IRC & NRC, 2015).

In addition to the need for more data on these subjects, it should be mentioned as well that, with the exception of the LCRP and VASyR (both UN publications), most of the sources we have used to write the second chapter of this thesis date mostly from 2015 and 2016, and we were not able to find any reports or publications with more updated information. Further investigation should thus be carried out, but the existing data should also be updated. For example, we were not able to determine if the fee waiver applied in early 2017 to refugees who had registered with UNHCR prior to January 2015, and who had not renewed their residency, was still up-to-date at the moment of writing. We could not find any additional information on the financial and housing pledges displaced Syrians were supposed to present at the GS office in order to obtain legal status either. Finally, it must be noted that we came across conflicting, or at least discrepant, data about certain subjects, such as the prevalence rate of child labour. According to the VASyR report of 2017, 4.8% of children aged 5 to 17 years old were reported to be working, whereas a "leading NGO", cited by the Freedom Fund, estimates the figure to range between 60% and 70% (non-dated figure; TFF, 2016). This report adds that, in 2017, crisis and emergency coping strategies were adopted by less than 2% of refugee households (VASyR, 2017). Knowing what these coping mechanisms consist of (withdrawal of children from school, reducing non-food expenses, child marriage, child labour, among others), it is difficult to believe such figure is accurate. Another example has to do with AI and CLDH. Amnesty International states that the fee refugees must pay if they entered Lebanon illegally and now wish to obtain legal stay corresponds to 633USD (AI, 2015). The Lebanese Centre for Human Rights places the sum at 650USD, though (CLDH, 2016). Although the difference is not very significant, the value is not congruent among distinct organisations, which leaves doubts. Most importantly, however, is that the differences we perceived to exist were mainly between data and documents produced by the UN and those gathered by (mostly international) NGOs, such as AI, TFF or IRC/NRC. Indeed, the 2015 edition of the VASyR report, a study carried out by the UN, found that only 6% of surveyed households had experienced "any kinds of issues related with their safety during the last three months in Lebanon" (AI, 2016b, p.47). In sharp contrast, "the majority of women interviewed by Amnesty International expressed concerns for their safety

and that of other family members and said that harassment of refugee women on the streets was commonplace" (AI, 2016b, p.47). This was corroborated by staff working with other NGOs, who "described a climate in which refugee women were at risk of gender-based violence" (AI, 2016b, p.47). With this in mind, we can either conclude that the VASyR report was, both in 2015 and in 2017, misconducted (for instance, they failed to have a representative sample), or that the communities and individuals they reach are different (less varied, less representative of the displaced population) than those that NGOs do. Another possibility is that refugees might feel more at ease speaking to NGO workers rather than to the UN's. Many of the former's interviews are held in the form of focus group discussions, which may be a better-suited method for discussing sensitive issues, like SGBV, while the UN seems to collect data through individual questionnaires (AI, 2016b). However, we cannot be sure about this. It would be very useful and valuable to further explore this discrepancy.

Conclusion

The Syrian conflict has created one of the most pressing humanitarian crises in the world, severely affecting both Syria and the neighbouring region, especially Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, who, together, host more than 5 million registered Syrian refugees, as of early June 2018 (UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response data portal website, 2018). Given the large amounts of refugees that it received (Syrians in the present and in the recent years, and Iraqis and Palestinians in the past as well), Lebanon is the country in the world which hosts the most refugees in comparison to its national population. This has placed enormous strain on the already-weak Lebanese state institutions and on the provision of services, which were already known for their scarce capacity and had been facing considerable pressure even before the influx of Syrians.

The GoL remained largely inactive and 'unresponsive' to this crisis until late 2014 due to the political impasse the country was living, and also because of its social context (entrenched levels of sectarianism and overall administrative inability to deal with fast-developing crises), which prevented the implementation of a quicker response. The Government operated an open-border policy until October 2014, when a new Policy Paper aimed at reducing the number of Syrians in Lebanon was adopted. Its main purpose was to restrict Syrians' access to Lebanon and encouraging their return home, however, few took the decision to go back as the security situation is still dangerous and uncertain in many

parts of the country and for certain groups, such as Sunnis. This document also envisaged the enhancement of security and regulation measures towards the Syrian population, in an attempt to better control their presence and activities in Lebanon. Indeed, "[t]he underlying motive of the official policy towards Syrian and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is to deliberately increase their hardship so as to encourage their departure from the country" (ALEF & PAX, 2016, p.7). After the entry into force of these new rules in January 2015, seeking refuge from persecution and conflict in Lebanon became practically impossible, unless one obtains a sponsor. The sponsorship system itself bears great danger and risks as refugees might fall into uneven relationships with the sponsor and be exploited for numerous purposes. Furthermore, it encompasses the payment of considerable fees too, which most refugees are unable to meet because their assets have been continuously depleted since the start of the war. This ultimately means that those who are not in possession of legal residency (the majority of refugees) are considered to be in breach of Lebanese Law, in the eyes of the GoL. If they do not possess residency, they are also banned from (legally) entering the labour market, and thus cannot have a source of income. Their freedom of movement is highly limited due to the existence of checkpoints throughout the territory, making survival increasingly precarious and directly encouraging refugees to resort to illegal activities, including engaging in crime, and to adopt harmful coping strategies, such as child labour or accepting risky jobs. In this way, as Janmyr puts it (2016, p.72), displaced persons are in fact "not only rendered outlaws, but outside the protection of the law" too.

The fluctuation and inconsistency of the official GoL response, shifting from an "open-border policy to very strict regulations based on the political interests and sectarian concerns of leading Lebanese political groups" (Tınas, 2017, p.13), has delegitimised the national governance system. Nonetheless, the lack of support from the international community should not be overlooked when analysing the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, as, under international law and following the principles of the global refugee regime, the responsibility of burden-sharing applies to all countries, and not only to those considered to be first asylum countries, like Lebanon. Other states, in particular the EU Member States, the US, Canada and other wealthier countries, should step up their efforts to resettle refugees and provide more funding to tackle the humanitarian crisis that has developed. Further cooperation between all stake holders, bringing together the GoL, UN Agencies, aid agencies, academia, think tanks, the local government and the private sector, including private citizens, must be promoted by the relevant authorities if an attempt to implement a holistic and comprehensive response to the emergency is to be taken seriously. Most importantly, in our perspective, the first measure to be immediately materialised is the resumption of the registration of refugees by UNHCR, in compliance with international standards of refugee protection and in a Human rights-based approach. Despite the GoL's apparent lack of political will to make such a

decision, since this is not in their interest (Janmyr, 2016), Lebanon must fulfil its obligations under international law and abide by the rules stipulated in its Constitution, to grant safe haven to all persons fleeing war and/or fearing for their lives.

Finally, Lebanon should take this chance to review, develop and improve its asylum system, and also to boost the development and resilience of its institutions, public services and economy. This can be achieved as shorter-term humanitarian assistance and relief projects are implemented in coordination with longer-term development and investment initiatives, whose growing need reflects the results of the protraction of the conflict and the ensuing necessity to establish more future-oriented programmes. In this context, Dionigi asserts that "[m]atching development objectives with humanitarian relief may have the positive effect of turning crisis management into a development opportunity for Lebanon" (Dionigi, 2016, p.29). Betts and Collier (2015) add that "[a]n effective refugee policy should improve the lives of the refugees in the short term and the prospects of the region in the long term, and it should also serve the economic and security interests of the host states". However, for this, the fragility of the Lebanese social and political institutions must be tackled and mitigated, so that crises of a complex nature, like the Syrian one, can be better and more adequately managed by the competent authorities without plunging the country into further fragmentation and political deadlock. The risk of not doing so ultimately translates into a political contagion of Lebanon by the conflict, as some fear was the case of the impact of the Palestinian refugee crisis in the origins of the Lebanese civil war. It thus appears that the approach to the crisis needs reconsideration overall, so as to better integrate refugees in the host society and above all recognize that their presence in the country can be beneficial in economic terms (Betts & Collier, 2015).

To sum up, to answer the initial key question, we argue that negative coping mechanisms that amount to exploitation and trafficking are both present in the context of displacement in Lebanon, as Syrian refugees are vulnerable and living in increasingly precarious conditions. Women and girls, in particular those belonging to women-headed households, are susceptible to being trafficked for sexual exploitation into prostitution or to be exploited by individuals who have some degree of authority in their lives, such as landlords, employers or sponsors. Younger women or underage girls are more and more confronted with child marriage and early pregnancies, since their families consider them to be in danger while in displacement and facing mounting degrees of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and harassment. Men and boys, on the other hand, are known to be victims of forced labour and child labour, usually engaging in unsafe, unsupervised, low-paying and risky jobs, namely in the construction and the agriculture sectors. Child labour is especially common among boys, as we see them carrying out street labour tasks, or other forms of the "worst forms of child labour", whereas for girls the most usual harmful coping strategy is child

marriage. Although some families are reluctant to applying such mechanisms, whether they are directed at children or adults, when confronted with the protraction of the conflict, the depletion of resources and the many other difficulties faced daily, including those related to the renewal of legal residency or the lack thereof, or the decrease in the aid provided by UN agencies or other organisations, many households have run out of less negative ways of dealing with the crisis, so they are forced to adopt more adverse measures. The most reasonable and impactful ways of combatting the resort to such behaviours is by lifting all the obstacles that prevent Syrians from obtaining valid stay in Lebanon, and by substantially increasing the resources allocated by the international community to the Syrian refugee crisis – both material resources (funding and in-kind aid), and the number of resettlement places – in strict consideration and application of the basic principles of international refugee law. This has not been the case, however, as funding trends have been consistently decreasing over the years and the response is more and more ineffective and inadequate. In this way, we can conclude that the situation is not so much one of amending the fundamentals of the existing regime for refugees, but of implementing it in practice, enduring proper burden sharing and adjusting the funding for dealing with prolonged and massive refugee waves. The Lebanese Government and UNHCR should also forge a new MoU with the aim of enforcing a more comprehensive response to the crisis and ensure that relevant legislation, like the Lebanese Constitution or the principle of *non-refoulement* or other key instruments of international humanitarian law and international refugee protection, are not sidestepped.

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Annexes

- Annex A – Political map of Syria

Political map of Syria

- Annex B – Political map of Lebanon

Political map of Lebanon

source: *Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2020 (2018 update)*, 2018, p.6