



PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IN THE INTERNAL CONFLICTS OF MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES AND THE RELIGIOUS FACTOR

Maia Kapanadze

Doctor of Historical Sciences.

Associate Professor of the Faculty of Social and Humanitarian Sciences,
Caucasus International University
Head of the Scientific Analytical Center for Georgia and Iran.

Kamran Mamedov

Doctoral Educational Program in Political Science
Caucasus International University

***Corresponding Author: Kamran Mamedov**

Abstract. The problem of Palestine and Palestinian refugees has long been one of the most important challenges for the Middle East region. As a result of the wars between the Israeli-Arab countries, many Palestinians had to leave their homeland and become equal. This process began intensively in the 1940s and continues to this day. Palestinian refugees moved to various neighboring countries and settled there “temporarily” in the hope of returning to their homeland. Some Arab countries refused to accept Palestinian refugees and still refuse. This has certain religious, political and economic reasons. A number of neighboring countries have accepted and sheltered Palestinian refugees since the time of the first Israeli-Arab war. These countries are; Jordan, Lebanon, etc. Many Palestinians have been living in shelters for decades. Most of them do not have citizenship of the country where they have been living for years. Accordingly, they do not have a permanent job. As soon as the conflict between Israel and Palestine resumes, a new flow of Palestinian refugees immediately appears and problems arise in this regard again, this problem has become relevant again in recent years.

The role of Palestinian refugees in the internal conflicts of the countries of the region has become one of the challenges for some countries in the Middle East. Palestinians often provoke internal conflicts in the countries that have taken refuge, which is why many countries have refused to accept them. In recent years, the problem of Palestinian refugees has become more active - they still seek asylum in various countries, but many neighboring

countries, for certain reasons, refrain from accepting them. Due to their large number, Palestinian refugees remain a problem in the internal conflicts of the Middle East region today.

Those Palestinian refugees who have found refuge in a number of countries in the region, as we have already mentioned, have often become the cause of internal conflicts in these countries. For example: Lebanon, Jordan... This circumstance somewhat hinders the provision of shelter to the Palestinian refugee population by neighboring states. In October 2023, renewed military operations between Hamas and Israel turned many Palestinians from the Gaza Strip into refugees again.

Keywords: Palestine, refugees, region, East, problems.

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Research objective: To determine the role of Palestinian refugees in the internal conflicts of some countries in the Middle East region and to scientifically analyze it.

Research methods: Qualitative research methods:

- Historical descriptive;
- Content analysis;
- Interdisciplinary method.

Research methodology:

Richard Cohen's Cooperative Security Theory:

Securitization Theory:

Political Realism Theory.

Scientific news: Research on the problem of Palestinian refugees is important, because this issue has been quite clearly identified since the late 1940s. The problem is still relevant today. The recent conflict between Israel and Hamas has brought this problem to the forefront again. In addition, the Palestinian refugees have created a number of conflicts in the countries of the region that have sheltered them.

The problem of Palestinian refugees may again become a serious challenge for this region and become one of the factors contributing to the deepening of the existing conflicts here.

Introduction: One of the negative consequences of the long-standing conflict between Israel and Palestine is the Palestinian refugees, who are periodically forced to leave Palestine and move to various neighboring countries, legally or illegally. The neighboring countries that have received Palestinian refugees have often found themselves in difficult internal political situations. Some of these countries have developed internal conflicts, the cause of which was also the Palestinian refugees. These countries have had to make great efforts to maintain a stable political situation and to avoid the challenge posed by the Palestinian refugees.

Discussion: The Balfour Declaration, created by Great Britain in 1917, became the real legal basis for the repatriation of Jews to Palestine. With this declaration, the British government supported the implementation of the goals of the Zionists. It expressed the goodwill of the British government in support of the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine. It did not specify the exact area where the Jews were to be settled. The Jews accepted this declaration. The Arabs did not, however, because they believed that Balfour had given the land to those who did not belong to it. In 1922, the declaration was ratified by the League of Nations as part of a document, according to which the mandate for Palestine was transferred to Great Britain. Thus, this declaration became an international obligation. According to the terms of the mandate, Britain was to facilitate the immigration of Jews to Palestine. Already in the 1930s, clashes between Arabs and Jews became more frequent in the territory of Mandatory Palestine, which had both socio-political and cultural reasons.¹

The British government and the Mandate administration tried to dampen the discontent caused by the Balfour Declaration. This is evidenced by the document issued in 1922 at the initiative of Winston Churchill, the so-called "White Paper", according to which the Balfour Declaration of 1917 did not envisage the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. In addition, Zionist organizations would not participate in the administration of the Mandate Palestine territory, and all ethnic groups and religious confessions would be included in the future Palestinian parliament. This did not defuse the situation. The Arabs boycotted the elections scheduled by the Mandate administration. The struggle of the Palestinian Arabs against the Jewish enclave began. The conflict continued afterwards and remains an unresolved problem in relations between the two peoples to this day.²

In April 1936, the Arab Revolt began, which lasted about three years. In November of the same year, Lord Peel, together with members of a special commission of the British Parliament, arrived in Palestine and studied the current situation on the ground. This commission adopted a resolution that two independent states should be created in Palestine - Arab and Jewish (another White Paper), which was considered a rather progressive model for resolving the conflict.³

It also outlined the borders of the future state of Israel, which would cover a small area. The larger territory of Mandate Palestine was to remain with the Arabs. Britain retained a portion of the "mandate territory" as an enclave. The decision of the Peel Commission was unacceptable to either the Jews or the Arabs.⁴

In May 1939, Britain, which planned to create an independent Palestinian state within the next ten years, made significant changes to the White Paper in consultation with the Arab states of the Middle East. This policy of Great Britain was aimed at preventing another sharp

¹ Shlaim Avi. *The Iron Wall: Israel and Arab World* (New York, London: W.W. Norton and Co., 2000, p, 598.

² ECF, British White Paper of 1922 on Palestine (Churchill White Paper) <https://ecf.org.il/issue/s/issue/248>

³ Gachechiladze, R. *The Political Geography of the Middle East* Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University.

2018 <https://digitallibrary.tsu.ge/book/2019/feb/reader/Gachechiladze-New-Eastern-Political-Geography.pdf>

⁴ UNGA Resolution №3379 (1975)

<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/000/92/IMG/NR000092.pdf?OpenElement>

explosion of discontent among the Palestinian Arabs. The London Plan partially met the demands of the Palestinian Arabs, as a result of which their uprising slowed down. However, the problem still remained. This White Paper caused outrage among the Jews.⁵

In February 1947, Britain officially acknowledged that the Palestine Mandate and its obligations had become practically impossible to fulfill. Maintaining the mandate would only cause problems for Great Britain, so the Labour government decided to transfer the mandate to the United Nations. On May 15 of the same year, a UN Special Commission was established with representatives of 11 countries to resolve the Palestine question.⁶

On August 31, 1947, the commission submitted recommendations to the United Nations on the future of Palestine. The commission proposed two options for the organization of Palestine: the "Majority Plan", according to which Palestine was to be divided into two independent states - Arab (60% of the land) and Jewish (40% of the land). Jerusalem was to be placed under UN administration. The UN's "Minority Plan" envisaged the creation of a single federal state consisting of Arab and Jewish states, with Jerusalem as its capital. The city would be ruled by the majority of the population - Muslim Arabs.⁷

On November 29, 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 (II), which recommended the partition of Palestine into two independent states and the granting of Jerusalem the status of a separate city under international control. According to the UN decision, the Jewish state was to retain 56.47% of the territory of Mandatory Palestine (excluding Jerusalem). The Jews, despite the fact that the Zionist leaders aimed to control the entire territory of Palestine, for certain reasons accepted this compromise plan of partition. The Arabs, however, did not strictly accept the plan of partition of Palestine. The idea of creating a Jewish state "on their territory" was incomprehensible and unjust to them, so they declared that there should be no Jewish state "on their lands". It was clear that reaching a compromise agreement between the Arabs and the Jews was practically impossible. Accordingly, both sides were arming, creating and training militaries. From the beginning of 1948, clashes between the Jews and the Arabs resumed. The situation quickly escalated, since no specific mechanisms for the division of Palestine had been developed. On May 14, the Jews declared an independent state - Israel. On May 15, the Arab League (Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan and Iraq) began military operations against Israel (the First Arab-Israeli War).⁸

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has become one of the most complex problems in international relations since its inception. The term "Palestine crisis" refers primarily to the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Arab countries, which began with the confrontation between Arabs and Jews in Palestine in the 19th century. The reason for its emergence is associated with the

⁵ Felton John. *The Contemporary Middle East: a Documentary History*. New York: SQ Press, 2008. p, 24-25.

⁶ Yale Law School British White Paper of 1939 https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/brwh1939.asp

⁷ Khalidi Rashid. *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. p, 111-112.

⁸ Palestine question/Establishment of UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP)-Gafirst scial session Resolution 106 (S-1). Special Committee on Palestine <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-183472/>

Zionist movement and the Balfour Declaration. The first Palestinian crisis began with the colonial policy of Great Britain and its establishment of a mandate regime in the region.⁹

As a result of the First Arab-Israeli War (1948-1949), approximately 78,000 Palestinian Arabs (according to other sources, 900,000) had to leave their homeland. More than half of them were taken in by Jordan, while the rest fled to Lebanon and Syria in search of refuge. Their migration had a great impact on the economy, agriculture, and industry in other countries. Against the backdrop of the conflicts, internal economic ties within the country were also disrupted. For example, after the closure of the Palestinian ports of Jaffa and Haifa, Jordan began to use the port of Beirut and the Gulf of Aqaba. The situation also became more difficult in those countries that had received Palestinian refugees. The situation in the Palestinian refugee camps was dire.¹⁰

On June 5, 1967, a new war between Arab countries and Israel broke out in the Middle East, which went down in history as the "Six-Day War". It ended with Israel's victory over Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. As in the first war, the lack of unity of the Arab countries supporting Palestine seriously weakened it.¹¹

The war, which lasted six days, significantly changed the geopolitical balance in the Middle East. Israel expanded its territory as a result of its victories over Arab countries.¹²

Added to this was the exodus of thousands of Palestinians from their homeland and their indefinite displacement. The grueling 1969-1971 and 1973 Yom Kippur wars also resulted in a new wave of Palestinian Arab refugees fleeing their homes and seeking refuge in neighboring Arab countries. It is worth noting that the Palestinian refugees living in the eight refugee camps in the Gaza Strip were in a difficult situation, with high population density, unemployment, and poverty. We cannot ignore the fact that Palestinian refugees and their organizations often came into conflict with the Arab authorities and local populations that had rejected them.¹³

As already mentioned, Jordan is a large country, which receives a large number of Palestinian refugees. It should also be emphasized that the issue of temporary resettlement of Palestinian Arab refugees and their eventual return to their homeland remains an acute and unresolved problem.

It has already been noted above that. The official declaration of the creation of the State of Israel (May 14, 1948) had a sharp response from the Arab countries: Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq... Accordingly, hostilities began between the Arab countries and Israel, which resulted in the forced displacement of Palestinians to various countries. As a result of these

⁹ The national WWII Museum, The Holocaust <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/holocaust>

¹⁰ Khalidi, Rashid. *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p,124-128.

¹¹ Kamrava, Mehran. *The Modern Middle East: A Political History since the First World War*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2005. P. 129

¹² Felton, John. *The Contemporary Middle East: a Documentary History*. New York: SQ Press, 2008, P. 23

¹³ United Nations, An International Law analysis of the major United Nations Resolutions Concerning the Palestine question <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-196128/>

conflicts, Jordan received hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees, who now constitute the majority of the Jordanian population.¹⁴

After the 1949 armistice, Palestinian refugees fled to the Gaza Strip under Egyptian control or the West Bank and East Jerusalem annexed by Transjordan (Jordan),¹⁵ as well as to Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. The United Nations established UNRWA in 1949 as a relief and human development agency tasked with providing humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees.¹⁶

As mentioned earlier, Jordan hosts the largest number of Palestinian refugees. The Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan are jointly managed by the Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA) and UNRWA. Refugees living in these camps have only the right to use, not ownership. UNRWA continues to provide its basic services, such as education, health care and assistance, to all registered Palestine refugees, regardless of their place of residence.¹⁷

According to the UN 2023 data, the total number of international migrants in Jordan is 33.1% of the country's total population. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the country hosts refugees and asylum seekers from: Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan and the Middle East. Most importantly, Jordan hosts more than 2 million Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA. Approximately 18% of the registered Palestine refugees in the country live in ten officially recognized Palestine refugee camps. In addition to the ten official camps, there are also unofficial refugee camps.

Refugees also live near camps. The official camps are: New Amman (1955), Baqa (1968), Husn (1968), Irbid (1951), Jabal el-Hussein (1952), Jerash (1968), Marka (1968), Souf (1967), Talbieh (1968), and Zarqa (1949). Unlike other Arab countries, Jordan granted full citizenship to all Palestinians who fled Palestine after the First Arab-Israeli War of 1948, as well as to those who arrived from the West Bank after the Six-Day War of 1967. Citizens of Palestinian origin now constitute a large part of Jordan's population and enjoy the same rights and obligations as Jordanians of East Bank origin. They also retain refugee status and, therefore, the right to return to Palestine.¹⁸

Since the second half of the 1960s, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has become a significant military and political force in Jordan. The settlement of tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees in Jordan as a result of the 1948-1949 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars created favorable conditions for the PLO to operate as the center of the Palestinian national liberation movement. This organization established its headquarters in Jordan, which, through various

¹⁴ Palestine question/Establishment of UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP)-Gafirst special session Resolution 106 (S-1). Special Committee on Palestine <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-183472/>

¹⁵ Palestine question/Establishment of UN Special Committee on Palestine(UNSCOP)-Gafirst special session Resolution 106 (S-1). Special Committee on Palestine <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-183472/>

¹⁶ United Nations, An International Law analysis of the major United Nations Resolutions Concerning the Palestine question <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-196128/>

¹⁷ United Nations, An International Law analysis of the major United Nations Resolutions Concerning the Palestine question <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-196128/>

¹⁸ Mark Tessler "A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" (Indiana Series in Arab and Islamic Studies) Publisher-Indiana serie-Middle eats studies. Paperback – March 24, 2009. pp.273-336

armed groups, carried out operations against Israel from Jordanian territory, thereby intensifying elements of military arbitrariness within Jordan. PLO groups gradually began to establish political and military autonomy in Jordanian territory. They controlled refugee camps, conducted armed training, organized public marches in the Jordanian capital, Amman, and created a “state within a state.”

The actions of the Palestine Liberation Organization increasingly conflicted with the political position of the Jordanian royal court. The conflict between the Jordanian government and the PLO reached its peak in September 1970, when King Hussein mobilized the armed forces and launched a large-scale operation against Palestinian armed groups. This conflict went down in history as "Black September". The fighting was especially fierce in Amman and the Jordan Valley, where the PLO had a strong influence. The confrontation between thousands of armed people ended with heavy casualties and the country suffered a serious disruption of internal stability. After "Black September", by 1971, the PLO was forced to leave Jordan. The organization moved its headquarters from Jordan to Lebanon. The expulsion of the PLO from Jordan had a profound impact on both the Palestinian national movement and the political unity of the Arab world. Some PLO groups, including "Black September", which later became known for its terrorist acts (for example, during the 1972 Munich Olympics), became even more radical. The PLO's actions clearly demonstrated that the Palestinian problem was not only a confrontation with Israel, but also posed a serious threat to regional stability in the Middle East. It should also be noted that one of the factors contributing to Jordan's acceptance of Palestinian refugees was the fact that Palestinian Arabs and the overwhelming majority of Jordan's population are Sunni Muslims.

Now we will talk about Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and their involvement in the civil war in that country. We note that Lebanon is a multi-confessional country. The main religious groups living in Lebanon are: Christians (mostly Maronites), Sunni Muslims, Shiite Muslims, Druze, and others. Due to the diverse religious composition, in 1943 the so-called National Pact was adopted in Lebanon,

Which is considered an unwritten agreement. This pact regulated the distribution of political power between different religious groups and laid the foundation for the country's modern system of governance. According to this pact, the President of Lebanon should be a Christian Maronite, the Prime Minister - a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of Parliament - a Shiite Muslim, etc. This model still plays an important role in the political structure of Lebanon today.¹⁹

This system of governance is based on the confessional ratio of the Lebanese population, which is why any change in the number of confessional groups is perceived as a threat to disrupt the already distributed balance of power in the country. That is why the Lebanese government was negative about accepting large flows of Palestinian refugees. Their acceptance reinforced the fear of disrupting the religious balance of the population.

¹⁹ Felton John. *The Contemporary Middle East: a Documentary History*. New York: SQ Press, 2008. p, 54.

Lebanon's stability and security were negatively affected by the influx of thousands of Palestinian refugees (Sunni Muslims) into the country in the 1970s. Some of them joined armed groups (for example, the Palestine Liberation Organization), which became one of the factors that led to the start of the bloody Lebanese civil war. This experience increased skepticism and fear of Palestinian refugees in Lebanese society. All this was compounded by Lebanon's economic problems and poor infrastructure. The country did not have the resources to provide social services, health care, or education for the thousands of refugees. There was also a fear that the refugee camps could become bases for armed groups, which would pose an additional threat to Lebanon's national security.²⁰

Thus, Lebanon avoided accepting refugees en masse in order to protect its internal stability, religious balance, and national security.

In 1969, the Cairo Agreement was signed in Cairo between Yasser Arafat and the commander of the Lebanese army, Emir Bustan, which defined the authority of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Lebanon. The Palestinians received as their zone of responsibility a strip in the south of the country, along the Israeli border, and the right to wage armed struggle against Israel from Lebanese territory. After the events of "Black September" (1970 in Jordan), the headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organization was located in Lebanon. Palestinian attacks provoked retaliatory strikes from Israel, which was perceived negatively by the Lebanese. The first Israeli attack on Lebanon in 1978 was remembered by the Israeli military as revenge for the defeat of Palestinian fighters. The civil war in Lebanon (1975-1990) gave Israel the opportunity to strike at Palestinian organizations operating in Lebanese territory, as a result of which the Lebanese Christian Maronites became Israeli protectorates. In June 1979, the Israeli army left southern Lebanon, where the Lebanese militia under the command of Saad Haddad was deployed.²¹

On September 14, 1982, the newly elected President of Lebanon, Bashir Gemayel, was assassinated. It seems that the Syrian special services were behind the assassination. The "Phalaingists" believed that this was the merit of the Palestinians and were preparing for revenge. On September 16-17, the Christian "Phalaingists" organized a massacre in the Sabra and Shatila camps, which ended with the deaths of 700 to 35,000 Palestinians. These events caused a great resonance throughout the world and in Israel. Israel claimed that its army did not take part in this massacre, that it was committed by the Christian "Phalaingists". The Palestinians claimed that Israeli soldiers were among the attackers.²²

As a result of this Israeli military operation, 6 cities, more than 30 villages, and 17 Palestinian refugee camps were destroyed in Lebanon. The ongoing civil war in Lebanon lasted for about

²⁰ Mark Tessler "A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" (Indiana Series in Arab and Islamic Studies) Publisher-Indiana serie-Middle east studies. Paperback – March 24, 2009. pp.275-334

²¹ Cleveland, William L. A History of the Modern Middle East 3rd ed. Boulder: Westview Press, 2004, 2009., P.114-117

²² The Jerusalem Post, Frantzman, Seth J. „Inside Israel's "reverse periphery" strategy- analysis <https://jpost.com/middle-east/inside-israels-reverse-periphery-strategy-analysis-688066>

15 years. In 1989, a peace process began with the mediation of Arab countries, as a result of which the opposing sides signed the "Taifa Agreement".²³

Israel achieved its goal - the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) left Beirut and also practically destroyed its infrastructure in Lebanon. However, this did not stop the military resistance to Israel from the Lebanese side. The baton of the anti-Israel struggle passed into the hands of the Lebanese Shiites, who united in 1982 and became a significant force of the regional resistance in the form of "Hezbollah".²⁴

Palestinian refugees and related challenges have become relevant again in recent years for the countries of the Middle East region. October 7, 2023 is considered the date of the resumption of the military confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians. It was on this day that Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and other Palestinian militant groups launched a large-scale attack on Israel from the Gaza Strip.²⁵

The attacks targeted both civilian and military infrastructure, killing more than 1,200 people and taking more than 240 hostages. This significantly escalated the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

Following the attack on 7 October 2023, the Israel Defense Forces began airstrikes in the Gaza Strip, which quickly escalated into ground operations. The operation was intended to destroy the military infrastructure of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, but the conflict escalated into a full-scale war.²⁶

In 2024, the Israel Defense Forces continued military operations in southern and central Gaza. They also launched an offensive in northern Gaza, particularly around the Jabalia refugee camp, to eliminate Hamas militants. This resulted in the deaths of a Palestinian refugee under the age of 13. As of January 2025, thousands of Palestinians in Gaza had become refugees and many Palestinians had lost their lives.²⁷ According to Israeli military sources, many of them were Hamas fighters. Israel often claims that its actions were necessary. This military operation resulted in the elimination of senior Hamas officials, including leader Yahya Sinwar, military commander Mohammad Deif, and his deputy Marwan Issa. According to the United States, Hamas has almost completely replaced the fighters it lost, which is associated with the mass radicalization of Gazans as a result of the war.

The renewed Israeli-Palestinian war in 2023 led to a massive displacement of Palestinians. They sought refuge in neighboring countries during the war. It should be noted that these countries; Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and others, due to security, political and demographic fears, refuse to accept them.

²³ Abu-Amr, Ziad. „Report from Palestine”, Journal of Palestine Study XXIV, No.2 (Winter 1995). p. 40-47.

²⁴ Palestine question/Establishment of UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP)-Gafirst special session Resolution 106 (S-1). Special Committee on Palestine <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-183472/>

²⁵ Israeli-Palestinian Conflict <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/israeli-palestinian-conflict>

²⁶ United Nations, An International Law analysis of the major United Nations Resolutions Concerning the Palestine question <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-196128/>

²⁷ United Nations, The Question of Palestine. <https://www.un.org/unispal/history/>

Conclusion. The Israeli-Palestinian conflicts have given rise to a growing number of Palestinian refugees. Palestinians left their homeland in the hope that they would return to their homeland. Hope remained hope. The reality turned out to be completely different. The Kingdom of Jordan received the largest number of Palestinian refugees. This country even granted citizenship to a large part of them and allowed them to work legally. The massive influx of Palestinian refugees caused problems in Jordan. There were clashes between the local population and the refugees. Nevertheless, Jordan welcomed them every time. Palestinian refugees also found refuge in Lebanon. Unlike Jordan, they were not welcomed in large numbers in Lebanon. The reason for this is to maintain the balance of the ethno-confessional composition of Lebanon. As in Jordan, Palestinian refugees have created conflict situations in Lebanon. A clear example of this is that Palestinian refugees were one of the reasons for the start of the Lebanese civil war. The problem of Palestinian refugees has recently become more active as a result of the conflict between Hamas and Israel.

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