Seeking Safety, Finding Fear:
Syrian Families' Experiences of (Im)Mobility and the Implications for Children and Family Rights

Bree Akesson
Associate Professor
Faculty of Social Work
Wilfrid Laurier University

Kearney Coupland
Doctoral Student
Department of Geography and Environmental Studies
Wilfrid Laurier University

Abstract

The war in Syria has led to a large number of Syrian families fleeing to neighbouring countries, including Lebanon. Per capita, Lebanon has taken in more refugees than any other country in the world. Despite a shared history of taking in each other's war-affected populations, the Government of Lebanon response has shifted from that of hospitality and protection to refusing to officially recognize displaced Syrians as refugees and imposing other restrictive policies that make everyday life a challenge for Syrian families. These actions have an impact upon the basic human rights of these families. Drawing upon data from research with 46 Syrian families, this paper will describe how Syrian family movement is restricted, identify the multiple and interrelated factors that contribute to immobility, explore how restricted mobility can compromised children, family, and human rights.

Keywords: Syrian refugees; forced displacement; mobility; child and family rights; well-being

Introduction

The war in Syria is considered the largest humanitarian and protection crisis in the world (Amnesty International 2015; UNHCR, 2017). As the Syrian war enters its eighth year, the number of displaced Syrians now exceeds 11 million people, over five million of whom have sought safety in neighbouring countries such as Lebanon (UNHCR, 2017). In Lebanon, there are approximately 1.5 million displaced Syrians (UNHCR, 2017). One in four residents in Lebanon is a Syrian refugee (Boustani, Carpi, Gebara, & Mourad, 2016). Lebanon is the only country in the world to take in the most number of refugees in proportion to its size (Kelley, 2017).

Both Syria and Lebanon have a long history of open borders that have encouraged commerce and livelihoods, as well as hosting each others' displaced populations during wartime (Chatty, 2018). Nevertheless, as the Syrian war has become more protracted, the Government of Lebanon's (GoL's) refugee response has transitioned from hospitality and protection to restriction and containment. The GoL has not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention andJanmyr, 2016). Therefore, a major element of the GOL's response has been its refusal to officially recognize Syrians as refugees, which impacts the rights of Syrian children and families.

This paper presents findings from a mixed methods research study with 50 Syrian families living in Lebanon. In the following pages, we will describe the research results that specifically address how Syrian family movement is restricted in Lebanon, identify multiple interrelated factors that contribute to this restricted mobility, and explore the implications of restricted mobility on children's and families' rights and well-being. We will provide a context for a large number of Syrian refugees who have entered Lebanon and describe the GoL response. Drawing upon a child rights framework and the experiences of Syrian families, we will then explore how the GoL's refusal to recognise Syrians as refugees impacts families' living environments and (im)mobility.

Background: Syrian Families in Lebanon

The growing number of Syrian families seeking safety has placed an increased burden on the already strained government structures in Lebanon. Prior to the influx of Syrian refugees, Lebanon was limited in affordable housing options for its citizens (Fawaz, 2017). International aid has not been sufficient in addressing the critical public service and infrastructure needs of the

country, putting pressure on the GoL and increasing tensions between Syrians and the local Lebanese populations (Human Rights Watch, 2016a). Humanitarian and non-governmental organisations have filled the gap left by the government, though they continue to struggle to meet the growing needs of the high numbers of displaced Syrian families. Funding gaps for humanitarian assistance also remain.

Policies Affecting Syrian Refugees

Prior to the conflict, Syrians and Lebanese moved freely across their shared border. However, as the number of Syrian families seeking safety has grown, the GoL has changed its policies from one of unrestricted movement to those that aim to contain Syrian refugees (Sanyal, 2017). Due to a shared history of strong economic ties and hosting one another's citizens during wartime, the GoL initially anticipated that displaced Syrians would self-settle and receive support from kin and community (Chatty, 2016). However, today, the country considers itself one of transit and not asylum, prompting the development of policies that encourage only temporary stays (Shawaf & El Asmar, 2017).

In January 2015, the GoL implemented regulations that made it significantly more restrictive for Syrians to renew residency (Human Rights Watch, 2016b). This created two categories of refugees: those officially registered with the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) and those not registered with UNHCR who are therefore required to have a Lebanese sponsor (Human Rights Watch, 2016b). Syrians who register with the UNHCR are also required to sign a declaration that they will not work and pay a US$200 annual fee (Human Rights Watch, 2016b). This is a challenge for Syrian families whose average monthly income is around US$60 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), & World Food Program (WFP), 2016).

Sponsorship has become the *de facto* pathway to legal status in Lebanon (Keith & Shawaf, 2018). In practice, this system has become exploitative. Sponsors can retract their sponsorship at any time and for any reason, creating a hierarchical power relation that can lead to Syrians providing free labour and paying additional fees to maintain their legal status in Lebanon (Human Rights Watch, 2016b; Keith & Shawaf, 2018). This has resulted in a large number of undocumented Syrian families in Lebanon (Human Rights Watch, 2016b; Keith & Shawaf, 2018; Shawaf & El Asmar, 2017). Futhermore, children over the age of 15 face risk of arrest and

detention when they do not have the necessary required documents, which inhibits their mobility, education, and access to basic services such as healthcare and social services (El Daoi, 2017).

The GoL's policies to register Syrian families has also contributed to the perception by local communities that they must compete with Syrians for employment and services. A growing attitude of us-versus-them has led to increased incidents of harassment and discrimination of Syrians (Sanyal, 2017). In addition, the GoL's policies have prompted Syrians to self-impose curfews in a number of municipalities, which restrict Syrian's ability to earn livelihoods and interact with the Lebanese population, further isolating and marginalising them (Chatty, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2016b).

Under an international human rights framework, the GoL does not recognise the displaced populations of Syria as official *refugees*. The decision not to sign the 1951 Refugee Convention is influenced by Lebanon's history of accommodating a large number of Palestinian refugees. For nearly 70 years, Lebanon has been host to 12 UN camps for an estimated 500,000 Palestinian refugees (Sanyal, 2017; Thorleifsson, 2016). Since that time, the GoL has increasing tried to restrict the entrance of additional Palestinians into the country, including Palestinians from Syria (Santos, 2014). The GoL no-camp policy is intended to avoid another "Palestinian situation" (Sanyal, 2017).

Finding refuge is therefore dependent on the individual hospitality of locals, rather than as a universal right afforded to the displaced (Chatty, 2016). In addition, despite the large numbers of Syrian families seeking safety and shelter within Lebanon, the GoL has refused to create formal refugee camps, prompting the establishment of informal settlements across the country. Informal settlements are negotiated spaces "regulated, controlled and segregated like camps through private actors" (Sanyal, 2017, p.120) as a response to the state's suspension of law. Even though the GoL has given tacit approval for the development of informal refugee settlements in response to the crisis, the official no-camp policy in Lebanon removes the "burden of refugees" from the GoL (Sanyal, 2017, p. 120).

Syrian Families' Living Environments in Lebanon

The GoL's no-camp policy, has resulted in two types of informal shelters for Syrian families in Lebanon: (1) private urban and semi-urban and (2) informal settlements. The majority of Syrian families in Lebanon live in private urban and semi-urban areas. In these urban contexts, Syrian families find accommodation in rented apartments, rooms, or makeshift housing

(Fawaz, 2016). In larger cities, families may be forced to live in a single room subdivided from an original apartment or share a larger apartment with other families (Fawaz, 2017). In some situations, women are living in close proximity to men who are not family, challenging the cultural norms of Syrians living in Lebanon (Thorleifsson, 2016).

Informal settlements negotiated between a *shaweesh*, a Syrian community leader, and a private landowner, have emerged primarily on agricultural land throughout the Bekaa Valley (Sanyal, 2017). Informal settlements largely dependent on the private landowner, are dispersed throughout the landscape and are challenging for humanitarian services to access (Sanyal, 2017). The "highly uneven landscape of settlements" differs in the services provided in terms of size, security, and amenities (Sanyal, 2017, p. 121). There is often a high cost of rent relative to the income available from precarious work in the region. In agricultural areas, Syrians may work for lower wages than Lebanese workers in order to provide food and shelter for their families. Over half of the displaced Syrian population is living in extreme poverty, on less than $3 a day (UNHCR, 2017). This income inequality adds to the hostility from local Lebanese citizens, who may also be struggling financially (Chatty, 2016).

The no-camp policy exacerbates the dire situations of Syrian families. In these settings, rent is controlled by private landowners who can extort and exploit their often unregistered Syrian tenants (Sanyal, 2017). This has led to a majority of Syrian families accumulating burdensome debts. The average Syrian refugee family in Lebanon has an average debt of US$857 per household (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees et al., 2016).

In 2014, the GoL enacted a policy to decrease the number of Syrians living in Lebanon by reducing their access to territory (Janmyr, 2016). By refusing to sign the 1951 Refugee Convention, the GoL can effectively make life so challenging for Syrians that they will have no other choice but to return to Syria. With few if any rights, Syrian families struggle to survive in an increasingly inhospitable environment. The next section will explore the theoretical framework that allows for a better understand of the situation of these Syrian families.

(Im)Mobility and the Rights of Syrian Families

In addition to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the protection of refugee children is explicitly outlined in Article 22 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which states that signatory countries "shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee

status or who is considered a refugee in accordance with applicable international or domestic law and procedure shall… receive appropriate protective humanitarian assistance..." (UN General Assembly, 1989, p. 6). While the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the international agreement with the most signatories globally, if a child does not have the relevant identification papers—commonly attained through their parents' legal status—then they face additional obstacles (Garin et al., 2016). If children's births are not registered or if they are born to parents who do not have official documentation—with both scenarios common among Syrian families in Lebanon—then these children can be further marginalized (Bhabha, 2009; Garin et al., 2016). These functionally stateless children have been referred to as *Arendt's C*, those who despite having *inalienable rights* have no government to enforce them (Bhabha, 2009). It has become evident through the experiences of many of the 65 million refugees worldwide that, while rights are not meant to be tied to government, in practice, "the moment human beings [lack] their own government… no authority [is] left to protect them and no institution [is] willing to guarantee them" (Arendt, 1951, p. 370).

Though their undocumented status should not restrict their access to rights, the inability to provide a government-issued document, or the inability of a parent or guardian to secure legal status, has implications for children's rights, such as access to education or health services. The international community accepts that all persons are privileged with certain "inalienable rights" though the actual recognition of this has been contested in the discourse related to displaced Syrians in Lebanon (Clutterbuck et al., 2017). *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* presents 30 human rights including the right to dignity, the right to movement, and the right to a standard living (UN General Assembly, 1948). The 1951 Convention on the Status of the Refugee promises to act as the institution that guarantees rights to stateless families. Yet countries, such as Lebanon, who are not signatories of the Convention, pose obstacles in realising the universal human rights of displaced families.

Displaced Syrian families face physical and legal challenges finding safety in Lebanon. The restrictive policies in attaining legal documents and the no-camp policy based on GoL's refusal to recognise refugees, directs the displaced into a zone of informality. Yiftachel (2009) refers to this as a *gray space*, existing between legality/eviction, approval/destruction, safety/death and lightness/darkness (p. 250). The uncertainty that surrounds the everyday existence of children in these environments interrupts their ability to attach to place, challenging

their understanding of identity and belonging. *Gray spacing* is a "ceaseless process of producing social relations" (Yiftachel, 2009, p. 250) through the power of "physical obstacles and legal practices of control" (Pasquetti & Picker, 2017, p. 533). The production of informal spaces can be recognized in a physical-spatial form or "confined informalities" such as an illegitimate and informal settlement that physically confines the limits of "safety" and familiarity. As the displaced Syrian population grows, this confinement increasingly threatens children's right to play and rest (Article 31), their right to privacy (Article 16) due to cramped living conditions, and their right to be free of discrimination (Article 19) (UN General Assembly 1989). The independence of children is limited as parents restrict mobility, sometimes within the home, as a measure for safety, which is common with other war-affected populations (Akesson, 2014). By not experiencing their surroundings, families may never become familiar with their physical environment, thereby reinforcing fears that encourage confinement.

Alternatively, gray spacing can take a symbolic form or "informal confinements" such as the limitation felt by a person as a result of fear and informal interventions of the state that limits their mobility (Pasquetti & Picker, 2017, p. 538). The legislation and policies that restrict access to legal documentation and therefore fair employment, challenges families' ability to provide a safe place for their children to live and meet their children's basic needs (Article 27). In addition, while actions are being taken to improve access to education for displaced Syrian children, for many, their right to education (Articles 28 & 29) (UN General Assembly, 1989) is threatened as they face discrimination, limited transportation, and lack of documentation that confers rights.

As displaced Syrian families find themselves in a gray space, they are tasked with defending the rights of their children while informal and formal policies challenge their ability to lead a safe and dignified life. This deterioration of dignity and status removes the political being from the personHistorically, in order to ensure the security of the state, rights are stripped away from those perceived as threats: the stateless, the marginalised, the displaced, the refugee (Agamben, 2005; Arendt, 1951). They are reduced to *bare life*, a body without a political voice (Agamben 1998). Held in a state of exception, where the rule of law is not in effect, without the support of a community nor the political voice to affect change, Syrian families in Lebanon remain in a *gray space,* searching for safety in a state of uncertainty. Through the GoL's restrictive residency policies and lack of formal spaces for the displaced, Syrian refugees in Lebanon are rendered to a *bare life*.

Methodology

This paper reports on the findings from a multi-methods research study aimed at generating knowledge regarding the experiences of Syrian refugee families living in Lebanon. The research received human subjects' approval through the Wilfrid Laurier University Research Ethics Board (REB #4661) and followed all REB guidelines.

In 2016, we conducted collaborative family interviews with 50 families who had fled Syria due to war and had resettled in three regions of Lebanon: northern Lebanon, Beirut, and Bekaa Valley. Initial recruitment of participants took place in partnership with various community and international organisations working in northern Lebanon. Aligned with cultural norms, researchers subsequently recruited participating families through word of mouth.

The 50 families included a total of 312 index family members (e.g., mother, father, children) and 39 extended family members (e.g., aunts, grandmothers, cousins, etc.). Of the 50 participating families, the majority (N=24) arrived in Lebanon within one year of the start of the Syrian conflict, while 16 families arrived more recently (within the past one to three years); two families were living and working in Lebanon prior to the start of the conflict, and eight families did not answer this question. Twenty-three families had arrived in Lebanon using legal channels, 15 had arrived "illegally", and 12 declined to respond. At the time of the interview in 2016, 16 of the 50 families were legally registered in Lebanon, while 22 were living in Lebanon without their official registration papers, and 12 declined to respond. Fourteen of the families had maintained their legal status, 14 additional families never registered, while eight families had entered legally, but were living without official registration status. Two families converted their "illegal" status and, at the time of the interview, were residing in Lebanon legally registered, while 12 families declined to answer one or both of the questions about legal status.

At the beginning of each collaborative family interview, we gathered demographic data as well as our team's reflections on the research process. Collaborative family interviews followed a chronological life course format: (1) life in Syria before the war, (2) life in Syria after the war, (3) journey from Syria to Lebanon, (4) life in Lebanon, and (5) dreams for the future. Children participated in the research through drawing, mapmaking, and engagement in the collaborative family interview.

At the end of the collaborative family interview, we invited the children to take us on a walk of their neighbourhood communities (with parental consent and child assent), which was

documented using geographic information systems (GIS). During the neighbourhood walk, children were encouraged to show us the places where, they were allowed to visit, places where their daily activities occur, and places where people they know are located. We asked the children to indicate any important places, and we took a photo to add to the GIS-generated neighbourhood walk map. Throughout the course of the walk, the children had full control over the research process directing us in their own everyday worlds.

With participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded, translated, and transcribed prior to data analysis. Data analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data was facilitated through Dedoose, an online research and evaluation data application. Data were analyzed through careful reading and collation of transcripts to ascertain meaning and significance that participants attributed to their experiences. Transcripts were coded and concepts were generated and categorized into themes. The emerging theme of (im)mobility as it relates to children's and families' rights is the focus of this paper.

Findings & Discussion

Experiences of mobility in Lebanon: Seeking safety, finding fear

For the families in this study, Lebanon was originally considered a place to escape the violence and uncertainty of war, though families found that their mobility was more restricted than their lives before the war and as restricted as their lives during the war. Some children were born during the course of the war in Syria, so these children's mobility had been restricted for their entire lives. For example, 37-year-old Umm-Zahra, a single mother of two young children who had arrived in Lebanon within the past year, described how her children's mobility was compromised while living in Syria during the war:

> They were born in war and they lived at home most of the time…. The only place I took them to is a mall near my home, there is a mall….I took them...only one time and that [was] more horrible than anything I've seen in my life. You can't imagine the way [it was] destroyed [by] fire [and] there was nobody there….it's not a living place…. There is no reason to burn these. Sometimes I think that it's burnt just to make people feel afraid..., because it's nonsense to destroy these places.

However, as families spent more time in Lebanon waiting to return to Syria, mobility for families did not improve. For example, 29-year-old Umm-Imad, mother of three children all under the age of 10, explained:

...from when we first came here, we resided here and never moved. So nothing has changed. We don't go out. My husband comes [and] goes from work to home. We don't go anywhere. My husband has an uncle that lives far away. He always asks us to come, and we avoid going. My husband always comes up with excuses, because we don't like going faraway places.

When discussing their everyday lives in Lebanon, families were asked to describe the places that they feel comfortable visiting and the places that they do not feel comfortable visiting. Many families cited feelings of insecurity, threat, and unease stating that because "we do not feel safe here" and so "we never leave the camp". As 38-year-old Abu-Mahmoud explained, to protect his children, "No one leaves. Everyone stays inside the house." These discussions elicited a range of responses about the many places that families do *not* visit with little to no discussion about the places they do visit. For example, 44-year-old Umm-Mahdi, a mother of six children ages four to 16, explained: "We don't go out like other people, to walk around or anything. Only along our street and that's it." Similarly, Umm-Imad said the only "safe" place was "here beside my house, beside the fence."

Many families' limited mobility was reflected in their neighbourhood walks. After the collaborative family interview, 44-year-old Umm-Mahdi and her six children participated in a neighbourhood walk that lasted two minutes and only toured the alleyway in front of their apartment. According to the interviewer, "The children don't go anywhere else in the neighbourhood alone. This is the only picture (see Image 1 below), because this is the only place they go out in the neighbourhood".

Image 1: "This is the only place they go out in the neighborhood" (The Abu-Mahdi Family).

Similarly, Image 2 below shows a small piece of land outside the tented settlements, which is the only place that the Abu-Abbas family allows their children to play. For six families, their limited mobility was so severe that they did not feel comfortable participating in the neighbourhood walk at all.

Image 2: "This is the only place the children can go to alone" (The Abu-Abbas Family).

Families also spoke about actively restricting their children's independent mobility. 63-year-old grandmother, Umm-Jeda explained: "We don't let [our oldest granddaughter, nine-year-old] Iman go out anywhere other than school and home. No way. Either we go with her, or she doesn't go. I worry about her." Similarly, when Umm-Abbas, a 35-year old mother of seven children ages two to 16, was asked where her children go unattended by a parent, she replied:

> Umm-Abbas: Nowhere, they are allowed only around the tent.
> Interviewer: To the football court nearby?
> Umm-Abbas: No, not even there.
> Interviewer: Except for your eldest son?
> Umm-Abbas: Even my eldest son. Sometimes if we forget the bread or the teacups and he goes to get them, I worry about every second while he's away until he's back. I wait for him impatiently.

Most parents allowed their children to travel to and from school. For example, when asked what places their children are allowed to visit, Umm-Imad replied: "Not a lot of places, just their school which is the safest." The importance of education among Syrian families was underscored and is aligned with other research on Syrian families (see, for example, Buckner, Spencer, & Cha, 2017). Furthermore, during the time when we were conducting this research, there were incentive programs to encourage families to support their children's attendance at school, which increased children's attendance at school.

Even though families encouraged their children to attend school, there was still a sense of fear regarding these children's journeys to and from school. Thirty-one-year-old Umm-Anwar, mother of five children ages six to 13 explained that one of her sons was threatened with a knife by another child during his walk to school and so she walks with them to and from school every day.

In some cases, overwhelming fear drove some families not even to allow their children to attend school. 27-year-old Umm-Ghani, a mother of five children ages one to six, explained: "There are schools here, but I didn't put my two [school-aged] children in schools, because they would have to take the "service" [bus], and I would be worried sick about them. If the school was close by, then I wouldn't mind".

Factors that Contributed to Restricted Mobility

The data revealed four factors that contributed to their children's restricted mobility: (1) a lack of comfort or familiarity with their environment, (2) various GoL policies - --enacted to contain and restrict Syrian refugees, and (3) the threat of harassment from Lebanese citizens. Economic precarity was identified as a fourth major theme that families identified as contributing to their restricted mobility, and further exploration of this finding are found in Akesson & Badawi (in press).

Lack of Place Familiarity: "We Have to Go to Know"

Being familiar with a place is directly related to one's feeling of safety and well-being. For Syrian families who are relatively new to Lebanon and living in an unfamiliar and often inhospitable environment, these feelings of comfort and safety may never fully develop due to a variety of factors. However, a lack of place familiarity was clearly a reason that families restricted their children's mobility. For example, 38-year-old Umm-Khalil, mother of five children ages one to 12, stated, "I don't let my children go off and wander to places far away. I fear for them because they don't know anything about this place."

For many families, their place familiarity - --developed over time, the longer they stayed in Lebanon. Umm-Zahra described how when she and her two daughters first arrived in Lebanon about one year ago, "...we were uncomfortable a bit. We didn't want to go out and the environment changed and our location changed…use to go out. We didn't know how or where. But slowly we learned and we managed." This idea of families learning about and becoming more comfortable in their environments was captured by 50-year-old Abu Amir, father of five, who said, "First, we have to go to know."

Families not only struggle with displacement from Syria to Lebanon, but also within Lebanon. Many families, especially those living in northern Lebanon, face ongoing displacements due to GoL policies. The Abu-Fawziya family of five, who had been living in the same place in Lebanon for four years, was interviewed 15 days after being displaced by the Lebanese army from their informal settlement. Umm-Fawziya spoke about how the children lost their sense of place familiarity after being forced to relocate:

> Since they were there for 4 years, they loved it. They knew everything there. They adored it. [Mom laughs.] They knew where the supermarket it. They used to go out.

Distance was another factor that corresponded with families' perceptions of unfamiliar and oftentimes "unsafe" environments. Places that were "near and close", such as for Umm-Zahra and her children, were considered safe. The further away from the home the family travelled, the less safe they felt. Therefore, play spaces far from home were considered off limits for families. Thirty-one-year-old Umm-Habib, a mother of five children ages one to 11, described her rationale for what places her children are allowed to visit, which is highly related to how far away the place is from Umm-Habib's home:

> Umm-Habib: Yes, there is a lot [of places that are unsafe]. Sometimes we don't go to specific places like the park, the [children] like to go there but it's far, so I don't let them go. There is the danger of cars, and I am scared for them. So, if the kids want to play, they just go around here. Other than that, they stay at home. So, only around us, it's closer and safer.
> Interviewer: Are there specific places other than the park that your kids can't go to?
> Umm-Habib: Mainly the garden or park; they like to go play with the kids in the internet cafe or fun fairs, but I can't take them, because they are far. They always like to go, but it's far. They can't go far away from the house, so they just go out to play with the ball….
> Interviewer: So, if it is a place far away from home, you don't feel that your kids are safe?
> Umm-Habib: Yes, if they are far places, I feel that it's unsafe.

The above examples illustrate Yiftachel's (2009) *gray spaces*, with families experiencing a space that they were hoping would become familiar, but remains unfamiliar. The seeking of familiarity of place drove many families to seek proximity in informal spatial arrangements such as living with extended family members, even if that meant living in overcrowded conditions. Living in the "quietly tolerated" gray spaces results in an environment where Syrians remain in a state of "permanent temporariness" (Yiftachel, 2009, p.251).

Lebanese Government Policies: Permits, Curfews, & Checkpoints

The prohibitive residency renewal processes have resulted in the majority of Syrian refugees not having legal documentation to remain in the country, making them subject to arrest and at risk of exploitation (Human Rights Watch, 2016b). Following clashes in 2014, GoL security forces established *ad hoc* checkpoints to limit movement and ensure the registration of Syrian refugees (Human Rights Watch, 2016b). Together, curfews, permits, and checkpoints were found to restrict families' mobility further.

The restrictive residency regulations are a more pervasive means of controlling the Syrian refugee population. For example, when 28-year-old Umm-Haytham was asked why she doesn't leave her tent, she replied, "...because I don't have my legal cards, meaning I'm a trespasser." This identification as a trespasser contributes to the pervasive us-versus-them attitude that has led to increased incidents of harassment and discrimination (Sanyal, 107), which will be addressed below.

Furthermore, these restrictive policies do not operate alone. Thirty-five-year-old Abu-Farid explained how the permit system works in concert with other mechanisms such as checkpoints to restrict family mobility: "The bigger and more important problem here is the residency permit. For instance, I can't go out for many people here are taken by the checkpoints and the army, even the traffic officers get involved. For example, if he sees someone he asks him for his papers." Due to these interrelated mechanisms to control the Syrian refugee population, Abu-Farid rarely leaves his home.

Having residency papers/permits ensures that families are able to stay in Lebanon and not be forced to return to Syria. Though Lebanon is bound by customary international law on the treatment of refugees and international human rights law that prohibits refoulement - or the forcible return of refugees to a country where they are may be subjected to persecutionShawaf, 2018). Umm-Zahra explained the importance of having such papers: "This paper will not allow them to take me back to Syria and now if I'm caught [without the paper], I will go back to Syria….If I go back to Syria, I have nothing there. Nothing. Where will I stay?" Umm-Zahra went on to explain how she sometimes borrows neighbours' identification papers in order to protect herself and her children when they are travelling away from her home.

Lebanese authorities--even hospital workers--have taken advantage of Syrian families' precarious status. There are examples of identification papers being confiscated by hospital workers as an example of the us-versus-them mentality, and as a means of further controlling the Syrian population through discriminatory practices. In one example, the Abu-Amir family had their papers confiscated when their five-month-old son died, and the family could not pay their hospital fees. Families without legal status, such as the Abu-Amir family, risk arrest if they make a complaint, denying their right to legal redress (Human Rights Watch, 2016b). Without legal status, Syrian refugees are stripped to Agamben's (1998) *bare life* without political voice nor authority to enforce their rights, making them vulnerable to further exploitation and

mistreatment. These experience further hinder families from seeking health care and other services that they may be entitled to and which they may desperately need.

Many families explained how not having the correct papers drastically hindered their mobility. For example, 50-year-old Abu-Amir and his wife, 33-year-old Umm-Amir, described how his lack of papers impedes his family's mobility:

> Abu-Amir: The farthest place [I go is] 100 meters [from home]....we don't have papers or anything we can't go anywhere on the streets.
> Umm-Amir: We don't have ID's or anything.
> Abu-Amir: IDs we don't have. We don't have anything. All our things are gone.,

Similarly, Umm-Fawziya explained how she never travels, "because our legal papers are not renewed. We would go to jail."

Though the curfew system has been formally enforced in certain places, families also imposed their own curfews on their household, citing safety reasons. For example, 37-year-old Umm-Zahra explained, "After 6pm, Syrians living in camps cannot go outside." Umm-Habib stated, "...for safety, we never stay outside after 5pm." Others saw the curfews as a way to maintain a safe environment for their families, and especially the children. Being kept in a state of informality, through a prohibitive and arbitrary residency renewal process, curfews, and checkpoints, families are confined to a symbolic and spatial *gray space* (Yiftachel, 2009).

Everyday Harassment from Lebanese: "We Receive 100 Comments"

With rising numbers of displaced Syrian families entering Lebanon, there has been increased hostility towards Syrians (Human Rights Watch 2016; Thorleifsson 2016). This has been observed through physical violence, verbal insults and arbitrary refusal of services (Human Rights Watch 2016b; Thorleifsson 2016). Lebanese citizens see displaced Syrian families as competition for limited resources, particularly in regard to housing and employment (Human Rights Watch 2016; Thorleifsson, 2016). Restrictive government policies reinforce the idea that the government does not have enough resources to shoulder the "burden" of displaced Syrian families while providing for its own citizens, fostering a hostile environment that further restricts displaced Syrians mobilities (Fábos & Kibreab, 2007).

Most families noted that they had faced a variety of harassment--such as verbal and physical harassment--from the local Lebanese population. 37-year-old Umm-Zahra (Bekaa 01)

described an incident when her neighbour's young son went to fetch a ball that had accidentally fallen into a field owned by a local Lebanese man:

> The owner of the field...went and stepped on the child's foot aiming to kill the small child. He started to scream...that he wants to kill him [because he thought the child] came to steal something from his trees. From that day on, I tell my children to not get close to the trees nor the fence. I am scared for them.

Stories of harassment were common among most discussions with Syrians. During a focus group discussion with a local NGO, several Syrian community workers described how Syrian children are harassed, how parents use restriction of mobility to protect their children, and what the effects of this harassment are for children:

> Female #1: Even if they are playing here within the society the neighbourhood we are in if they are playing with a Lebanese kid they tell him, "Go! You are Syrian." This word is always on the tongue of the kids… The Lebanese children are treating the Syrian children in that way….
> Interviewer: How are the parents dealing with these things?
> Female #1: They're keeping their kids inside
> Female #2: They're taking care of their kids more. They're trying not let them [go outside]....
> Female #1: First thing they'd do is move to another city.
> Female #3: Forbid him from going outside
> Female #2: Locks them at home...
> Female #4: This thing happened to me and I stopped letting my kids go outside.
> Female #1: My little brother is exposed to such things when he goes [to] buy things, and [he] sees kids, and they yell at him. I tell him to stay away and not to get involved. They're affecting the personality of the kid.

Like the permits, checkpoints, etc., harassment oftentimes operates alongside other mechanisms that keep families restricted in their movements. Thirty-one-year-old Umm-Fares explained:

> We are exposed to comments from Lebanese people. For example, if a child got sick and wants to go to the pharmacy to get a medication [my husband] can't go out, because he doesn't have a card. So, we are forced to go, and when we go, we receive 100 comments [from Lebanese citizens].

Syrian refugees are not recognised as citizens with rights, and they continue to be perceived as a threat through their informality and illegitimacy as a result of the GoL's refugee discourse and policies.

Effects of restricted mobility

The data indicated that the obstruction of a family's mobility can have negative implications for children and families. Children are specifically affected by their family's restricted mobility. When asked what the observed effects of restricted mobility were on children of the families they work with, the Syrian community workers in the focus group listed: "depression, weakness in personality, inability to concentrate, hating his parents, violence, isolation."

Thirty-seven-year-old Umm-Mahmoud described how restricted mobility impacts her children, especially in comparison to other children whose parents let them go outside: "Even the children's temperament changed.… They see their cousins going out so they get jealous, and this can be very problematic as it makes them fight with each other." Likewise, 27-year-old Umm-Ghani explained, "When they see other children playing outside they ask me why do I keep them inside, and that they want to play outside just like the other children." Umm-Ghani continued:

> My son keeps complaining how the other children are playing outside and he is not. I tell him that he shouldn't care about the other children. If I am cooking and I let him leave my sight for a bit, I come back to find him gone. I worry about him.

Parents were also concerned about how their children have become bored, a common complaint among children and parents alike. Mother of four young children all under the age of eight, Umm-Rafik, explained:

> ...the children get bored a lot, especially the youngest one, who feels bored all the time, but we cannot take him out. We cannot allow the children to go outside, so that they don't get hurt. They just go to school and come back.

The data indicated that parents' fears tended to be reflected within their children, so the children also became scared to leave the home. For example, 37-year-old Abu-Farid described how his fears impact how he raises his children: "I have fears for them. Because of what happened to me, when they go out of the camp I stay worried and anxious until they're back because of the threats."

The anxiety and fear in families may manifest into physical symptoms, especially among children. Twenty-seven-year-old Umm-Ghani explained how her six-year-old daughter, Ramina,

becomes ill every time she leaves the home: "[Ramina] goes by bus to school, but she always complains that her head hurts, so I am always worried. Yesterday, we were going to the UN, and she kept saying, 'Mom, I'm scared, and my head hurts,' and it hurt for two to three hours".

For this and other reasons, many families stopped sending their children to school. One Lebanese community worker described a mother who stopped sending her children to school for fear that their children would be picked up by harassed by Lebanese citizens:

> Because of the abuse, maybe physical or verbal or anything, abuse from the community to their kids. Her daughter, she's very afraid of going to school, and she keeps on...peeing her pants...whenever she's scared. And that's because she doesn't want to go to school….or go out of home. And I remember this little girl. She wasn't so little, I think...she was like 10 years old.

Restricted mobility can also impact how families are able to seek social support from other family members. For example, Umm-Fawziya explained how not having the correct papers has kept her family from visiting relatives, who can be a source of social support for families in contexts of adversity:

> We just don't go because of our legal papers. We like to go to the south, since we have a lot of relatives there. But because of these cards, we can't…. They won't renew our papers. That's why we don't like to go anywhere. The south is beautiful. But we can't take the risk of being captured...

This is especially striking because of the importance of social support networks such as family and friends in helping displaced persons feel more comfortable in new contexts, decreasing stress, and providing psychosocial support (Hynie, Crooks, & Barragan, 2011; Warner, 2007).

Furthermore, families faced compromised access to services such as health clinics and social welfare services. Many families without permits who live and work within Lebanon cannot access medical care and other essential services. Families, such as the Abu-Amir family described above, have experienced poor treatment at hospitals, and they therefore, avoid those places, even when there is a serious medical need.

Conclusions

The stories of the 50 Syrian families reveal much about the relationship between (im)mobility and children and family rights. Dand to enact their human rights in very challenging conditions (Garin et al., 2016). The findings indicate that few Syrian families feel

that they have found true safety in Lebanon as they are not able to live a dignified life free from discrimination (Shawaf & El Asmar, 2017). Instead, they have found themselves living a *bare life*, with the deterioration of dignity and status. These perceptions of not being safe and living a *bare life* can be directly attributed to the GoL's policies that restrict movement, hindering families ability to seek livelihoods, freely visit relatives, and access health and social services, among other things. Within these families, children grow up in an environment of fear and anxiety, which reflects their own experiences of discrimination and their parents' worries. In the context of *bare life*, children's enactment of independence and rights are overshadowed by constant insecurity and uncertainty.

The GoL has continued to rely on policies that reinforce the temporary nature of Syrians' place in Lebanon, hindering integration through informal measures of physical and legal containment. These restrictions also press families to consider informal living environments that may further contribute to their feelings of being displaced within a *gray space*. Finally, all of the above factors that contribute to restricted mobility - GoL policies such as curfews, permits, and checkpoints, harassment from Lebanese citizens, as well as economic precarity (Akesson & Badawi, in press) - In this complicated context, it is impossible to disentangle the political, geographical, social, and economic elements that contribute to the further marginalization of Syrian families in Lebanon. The findings illuminate the effect this is having on families' and children's physical and mental well-being.

This research underscores the importance of learning about the impact of government policies. Policymakers should consider the intended and unintended consequences of policies that impact the everyday lives of marginalised population such as refugees. There should also be alignment between policies and international human rights documents that aim to protect such populations and provide them with human dignity. Lebanon has the responsibility to work with United Nations and non-governmental organisations to ensure the rights of all within its borders, inclusive of children and those who lack citizenship.

The impact of the arrival of a large number of Syrian refugees has reshaped Lebanon. The fact that Lebanon's infrastructure is stretched thin should not be trivialized. One solution could be the provision of services such as health care and education intended not just for Syrians, but also for local Lebanese children. Other policy implications include consideration for the design

of refugee spaces, keeping in mind the importance of garnering the input of the children and families to they create spaces that are liveable and based on their own terms.

Further research is needed to better understand the relationship between human rights and restricted mobility. Though this research highlights some promising themes regarding the effects of restricted mobility, further research could more rigorously explore the psychosocial impact of restricted mobility on children and families, preferably using a longitudinal research design.

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