

Governance, Governmentalities, and the State of Exception in the Palestinian Refugee Camps of Lebanon

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Based upon data collected from four focus groups, this paper examines life in the Nahr al-Bared, Beddawi, and 'Ayn al-Hilweh refugee camps in Lebanon from a governance perspective. The authors contend that a lack of legitimate governance structures in the camps has inhibited the improvement of socio-economic and living conditions for the residents and jeopardized the security of Palestinians and Lebanese alike. The authors discuss the history of Palestinian governance in Lebanon, the securitization of the camps, and following Giorgio Agamben, 'the state of exception' prevailing within them. Furthermore, the authors posit that, in the near-absence of legitimate government, Islamism and an 'economy of morals' has emerged to help ensure the daily functioning of the camps.

Keywords: Palestinian refugee camps, 'state of exception', Islamic governmentality

Introduction

In recent years, critics like Rajaram (2002: 247) have taken issue with the ways in which humanitarian and aid agencies purport to speak on behalf of refugees. Noting how these organizations tend to represent the refugee only as helpless and lost, Rajaram complains, 'Refugees are denied the right to present narratives that are of consequence institutionally and politically' (see also Malkki 1996; del Soto 2008). The problem, as Silverman (2008: 11) suggests, is that there is 'a silencing of refugee voices by aid agencies, government bodies, and other groups claiming to work on their behalf without giving refugees the opportunity to speak for themselves.' As a result, interventions in

refugee communities are often not planned, financed, or implemented in efficient, dignified, and collaborative ways.

In this summary of four focus groups with members of the Palestinian refugee community in Lebanon, we endeavour to listen more closely. We limit our discussion, therefore, to debates on the state of governance within the camps. By recording the positions of community members on questions of governance, rather than simply publicizing dire socio-economic conditions as other studies have done (e.g. Tiltnes 2005, 2007; Sayigh 1995; Petrih 2006; Peteet 2005; Jacobson 2003; Abbas *et al.* 1997; Ugland 2003), we seek in part to relocate focus group participants from the 'bare life' of the conventional discourse on refugees to the 'political life' of their actual experiences (Agamben 1998).

Based mainly upon these focus groups, we posit two general theses. First, that at present, there is an endemic crisis of governance in and between Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Rampant factionalism, clientelism, sectarian strife, oppressive Lebanese security and surveillance, and a lack of central administrative and juridical Palestinian authority continue to prevent Palestinians from establishing effective governance structures. Second, that in this near-absence of conventional governance, alternative mentalities of governance, or 'governmentalities' (Foucault 1991; Dean 1999), have emerged among camp populations, which to a remarkable degree, have succeeded in regulating camp residents' behaviour. We contend that these governmentalities have helped ensure the daily functioning of the camps, have contributed to the rise and spread of Islamism, and have inhibited the establishment of formal and necessary structures of governance.

By way of introduction, the unique status of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon vis-à-vis Palestinian refugees in other parts of the diaspora should be noted—specifically the significance of the fact that some Palestinian refugees live in camps while others live among the general populace of their host communities. Although Palestinian camp dwellers by and large enjoy adequate health and education services, they have been marginalized socio-economically by Arab host countries. Though differences between camp dwellers and urban refugees (non-camp dwellers) in Syria and Jordan are relatively minimal, the gap between camp and non-camp dwellers in Lebanon and in the Palestinian Territories is significant. This may be explained by the fact that the camps in Jordan and Syria constitute, by and large, open spaces regulated by the host state, while in Lebanon the camps have literally been walled off (Hanafi 2008). For our purposes, we define 'open space' both as something physical (urban) and social. Open urban space is regulated by the host country to look like any residential, low-income neighbourhood, allowing for meaningful interface with the surrounding cities and villages. Socially, camp dwellers in these host countries are relatively integrated into the surrounding neighbourhood and labour market. In contrast, a 'closed space' does not meet either of these conditions; camps organized as 'closed spaces' are satellite enclaves of refugees located at the urban

periphery. These camps lack green spaces, have poor access to markets, and inadequate housing. Furthermore, previous studies (Khawaja and Tiltnes 2003) on refugee camps have shown correlations between the relative poverty rate for Palestinian refugees and the poverty rate for non-Palestinian populations near refugee camps. It was found that the poverty rate was higher for refugees only in Lebanon and the Palestinian Territories (mainly the West Bank), where camps are ‘closed spaces’. Though there are many Palestinians in Lebanon living outside refugee camps, this article is concerned with life in the camps—in the sort of ‘closed space’ describe above.

Methodology

This article draws source material from a series of four focus groups of roughly four hours each held between March and May 2009 in the Palestinian refugee camps of Nahr al-Bared and Beddawi in northern Lebanon and ‘Ayn al-Hilweh in southern Lebanon (for camp demographics, see Ugland 2003: 219–230; UNRWA 2008). The focus groups consisted of 61 adult Palestinians of diverse age, gender, relative socio-economic status, religiosity, political affiliation, and professional and educational backgrounds. Altogether, the focus groups included 23 females (38 per cent) and 38 males (62 per cent). Twenty-one participants were from Nahr al-Bared (34 per cent), 22 were from Beddawi (36 per cent), and 18 were from ‘Ayn al-Hilweh (30 per cent). One focus group was made up of 18 Palestinians between the ages of 18 and 24, all of whom resided in the Nahr al-Bared or Beddawi camps.

In the convening of each session, the authors sought representation from as many significant political and religious organizations within the community as possible. In attendance were members or representatives of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), Fatah, Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine–General Command (PFLP–GC), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), Islamic Jihad, the Vanguard for the Popular Liberation War (*Al-Sa’iqa*), the Association of Palestinian Religious Scholars, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the Nahr al-Bared Reconstruction Committee (NBRC), the Palestinian Women’s Union, the Palestinian Youth Organization, the Palestinian Scout Association, and the popular and security committees of each camp, among others. Participants were selected based on their potential to represent others in their community and for their ability to speak to a carefully prepared series of questions related to the topics of conflict prevention and governance.

A Brief History of Palestinians in Lebanon from a Governance Perspective

The overarching historical framework within which focus group participants discussed their situation in Lebanon centred on the years 1969–1982, which were remembered with considerable nostalgia. This was true even of

participants too young to recall this period. This ‘golden age’ of the Palestinian experience in Lebanon was called simply ‘*ayyam al-thawra*’, or ‘the days of the revolution’, and emerged as a key component of the dominant historical narrative of Palestinians in Lebanon. Individuals recurrently discussed the present by way of the past, contrasting the current political landscape with ‘the way things were’.

The year 1969, therefore, emerged as a pivotal point in this narrative on account of the signing of the Cairo Accord. Brokered between PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and Lebanese General Emile Bustani, the Cairo Accord agreed on a *modus vivendi*, which effectively recognized the autonomy of the PLO inside Lebanon and permitted the resistance movement to launch attacks against Israel from Lebanese soil (*Al-Nahar* 20 April 1970). And though it was revoked as ‘null and void as if it had never existed’ by the Lebanese government in 1987, the precedent it set for official Lebanese–Palestinian relations after nearly 20 years in force has been difficult to disregard (Abboud 2009). Today, Lebanese and Palestinian authorities alike implicitly accept that the camps are off limits to Lebanese security forces. The Lebanese army’s assault on Nahr al-Bared in the summer months of 2007 was, in fact, the first instance in decades of the Lebanese army or police fielding a sizeable force inside a camp, rather than merely around a camp or at its entrances.

The legacy of the Cairo Accord is complex and multifaceted. The agreement permitted the PLO to establish much needed social, economic, legal, and political institutions for Palestinians living in the camps, which in turn enabled the PLO to provide jobs and other resources for the refugees. This, however, created a paradox of sorts, as Palestinian institutions developed in Lebanon into what its critics have called ‘a state within the state’. One focus group participant, a representative of the Women’s Union in Beddawi, summarized the significance of the agreement in the following terms:

With respect to the camps in Lebanon, the revolution started from here. The fact that the revolution started from the Lebanese camps left its impact on us... At first, it had a very positive impact. Let us be frank. The revolutionaries fulfilled their duties, and the people were better off financially. There were provisions, tenure, salaries. We had institutions; people were working. We had the media, and so much was going for us... Then the revolution left Lebanon, and we felt a big difference... After the Israeli invasion, we felt the difference. There were no [political] rights, no civil rights, and the camps suffered unemployment.

Indeed, though UNRWA had provided refugees with emergency health care, education, and a limited range of other social services since 1948, the situation changed drastically for many Palestinians in the 1970s. Nurseries, vocational training centres, health clinics, and various industries (in particular, those of textile manufacturing, leatherwork, ironwork, and furniture crafting) were established and expanded throughout the decade (Farsoun and Zacharia 2005; Peteet 2005). This was due almost exclusively to the

transfer of the PLO leadership from Jordan to Lebanon in 1970. Some scholars suggest that at one point the PLO employed as much as two-thirds of the Palestinian labour force in Lebanon (Sayigh 2005). From 1969 to 1982, the PLO played a key role in promoting a collective political and national identity among the exiled Palestinians, who until then had seen themselves ‘merely’ as refugees.

Of course, the presence of a heavily armed and autonomous PLO in Lebanon also exacerbated already deep tensions between Lebanese, especially between Muslims and Christians. The PLO was very much caught up in the fighting of the Lebanese Civil War, and thousands of Palestinians became both victims and victimizers.¹ Nor did the PLO succeed in these years in wholly uniting the Palestinians in Lebanon beneath one banner. As one imam of an ‘Ayn al-Hilweh mosque recalled:

In the camps, we refused the authority of the Lebanese state in 1969, because of the injustice and persecution that we had suffered [up to that point]. But when the Palestinian revolution came, there were too many factions, and as a result, it failed to form a unified and powerful authority that could hold matters under control in the camps. Consequently we suffered, but things were easier, since we resolved problems internally. But after the Israeli invasion, there was a new era where the revolution weakened considerably, and there were further divisions.

Ongoing unrest and the 1982 Israeli invasion ultimately forced Arafat and the *fidayeen* to leave Lebanon, and with the Palestinian leadership gone, scores of social and economic institutions disappeared, as did the livelihood of many Palestinians. Further, from 1982 to the close of the war in 1990, the Palestinians, bereft of what protection the PLO had previously provided, were routinely persecuted both by Israelis and by Lebanese. In particular, after the brutal massacre of Palestinians in Beirut’s Sabra and Chatila refugee camps in September 1982, perpetrated by Lebanese Christian militias under the auspices of the Israeli army, many Palestinians in Lebanon began to regret the departure of the PLO.

After the war, under the so-called ‘Pax Syriana’ of 1990–2005, Palestinians fared little better than they had in the 1950s and 1960s. Syrian–Lebanese intelligence services reasserted their dominance over the camps and prevented the establishment of any united Palestinian authority. They did so in large part by keeping Fatah and the PLO out of northern Lebanon (not even allowing posters of Arafat till after the second *intifada*) and by sponsoring proxy groups such as Ahmed Jibril’s PFLP–GC and *Al-Sa’iqa* in northern Lebanon and *Al-Ahbash* in ‘Ayn al-Hilweh. Collectively, Palestinians began to refer to these pro-Syrian factions, including Hamas, as ‘the Alliance’, or ‘*Al-Tahaluf*’. As Rougier (2007: 11) has noted, the Syrian position vis-à-vis the Palestinians in Lebanon was one of systematically ‘encouraging inter-Palestinian rifts and blocking any possibility of direct negotiation between the Lebanese government and the [Palestinian Authority’s] local representatives’.

Hamas, in particular, expanded its activities in Lebanon during these years of Syrian hegemony. It and other Islamist groups gained strength at the expense of the more secular PLO, Fatah, and Leftist revolutionary groups like the PFLP and DFLP. Ultimately, as Knudsen has argued, the 'power vacuum' left by waning PLO influence paved the way for the establishment in the camps of radical Islamist groups, such as Jund al-Sham, 'Usbat al-Ansar, and some years later, Fatah al-Islam (Knudsen 2003).

The Present Crisis of Governance

The present crisis of governance in the refugee camps is marked, first and foremost, by its rampant factionalism. Each camp is home to near-dozens of factions, each of which is vying for more power and greater influence. Theoretically, a popular committee and its associated security committee govern each camp and do so under the supervision of the PLO ambassador. From 2005–2009, this was Abbas Zaki, who was sent to Lebanon to restore order and to try and reconcile the factions with one another after the Syrian withdrawal. These committees are comprised of representatives from each faction—who are appointed, not elected—and are expected to keep the peace, solve internal disputes, provide security, interface with the Lebanese government and aid agencies, and generally administer the camp in coordination with UNRWA.² One Fatah partisan in 'Ayn al-Hilweh summarized this hierarchy of committees by explicating how, in theory, the system as a whole solves problems and settles disputes:

The camp is divided into neighbourhoods, and each neighbourhood has a smaller popular committee of educated members that speaks on behalf of the neighbourhood and includes all the forces active there. This neighbourhood committee is consensual, regardless of its organization. It is not about who is capable of resolving the electricity problem or construction. If the problem is not resolved within the neighbourhood committee, it goes to the popular committee or to the Armed Struggle Committee [*al-kifah al-musalah*] if it is a serious and complicated case. They will call *al-kifah al-musalah* or the follow-up committee, which have experience in such matters, since they have dealt with many problems and resolved them. Everything can be resolved.

As adduced by this participant, there are also higher committees which may be appealed to and which coordinate political activity between camps. These include the Armed Struggle Committee, which is the security arm of the PLO, and two follow-up committees, one for the north and one for the south, which include representatives from each faction. However, despite this veneer of cooperation and coordination, other focus group participants complained that these committees rarely come to any consensus on important issues, fail to coordinate their activities, do not have widely accepted legitimacy, are not duly recognized by the Lebanese government, cannot protect

their constituents from the harassment of Lebanese security forces, do not hold UNRWA accountable for its shortcomings, and in short, do more to enable factional infighting and bolster patron–client politics than they do to promote Palestinian unity. As Knudsen (2003) observed during his field work in the camps:

Both among the secular and Islamist lobbies we find a plethora of smaller and larger groups, often with conflicting views and sometimes involved in fratricidal battles that weaken the refugee community and ultimately undermine their quest for political hegemony. None of them are able to speak on behalf of the whole refugee community and this serves to ‘compartmentalize’ and therefore weaken the Palestinian nationalist struggle to regain their homeland.

In this regard, little has changed in the last six years. Today, ‘Ayn al-Hilweh even has *two* popular committees and *two* security committees, which broadly reflects a split between the camp’s secular/nationalist and Islamist blocs. Participants in each focus group warned that, unless Palestinians in Lebanon are permitted to centralize and strengthen their own political and security authorities, the community will not have sufficient means to assist the Lebanese state in preventing another outbreak of violence like that which took place between Fatah al-Islam and the Lebanese army in 2007.

Evidence suggests that from December 2006 to March 2007, in the months leading up to the conflict in Nahr al-Bared, residents of the camps tried repeatedly to excise Fatah al-Islam from their midst, and to this end the PLO even engaged in armed clashes with the militants (Abboud 2009: 36). The outcome of these clashes, however, was inconclusive and dismissed by the Lebanese authorities only as ‘routine’ Palestinian infighting; this was in spite of the fact that Fatah al-Islam was made up largely of non-Palestinians (Rougier 2008).³ The security committee of Nahr al-Bared and the PLO simply lacked the resources and mandate to deal with Fatah al-Islam on their own. As one man suggested:

If the Lebanese state had the will and permitted politicians or the PLO leadership to form a [Palestinian] security force, Fatah al-Islam would never have manifested like this.

What residents’ comments about the possibility of ‘another Nahr al-Bared’ reflect is the widely held perception that both the popular committees and the factions, in their present form, do not represent the best interests of Palestinians in Lebanon. Young people were especially adamant about this. Our focus groups suggested that there was a low level of conventional political activity among youth. Only three of the eighteen participants in the youth focus group, for example, said they were engaged in political activities, and the group generally agreed that they were weary of politics and disinclined to join factions. Together, they expressed anger, outrage, pessimism,

and apathy when questioned about the state of governance in their camps. Politicians were seen as inefficient, untrustworthy, helpless, sometimes corrupt or just 'looking out for themselves', and they insisted, their leaders did not place the Palestinian cause before all other causes as they were expected to do. The youth said they felt unrepresented by the political factions, and they considered their leaders lacking in the sort of experience requisite to manage a camp. In short, they regarded the popular committees, and the political class in general, as largely illegitimate.

The Present Crisis of Legitimacy

Theorists have long sought to classify and understand the abstract processes inherent in the legitimization of sovereign power, or in more precise terms, 'the particular rationale for attributing legitimacy for command and obedience' (Matheson 1987: 199). Of the many theoretical works devoted to the subject, however, we find a review of Weber's classic typology of the forms of legitimization sufficient for illustrating the ways in which conventional forms of governance in the refugee camps in Lebanon have *lost* legitimacy over time.

Weber (2008) identifies three 'pure types' of legitimacy (traditional, charismatic, and legal), which he maintains must emerge relationally in some variation or combination within a given community in order to ensure its sound functioning. We argue that the conventional modes of governance present in the camps today do not derive adequate legitimacy from these to govern effectively. The fault for this lies not just with Palestinian and Lebanese leaders but also with the international community of donors, which has been complicit in the dismantling of Palestinian governance structures and supportive of their replacement with the bureaucracies of humanitarian and aid agencies.

Weber calls his first type of legitimacy 'the authority of the eternal yesterday, [that is] the authority of custom... this is traditional rule, such as that practiced by the old-style patriarch and patrimonial prince' (2008: 157). However, the vagaries of war and exile have sorely interrupted the passing down of any 'traditional' or 'customary' system which might have been capable of regulating, in coordination with the Lebanese government, the behaviour of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees spread out across the country. From 1948 to the present, Palestinian governance in Lebanon has been *ad hoc* at best. Only two structures—the *tanzimat* (Palestinian civic organizations) and the popular committees—have ever really succeeded in serving the refugee community's needs, and both of these have survived 60 years of exile in no more than a diminished capacity.⁴

The *tanzimat* are local, highly informal, and often clan or family-based hierarchical organizations that play a role in regulating the social order in a neighbourhood, mediating between families, or otherwise solving disputes in the camps. As relatively 'modern' institutions, they represent such constituencies as the Students' Union, the Women's Union, the Doctors' Union,

and the Engineers' Union. Historically, they have interacted with and been represented on the popular committees of many of the camps. Over the years, however, these organizations have been eclipsed by the factions, and in some of the camps in Lebanon, have all but disappeared. They are, lamented focus group participants, little more than a cultural relic today. One participant from Beddawi estimated, 'The political influence of the *tanzimat* is over less than two per cent of Palestinian society'.

As for the popular committees, scarce access to resources since 1982 and the antipathy of the Lebanese state, in particular, have hindered them from fulfilling their municipal functions. Today, for example, they cannot hire engineers to provide expertise on urban regulations concerning construction or to provide solutions for acute water and electricity problems. Lebanese military intelligence and police forces, furthermore, have instrumentalized the committees, using them when they need special favours, like delivering wanted persons to justice authorities but not giving them resources for this. As one resident of Nahr al-Bared camp asked:

When a member of the security committee earns only L£50,000 [US\$33] per month, how do you expect me to entrust this person with the security of the camp?!

Another criticized the work of the committees thus:

I do not want to call it a popular committee! This is a committee of organizations, and its members are representatives of organizations and factions. There is no effective representation of the neighbourhoods, professional sectors, or the elites. [...] There is no form [of representative government] that promotes trust between the people and the members of the popular committee, and legitimizes the popular committee with popular support through elections...

To the extent that the *tanzimat* and committees are historical, traditional, or customary, in any sense, they are no longer what they once were. Even if the collective memory—or the popular imagining—of what they were before 1982 is accurate, it is evident that, without endowing them with new forms of legitimacy, they will not succeed in winning authority over the community of Palestinians in Lebanon.

The second of Weber's sources of legitimacy is 'charismatic authority, such as that exercised by the prophet or—in the political sphere—by the elected warlord or the plebiscitary ruler, the great demagogue, and the party leader' (2008: 157). Only in a hazardously diluted form does this form of legitimization exist in the camps today. While it is true that Arafat, replete with charismatic authority, succeeded in uniting the Palestinians in Lebanon during his tenure in the country and even for some time afterwards, other Palestinian leaders have not won the same sort of popular support. As a result, party and factional leaders have used their significantly lesser charismatic authority only to mobilize factions with disparate political agendas.

Whereas revolutionary movements of the 1970s found charismatic leadership in guerilla-politicians like Arafat, the fragmentation of the Palestinian national movement in the 1980s and 1990s concomitant with the spread of Islamist politics in the region, shifted the focus from secular authorities like Arafat to religious personalities like Shaykh Ahmed Yassin, who while popular, nevertheless failed to unite Palestinians under an Islamist rather than nationalist banner.

In Palestine, and even more so in the Palestinian diaspora, no one party leader has garnered enough charismatic authority to 'replace' Arafat. Instead, factional and lesser party leaders in Lebanon have exploited this specific lack of legitimacy to set up, in effect, petty fiefdoms in the camps. This was one of the points most frequently reiterated in the focus group sessions: that factional politics have lost sight of the nationalist cause and promote through clientelism and similar such practices individual self-interest over collective Palestinian interests. One woman expressed this sentiment in these words:

Trust in local authorities has been lost. I am speaking of myself as well as others. There is pain. There is no trust in the authorities or in [political] personalities. . . The factions lived in a few years of glory and calm, but the institutions [of the factions] started with personal interests from the beginning, and people robbed and enriched themselves at the expense of [the people] of Nahr al-Bared. . . There was a time, if anyone remembers, when all the factions were trustworthy, and in those glorious days, people dreamt of joining the factions. Even UNRWA employees, even Lebanese parliamentarians and ministers dreamt of that!

Today, what party or faction one belongs to determines how secure one is in one's neighbourhood, what jobs one has access to, and what financial aid one receives. Hospitals and other social services are administered by factional personnel and usually employ only their own. This is as true of Fatah and the PLO-aligned parties as it is of Hamas and others in *Al-Tahaluf*. As one woman complained:

The Palestinian Authority factions are serving only their clientele and are not interested in serving the whole community. For example, I applied for a job in the hospital funded by Fatah. I was the only person with the specialty they requested, but they did not take me, because I am not a member of Fatah. They took someone unfit but belonging to Fatah.

Zaki has repeatedly tried both to unite the factions beneath the umbrella of his organization—a marriage of inconvenience between the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in Lebanon, established in 1996, and the PLO in Lebanon, disproportionately dominated by Fatah—and to bridge the divide between Palestinian and Lebanese institutions. He has even gone so far as to apologize to the Lebanese for wrongs committed by the Palestinians during the civil war (Zaki 2008). However, since his loss in local Fatah secretarial elections to Brigadier General Sultan Abu al-'Aynayn in December

2008, Lebanese and Palestinians alike have begun to question exactly how much influence he has over the factional leaders and how much pull he has with the Palestinian community in general.

Zaki's personal legitimacy has been undermined by several key factors, including (1) his lack of charisma, in the Weberian sense, (2) the perception that, as someone sent from the OPT and not raised in a camp in Lebanon, he is an 'outsider' and therefore cannot speak for Palestinians in Lebanon, and (3) that his authority in the country has been so circumscribed by discriminatory Lebanese laws vis-à-vis the Palestinians that he simply has no mandate. This last point, furthermore, has been compounded by the fact that, in the face of ongoing Lebanese polemics regarding the threat of *tawteen*, or the permanent settlement of the refugees in Lebanon, Zaki must spend more time and effort managing Lebanese perceptions of Palestinians than he does managing the affairs of the camps. Zaki lives in a legal limbo within which the state grants him only limited resources and authority to regulate Palestinian affairs, but lawmakers nevertheless expect him to exercise absolute control over the Palestinians in Lebanon—to keep the refugees quiet, subdued, and confined to the camps, regardless of the dire social and economic conditions in which they must live (see also Zureik 2003; Peteet 2005: 45).

'Finally,' writes Weber, 'there is rule by virtue of legality, by virtue in the belief of the validity of a legal statute and the validity of competence that is based on rationally created rules' (2008: 157). This last source of legitimacy in the twenty-first century has become the standard *par excellence* through which the community of nations apportions out authority over peoples. It has, however, also been the principal means by which the Lebanese government and some international institutions have denied Palestinians many of their human and civil rights. Palestinians in Lebanon have categorically been denied the legal privileges of any citizenship; instead, they have been documented *only* as refugees. As Gibney (2009: 50) points out:

Having a nationality is a gateway to other rights; it is not without justification that Hannah Arendt viewed the stateless as lacking the very 'right to have rights'. Without citizenship or nationality somewhere a person lacks many fundamental rights, including perhaps most fundamentally the right to a place in the world where one's opinions are significant and one's actions effective.

Without doubt, Palestinians in Lebanon are among these vulnerable non-citizens who seem to have lost 'the right to have rights' (Hanafi 2008). Thirty years ago, the League of Arab States (LAS) called on each member in the 1964 Casablanca Protocol to grant Palestinians, among other rights, 'the right of employment on par with its citizens' (Shiblak 1996). Lebanon was an unconditional signatory of this agreement. However, in September 1991, in order to punish Palestinians for their support of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein during the First Gulf War, the LAS amended this document to stipulate that the status of refugees was a national responsibility rather than an Arab one. Doing so underscored the reality that, under the prevailing

interpretation of international law, the 'rights' of Palestinians were not so much *rights* as *privileges*, which could be revoked with little ceremony and without justification.⁵

Still bitter about Palestinian involvement in their civil war, some Lebanese officials welcomed this amendment as a means for retribution. In the postwar period, the state progressively stripped Palestinians of rights they had previously enjoyed. This began with the exclusion of Palestinians from the 1991 General Amnesty Law (Knudsen 2007). As Lebanese warlords walked away with a clean slate after 15 years of bloodshed, the ranks of the Palestinian leadership in Lebanon were decimated by Syrian and Lebanese security forces, which jailed or forced into hiding, on both real and contrived charges, any Palestinian leader who did not fully comply with their demands (Rougier 2007: 11).

Meanwhile, Lebanese officials, citing a previously unenforced law of 1962 on the eligibility of non-Lebanese to apply for work permits, began to restrict Palestinian employment in all but the most menial of professions. Palestinians in liberal professions, such as doctors, nurses, and pharmacists, lost the right to practice their professions outside the refugee camps, and Palestinian engineers, of whom there were many, were denied jobs in the lucrative business of postwar reconstruction (Hanafi and Tiltnes 2009). In short, throughout the 1990s, the Lebanese state proceeded to institutionalize and legalize discrimination against the Palestinian refugees it hosted.

Furthermore, this manner of discrimination seems not to have abated in the twenty-first century. In 2001, the government decreed that it was illegal for Palestinians to purchase or inherit land. Today, not only are Palestinians forbidden to buy land, but if one's father or other landowning relative dies, that property reverts to Dar al-Fatwa (the institution of legal reference for Sunnis in Lebanon) and not to his next of kin (Saghieh and Saghieh 2008; Qasim 2009).

At present, there are few indications that the Lebanese government has the political will to return to the Palestinian community any of its civic rights. The Christian establishment, in particular, is reluctant to permit the Palestinians to own property, and certain of its representatives have made the rather unfounded claim that the Constitution and the Ta'if Accord forbid it from doing so. As one man grimly joked during his focus group session in Nahr al-Bared:

The Palestinian is deprived of everything! Who knows, maybe a decision will be soon issued to decrease his share of oxygen! In other words, Palestinians are deprived of all human rights, whether in regard to work, health, education, safety, residence, or shelter. Palestinians live in constant fear.

Another added:

There is nothing inside the camp other than fear, deprivation, and an island of misery and destitution.

Just as these men reiterate, the violation and abrogation of refugee rights continues unabated into 2009. When refugees are not denied their rights *de jure*, they are denied them in practice, as the Lebanese bureaucracies, which have been tasked with handling refugee affairs, deny Palestinians work permits without explanation and neglect to furnish undocumented refugees with the resources they need to register births, deaths, marriages, and even their own status as refugees (see also Yassine and El-Natour 2007; Ben-Sichou *et al.* 2008; Akram 2002).

As a result, the community is left in a state of antinomy where they may not assert their rights as Palestinians; yet, though over 90 per cent of them have resided in Lebanon since birth, they are also denied the rights of Lebanese. As one focus group participant pointed out:

We live on Lebanese land and under Lebanese law. However, the Palestinian camps exist under exceptional circumstances. The Lebanese state deals with the Palestinian camps from a security perspective, but this is something that we reject. There are no rights [given to us], but we have obligations.

In *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998) and *The State of Exception* (2005), this unenviable indistinction is what Agamben has called living under ‘the state of exception’.

The State of Exception

The paradox of the Palestinians in Lebanon today is that they are ‘excluded from rights while being included in law-making’ (Silverman 2008: 10). They may enjoy neither the rights of Lebanese, upon whose territory they reside, nor even those of the foreigner in Lebanon. Excluded from the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, which stipulates that refugees have the right to work without a specific work permit, Palestinians in Lebanon are obliged to secure one, even to do manual labour. By virtue of their very statelessness, as Agamben has argued, refugees

represent such a disquieting element in the order of the modern nation-state, this is above all because by breaking the continuity between man and citizen, *nativity* and *nationality*, they put the originary fiction of modern sovereignty in crisis (1998: 131).

Like most other countries in the twenty-first century, Lebanon exists within, and has been acknowledged as sovereign, in and of its own right, by, a global community of similar nation-states. In other words, Lebanon is self-governing, exercises authority over its peoples and lands through rational-legal legislation, and enforces its authority through a system of courts and law enforcement. To cite Weber (1964) once more, Lebanon is sovereign because, within its borders, its government alone retains a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force. The country’s refugee camps, however,

are exceptional. In spite of Lebanese claims to the contrary, Lebanese law, for all practical purposes, in that it is only rarely and arbitrarily enforced, has been suspended within the confines of the camp. In this sense, the camps have become 'spaces of exception'. Residents live in a 'zone of indistinction between outside and inside, exception and rule, licit and illicit, in which the very concepts of subjective right and juridical protection no longer make any sense' (Agamben 1998: 170).

As articulated by Agamben, the state of exception refers to the suspension of the law by the sovereign state, usually in the name of national defence or security. In the terrain of the camps in Lebanon, however, we have a tapestry of multiple, partial sovereignties: these include real sovereigns like the Lebanese government but also phantom sovereigns like the PLO and other factions, and UNRWA and other humanitarian agencies, who also contribute to the state of exception and participate in the suspension of the law. Thus, paradoxically, the only rational-legal act these sovereigns, or partial sovereigns, have endorsed together is the suspension of all sovereign authority over the camp and, in its place, the implementation of other 'temporary' or 'emergency' powers.

These emergency measures, however, exist in mutual contradiction, and rather than order the camp, they leave it in a state of void, of chaos and anomie. Each competing actor—government, faction, or agency—must compete not for the allegiance of each Palestinian but instead for predominant power over each refugee. 'Contrary to our modern habit of representing the political realm in terms of citizens' rights, free will, and social contracts, from the point of view of sovereignty, *only bare life is authentically political*', suggests Agamben (1998: 106).

Refugees become not political subjects, stakeholders in the management of their own society, but rather 'bare life', a label Agamben applies to the refugee on the basis of an allusion to the obscure personage of the '*homo sacer*' in Roman law. *Homo sacer* refers to a man who has been banned, exiled, or stripped of his citizenship (thus made 'sacred' to the gods) and who can be killed by anyone without fear of retribution, but who by virtue of his very sacredness may not be sacrificed in a religious ritual. The life of a *homo sacer* has no political significance to the sovereign. He exists only in a biological capacity or in 'bare life' (*zōē*) and thus, like something less than human, must be provided for only in a most rudimentary sense (i.e. given food, water, and shelter) and kept removed (i.e. in exile or incarceration) from the ordinary existence of mankind in 'political life' (*bios*).

The refugee, according to Agamben and his readers in the field of refugee or forced migration studies, may therefore be understood to live the bare life of the *homo sacer*. The Palestinian refugee in Lebanon, for example, lives on the margins of the law and therefore has no say in its drafting or application. The Palestinian has no voice in the legal formulation of his or her status and no say in either the Lebanese or Palestinian political processes which affect him or her. The Lebanese state has refused to take responsibility for the refugees and has relegated the management of their lives to UNRWA,

which has a mandate only to provide them with bare life. The concrete walls, barbed wire, and army checkpoints which surround each camp mark both the physical and juridical limits of the Lebanese state's concerns regarding the prosperity and happiness—indeed, the very lives—of the Palestinians. There is no more telling marker of the refugee's status as *homo sacer* than the unregulated, urban, and prison-like conditions of his or her life in a camp. It is true, as Agamben has noted:

Insofar as its inhabitants were stripped of every political status and wholly reduced to bare life, the camp was also the most absolute biopolitical space ever to have been realized in which power confronts nothing but pure life, without any mediation. This is why the camp is the very paradigm of political space at the point at which politics becomes biopolitics and *homo sacer* is virtually confused with the citizen (1998: 171).

The negative effects of confinement and overcrowding in the camps should not be underestimated. As one parent from 'Ayn al-Hilweh noted:

There is not a house in this camp that has not been inherited from a parent and in which one lives with his children and his brothers. The two square kilometres in which we have been living since 1948... or as one mentioned, it is the 'UNRWA area'. There was a school with a big playground that used to serve 30 people. Today, do you have any idea how many there are in that school? 1300! Come and see them during recess when the bell rings. You'll see the children one on top of another! This is not healthy.

These dramatic words from a Nahr al-Bared resident, however, were perhaps the most telling with regard to what it is like to be born into and only to live within the strictures of bare life:

All hopes have been shattered! Shattered where? At the shores of Nahr al-Bared and by the despair in which we live! If the hopes of future generations are confronted with this despair, be sure that this despair will lead to chaos and to an explosion.

In the Name of Security

As Agamben has previously observed, 'The juridical constellation that guides the camps is [...] martial law and the state of siege' (1998: 20). Today, in the wake of the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005 and even as the popular committees have begun to make amends between factions and address their current disordered state of affairs, representatives of the Lebanese state, especially officers in the army and police, continue to undermine this process 'in the name of security', by denying Palestinian leaders legitimacy. Community members in the focus groups complained of a lack of external political cover from these authorities. The army and police, they said, treated them—the leaders of the Palestinian community—without respect, as mere

informants and executors of military commands. One representative of the security committee in Nahr al-Bared made this point:

If any citizen from the camp makes trouble—say he has injured someone and the security committee has put him in jail—he could sue me with assistance from the [Lebanese] state, and then I would become the criminal. I have been jailed three times by the state because of... I am working for my people! I have no problem as long as I am serving my people. But if the state jails me three times because of complaints, then what? One time, I believe, a thief complained about me, and I was put in jail! ... In other words, the security forces here [in the camp] do not enjoy the legitimacy [from the Lebanese state] they need in order to play an effective role [in keeping the peace].

The Lebanese military and police have long used ‘security’ to justify their behaviour toward Palestinians. The assumption that all Palestinian political activity is de facto a threat to the Lebanese state, however, tragically forecloses the possibility of good Palestinian self-governance—something Lebanese have said they want for the Palestinians but have then denied through scaremongering about ‘security islands’ or a ‘state within a state’. One Palestinian in his focus group had this to say:

The Palestinian factions are banned from forming an internal administration inside the camp. First, if you do this, you would be forming an authority replacing the Lebanese state, and this would make you wanted for legal and security reasons. You are not even allowed to form a political [municipal] authority.

The army is quick to remind critics of their sometimes harsh policies of the hundreds of Lebanese soldiers’ lives lost in the battle with Fatah al-Islam and to caution that another such insurrection could happen again at any time in any camp. The mistreatment of Palestinians at LAF checkpoints, however, has been a major factor fomenting discord and disagreement between Palestinians and Lebanese. The cordoning off of many of the camps, and in particular Nahr al-Bared and ‘Ayn al-Hilweh, by the Lebanese army does little to nothing to prevent petty crime, factional violence, or incidents of terrorism, and yet the practice persists.

Furthermore, it is not unlikely that the victimization of individual refugees at these checkpoints and the perception of the victimization of their entire community produced by the expression of racism, sectarianism, and other types of hate in these places have already radicalized some young Palestinians, indeed making them *more* likely to participate in acts of violence against the Lebanese state and its agents (Hutson *et al.* 2009: 23). Previous studies of Islamic radicalization and political violence have suggested that victimization and exposure to traumatic events provoke some individuals to seek revenge, as victims sometimes retain an increased willingness to commit violent action (*ibid.*: 24). One Nahr al-Bared resident, in fact, was blunt in his

assessment that the humiliation felt by Palestinians at checkpoints would lead to violence if circumstances do not change:

If these things don't change . . . these guys speak of countless incidents, events, arguments, and about wrong behaviour and humiliation—as if another war is on the horizon. The harassment of these people [the residents of the camp] will lead to a point where people will have no other choice but to explode. Are we meant to reach such a point?

It is important, however, to note that focus group participants did not simply complain about the behaviour of the LAF but quite perceptively took issue with the sheer illogic of the checkpoints. For example, in order to contest the Lebanese perception that the camps were dangerous, three Nahr al-Bared residents contrasted their society with segments of Lebanese society. The first, commenting on the checkpoints and invasive searches of Palestinians going in or out of Nahr al-Bared for the past two years, asked:

Why is Nahr al-Bared a military zone till now, although it is the cleanest area in Lebanon from a security perspective? . . . The regions [in Lebanon] that are packed with weapons and trouble are not classified as military zones, whereas Nahr al-Bared is.

The second agreed, observing how, even in the absence of conventional governance, his camp enjoyed a relatively low crime rate:

There was no crime in the history of al-Bared camp, perhaps one crime only, and it was unintentional, where a kid murdered another, and the investigation proved it as did the committees.

Finally, the third discussant added that unfounded Lebanese fears of Palestinian militancy had fostered the perception that the camps were a refuge for fugitives, Palestinian and Lebanese alike:

Since [Fatah al-Islam] left Nahr al-Bared, the Lebanese state has only recorded the presence of seven fugitives, not security fugitives, which means that they had [domestic] problems similar to the ones you mentioned. What is the ratio of seven people in a camp with a population of 37,000?!

In short, most of the focus group participants agreed on several key points regarding the maintenance of security in and around the camps. These included: (1) that the Lebanese habit of dealing with Palestinian society solely from a security perspective is inherently problematic, as it denies the potentiality of other forms of Lebanese–Palestinian engagement or dialogue; (2) that the LAF's checkpoint policy provokes many more problems than it prevents; (3) that the Lebanese perception of Palestinians as being more prone to commit crimes is hateful and unfounded; and finally (4) that left alone by the army and permitted to develop their own security programmes,

they would be able to keep crime rates low and to counter any potential Palestinian threat to the Lebanese state on their own.

Governmentalities of Islamism

After the departure of the PLO leadership in 1982, the existing popular and security committees were almost completely disabled by the Syrian–Lebanese military intelligence apparatus and replaced with pro-Syrian committees, which were weak, considered illegitimate, and were virtually without their own financial resources. They were not permitted to develop their own effective police programmes or to participate in legitimate security functions. Regarding the day-to-day regulation of behaviour, therefore, camp residents resorted to new, informal, and alternative structures of governance, self-policing, and auto-conditioning to keep the peace and preserve order.

The conservative Islamic environment of the camps, coupled with constant policing and surveillance by the factions, has thus far succeeded in deterring most of the sorts of crime that one might find in a similarly impoverished Lebanese neighbourhood, though at the same time, it also seems to have enabled some of the factions themselves to commit other sorts of crimes. For example, as Nahr al-Bared residents are keen to point out, their society accepted Fatah al-Islam in their midst for several months, because the group appeared pious and was effective in preventing crime and promoting good Islamic behaviour:

The camp is fertile ground and if you throw a seed there, it will grow on its own. The camp and the religious environment that [the sheikhs] talk about exists, and the conservative environment tends to dislike crime.

Even more telling, however, were the words of one sheikh in the camp:

I am one of those who approved of some of the accomplishments of Fatah al-Islam, when you consider dealing with the drunkards and the fact that our girls could come and go without anyone misbehaving with them. All this was positive.

Many witnesses in Nahr al-Bared confirmed that some imams condoned the presence of Fatah al-Islam in the camp during their Friday sermons. For example, after two clashes between the population and Fatah al-Islam fighters in the spring of 2007, at least two imams interceded on behalf of Fatah al-Islam, as they were ‘pious faithful people’, reported residents. Islamist movements are, to some extent, welcomed in the camps for their ability to preserve the social order in the absence of other regulatory authorities. Because no Palestinian authority recognized by both Palestinians and Lebanese as legitimate and sovereign exists, Palestinians have been forced to adopt alternative—but less effective—ways of maintaining order in the camps.

Following Foucault (1991), the notion of governmentality allows us to consider some of these many alternatives to conventional modes of governance. The term ‘governmentality’, which refers to ‘how we think about governing others and ourselves in a wide variety of contexts’, grants us one more analytical tool for understanding power as something distributed rather than wielded from above (Dean 1999: 212). It allows us to go beyond classical theories of sovereign power, such as Weber’s typology of the forms of domination discussed above, which limit ‘legitimate’ power to institutions of the state. In contrast to Weber’s conceptualization, there exists within governmentality studies the notion that governance and state power are not necessarily the same.

Governmentality as a theoretical tool permits us to consider how the ways Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have produced knowledge about themselves, their environment, and their situation have changed over time and, furthermore, to examine how these changes have created new mechanisms for regulating camp residents’ behaviour. Specifically, the discourse of Islamism, principally as it has been articulated by Hamas and its allies, has provided Palestinians in Lebanon with new ‘technologies of subjectivity’, that is, with new ways of understanding their own selves, not just as Muslims, but as refugees. As Rose reminds us:

Technologies of subjectivity thus exist in a kind of symbiotic relationship with what one might term ‘techniques of the self’: the ways in which we are enabled, by means of the languages, criteria, and techniques offered to us, to act upon our bodies, souls, thoughts, and conduct in order to achieve happiness, wisdom, health, and fulfillment (1990: 11).

We contend that there are new governmentalities in the camps, which have arisen in the absence of state authority and which ensure the day-to-day functioning of the camps. In these, we can see how power has been transformed into specific practices and redistributed to new authorities, such as NGO leaders, the imams of mosques, elders in a neighbourhood (*wujaha*), and most importantly, to individuals.

This phenomenon should be seen in parallel with the revival of a conservative Sunni Islam, also in recent years, in Lebanese cities neighbouring the camps. In both Tripoli, near Nahr al-Bared and Beddawi, and in Sidon, near ‘Ayn al-Hilweh, groups such as Al-Jama‘a al-Islamiyya, the Muslim Brotherhood, and several locally established Salafist⁶ groups have been competing with municipal authorities, and to a lesser extent, with secular camp leaders, for bases of social support. One youth from Beddawi commented on this:

There are schools in Tripoli, and there are many students from the camp who study at these schools, such as Al-Hidaya al-Islamiyya of Sheikh Abdullah al-Shahhal and Al-Sahab Islamic Foundation, the schools of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Islamic University, which has now shifted to Hamas’s [control].

These new manifestations of a conservative and urban Islam in Lebanon, in such close proximity to the camps, have made a distinct impression on many Palestinians. By welcoming camp residents into their midst socially, by accepting Palestinians in their religious colleges, and by popularizing conservative Saudi satellite media such as *Iqra'*, *Al-Majd*, and *Al-Nass* in their geographical locales, these actors have provided many Palestinians with new frames of reference to discuss their situations. As a result, more and more Palestinians have begun to turn to Islamic authorities rather than the PLO or other political authorities for answers to their questions and for assistance. For example, as one focus group participant observed:

Regarding matters of marriage, divorce, and problems between neighbours, even problems on a political level—all these have witnessed involvement by the imams of mosques, who have played a role in calming things down.

Unable to turn to municipal or larger Palestinian authorities to solve their problems, camp residents have been compelled to seek mediation in highly individualized ways such as these. Camp residents have begun to rely more on shared notions of morality and ethics—particularly, Islamic ones (*akhlaq*)—to promote norms for acceptable behaviour. As a result, sheikhs, imams, and other ‘morally sound’ persons, like the *wujaha'*, have been granted much of the authority that, twenty years prior, belonged to secular political organizations like the PLO. As Dean reminds us:

Notions of morality and ethics generally rest on an idea of self-government. They presume some conception of an autonomous person capable of monitoring and regulating various aspects of their own conduct (1999: 12).

In this sense, specific interpretations of Islam—not just *shari'a* but also *akhlaq*—appear to have begun to function as ‘mentalities of governance’, or governmentalities, for camp residents. Jensen (2009), in conducting fieldwork with a Hamas soccer team in Gaza, observed how ‘the creation of sound Muslims at the individual level’ was accomplished through the physical conditioning of one’s body through sport; it was the physical alteration of one’s body through the ‘care of the self’ that marked one out as Islamist. The soccer players Jensen interacted with also adopted new styles of dress and new ways of talking about themselves as distinct, in a moral sense, from other Palestinians in Gaza.

It is ‘through self-reformation, therapy, techniques of body alteration, and the calculated reshaping of speech and emotion, we adjust ourselves by means of the techniques propounded by experts of the soul’ (Rose 1990: 10). Islamism, as articulated by Hamas, literally as a science of the soul, has transformed the way many Palestinians, especially young men, construct their sense of self. It has brought to the forefront the idea that an ‘economy of morals’ can order societies in the absence of traditional hierarchies. The accumulation of moral capital thus becomes a way of standing out, of setting

oneself apart from one's peers, and ultimately even a way of commanding respect and authority in the camp.

Substantiating this, focus group participants placed a great (arguably hyperbolic) emphasis on the threat of moral degeneracy to the continued well-being of their society. Some said that the dilemma of dwindling Palestinian political authority reflected a crisis of substantive moral purpose, while others lamented that Islamic conceptions of good governance and righteousness were not being followed. There was a general consensus among participants of all ages and in each of the camps that moral degeneracy was a problem. Specifically, these complaints had to do with drinking, smoking, cursing, homosexuality, child abuse, drug use, pornography, prostitution, and sexual harassment.

It was the revitalization of Islamic values, however, rather than the legitimization of a specific political authority, which was proposed most often as the solution to these problems. As one woman from Beddawi summarized:

For example, while there are young men getting drunk during Ramadan, you have other young men praying all night long. This is something that I don't remember the older generations ever had. In other words, there is a positive progressive improvement in the camp, and all the camps hopefully, perhaps even the entire Islamic world.

Islamism was seen by many as the only solution to the Palestinians' problems in Lebanon, as political solutions had been closed to them through the unwillingness of the Lebanese state to work with the Palestinian community in good faith. Focus group participants also cited a number of examples of the ways in which residents'—especially young residents'—behaviour had changed for the better as a result of increased piety. Specifically, some also pointed to how the rise to prominence in their camp of Hamas (at the expense of Fatah) had precipitated this. For example, discussing this, one woman said:

You felt that Fatah had a very strong presence [in Beddawi before]. Seriously, whenever I walked unveiled—I have only recently started wearing the veil—that it was a normal thing if we walked in the market without the veil. After Hamas came to the camp, religious discipline increased, religious awareness increased, and the number of religious lectures increased.

Also, a man from Nahr al-Bared was happy to report:

Everyone here talked about the rising numbers of young people who have recently gone back to praying at the mosques. Also, many are participating in religious ceremonies and in the Friday prayer on religious occasions during Ramadan.

Another Nahr al-Bared resident argued:

Before, we had one mosque; now there are fourteen. Doesn't this have to do with religion? Every year, two or three pilgrimage trips are organized either for

hajj or *'umra*. Isn't this related to values and ethics? Aren't such trips increasing? No, honestly, I believe that compared to the number of people, the crime and delinquency rates are low.

Taken as a whole, however, participants across the focus groups had conflicting ideas about the role that religion and religious movements should play in the administration of the camps. For example, when asked whether politics and religion should be kept separate in government, participants in the youth focus group were divided in their opinions. Some favoured a secular authority like the PLO of decades past, while others voiced a preference for a religio-nationalist government, like that endorsed by Hamas. Only a few, however, endorsed the full implementation of *shari'a*.

What participants agreed upon was that Islamism had emerged in the last decade, for better or worse, as a new and powerful force in the camps. For some, it brought out the best in people, compelling them to behave in 'sound' and 'Islamic' ways, abating violence, delinquency, and moral degeneration while simultaneously abetting increased cooperation among neighbours, better regimes of health, and improved social services. On the other hand, Islamist factions like Hamas, Jund al-Sham, 'Usbat al-Ansar, Fatah al-Islam, and others seem to have brought with them new issues, the foremost of which has been the ability to integrate with existing or historical modes of governance, both Lebanese and Palestinian, thus begetting conflict.

Conclusions

The Lebanese–Palestinian relationship today is a highly conflicted one, and the topic of 'governance' in the camps is commonly misrepresented and misunderstood. For some, it is above all a security issue, in which camp spaces are transformed into security zones, consequently upending normal rules of deliberation, accountability, social convention, and principles of human rights. For others over the years, this explicit lack of governance has become nothing short of 'normal'. Some Lebanese blame the crisis of governance in the camps on the collective failure of the refugees to manage their own affairs; and for their part, there is a tendency among Palestinians to present themselves to the public only as victims—victims both of Zionist aggression in the past and of Lebanese discrimination in the present. In reality, however, it seems that the current state of affairs inside the camps is most likely the unintended result of failed neoliberal ambitions to 'manage' the Palestinians and of the untoward effects of a conservative Lebanese nationalism, forged anew in the aftermath of the civil war. More so than anything else, however, it has been the severe dysfunction of the Lebanese state that has exacerbated the problems of the refugees. The long and sometimes difficult history shared by both Palestinians and Lebanese has prompted different authorities within the Lebanese government—the army, the police, the cabinet, and of course, the various blocs which make up parliament—to

view the Palestinian question from diverse, almost idiosyncratic, perspectives. The army, for example, formulates its policies vis-à-vis the Palestinians from within a security perspective, while politicians tend to discuss the Palestinians in demographic terms, warning that any change in the status of Palestinians could have dire consequences for Lebanon's confessional balance.

As a result, there has been no coordinated government policy regarding the Palestinians or their camps. Because the question of the refugees' status has become so sensitive, Lebanese politicians, in general, have opted to steer the easy course rather than the best one. While acknowledging that there are problems in Lebanese relations with the Palestinians, they nevertheless demonstrate no interest in addressing these.

The establishment of the Lebanese–Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC) in 2005 was a positive first step, after years of conflict, to try and bridge the divide between both parties (see Brynen 2009). Over four years later, however, the LPDC appears to have made little progress on this front. The general dysfunction of the Lebanese state—which in these years has witnessed massive demonstrations and protests, a war with Israel, sectarian violence, a boycotted government, political infighting, a presidential vacuum, and two highly contentious cabinet formations—has prevented it from taking any initiative on the much needed reform of its policies. Instead, it has left the Palestinians to be fed by UNRWA and guarded by the army until such time as parliament—the only governmental body capable of licensing meaningful reform—sees fit to weigh in on the issue.

Sadly, for the foreseeable future, indicators suggest that the Lebanese state will continue *excluding* Palestinians from the rights and benefits they ought to enjoy as residents of Lebanon while simultaneously *including* them as a security threat, as 'something' to be contained and subjected to strict control and surveillance. As a result, tensions between Lebanese and Palestinians will continue to mount, the factions will carry on in their struggles inside the camps, and these 'spaces of exception' will continue to present a threat to Lebanese sovereignty and security. This reality is what the International Crisis Group has aptly referred to in a report as 'nurturing instability' (ICG 2009).

In spite of this, our study suggests, Palestinians in Lebanon will continue to cope in remarkable ways. By drawing from their shared history, their common experience as refugees, the motivating force of Palestinian nationalism and by relying on strong moral and ethical norms, which in recent years have been underpinned by Islamist discourse, they will govern themselves in the absence of any real, legitimate government as best they can.

1. Particularly painful memories for Palestinians and Lebanese alike derive from the massacre of Palestinians and other Muslims on 18 January 1976 by Christian rightist forces in the Karantina district of Beirut and, two days later, the retaliatory massacre of Christians in the village of Damour by the National Progressive Movement, which included PLO militiamen.

2. UNRWA also maintains its own administrative apparatus, and the top Palestinian official employed by UNRWA in each camp is a man of significant power and influence. In at least one of our focus groups, this employee referred to himself, in the presence of representatives of his popular committee, simply as '*mudir al-mukhayim*', or 'the camp director'. UNRWA typically appoints new camp elites to leadership positions, such as well-educated engineers, teachers, and pharmacists, many of whom also have an activist history and good relations with the camp.
3. One Nahr al-Bared resident claimed, 'I daresay that the majority in Fatah al-Islam were Lebanese. There were more Lebanese than Palestinians, and I can provide names'.
4. Hamas is a relatively new political formation, which had no presence in Lebanon before 2000. And, beyond the *tanzimat* and the popular committees, there were of course also Palestinian NGOs and the village committees, among other organizations, which brought new sorts of order to some of Lebanon's camps in the 1990s. Historically, however, the impact of these has been minimal.
5. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has concluded that '[a] person who enters a state and assumes an employment relationship, acquires his labour human rights in the state of employment, irrespective of his migratory status [...] the migratory status of a person can never be a justification for depriving him of the enjoyment and exercise of his human rights' (Amnesty International 2006; see also Inter-American Court of Human Rights 2003). The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, furthermore, has adopted a General Comment on the right to work. In it, the Committee underlined 'the need for national plans of action to be devised to respect and promote [the principle of non-discrimination] by all appropriate measures, legislative or otherwise' (Amnesty 2006). In general, the right to work as outlined in Article 6 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights [ICESCR] has two distinct aspects: the right to access employment, and the right to acceptable conditions of work and rights at work.
6. Salafist groups are religious groups influenced by the Saudi Arabian Wahhabi doctrine. They are often very conservative.

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