



Lebanese Republic | Presidency
of the Council of Ministers
LEBANESE PALESTINIAN
DIALOGUE COMMITTEE

National Vision 2022-2024

Executive Summary

This updated strategy was developed with the aim of bringing the Palestinian file in Lebanon, in all its political, security, governmental, and humanitarian dimensions, under the authority of the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, so as to consolidate the management of this sensitive yet vital file for the Lebanese Government in the coming critical moment. It outlines the Committee's ambitious plan for fulfilling its transformational mission of improving Lebanese-Palestinian relations, pursuing the national interests of the Lebanese people, and enabling Palestinians to live lives of dignity while in Lebanon, at a moment when Lebanon is eliciting significant international attention.

The LPDC composed this strategic vision following, first, a careful review of its successes and failures since its establishment 17 years ago and of the nature of the challenges it has faced in that time, whether structural or stemming from security and political developments that forced the Committee to alter course. Second, the strategy is the result of a pragmatic assessment of current local, regional, and international dynamics that suggest that the Middle East region is in time of transition. As the government's designated organ to address the Palestinian file in Lebanon, having studied, operated on, and become expert in Palestinian refugee issues over 17 years, the Committee understands the urgency of the Government of Lebanon taking swift, unified action to achieve Lebanon's best interests at this pivotal point in regional transformation. Third, the strategy has been designed to circumvent certain ominous local risk scenarios at an already difficult time for the Lebanon—namely, the possibility of UNRWA ceasing service provision in the event of an exacerbated funding deficit, that of a social explosion due to unsustainable economic pressures on the Palestinian refugee community, or that of a security explosion resulting from the entanglement of Palestinian arms in local and regional conflicts. Fourth and finally, the strategy is rooted in the Committee's strong commitment to securing and protecting human rights for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon as a starting point for improving their dire living conditions.

Accordingly, the LPDC's strategic vision paves the way for the Government of Lebanon to navigate the risks and realities of the political, human rights, governance, and security aspects of the Palestinian file. To do so, it centrally details the Committee's work streams along these four important pillars, and illustrates its plans and priorities for the short, medium, and long terms. It also delineates the resources and commitments needed by the Committee to effectively implement its three-year plan and maps the actors working on the Palestinian file in Lebanon to identify existing and required resources, strategic government institutions, and donors with whom to partner. It couples a statement of principles with a practical assessment of risks and realities via a risk monitoring & mitigation system and evaluations of both the external Lebanese crisis context and LPDC's strengths and weaknesses internally. Ultimately, LPDC's national strategy makes the argument for granting LPDC the resources, the authority, and support to lead on Palestinian affairs in such a critical transition moment.

I. Background:

Established in 2005, the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, an inter-ministerial committee directly linked to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers was mandated¹ to deal with Palestinian refugees' affairs in Lebanon. It currently serves as a focal point between the Palestinian refugees and local and international stakeholders, and provides policy recommendations to the Government of Lebanon based on the national interests of the Lebanese people and the rights of Palestinian refugees to live in dignity and respect, until they are able to realize their right of return. In recent years,² LPDC's workstreams focused on several areas including fostering dialogue and building consensus both among and between Lebanese and Palestinian political parties. It has proposed numerous public policies related to improving the living conditions and social and economic rights of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, has backed various line ministries' support of Palestinian refugees, and has engaged the general public through strategic communication activities.

Despite the vast array of challenges facing the Palestinian refugee file in Lebanon, the LPDC has managed to accomplish numerous actions at the policy and operational levels in the period spanning from 2011 to date.³ These actions include, among others, ongoing collaboration with UNRWA on numerous projects, with the reconstruction of the Nahr El Bared camp being a top priority. This project entailed LPDC's active engagement on multiple fronts, from coordinating between and troubleshooting with UNRWA and the Lebanese administration,⁴ to overcoming various challenges to camp reconstruction, to consulting the camp community, service providers, and civil society organizations on camp governance structures. Another critical milestone came in 2015, when the LPDC facilitated a Lebanese political dialogue⁵ in the form of the "Lebanese Working Group on Palestinian Refugee Affairs,"⁶ culminating with the development of "A Unified Lebanese Vision for the Palestinian Refugees' Affairs in Lebanon."⁷ This unified vision created the enabling environment for conducting the first ever housing census of Palestinian camps and gatherings⁸ in Lebanon⁹ as well as the labor force and household living conditions survey (LFH LCS).¹⁰ Under the joint leadership of the LPDC, the Lebanese Central Administration of Statistics (CAS), and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the census, along with the survey, provided an accurate portrayal of the social, economic, and demographic realities of Lebanon's Palestinian refugee population. In turn, these exercises constituted the cornerstone for developing better evidence-based policies and strategies. In addition, the "Unified Vision" also paved the way for developing a Palestinian refugee youth policy¹¹ in the form of a two-pronged strategy¹² that seeks to empower Palestinian youths to act and speak as decision-makers in youth-centered programs and to provide a framework to facilitate

¹ <https://lpdc.gov.lb/about-lpdc/mission/>

² From approximately 2016 to 2020

³ September 2022

⁴ These include LAF, MOPW, MOEW, MOT, MOIM, and CDR, among others.

⁵ For the first time, Lebanese of all political affiliations presented, through this dialogue, a common approach on how to deal with Palestinian refugees and began to overcome the circumstances and differences that have shaped their views towards and positions on this file.

⁶ Dialogue sessions spanned two years, from 2016 to 2017.

⁷ <https://www.lpdc.gov.lb/DocumentFiles/unified%20vision-636789928712947012.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.lpdc.gov.lb/DocumentFiles/Key%20Findings%20report%20En-636566196639789418.pdf>

⁹ The census took place in 2017.

¹⁰ Labor Force and Living Conditions survey took place in 2020.

¹¹ The Youth Policy was launched in 2019.

¹² <https://www.lpdc.gov.lb/DocumentFiles/Youth%20Strategy%20Draft%20En-636849712766575045.pdf>

stronger coordination and synergies among organizations supporting Palestinian refugee youth.¹³ Towards the aim of changing narratives, meanwhile, the LPDC initiated Jousour¹⁴ Magazine¹⁵ as a space for dialogue between the Lebanese and Palestinians beyond stereotypes and dogmas and to reflect an array of opinions and perspectives on issues pertaining to Palestinian refugees' affairs in Lebanon. To date, LPDC has published 9 issues of Jousour featuring over 94 Palestinian and Lebanese writers covering a variety of topics. The political dialogue platform, coupled with Jousour and the youth strategy workstreams, demonstrate how LPDC has actively contributed to changing the national narrative surrounding Palestinian refugees from one that is focused on security and humanitarian relief towards a more nuanced one concerned with human security¹⁶ and finding durable solutions for Palestinian refugees' challenges.

Since COVID-19's emergence in early 2020 and its disproportionate effect on vulnerable populations, refugees in Lebanon, who reside in densely populated, underdeveloped communities and already suffer from dire economic conditions, have faced considerably higher risk. As such, LPDC has teamed up with the UNDP, UNRWA, WHO, the National Committee on COVID-19, and the Palestinian Embassy in Lebanon to support efforts to mitigate the health risks associated with the pandemic. These efforts have mostly focused on improving the preparedness and response capacities of organizations supporting Palestine refugee healthcare in Lebanon. So far, this collaboration has resulted in the rehabilitation of four Palestine refugee-run hospitals, the establishment of 5 specialized COVID-19 units, support to UNRWA's hospitalization program, and the rehabilitation and equipping of two isolation facilities and one vaccination center. In its COVID-19 response, LPDC selected locations for investment purposefully, with the explicit aim of providing a nationwide ring of care for the three largest Palestinian refugee population clusters in Lebanon.

Over the past decade, therefore, the LPDC has sought to tackle Palestinian refugees' needs from many different angles, from reconstructing and re-shaping governance in Nahr El-Bared, to leading political dialogue and building consensus among stakeholders, to amplifying unheard voices and changing the narrative with Jousour and its youth and communications strategies, to working to close the healthcare gap in the country. Yet one of LPDC's most important achievements over the years is also one of its most invisible: namely, that it has come to be perceived as an agent of systemic change in the relationship between the Lebanese Government and the Palestinian refugee community. In many ways, the LPDC acts as a symbolic assurance to Palestinian refugees that their cause remains a priority for the Lebanese government and high up on its public agenda. On a practical level, its access to the center of government and the accompanying authority that this provides¹⁷ has enabled LPDC to lead on developing and implementing a wide range of policy-oriented action on the Palestinian refugee issue without usurping the responsibilities of line ministries or engaging in activities that can be delivered by other government agencies, international organizations, or civil society organization. The Committee has worked and continues to work tirelessly alongside UNRWA, the Palestinian refugee representation, and the international donor community to mobilize the resources required to assist Palestinian refugees.

¹³ The LPDC, through its youth strategy, sees its role as to act as one of the primary facilitators between Palestinian youth and stakeholders, to provide support for youth, and to act as a focal point for national and international partners. Yet fully enacting LPDC's strategy requires partners' support.

¹⁴ <https://lpdc.gov.lb/jousour/>

¹⁵ Jousour's first issue was published in 2018.

¹⁶ <https://www.un.org/humansecurity/what-is-human-security/>

¹⁷ The fact that the LPDC is based at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers inside the Government Palace provides it with vast practical value.

Challenges and Bottlenecks

An honest internal reflection¹⁸ on which tasks LPDC could have better executed revealed some key areas for improvement. Internally, LPDC is hampered by certain structural and administrative challenges, while externally, it struggles with the political connotations of the Palestinian file in Lebanon.

To begin with, the ministry representatives on the LPDC's inter-ministerial committee lack decision-making power, hampering LPDC's ability to follow through on its recommendations. Line ministries have also failed to strategically and systematically engage LPDC by sharing data and plans to Palestinian refugees and camps in Lebanon. This is further reflected in several line ministries' lack of action on communiqués by the LPDC. In other words, while LPDC has made significant progress on the political dialogue track and has consistently communicated its work to line ministries, it has not always succeeded in translating its recommendations into actions or policies adopted by line ministries or new legislation passed by Parliament. On many occasions, moreover, several line ministries took unilateral decisions or developed policy frameworks without engaging the LPDC or other relevant ministries to assess the potential impact of their actions. For instance, the labor ministry's decision in 2019 to lead a crackdown¹⁹ on foreign workers working without permits, which affected dozens of Palestinian refugees, led to mass protests in the camps, thus heightening tensions and exacerbating the security situation.

Two root issues are to blame for LPDC's structural challenges. First, the LPDC's mandate is purely consultative, offering few executive powers, which makes it challenging for the Committee to take or enforce action. Second, the LPDC's limited human and financial resources leave the Committee struggling to balance multiple workstreams effectively. For example, while the LPDC was organizing and facilitating the multi-stakeholder political dialogue process, its bandwidth to lead on other workstreams went thin. Similarly, conducting the census in 2017 consumed most of LPDC's attention and forced it to reduce its efforts on different tracks.

In addition to the internal challenges described above, the work of LPDC continues to face the difficult political realities associated with the Palestinian refugee file in Lebanon. One such issue involves the counterproductive narrative surrounding Palestinian refugees in Lebanon which is propagated by negative media coverage that represents camps as "outlaw," extra-territorial spaces and thus contributes to the stigmatization of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon as a security threat to the country's stability. This narrative also permeates many Lebanese institutions' attitudes towards Palestinian refugees: these institutions tend to view Palestinians in Lebanon exclusively through the security lens as a series of threats to be responded to or contained, and thus they mostly address Palestinian refugee issues reactively instead of proactively. Furthermore, the presence of Palestinian refugees and camps in Lebanon is often instrumentalized by Lebanese political actors, who at best portray them as an economic and social burden, and at worst as an imminent security threat. Indeed, the refugee question remains intricately tied to Lebanon's sectarian divisions, with some political parties deploying it as a tool to mobilize their bases. So, for example, despite the various political parties having accompanied the census process very closely, many of these same parties²⁰ continue

¹⁸ LPDC has conducted two internal review processes: one in 2010 and one in 2018.

¹⁹ <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1284128/labor-minister-decrees-palestinians-can-work-in-professions-requiring-syndicate-membership.html>

²⁰ https://twitter.com/jamil_el_sayyed/status/945348749395718145

to question the results and to make public statements referencing numbers far from those indicated by the census.

Meanwhile, on the Palestinian front, fragmentation prevails among the Palestinian refugee leadership. As a result, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon feel deprived, more than ever, of a legitimate and recognized leadership capable of providing them with either concrete assistance or a vision for the future.²¹ This lack of a representative and unified leadership for Lebanon's Palestinian community has in turn made it much more challenging for LPDC to engage the Palestinian refugee community in Lebanon on the issues, because of the Palestinian side's multiple foci of power and disunified political positions.

II. Context

Adding to the challenges specific to the Palestinian file are the difficulties posed by Lebanon's current state of crisis, which, nearly three years later, persists, with frequent street protests continuing to erupt and questions being raised around the government's ability to implement needed reforms. Among the crisis's primary manifestations are chronic food, medication, fuel, and electricity shortages, significant currency devaluation, rising inflation and unemployment, and increased corruption. Lebanon is also witnessing an upsurge in tensions and security incidents, often driven by competition for basic services and commodities. The lack of security at the community level is leading to increased theft and crime, while anger and frustration is increasingly manifesting in incidents between citizens and between communities, rather than towards institutions. This multifaceted crisis is compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, which further impairs Lebanon's health and socio-economic situation.

Given the longstanding dire conditions of Palestinian refugees living in camps and gatherings in Lebanon, the unfolding Lebanese crisis is further amplified and exacerbated when it comes to Palestinian refugees. The urgency of their situation is illustrated in UNRWA's latest socio-economic crisis monitoring report conducted in July 2021. The survey covered a range of key indicators such as poverty, household consumption, food security, debts, migration, employment, and school attendance, among others, some of which have been reproduced below. It is moreover estimated that these alarming metrics have only deteriorated since July 2021.

Poverty: Nearly three quarters of the population live below the poverty line. This is a considerable increase from UNRWA's 2015 study findings.

Household consumption: A considerable stress on households to ensure basic food requirements are met was observed – 45% of household expenditure is going towards ensuring basic foods. This is followed by an average of 11% for health services and medical care, and another 11 % covering expenditures on electricity, fuel, and materials required to maintain homes.

Food security: 58% of families indicated having reduced the number of meals consumed daily during the 7 days preceding the survey, and 56% report having reduced the quantity of food in meals. An alarming 85% of households purchased leftovers from the market and 34% reported seeking assistance or borrowing food from extended family.

Debt and remittances: 47% of families reported having incurred debts within the last 3 months and a total of 28% reported receiving remittances from relatives abroad.

School attendance: School attendance is considered high, with a total of 94% of children aged 6-15 years attending school. About 2% of children in this age group were reported as never having

²¹ <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/lebanon/nurturing-instability-lebanon-s-palestinian-refugee-camps>

attended school and 4% were reported as having been enrolled but having left school at some point.

Employment:

- Female participation in the labor force above the ages of 16 is abysmal at 9%.
- 40% of males above the age of 16 reported having withdrawn from the labor force (neither looking for work nor being employed).
- Only 23% of the employed hold a written contract for either an indefinite or a fixed period, whereas the remainder hold either no contract or are employed based only on a verbal agreement.

Alongside their severe socioeconomic circumstances, the other most urgent issue facing Palestinian refugees is the insecurity of their surroundings. This insecurity can be traced to certain structural deficiencies in policing, namely, the combination of the lack of access of Lebanese security forces to the camps and the shortcomings of Palestinian refugee authorities' efforts at self-policing. To wit: most camps have their own specific policing arrangements dependent on the dominant faction or party, which leads to a broad variation in degree of internal policing, but overall, the Lebanese security forces mostly stay out of the camps.²² Practically speaking, the Lebanese authorities are generally unable to enforce the law within the refugee camps but use checkpoints to control access to the camps and coordinate with Palestinian factions²³ and Popular Committees inside self-policed camps to help maintain law and order. As a result, while official data on camp security incidents and criminality rates are lacking, the Lebanese public commonly perceives camps as “no-law zones”²⁴ associated with high levels of security and criminality risk. This perceived lawlessness is further compounded by the lack of legitimate camp governance structures internally, which inhibits the improvement of residents' socio-economic and living conditions²⁵ and further worsens perceptions of Palestinian refugee communities.

Coupled with the current economic crisis, these structural weaknesses in policing thus have had the net result of heightening security risks in recent years in a way that jeopardizes the security of Palestinians and Lebanese alike and deteriorates relations between the two communities. Prominent among the observable effects of the deteriorating security situation are, first, the increase in organized crime and, second, the rise in armed clashes. On the former, recent reports clearly indicate increases in drug-related crimes,²⁶ theft,²⁷ and illegal migration in the camps.²⁸ On the latter, various sources of violence beset the refugee camp scene. For one thing, radical armed Islamist movements, though geographically confined to certain areas in a few camps, are indeed present in the camps and appear to be on the rise.²⁹ In recent months, moreover, Lebanese media, citing security sources, have

²² <https://www.refworld.org/docid/54622d844.html>

²³ According to the 1969 Cairo Agreement between the Lebanese government and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the refugee camps remain off limits to the Lebanese army and security forces, which coordinate with the Palestinian factions and committees to maintain order and contain criminal activities inside these areas. While the agreement was later annulled by the Lebanese parliament, the *modus vivendi* it put in place with regards to the security situation in the camps has remained applicable, with the notable exception of the army's takeover of the Nahr al-Bared camp in 2007.

²⁴ <https://civilsociety-centre.org/pdf-generate/31635>

²⁵ Journal of Refugee Studies, Volume 23, Issue 2, June 2010, Pages 134–159

²⁶ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2014/8/30/palestinian-refugees-struggle-with-drugs>

²⁷ <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/commissioner-general-statement-two-major-security-incidents-lebanon>

²⁸ https://www.icmpd.org/file/download/55626/file/LB_Trend_Assessment_final_2.pdf

²⁹ <https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/85930>

expressed concerns around youth from Lebanon, including refugees, joining the ranks of terrorist organizations, namely ISIL, in Iraq.³⁰ Another huge issue stems from the political divisions and tensions between various refugee factions, whose competing regional interests play into a broader landscape in which local and international players use the camps as yet another tool in the regional tug-of-war.³¹ This manifests in the form of frequent armed clashes inside the camps and occasional spill-over into other areas. For example, fighting between the armed wings of Fatah and Jund al-Sham erupted in September 2021, resulting in the injury of several people, including two civilians in Saida, as well as damages to four UNRWA schools³² inside the camp. In another recent example, an explosion occurred on December 10, 2021, in the Burj al-Shemali Palestinian camp near Sour and caused several deaths and injuries.³³

In short, Palestinian refugees are surrounded by reasons to despair of ever achieving a safer and more prosperous future in Lebanon or of realizing a return to historic Palestine. From one end, they lack access to basic rights, which ensures their systematic legal and social marginalization in the Lebanese context and effectively forbids them from living dignified lives in the country's refugee camps. From another end, in those same camps, they are constantly subjected to violence and life-threatening events. This leaves little room for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon to pursue a fair and honest living. As a result, a considerable 40% of Palestinians are seriously considering migration³⁴ as a last resort.

III. Why now?

Faced with a crisis that will shape its development pathway for a considerable time to come, Lebanon is at a critical crossing. With rising pressure on all sectors, including a currency shock, political uncertainty, a pandemic that has overstretched the country's health capacities, and continuous security threats, how LPDC and its partners choose to mitigate and manage short-term risks and strategically safeguard the official human security-centered policy of the Government of Lebanon in addressing the plethora of challenges facing Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is of paramount importance.

The current crisis entails political, social, and economic challenges for all denizens of Lebanon, yet, as outlined above, the crisis' impact is amplified for Palestinian and Syrian refugees. Conditions in formal and informal settlements are rapidly deteriorating, hurting refugee communities and presenting risks to wider peace and development in the country. As Palestinian refugees are being squeezed from all sides, with the socio-economic and financial crisis limiting their already restricted access to services and an increase in violent escalations being observed due to camp, country, and regional pressures, the threat of a downward spiral into violence in the camps is high. Failure to adeptly manage the Palestinian file thus has the potential to further disrupt broader Lebanese society beyond the bounds of its Palestinian communities via a range of complications, including security concerns, not to mention the harm that would be wreaked upon refugees themselves.

Against this rapidly evolving national and regional backdrop that amplifies risks, LPDC recognizes the importance of frontloading its efforts in order to prevent the nation's descent into cycles of

³⁰ alhurra.com يستغل الأزمة.. استقطاب شباب لبنان إلى العراق | الحرة "داعش"

³¹ <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/lebanon/nurturing-instability-lebanon-s-palestinian-refugee-camps>

³² <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/commissioner-general-statement-two-major-security-incidents-lebanon>

³³ <https://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/286351-deaths-injuries-in-hamas-arms-blast-in-al-bourj-al-shamali>

³⁴ Socio-economic crisis monitoring report, UNRWA, July 2021

violence and maintain a transformative course of action that addresses the underlying risks and root causes of Palestinian issues in Lebanon. This course of action is grounded in the conviction, backed by global evidence,³⁵ that, while tackling development challenges by introducing sustainable, transformative solutions in times of crisis is challenging and costly, the humanitarian bill accompanying all-out conflict proves far worse.

Having reflected deeply over the past decade in the form of two strategies in 2015 and 2019, and following the formation of the new Lebanese Cabinet and appointment of a new LPDC chairman in late 2021, the LPDC is now focused on aligning its work—including its targets, approaches, and partner engagement model—with the changing context. In drafting its latest strategy, the Committee is well aware of the set of challenges facing the country, including recent parliamentary and upcoming presidential elections, the need to roll out and implement necessary comprehensive reforms³⁶ to unlock international financial and technical assistance to Lebanon, and the social, political, and security implications of Lebanon’s hosting around one million Syrian refugees.³⁷ In light of such challenges, the LPDC, with the support of the Prime Minister, is seeking to seize the reins of the Palestinian file, one of Lebanon’s most complicated issues, now, instead of adopting a “wait-and-see” approach. The LPDC keenly realizes that how it functions and engages in this critical transition period, with all the opportunities the moment presents to advance reforms and address grievances, could simultaneously alter the trajectory of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and affect the stability and prosperity of the Lebanese going forward.

IV. Way forward

Building on LPDC’s existing track record and approach, therefore, this new strategic vision involves re-orienting its same, longstanding work philosophy and ethos to best adapt to currently unfolding realities and looming threats. It confirms the LPDC’s commitment to operating with a comprehensive vision of the Palestinian refugee file, underpinned by the need to address the underlying causes of Palestinian refugees’ grievances in Lebanon and improve their living conditions, ever at the forefront of its mind. The updated strategy outlines how LPDC will continue its engagement along four primary, interdependent, and mutually reinforcing workstreams that go beyond ad hoc and humanitarian aid, but are rather conducive to fostering new policies and legislations, and thus provide more lasting solutions for latent issues. The four workstreams, which address the four domains of politics, rights, governance & basic services, and security, are informed by the realities and risks presented above, cover the needs listed below, and are intertwined in such a way that a failure to advance in one workstream will likely have a knock-on effect on the others. The four workstreams can thus be summarized as follows, with further details to follow in the Strategic Action Plan below:

- 1) **Political:** LPDC is re-activating a political and public dialogue process on Palestinian refugee issues to bring together Lebanese and Palestinian political parties with other categories of the Lebanese and Palestinian societies, namely, professional Orders, Syndicates, and civil society, while also promoting the active participation of women and youth to improve the status quo. Aside from providing a safe and open space to discuss concerns, bridge differences, and promote reconciliation and consensus, this workstream will act as an

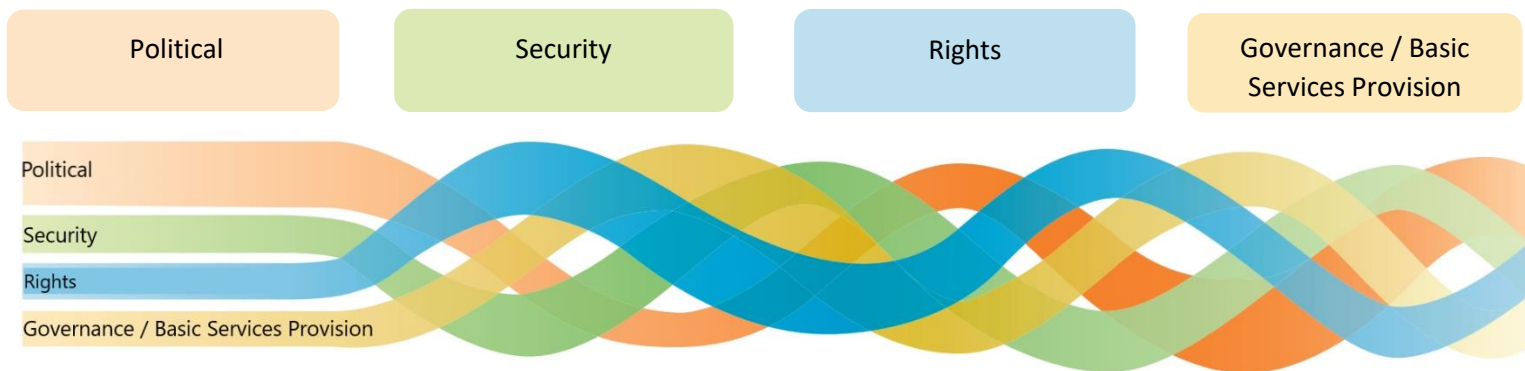
³⁵ | [Pathways for Peace](#)

³⁶ <https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/LBN/faq>

³⁷ 2022 marks the 11th year since the start of the war in Syria and the influx of refugees to neighboring countries such as Lebanon.

instrument to facilitate and accelerate progress on the other three pillars by providing an enabling environment.

- 2) **Rights:** LPDC is working to improve the social, economic, and cultural rights of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon –i.e., their civil rights– as the cornerstone both for Palestinians realizing dignified lives in Lebanon and for providing stability for Lebanese and Palestinians alike. Efforts on this workstream will inform and be informed by progress on the dialogue one.
- 3) **Governance and basic services:** LPDC is helping improve access to and provision of basic services for Palestinian refugees with a longer-term vision of addressing wider camp governance³⁸ challenges. This plan will entail leveraging LPDC’s presence at the center of government³⁹ to re-activate the inter-ministerial committee, accelerate ministerial responsiveness to sharing of information, and take action on the ground. These actions should ultimately mitigate major service disruptions in the camps and introduce standardizations⁴⁰ and regularize touchpoints between Palestinian refugees and government agencies.
- 4) **Security:** LPDC is engaging the Lebanese Security Forces on matters pertaining to the basic needs and security concerns of Palestinian refugees living in camps via a human security approach.⁴¹ This collaboration must be coupled with a wider conversation with the Lebanese and Palestinian authorities on managing Palestinian refugees’ arms in line with the outcomes of Lebanon’s 2006, 2008, and 2014 national dialogues, as well as the forthcoming National Security Strategy of the Lebanese Armed Forces.



In defining and focusing on these four interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars, the LPDC fulfils complementary aims. On the one hand, it acknowledges the interdependency of the four

³⁸ Seeking in particular to rehabilitate and revive Nahr el-Bared Camp as a model of good camp governance

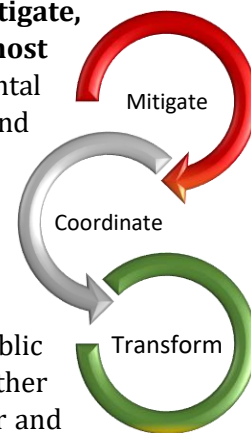
³⁹ Vis-à-vis LPDC’s status of being directly linked to the Prime Minister, with the Chairperson being the Prime Minister’s senior advisor on Palestinian refugee affairs

⁴⁰ Examples could include regularizing access to building materials for camps, electricity and internet connectivity, water and sewage, municipal services, health, and education.

⁴¹ Human security is a holistic concept that encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education, and access to healthcare, and ensures that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his or her own potential. Integrating a human security approach in the context of the Palestinian refugee file security dimension can help identify and address cross-cutting challenges and prevent them from spiraling into conflict. See: Swiss Embassy, <https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/nigeria/en/home/switzerland-and/menschliche-sicherheit.html>

domains of politics, rights, governance, and security, and espouses a balanced, integrated approach to the Palestinian file accordingly so as to circumvent violence and create positive feedback loops.⁴² This balanced approach to the Palestinian question was previously lacking in Lebanese policy-making circles. On the other hand, the distinctions and logical sequence between the four workstreams leaves room for structuring effective action plans that take into account the step-by-step nature of progress (e.g., effective political dialogue may be a prerequisite to increasing refugees' rights) and maintain adaptability amid rapidly shifting local, national, and regional circumstances.

In line with comparable experiences globally, LPDC is re-aligning its strategy to “**mitigate, coordinate, and transform.**” The Committee seeks to **mitigate impacts on the most vulnerable** among the Palestinian refugee population by using its central governmental position to manage unfolding and looming situations and emergencies upstream and downstream.⁴³ Likewise, it wields its proximity to the Prime Minister to inform and **coordinate responses to Palestinian refugee issues** in Lebanon, coordinating between the government, the UN, local and international partners, and others. Going forward, LPDC is looking to scale up its coordinating role with partners both local and international, as it plays a role in collecting and analyzing data⁴⁴ to fill gaps in public, government, and international knowledge about Lebanon’s Palestinians, to inform public policy and humanitarian responses, and to assess and monitor risks that no other institution or organization in the country does. Ultimately, LPDC’s role as coordinator and focal point works to develop a shared understanding among partners of the issues facing Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and so paves the way to more unified and targeted responses. Finally, by planning for each pillar across the short, medium, and long terms, LPDC’s updated strategy aims to **achieve transformational change that will address the structural challenges** that have long curtailed the realization of Palestinian refugees’ social, economic, and cultural rights. Thus, these three elements of LPDC’s role are inter-constitutive.



Principles:

With its role, aims, and foci now clearly defined, and cognizant of the widening trust deficit between state and society in Lebanon, particularly on the part of Palestinian refugees,⁴⁵ LPDC will abide by and advocate for a set of engagement principles that contribute to improving the broken relationship between the government and the people. Across its four workstreams, LPDC will promote, first, **more inclusive participation of Palestinian refugees** in informing and shaping the Committee’s actions. This participation will not be limited to the formal Palestinian refugee representation, in the form of Popular Committees, Factions, and the Palestine Embassy, but will strive to engage other categories of the Palestinian refugee society such as civil society organizations, with special attention paid to the voices of women, youth, and sector⁴⁶ leaders. Second, the LPDC will also work to **become more conflict-sensitive** by assessing the impact of unfolding situations on the communities with which it works in real-time while regularly examining and re-examining the impact of its actions and those of line ministries on the Palestinian refugee community and on wider Lebanese society. Third and finally, LPDC will adhere to and promote a culture of **respect for human rights**⁴⁷ at every

⁴² Pathways for Peace

⁴³ There is a need for the LPDC to play a coordination role—to “run interference” with GoL actors and link up the efforts of the Lebanese government, Palestinian refugee authorities and other Palestinian players, UNRWA and other international agencies, bilateral aid donors, local and international NGOs, and other stakeholders.

⁴⁴ Including data and information produced by LPDC as well as line ministries

⁴⁵ Fueled by a troubled history and a perception of file over-securitization

⁴⁶ Namely orders and syndicates

⁴⁷ [UNSDG | Human Rights-Based Approach](#)

opportunity, both in its own engagements and in those of line ministries. A crucial component of this principle will include safeguarding the storage and utilization of data gathered for the purpose of helping LPDC fulfil its mandate to pursue the best interests of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

Theory of Change

In line with its key aims and principles and building off of its four-pronged work plan, the LPDC posits the following theory of factors that must align to achieve transformational change on the Palestinian file in Lebanon:

IF LPDC facilitates a dialogue and builds consensus between Lebanese, Palestinian, and international stakeholders around issues affecting Palestinian refugees in Lebanon;

AND LPDC helps advance Palestinian refugees' claims to social, economic, and cultural rights;

AND LPDC enables policy and institutional reforms improving Palestinian refugees' access to basic services and needs;

AND LPDC successfully mainstreams the human security approach in the work of the Lebanese Security Forces with Palestinian refugee camps and communities;

THEN LPDC can effectively mitigate the immediate impact of the ongoing crisis in Lebanon on the Palestinian refugee population and transform risks to pathways for long-term, sustainable solutions.

In order for the theory of change to prove true, however, the following conditions must also be met:

- First, targeted institutions and groups must be responsive to calls for dialogue and cooperation;
- Second, LPDC must be able to leverage its access and authority in government when engaging other parts of the government;
- Third, the overall national security situation must be stabilized to an extent necessary to enable the smooth functioning of government administrative processes.

V. Strategic Action Plan:

Having overviewed the sensitive context in which LPDC seeks to fulfil its mandate with the accompanying challenges and bottlenecks, having explained the exigencies of this historic moment, and having framed LPDC's track record of past accomplishments against its credos and its ontological assessment of the conditions necessary to unleash change, the Strategy will now present LPDC's 2022 to 2024 Strategic Action Plan. This plan illustrates the work that will be done across the four pillars of politics, rights, governance & services, and security over the short, medium, and long terms, i.e., in 2022, 2023, and 2024. In sharing its plan, LPDC hopes to find common cause with fellow stakeholders in the Palestinian file, including Lebanese government institutions, Palestinian authorities, donor countries, fellow host countries, UNRWA and other UN agencies, and relevant civil society organizations, and invites them to support or join in the initiatives detailed below.

Pillar 1 (Political):

This pillar addresses the advocacy and lobbying needed to resolve structural challenges to Palestinian affairs in Lebanon. Multilateral dialogue will be the key to LPDC’s political engagement on the domestic and international scenes. Locally, LPDC will address Lebanese concerns and reduce objections to granting fundamental rights to Palestinian refugees. Work with Lebanese political parties, Palestinian factions, and big donors will intensify to achieve the following strategic goals.

<u>2022</u> <u>Short-term</u>	<u>2023</u> <u>Medium-term</u>	<u>2024</u> <u>Long-term</u>
<hr/> <i>Align government policy with inter-ministerial work by coordinating and hosting dialogue between different branches of government</i> <hr/>		
	<hr/> <i>Launch and lead a dialogue between Lebanese and Palestinian political parties to advance the realization of social, economic, and cultural rights for Palestine refugees</i> <hr/>	
	<hr/> <i>Initiate a dialogue process with professional orders and syndicates on frameworks for employing Palestinian refugees</i> <hr/>	
	<hr/> <i>Engage Lebanese and Palestinian civil society organizations in dialogue on how to conduct joint advocacy to increase Palestinians’ rights in Lebanon</i> <hr/>	
	<hr/> <i>Use the AdCom chair mandate to conduct a running dialogue with UN agencies and international donors on support programs, refugee advocacy, and UNRWA reform</i> <hr/>	<hr/> <i>Propose a unified Lebanese public policy for the Palestinian refugee file in Lebanon & organize different ministries’ work under one umbrella</i> <hr/>

Pillar 2 (Rights):

When it comes to improving Palestinian refugee rights in Lebanon, LPDC will mobilize its resources and expertise in international and local laws to work along two pivotal tracks.

First, it will pursue the enactment of individual laws to operationalize improved and inclusive access to socio-economic rights in the form of labor, social security, professional associations, and pre-2001 property ownership for Palestinian refugees. This will be achieved by drafting legal texts establishing reciprocal arrangements on specific terms and submitting proposals of implementation decrees and explanatory circulars. LPDC will facilitate the adoption of these proposals by the concerned ministries, executive and administrative institutions. LPDC will also facilitate the *a priori* examination of proposals by a group of experts and discussions with concerned political stakeholders and civil society prior to submission.

Second, LPDC will lead on creating a broader, comprehensive legislative framework for Palestinian refugees' legal status under Lebanese National Law based on the political consensus of the Lebanese Unified Vision towards the Palestinian Refugees' Affairs in Lebanon. This will be accomplished by submitting a bill, drafted by a group of experts following extensive discussions with Lebanese and Palestinian political stakeholders, to the General Assembly of the Lebanese Parliament.

Ultimately, this workstream aims to wield LPDC's strategic position and its extensive knowledge base to pave the way for advancing strong legislation that will bring about much-needed changes for Palestinian refugees in areas such as labor and property rights. To do so, LPDC will rely on its intimate understanding of existing legislation, its keen knowledge of Palestinian needs based on decades of research and groundwork, and its unique capacity to conduct dialogue to build consensus.

Pillar 2 (Rights) cont.:

2022
Short-term

Engage Orders and Syndicates to allow Palestinian refugees to register

Promote livelihood and employment programs through a market-based needs assessment approach

Support sectoral self-organization of Palestinian labor force

Work with MoM to accelerate Palestinian refugee NGO registrations

2023
Medium-term

2024
Long-term

Propose new legislation that defines the legal status of a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon, including rights to employment, property ownership, and registration of civil society organizations

Pillar 3 (Governance and basic service provision):

This pillar aims to unify government management of the Palestinian file in Lebanon by orienting public policy towards one strategic plan that best serves Lebanese and Palestinian needs. The LPDC will capitalize on the Prime Minister's support and re-activate and strengthen the inter-ministerial committee to align different government institutions' security and political work towards shared goals. Meanwhile, LPDC will prioritize improving governance of and service provision to Palestinian refugees by supporting and coordinating with the GoL and UNRWA on the following projects:

Pillar 3 (Governance and basic service provision) cont.:

2022
Short-term

2023
Medium-term

2024
Long-term

Support UNRWA in resource mobilization efforts to respond to current and looming crises. Increase stability through cash assistance programs and by maintaining adequate service provision via emergency assistance and core programs stabilization.

Resume the provision of services by GoL institutions in Nahr El Bared Camp – electricity, telecom, municipal solid waste

Pilot a coordinated system of service provision by GoL institutions in Nahr El Bared in coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces and relevant ministries: MoIM, MoEW, MoT, MoH, MoPW, as well as UNRWA and the Palestinian refugee community

Propose new legislation that standardizes Palestinian refugee camp governance in Lebanon, including the provision of services such as health, education, WASH, telecom, electricity, and security

Follow up on administrative Nahr El Bared camp construction bottlenecks with responsible Lebanese institutions

Significantly upgrade the Palestinian refugee civil registry by issuing biometric i.d. cards

Standardize and operationalize procedures among line ministries to share data and information and coordinate between them on Palestinian refugee affairs

Pillar 4 (Security):

This pillar addresses the security dimension of the Palestinian file and ways to resolve some of the most challenging aspects of this file in support of humanitarian and political ends. This workstream will continue to examine the current policy challenges and operate with the below aims:

2022
Short-term

Strategic Engagement: *engage with security actors to include Palestinian security issues (both inside and outside the camps) as a key component of the national defense strategy.*

2023
Medium-term

Law Enforcement: *engage Lebanese security forces on matters related to organized crime in camps, including drugs manufacturing and trade, irregular migration and human trafficking, and extremism, with an emphasis on mainstreaming a human security approach to the security forces' work in the camps.*

2024
Long-term

Arms Management: *Initiate dialogue with Lebanese political leadership and Lebanese Security Forces and Palestinian Authorities around camp arms management and explore possible pathways to pursue resolution of arms issues in line with the outcomes of the National Dialogues of 2006, 2008, and 2014.*

VI. Conclusion

Following on the heels of LPDC's years of experience and completion of a thorough internal review, and in light of the urgency of and of avoiding domestic risk scenarios, this strategy makes the argument for the Government of Lebanon's imminently aligning its Palestine refugee policy under the authority of its designated organ and expert body in Palestinian affairs in Lebanon, the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee. Inspired by its mission, to which its work of 17 years attests, the LPDC strives to improve Lebanese-Palestinian relations, serve Lebanon's national interests, and uphold the human rights of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Over the course of 2022 to 2024, the Committee is moving beyond its legacy of past humanitarian and political accomplishments and setting its sights on a still bigger and bolder agenda. The context in which it is doing so could not be more challenging: Lebanon is undergoing a devastating financial and economic crisis whose impacts are only amplified for refugees, national security for Lebanese and refugees alike is deteriorating alongside it, and regional transformation are rapidly intensifying. Yet amid this chaotic context, the Committee sees a unique opportunity for the Lebanese Government to turn a moment of vulnerability into a moment of strength by building political consensus, championing human rights, remodeling governance and basic service delivery, and ensuring security for all denizens even in a time of great uncertainty. Towards this aim, and relying on its considerable research and experience on the ground, LPDC's new and updated strategy elaborates what specific actions and processes must take place to make tangible progress on the four pillars of politics, rights, governance, and security. It is the Committee's hope that, by reading LPDC's updated National Strategy in this critical moment of growing Lebanese and Palestinian need and escalating regional dynamics, current and prospective partners both domestic and international will emerge even more eager to ramp up collaborations in the name of improving both peoples' wellbeing.