



المنظمة الفلسطينية لحقوق الإنسان (حقوق)
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Beirut, April 14, 2017

Ein El-Hilweh Evaluation and Assessment Position Paper

**The residents of Ein El-Hilweh must not remain victims of political quarrels
and mailbox to all affiliated parties**

**Let the violators, Instigators and supporters bear moral and legal
responsibility and be held accountable for the harm caused to the civilians**

Between every clash and another in Ein Elhilweh Palestinian refugee camp in Saida region – south Lebanon, disbanding of a security force and restructuring another¹, and escalation of Lebanese security demands on the Palestinian parties, beside security procedures which suffocate the camp. In addition to the local and the regional interference within a km² camp, where 80 thousand people reside, and are paying the price for all security chaos and policies which keep risks present through tension management. They limit – if not completely deprive – their human rights under the fragility of Palestine's liberation Organization, (which is considered the legitimate representative of the Palestinian refugees), the impotent of its political factions along with the others, the absence of Lebanese political well while quarrels persist (even though among players belong to the same sect) in finding a unified vision for solution to the camps insecurity, as will as rights of the Palestinian refugees, also under weakening the role of UNRWA by the international community.

PHRO believes that it is time for the local, regional, international players and influential actors in the Palestinian refugee issue in Lebanon, to have the courage to be honest with Palestinian refugees, especially the youth concerning what is being schemed for their future. They, youth, must be engaged in finding solutions that must be civilized, based on rights and duties, and it must take into consideration the Palestinian youth, who should be productive and well prepared to play a positive role, Regardless of the upcoming solution. And for violators, instigators and supporters for, the inhuman and unmoral and volatile situation of camp which is backlashing on the face of residents, harming and violating all their life aspects. Keeping in mind that **PHRO** is focusing on Ein Elhilweh because of its occurring crisis. But it's important to mention that similar crises occurred in other

¹ According to "Cairo agreement" between PLO and the Lebanese government in 1969, a PLO security force called "Kifah Mossalah", took responsibility for securing the camps, but after the abolition of "Cairo agreement" in 1983, and many accompanied by the rise of local and regional interferences, the role of this force was abolished. An unwritten understanding between Palestinian factions and Lebanese government, leads to establish Palestinian Security Forces that held responsible to safeguard the camps.



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camps, and may occur in the future in other refugee camps. This affirms that the matter is about the Palestinian existence in Lebanon² and the region, taking into consideration what happens in the Palestinian refugee camps in Syria.

Overview:

Ein Elhilweh residents live in vulnerable situation (in regard to security, social and economic – living conditions, judicial and political situations, and degraded human rights), they suffered years of security chaos fed by the factions conflicts, and the local and regional polarization, where the absence of capability and/or the will to solve the accumulated crisis among official Lebanese authorities and Palestinian factions. These assimilate in three aspects:

- 1st, the Lebanese Official and partisan position's (political and sectarian) insistence on dealing with the Palestinian demographic and social existence in Lebanon, as a security file, which coasted in the past and will keep coasting Lebanon and the Palestinian refugees heavy loss in all the levels Socially, economic, politically and security.
- 2nd, a state of siege manifested in a suffocating cordon, "that impacted the civilians instead of the acclaimed perpetrators", started immediately after Taif Agreement at the early 90s of 20th century and escalated gradually, especially after Lebanon's political and security stability took turns to the worst in 2005³.
- 3rd, Internal Palestinian chaos manifested in the spread of extreme Islamic groups from one side, and the weak will and capability of the traditional Palestinian factions to insure the procedural and social security, due to their dispute and divisions from the other side.

In early 90s of the past century – and in the middle of an expanding political and security void and/or maybe due to the crumbling of the traditional Palestinian factions and the prevalence of the "Political Islam" and the "Jihadism" phenomena – Extreme Islamic groups appeared in Ein El-Hilweh camp. Some of these groups reduced or hid their social extremist ideology, and are considered, nowadays, as relatively moderate Islamic groups, while the residents of the camp abstain from

² In 2007, a battle took place between Lebanese Army and an extremist group called "Fateh Al-Islam" in Naher El-Barid camp in north Lebanon, causing a complete destruction of the camp and displaced its residents before a partially return for some of the residents to the camp, and that after a decision was made to rebuild the destroyed camp, knowing that, until now, the rebuilding process had not accomplished yet. For more about Naher El-Barid, visit PHRO website to read on reports and papers on this camps' case.

³ after expulsions and other attacks that led to the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, and the Political/ sectarian division in Lebanon, knowing that the siege around the camps which started in 1997 aftermath security unrest in several areas in Lebanon and around the camps, had become more tight especially after the clashes between Fateh Al-Islam and the Lebanese Army in Naher El-Barid, and the starting up of the civil war in Syria that affected Lebanon too throughout the engagement of Lebanese party directly in the military conflict, and the explosions in southern suburb of Beirut, where is the main base of Hizbulla and his population.



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practicing their social freedom, amid tendency toward social extremism due to wrong upbringing, fanatic brainwash and recruitment, the Vulnerable situation.

This paper, that its previous paragraphs give a general view to the variables that affected and do still affect the security trends and non-security orientations in Ein El-Hilweh, aim to highlight the current situation in the camp and those responsible for the deterioration in the procedural, social and humanitarian security. It's the second after the position paper issued by **PHRO** "*Ein El-Helwih Camp. Are we facing another racial separation Barrier?!! And this Time in Lebanon, Are we going to Follow Steps of our sisters organization in Palestine and Resort to Litigation?!!*" Dated 4\12\2016⁴, and previously an essay written by the general director of **PHRO** Mr. Ghassan Abdallah "*Ein El-Hilweh between extremism and forced displacement*"⁵.

The forces in the camp and its surroundings:

- 1- The Islamic forces "Salafi" and "Jihadi" which exist in the camp at the moment: Osbat Al-Ansar, Jund Al Sham, Al-Haraka Al-Islamia Al-Moujahida, Fateh al-Islam, and other small groups have connection with ISIS and other groups affiliate and/or owe allegiance to AL-Qaida, The remains of "Abdullah Azzam Brigades" group, as well as "Ansar Allah" which is close to "Hezbollah".
- 2- On the other hand, there are traditional factions (old and new/National and Islamic): Fateh, Reformist movement (which born from Fateh), PFL, DFLP, Peoples Party, PFLP-GC, Palestinian Liberation forefront, Al-Nedal forefront, Al-Sa'ika, Fateh Al-Intefada, Hamas movement, Islamic Jihad movement...etc
- 3- Surrounding the camp, the Lebanese army and army intelligence services, in addition to other security services, such as the General Security and the Information Department – ISF and they all have informers inside the camp; some of them are known and some others are working secretly.
- 4- And in the surrounding areas of the camp, also there are Lebanese armed groups (some of them have supporters and/or followers inside the camp) affiliated to/or pro Lebanese parties like "Saraya Almokawama" which is affiliated to Hezbollah, and groups affiliated to the "Popular Nasserist Organization", and other affiliated to Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya in addition to the Pro-Future Movement. while the remnant groups of Ahmad Al-Asier, the clerk who is trialed in front

⁴ For more about the position paper, visit PHRO web on:

http://www.palhumanrights.org/2016/Ein_Hilweh_wall.pdf

⁵ For more about the essay, visit PHRO page on Face book:

<https://www.facebook.com/phro.mena/posts/520376481450782>



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of the military court, is absent after the suppression of the Al-Asier following the battle of A'bra at the end of June 2013, and prosecution of his supporters during the years that followed and imprisoning them.

The Islamic groups "Salafi" and "Jihadi" are considered to have the most solidarity and cooperation among them, despite the variation of the positions they take on some issues. This holds true while handing over wanted persons engaged in armed clashes or for another reasons, to the Lebanese army intelligence services, according to the understanding that have been done and is being done between the Lebanese and the Palestinians.

As for the traditional national and Islamic factions, they are inconsistent even though all of them call to avoid the camp a fate similar to Nahr Al-Barid fate, especially Fateh movement, the most popular and field present, but still not able or capable to clench the situation, due to its internal problems and family / tribal affiliation, even though its members and armament are much more than the all of the Islamic salfi and jihadi groups combined. While the rest of the "national factions" don't have Fateh capabilities; as for Hamas and Jihad there role mostly is to calm the situation without any clear position towards what is happening in the camp; and here it must be highlighted that there is accusation to an Islamic factions of submitting facilitations for the extreme groups.

And on the Lebanese side, security and policing procedures taken around the camp – especially on the check points at the entrances and what so called "the security wall" which is similar to the "The Apartheid Wall" in Palestine. This wall is still under construction in spite the announcement of freezing it, more than 90 % of it is completed – are considered collective punishment, affect civilians of the camp, and do not affect as much on the presence and efficiency of the extremist groups. This raise a question about the ability of some wanted and those classified as extremists to enter and exit the camp despite the tight Lebanese cordon?... taking in to consideration that there are Islamic groups, accused of owing allegiance to Al-Qaeda and ISIS, are located just next to the Lebanese army locations, for example, and not as a limitation:

- The extremist Islamic activist group led by Bilal Bader, whom is accused of his belonging to Fateh Al-Islam and was located in Al-Tera neighborhood above the upper road of the camp, aligned to barbwire fence and the Lebanese army location which is overlooking the Al-Sahoun neighborhood (PFLP-GC slope road), before the last clashes between his group from one side and the Joint Security Force and Fateh movement from the other side, which caused many of deaths and tens wounded beside serious damage to properties. After that



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Bilal Bader became out of sight and declared as wanted according to "Internal understanding" under outer pressure influence. While his affiliated fighters and/or fighters that were loaned to him, were redistributed on other extremist groups. Where this keeps their danger persists, even becoming more dangerous because of their distribution on more than one security square.

- Osama Al- Shihabi, the Islamic activist how is accused of being affiliated to Al-Qaeda and Fateh Al-Islam, located in Safsaf neighborhood closed to the Lebanese army location in Al-Naba'a neighborhood next to Al-Vilat area;
- Jond Al-Sham, known as the most extremist group, unstable in its allegiances and affiliations, and the most dangerous group in the camp, It's led by Haitham Al-Sha'bi and is located in Al-Tawari'a neighborhood, on the lower road, close to Lebanese check point.

The questions here: how could wanted Lebanese persons enter the camp, how could wanted Palestinian persons go out the camp to do/ or participate in formal and security meetings, how are the armaments being entered, while the Lebanese army locations are completely controlling Ein El-Hilweh and monitoring the movement inside it. Without mentioning that the camp has been tightly blocked due to the siege and the complicated security and policing procedures on the check points for more than two decades, despite building wall at a lately?

It must be confirmed, that the Lebanese security and armed forces have the ability if there is a well to do so, this fact was revealed by the special forces operation of the Lebanese intelligence army directorate, (in Sep. 22- 2016, in Al-tawari'a neighborhood that is considered as controlled by extremist groups), where they managed to detain Imad Yassen whom accused of affiliation to ISIS, despite what have been said about him "being a head of big armed group", without any losses within the special forces or the civilian residents in the neighborhood. The leaked video of the operation showed that, no bullets were fired. It is worth mentioning that, most of the security squares, where the wanted persons located, are similar to Al-Tawari'a security square due to its proximity to the Lebanese army locations. Here we wonder, isn't more feasible to reduce the collateral damage among human beings and properties if Bilal Bader's case is dealt with as same as Imad Yassen's case"!

Adding to the previous; it is rumored as it is known, that groups inside the camp are funded by some Lebanese parties, these groups fought, during the some previous clashes, side by side with some extremist groups, in spite of their differences, and this maybe aims to raise the tension and push the



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Lebanese security forces to deploy inside the camp, and to hold their grip on the situation in all Saida!!!

Moreover, during some clashes, some armed groups affiliated to Palestinian factions, facilitated the movement of those extremist groups, fully armed, from a security square to another. Also in previous clashes Bilal Bader was under Fateh's line of fire, where Fateh combatants were forbidden from targeting him, under the allegation that he is being in a mosque that he opened fire from.

Moreover, a question arises, who are the local and regional players that are funding the procurement of the arms and ammunitions and facilitate their entry to the camp? With emphasis that weapons and ammunition entered and are entering the camp.

PHRO by observing the Lebanese policies toward the Palestinian refugee in general and the Palestinian camps in particular, can distinguish three orientations impact the situation of the camps and not just stimulate the security inside the camps but also manages it:

- 1- The General policy, aims to manage the tension, and keep it under control through supporting Palestinian factions that are acceptable by the Lebanese government, to get rid of the unwanted extremist groups, and to keep the tension within the limits, which can be controlled inside the camps, without any consideration to the government's responsibility as a state practicing its sovereignty on its lands including Palestinian camps on the intention to declare for the international community that these camps are insurgent spaces that cannot be subdued or assimilated.
- 2- Local trends to use the extremist Islamic groups as a scarecrow in front of what they consider a plan of specific party, to weaken Saida area, and secure the coastline for this party.
- 3- Other parties, want to eliminate the extremist groups inside the camp, but don't trust PLO, so they want the Lebanese army to clench the situation and control the camp, and thus weakening the party who want to be protected by the camp in Saida region.

PHRO considers all the mentioned entities, Palestinian and Lebanese, official and unofficial, are of equal responsibility for: worsening the security situation, as well as worsening living and humanitarian conditions for the residents of the besieged camp; due to absence of political will for some and incapability of others, and use of the camp as a political and security bargaining chip, by some Palestinians and Lebanese, and as mail box to regional players; that is a clear and explicit violation of human rights of the residents.



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PHRO highlights the facts that the consequent clashes in Ein Elhilweh camp: 1) caused human casualties and damages in properties. 2) Facilitated exploitation of the vulnerable youth in the camp, sometimes the children, and recruit them as fighters in the armed groups and engage them in the clashes. 3) Protected places were targeted and/or used for military purposes: hospitals, medical clinics, public facilities, and schools. 4) Militarizing residential units and endanger the civilians. 5) Appearance of lines of contact inside the camp, in which a decision was taken for the joint security force, which is formed lately, to deploy on. This deployment caused the last clash.

PHRO emphasize all the mentioned clashes/violations, use of small and medium weaponry, causing panic and horrifying the civilians, endangering their lives and/or using them for inhumane purposes, as well as militarizing the civilian areas, beside the damage and/or the use of Civil objects, public facilities and places of worship, are considered violations to the Lebanese Constitution and Law, and to the international humanitarian law.

PHRO believes that the solution in Ein Elhilweh camp is by, ceasing the use of it and its residents as political and security bargaining chip, and a local and regional mail box. **PHRO** recommends the stakeholders of the camp, the following:

For Lebanon:

- 1- Remove the constraints on economic and living conditions of the camp dwellers, and facilitate the access to work's opportunities especially to the Palestinian refugee youth (it is estimated that, 60% of labor force in the camp's are unemployed), and allow infrastructure rehabilitation and the houses renovations in the camp, (it is estimated that, 2% of houses are at risk to collapse), in addition to houses that got damaged partially or totally and are inadequate for living during the last clashes.
- 2- Dealing seriously with wanted and the extremists' cases, by refraining from facilitation of their movement to and fro. Cease armament, Cease political and security protection of those involved, and settle the minor cases.
- 3- Stop media and political incitement against the Palestinian refugees, and the reverse of the facts, and sometimes even fabricate stories that do not exist, in a racist manner, endangering the Palestinian refugee lives, by enforcement of the laws that prohibit hate speech and public incitement and undermining civil peace.
- 4- Taking full responsibility of the camps as a part of the Lebanese lands and under Lebanon sovereignty, and enforce procedural justice coupled with a human security approach, and settle all cases inherited from the days of civil war on the basis of transitional justice.



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For Palestinians:

- 1- Find a way to control the volatile situation in the camps on basis of good governance, or admit publicly the inability to do so, and then give the space to the hosting country to organize the situation in the camps.
- 2- Inform transparently the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon about the reality of their situation and the suggested solutions on the short and long terms, and engage the Palestinian refugee youth in discussing the suggested solutions or that will be suggested in the future, this may help the Palestinian stakeholders to better the negotiations' outcomes and improve the conditions.
- 3- PLO to use its official and legitimate status to put pressure on the local, regional and international players to fulfill their responsibilities to insure the human rights of Palestinian refugees, and build the capacities of the Palestinian youth, academically, vocationally and economic, to be productive regardless of the form of the solution to come.

For UNRWA:

- 1- Instead of closing its centers and facilities in clashing areas, UNRWA must work on prosecuting anyone who violate them, incite or fund – directly or indirectly – to target and \ or use them for military purposes.
- 2- Coordinate, with other responsible United Nations bodies, for example and not as a limitation: OHCHR, OCHA, UN-Habitat, to send a fact finding mission which should investigate the economic – social – security and residential conditions. Then, publish a report of facts to put pressure on the deferent players locally, regionally, and internationally, and to cease manipulating the camp's security and the use of camp as a mailbox where civilians paid dearly for it.
- 3- To exert all efforts on national community to improve UNRWA capabilities and to fulfill their financial obligations as well to enhance its role in relief, protection and working for the Palestinian refugees, and in enhancing the Palestinian refugees' living conditions.

Regionally and internationally:

- 1- Stop using Ein El-Hilweh (as a conflict zone) as a mail box in regional issues.
- 2- Exchanging the ways to spend money (directly or indirectly) from political/ security approach, to economic and developmental approach by funding productive projects that create work opportunities for youth.
- 3- Secure the funding required for UNRWA and fulfill the obligations toward it, in accordance to the needs of Palestine refugees.



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Conclusion: We are all responsible

PHRO considers, all the Palestinian entities inside the camp the legitimate, illegitimate and especially the extremist groups; the official Lebanese and Lebanese parties; the regional and international players, that support directly and/ or indirectly armed groups, in particular the extremists; UN represented by UNRWA, are responsible directly and/ or indirectly for the current situation inside Ein El-Hilweh camp and in all the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Hence, **PHRO** hold them, humane, moral, and legal responsibility, in particular for what is happening to the residents of Ein El-Hilweh, and the rest of the camps in general, the physical and psychological harm and the damages in properties, degradations of their human rights, therefor these entities fall under the prosecution on these infringements and violations and should bear the responsibility for compensation for all the losses.

The stakeholders, local communities, and civil society, especially the human rights organizations, should play their roles, to encourage the entities which are involved in all the camps in general and in especially Ein El-Hilweh, to respect human rights, to work seriously to improve the Palestinian refugee living conditions, to settle security cases from previous stages based on the transitional justice, and / or local and national prosecution for all the involved.

PHRO looking forward, if it secured the needed capabilities and funding, to communicate with relevant stakeholders and experts for the following steps:

- Establish early warning unit to monitor and document the frequency of the clashes and the nature of their transformation, especially violent ones;
- Establish a clear plan for protecting civilians regardless of the participation of the parties/ entities to the conflict.
- Establish a unit to empower the camp's residents and raise their awareness regarding the importance of procedural justice, particularly community policing;
- Establish a mediation unit concerning civilians matters only;
- Establish a legal support unit concerned with the prosecution of parties/ entities to the conflict, especially violators of host country's laws and the international humanitarian law.

***PHRO** is an independent non-governmental organization, established in 1997, recognized in Lebanon under registration no. 36/AD and works for promoting, protecting and defending the Human Rights of the Palestinian Refugees in MENA region. **PHRO** is a member of the international Federation for Human Rights (**FIDH**) and the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (**EuroMED rights**) and the Arab Organization for Human Rights (**AOHR**).*