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

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Abstract

The war in Syria has led to a large number of Syrian families fleeing to neighboring 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: refugees, displaced persons, Syria, Lebanon, mobility, family

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). This means that one in four residents in Lebanon is a Syrian refugee (Boustani, Carpi, Gebara, & Mourad, 2016), making Lebanon 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 hosting each others' displaced populations during wartime, as well as open borders that have encouraged commerce and livelihoods (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. 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.

Drawing upon data from a mixed methods research study with 46 families (n=268), this paper will describe how Syrian family movement is restricted in Lebanon, to identify multiple interrelated factors that contribute to this restricted mobility, and to explore the implications of restricted mobility on children's and families' rights and well-being. The paper will provide a context for the large number of Syrian refugees who have entered Lebanon and describe the GoL response. Drawing upon a child rights framework, the paper will explore how the GoL's refusal to recognize Syrians as refugees impacts families' living environments and (im)mobility.

Background: Syrian Families in Lebanon

The growing number of Syrian families seeking safety in Lebanon has placed an increased burden on already strained government structures. 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 the local Lebanese and Syrian populations (Human Rights Watch, 2016a). Humanitarian and

non-governmental organizations have filled the gap left by the government, yet 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. But as the number of Syrian families seeking safety has grown, the GoL has changed their policies, from one of unrestricted movement to that which aims 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 to encourage 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 and therefore required to have a Lebanese sponsor (Human Rights Watch, 2016b). Syrians who register with the UNHCR are required to sign a declaration that they will not work, though their needs are often not met by the support given by the organization (Human Rights Watch 2016b).

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 (Human Rights Watch, 2016b; Keith & Shawaf, 2018; Shawaf & El Asmar, 2017).

In order to have official legal status in Lebanon, the latter group are required to find a Lebanese sponsor 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). 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 health care 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 marginalizing them (Chatty, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2016b).

Under an international human rights framework, the GoL does not recognize the displaced populations of Syria as official *refugees*, refusing them legal protection and rights outlined in the 1951 Refugee Convention. The decision to not sign the Convention is influenced by Lebanon's history hosting 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, including Palestinians from Syria, into the country (Santos, 2014). The GoL no-camp policy is intended to avoid another "Palestinian situation" (Sanyal, 2017).

Finding refuge therefore becomes reliant 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 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 government (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 aren't 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). 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 to provide food and shelter for their families, adding to hostility from local Lebanese, who may also be struggling financially (Chatty, 2016). Informal settlements are dependent on the private landowner, dispersed throughout the landscape and are challenging for humanitarian services to access, making them substantially more precarious than a traditional refugee camps (Sanyal, 2017).

Many displaced Syrians arrived in Lebanon with few assets and limited funds, expecting that their stay would be temporary in Lebanon (Thorleifsson, 2016). Over half of the displaced Syrian population is living in extreme poverty, on less than $3 a day (UNHCR, 2017). The no-camp policy exacerbates the dire situations of Syrian families as rent is controlled by private landowners who can extort and exploit their oftentimes undocumented 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).

(Im)Mobility and the Rights of Syrian Families

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 exacerbated 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--both common among Syrian families in Lebanon--then these children can become even more marginalized (Bhabha, 2009; Garin et al., 2016). These functionally stateless children have been referred to as *Arendt's children*, those who despite having *inalienable rights* have no government to enforce them (Bhabha, 2009). 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 possess a legal status, has implications for children's rights.

The international community accepts that all persons are privileged with certain "inalienable rights" though the actual recognition of this has been contested throughout 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). 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). The 1951 Convention on the Status of the Refugee promises to act as the institution that guaranteed the rights to stateless persons. Yet countries, such as Lebanon, who are not signatories of the Convention, pose obstacles in realizing the universal human rights of displaced populations.

The displaced Syrian population face physical and legal challenges to finding a place of safety in Lebanon. The restrictive policies in attaining legal documents and the no-camp policy based on GoL's refusal to recognize refugees, directs the displaced in to a zone of informality, what Yiftachel (2009) refers to as a *gray space*. This is the space that exists between legality/eviction, approval/destruction, safety/death, and lightness/darkness (p. 250). This last representation refers to the temporary permanence of the spaces that emerge in the margins that are visible yet partially overlooked by authorities. *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, or the symbolic form or "informal confinements" such as the limitation felt by a person and the fears and informal interventions of the state that limits their mobility (Pasquetti & Picker, 2017, p. 538). Legislation and policies that restrict formal opportunities for a displaced population that is desperately seeking safety can lead to informal spatial arrangements, such as ad hoc neighbourhoods and informal camps that have been developed in Lebanon.

Historically, in order to ensure the security of the state, rights are stripped away from those perceived as threats: the stateless, the marginalized, the displaced, the refugee (Agamben, 2005; Arendt, 1951). Agamben (1998) introduces the concept of *homo sacer* ("sacred man") as the representation of the man who has been reduced to a body without political voice, or a *bare life*. The *homo sacer* is held in a state of exception, where the rule of law is not in effect, without the support of a community nor the agency to affect change. This deterioration of dignity and status, removes the political being from the man, creating a perception of the stateless as less than human (Arendt, 1951). 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 findings from a 2016 research study aimed at generating knowledge regarding the experiences of Syrian refugee families living in Lebanon. The research received human subjects' approval through the Authors' University Research Ethics Board (REB #4661) and followed all REB guidelines. We conducted collaborative family interviews with 46 families who had fled Syria in the last five years 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 organizations working in northern Lebanon. Aligned with cultural norms, participating families were subsequently recruited through word of mouth.

Families included 268 index family members (e.g., mother, father, children) and 35 extended family members (e.g., aunts, grandmothers, cousins, etc.). 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 neighborhood communities (with parental consent and child assent). During the walk, the children were asked to carry an activity logger, a small device that collects geographic data regarding physical movement. During the neighborhood walk, children were encouraged to show us the places where, for example, they were allowed to visit, places where their daily activities occur, and places where people they know are located. Children were also asked to indicate any important places of which we should take a photo. Throughout the course of the walk, the children had full control over the research process directing the research team to experience their own everyday worlds.

After completion of the neighborhood walk, the research team asked three family members (one parent, one older child, and one younger child) to carry the activity logger for a period of one week. Like the use of the activity logger during the neighborhood walk, geographic information systems (GIS) technology registered family members' movements over the course of a typical week, thereby serving as an ethnographic mechanism by which to better understand their experiences. To aid in recall, family members were asked to keep a simple diary of their daily activities. In addition to observing the family members in environments of displacement, the GIS technology yielded quantitative data on elements such as furthest distance traveled from the home, number of days spent inside the home, and average distance of weekday and weekend trips. At the end of the one week period, the research team revisited the family for a follow-up interview. During this final interview, the family were asked to reflect upon their experiences over the past week and to share anything else that they did not get a chance to share during the first interview.

For data collection with all the different cohorts of participants and 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 theme of mobility 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.

But 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 <u>not</u> 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 neighborhood walks. After the collaborative family interview, 44-year-old Umm-Mahdi and her six children participated in a neighborhood 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 neighborhood alone. This is the only picture (see Image 1 below), because this is the only place they go out in the neighborhood".

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 were so severe that they did not feel comfortable to participate in the neighborhood 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.

School was the one common place that most parents allowed their children to travel to and from. 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. 31-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 (unclear whether Syrian or Lebanese child who threatened) during his walk to school and so she walks with them to and from school everyday.

In some cases, overwhelming fear drove some families to not even 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 Lebanese government policies--such as the curfew, permit systems, and checkpoints--enacted to contain and restrict Syrian refugees, and (3) the threat of harassment from Lebanese locals. Economic precarity was identified as a fourth major theme that families identified as contributing to their restricted mobility, and further exploration of this finding can be 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 oftentimes inhospitable environment, these feelings of comfort and safety may never fully develop due to a variety of factors. But 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--and subsequent feelings of comfort and safety--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…. now it's better. We got used to it. Thank God, yeah we got used to it." Similarly, Umm-Khalil explained: "It took me a month to actually start going out of the house. Now we know…. we didn't used 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 Lebanese government 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, because they knew it very well. But now, here, it's unfamiliar to them. They don't know many places. They only know how to go to the market and come back.

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. 31-year-old Umm-Habib, 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 has 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, Lebanese 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 further restrict families mobility.

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. 35-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 persecution--the fear of not having legal status has become a "push" factor promoting Syrian refugees premature return home (Human Rights Watch, 2016b; Inside Syria Media Center (ISMC), 2018; Keith & Shawaf, 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 neighbors' identification papers in order to protect herself and her children when they are traveling away from her home.

Lebanese authorities--even hospital workers--have taken advantage of Syrian families' precarious status. There are examples of them confiscated identification papers 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 hot 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 can not 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 see displaced Syrian families as competition for limited resources, particularly in regard to housing and employment (Thorleifsson, 2016; Human Rights Watch 2016). Reinforced by restrictive government policies augments 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 neighbor'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 neighborhood 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. 31-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 people].

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

Effects of restricted mobility

The data indicated that the obstruction of 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 was 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."

37-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. 27-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 locals:

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. For many families who do not have permits to live and work within Lebanon, families do not access medical care, etc. Families, such as the Abu-Amir family described above, have experienced being treated poorly at hospitals, and they therefore avoid those places, even when there is a serious medical need.

Conclusions

By being displaced from their families, homes, communities, and everything familiar, Syrian families struggle to make a life for themselves in very challenging conditions (Garin et al., 2016). Unfortunately, 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. 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--place unfamiliarity, Lebanese government policies such as curfews, permits, and checkpoints, harassment from Lebanese locals, as well as economic precarity (Author, in press)-- are all interrelated. For 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.

       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 marginalized 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 organizations to ensure the rights of all within its borders, not just those with 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 that are not just intended for Syrians, but also for local Lebanese populations. 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.

       Given the exploratory nature of this research, there is a need for further research to better understand the relationship between human rights and restricted mobility. Though this research highlights some promising themes regarding the effects of restricted mobility, there continues to be a need for research that more rigorously explores the psychosocial impact of restricted mobility on children and families, preferably using a longitudinal research design.

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