

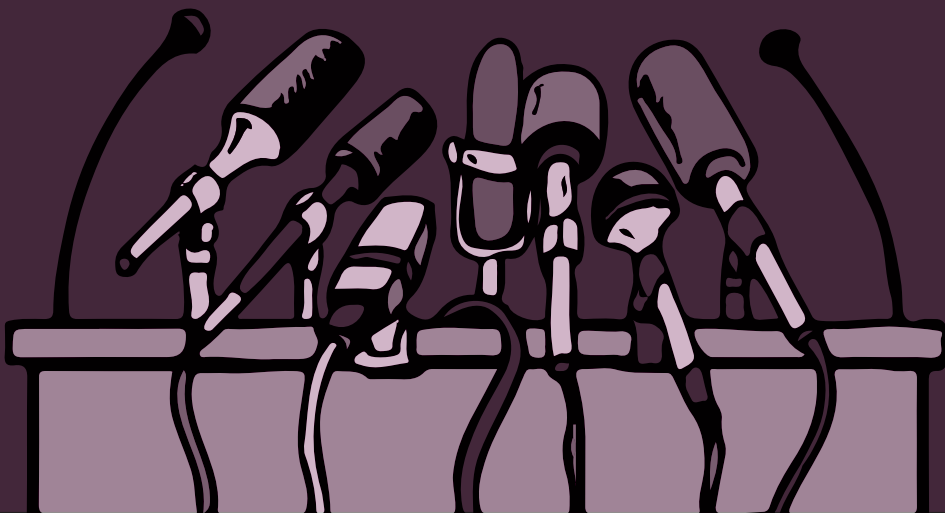


# NEGATIVE

**ABAAD**

Resource Center for Gender Equality  
November 2016

**Thaer Ghandour, Nader Fawz and Ernest Khoury**





# **Negative: Refugee Women from Syria in the Lebanese Media 2016 - 2015**

A mapping of the broadcast and print  
media coverage of refugee women's  
issues from the lens of UNSCR 1325

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# Forward

Article 1 of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees reads: "[...] the term 'refugee' shall apply to any person who: [...] owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country ... or to return to it."

On the other hand, a displaced person is any person who is forced to leave his place of residence and move to another location within his country owing to fear of being persecuted for economic, political, social, religious or ethnic reasons. However, Lebanese media still call the Syrians who fled to Lebanon as displaced persons for a political rather than technical reason.

The war in Syria continues to overshadow millions of Syrians living in danger and fear. International organizations have registered over 250,000 deaths due to ongoing battles for five years. Human Rights Watch says more than 7.6 million Syrians have been displaced internally, while the United Nations High Commission for Refugees' (UNHCR) figures put the number of Syrian refugees in the neighbouring countries at over 4.79 million.

According to the UNHCR, Lebanon, as of November 2016, had 1,017,433 Syri-

an refugees, in addition to tens of thousands of others registered neither with the UNHCR nor with official Lebanese bodies. The highest number of registered refugees amounted to 1.196 million in April 2015 (UNHCR). This leaves the door open to a Syrian tragedy in various Lebanese areas and at different levels.

While the Lebanese authorities are supposed to address this issue and meet refugees' needs in accordance with international laws and norms, the way they deal with refugees is still full of so many fallacies and faults that have almost become the norm where the official policy has neglected a general humanitarian and social disaster. Women's issues and rights in Lebanon are still, basically, neglected and denied because an integrated system of factors (religious, political, media and social) controls the country. Moreover, monitoring Syrian refugee women's situation proves this fact and the previous ideas prevailing in Lebanese society.

The approach adopted by the public and official policy is almost the same as that of the media. Seeking to monitor how the media deal with refugees in general and refugee women in particular, this paper presents an analysis of the materials produced by three major local newspapers and three major local TV channels from early June 2015 to late June 2016 (13 months).

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/ar/world-report/2016> last accessed on 24th of November, 2016

<sup>2</sup> <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122> last accessed on the 5th of November 2016

# Terms

**Article:** An article reflects its writer's point of view in particular and can often reflect the view of the newspaper too.

**Reportage:** A press material that deals with a specific subject where the writer raises a problem and addresses it from various sides.

**Interview:** A conversation a journalist conducts with someone in order to clarify their position or have access to official information.

**Story:** One of the easiest press materials to read that quickly presents a topic and answers five basic questions: who, what, when, where and how without going into details or addressing any problem. A Story source is usually a statement quoted by a news agency.

**Report:** An extended story, which builds on the same five questions. After answering them, the writer explains some aspects of the story, using quotations, statements or even past events in order to narrate and enrich the story. As such, a report describes a story and adds some details the author has chosen to present to the readers who have not been present at the scene.

**Statistics:** A study based on gathering opinions and numbers on a given topic to explore different orientations that can be experienced in a particular setting.

**Headline:** The main material that tops the press content of any newspaper and through which the policy, priorities and editorial line of the institution can be learned. The headline represents the main theme where the editorial board gathers all relevant information and tries to get a scoop to attract readers and present the newspaper in the most proper way.

**Source:** A natural or legal entity that has information to provide to a journalist or his or her media institution. A source can be of various sectors (political, security or economic).

**Agencies:** They provide a set of news emanating from different bodies. An agency edits news and then media institutions use it and publish it as is or its journalists add some information to inform the subject.

**Statement:** A media announcement or material issued by a natural or legal entity and circulated to news agencies or media organizations for publication.

# Executive summary

The study covers all materials published in three Lebanese newspapers (Assafir, AL-Nahar and Al-Akhbar), which amount to 731 articles over 13 months. The articles on refugees in Lebanon, totaling 504 press materials or 69% of the materials published during the said period, have been analyzed. The study also addresses news reports in broadcast journalism which amounted to 142 spread among the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) (50 reports or 35%), MTV (50 or 35%) and Al Jadeed Channel (42 or 30%). The study shows that 93% of these reports dealt with the situation or problems of refugees in Lebanon, while the rest focused on refugees in Jordan, Europe or within Syria itself. Therefore, only 132 reports on refugees in Lebanon have been analyzed: LBC (48, 36%), MTV (48, 36%) and Al Jadeed TV Channel (36, 27%).

The study is based on a Qualitative Content Analysis methodology where a sample of articles and reports in leading Lebanese newspapers and TV channels was analyzed to determine how refugees in general and refugee women, in particular, were depicted in Lebanese media. Accordingly, the study only deals with the articles tackling refugees' condition in Lebanon where it analyzes both the text of the article and the images attached to it. In the context of the analysis, several pillars have been chosen to determine the frequency and quantity of coverage in both print and broadcast media.

Judging from the key findings of this media survey, the way the press dealt with the crisis of refugees in general and of refugee women in particular was not much differ-

ent from the political reality. Syrian women were excluded in general with only 3% of all materials published in the three newspapers and 20% of TV reports covering them. Even this low coverage was mainly triggered after the disruption of a human trafficking network in the city of Jounieh in April 2016.

The gender analysis of media materials shows that the number of the materials directly covering women issues in the Lebanese print journalism talking about Syrian refugees was only 14 out of 504 (or 3%). Concerning the three TV channels, this number was 26 out of 132 broadcast reports (26%). In terms of content, these reports and articles, in general, depicted women as victims of domestic or community violence, trafficking or patriarchal mentality, and portrayed them as playing a traditional caring gender role (TV). These articles did not investigate the fate of the women victims covered in the media and did not seek to produce follow-up reports thereof. Moreover, stereotypical phrases were used in most cases, reflecting a lack of knowledge of the right terminology in such cases.

From a perspective of the Security Council Resolution 1325, the study shows that the media, as a whole, have followed the media system of the political power that sought to demonize the Syrian refugees and treat them in a generalized manner, causing the marginalization of women's issues and a failure to address them effectively. Women's participation in peace-making in Syria is perhaps very weak, especially since the peace process itself is facing a critical deadlock. However, there was a significant failure in covering wom-

en's roles in community peacemaking. The question remains: What is the role of women in preventing refugees from turning into mobile crises in Lebanon, especially given the high pressure on the refugee community at various levels including political, legal, economic, housing, educational and employment conditions as well as racist and discriminatory practices?

The conclusion of the study that covers six of the most prominent Lebanese broadcast and print media outlets is that Syrian refugee women, at best, were no more than victims without any political, social or economic roles. They are part neither of the decision-making processes in the peace negotiations in Syria nor even in the management of their own life. There is no research on their potential access to the regular refugee services despite the repeated complaints about the relief aid. Perhaps, the only positive point is that refugee women, unlike refugee men, were not depicted as a source of violence and terrorism. However, refugee women, like other refugees, were subjected to generalization and gender stereotyping and burdened with political responsibilities.

Strikingly enough, the issue of gender-based violence (GBV) was absent from media coverage, as was the debate on the best government policy or initiatives to prevent GBV during the conflict, within the refugee community in general or the GBV against women in the host communities. In conclusion, conflicts and wars are still a male arena, and the media coverage of their spillovers is just a tool governments and norm setters use for incitement or mobilization, with no political will to oper-

ationalize Resolution 1325 or other resolutions made in relation to women during and after conflicts.

The study concludes with a set of recommendations, mainly:

1. Create a media platform specialized in producing materials on refugees' situations including their relationship with the host communities and the Lebanese authority. The platform should include an electronic observatory to monitor how the Lebanese media, social media and websites deal with women's issues with a view to raising the public awareness and creating social pressure on media organizations to deal more seriously and sensitively with women's issues.
2. Work with various media outlets, in coordination with the competent authorities, to raise their awareness of Resolution 1325 and its significance, and engage them in making press and media products reflect its provisions.
3. Work with a number of veteran journalists to train young journalists how to possess the necessary skills, sensitivity and ability to deal with women's issues and to move from simple story coverage to investigative reporting of women's economic, legal and social issues.
4. Train women with leadership roles in refugee communities in dealing with the media and turning their stories into publishable materials in print and broadcast media.
5. Seek to create a social media network speaking for refugees.

# Scope and methodology

This study is based on a Qualitative Content Analysis methodology. A sample of articles and reports in leading newspapers and TV channels were analyzed to determine how refugees in general and refugee women, in particular, were depicted in the Lebanese media. The study selected Assafir, An-Nahar and Al-Akhabar newspapers, being the oldest, the most expressive of the prevailing political and social atmosphere, and the most read by, and influential on, Lebanese readership. Furthermore, the study chose the three local TV channels of LBC, Al Jadeed and MTV because they had the highest viewership along with the diverse audience. The 13 months period (from June 1, 2015, to June 30, 2016) was selected because the World Refugee Day falls in June of every year.

The study analysed the content and photos of articles exclusively tackling the refugee affairs in Lebanon. In the context of the analysis, several pillars have been chosen to determine the frequency and quantity of coverage in both print and broadcast media. The study adopts an extrapolative approach in analyzing print and broadcast reports, focusing on the following:

- - Story type, which helps learn how the media dealt with refugees' issues. News and reports are more about covering the existing events, while reportages investigate the raised issues.
- - Story source, to learn the sources journalists use to collect information, whether private sources or sources based on services provided by news agencies and/or press releases.
- Information resources, especially concerning special news to identify the covered groups (men or women) and consider their opinions and information on refugees' issues (politicians, refugees themselves, security members, anonymous).
- Refugees' nationality.
- Demographics, to see whether or not the coverage is generalized or it addresses certain gender groups (women, men) or age groups (children, elderly people), etc.
- Images of the articles.
- Field of coverage: to determine whether the main topic is humanitarian or for security reasons.
- Gender, to learn how newspapers dealt with women's issues (type of content, women's images in the media, photos of articles and photo reports), and the shortcomings of such coverage.

# Survey limitations and challenges

In the print press, the study addresses 504 articles about Lebanon out of 731 articles published in the said newspapers between June 2015 and June 2016. All these articles were purchased from As-safir Information Center that archives all newspapers and publications in Lebanon.

In the broadcast journalism and having failed to access the full archives of the TV stations, the study used a sample of 143 photo news reports broadcast during the same time period and posted on the official YouTube accounts of these stations.

# Findings | Print journalism

The study covers all press materials published in three Lebanese newspapers (Assafir, An-Nahar and Al-Akhbar) over 13 months. However, only those on refugees in Lebanon have been analyzed, totaling 504 press materials (69%) out of the total number of 731 items published during the said period.

## Articles on refugees in Lebanon by newspaper

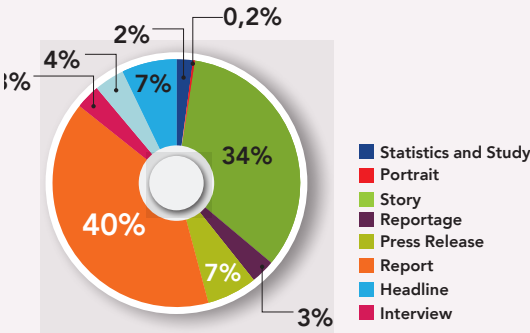
From early June 2015 to the end of June 2016, the total number of press materials on Syrian refugees published in the three newspapers (Assafir, An-Nahar and Al Akhbar) was 731, of which 504 articles (69%) were about refugees in Lebanon. Of these 504 articles, 385 articles (77%) were published by Assafir, 107 articles (21%) by An-Nahar and 12 articles (2%) by Al-Akhbar. The reason for this wide disparity in the published material is that Assafir almost every day publishes state-

ments, news or even political positions under press conferences, and An-Nahar follows the same policy but to a lesser extent, while Al-Akhbar does not adopt this approach.

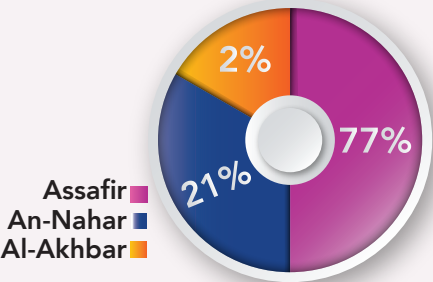
## Published materials by genre

With 40% and 34% respectively, reports and stories topped the materials published on this issue in the three newspapers. These figures show that the refugee issue was not treated closely and in detail. Reportages accounted for only 3% of the materials published, and only one portrait was published in the three newspapers (0.2% of total published materials). The headline rate was equal to that of reportages, but the difference was in the attitude towards refugees; while most media reports (reportage) were positive, the majority of headlines were negative. The share of studies and statistics was similar, barely

Distribution of published materials by press genre



Lebanese press coverage by newspaper



exceeding 2% of the published materials in 13 months.

Sources of published materials

Private sources accounted for 17%, news agencies and statements for 27%, and studies for 1%. The second ratio (27%) is high in this area, especially since it is only comprised of political statements. Private sources have statements as well, but news reports that presented statements and that were developed through information or statements exclusive to the newspaper were considered exclusive materials.

The rates in the second figure indicate the type of private sources journalists used. Political authorities accounted for 50% of sources, which reflects the size of attention given to the political component of the refugee issue.

It also reflects the general impression of readerships that this issue is centered on

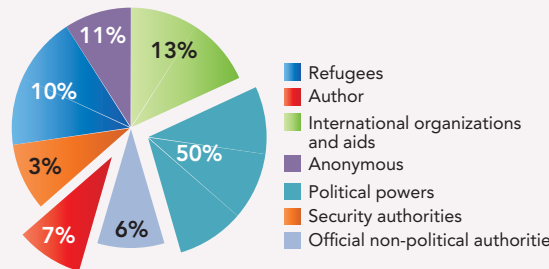
resettlement, demographic transformation, and terrorism in Lebanon. Refugees only accounted for 10% of the sources, which shows that they were considered an unimportant group with no valued opinion.

Published materials by nationality of refugees

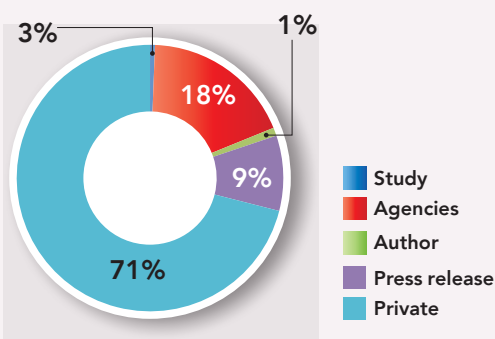
Around 94% of the materials on refugees published in Lebanon were about Syrian refugees. And if we consider the 3% about Palestinian refugees fleeing Syria to Lebanon, then 97% of articles were about refugees fleeing Syria regardless of nationality. This indicates that the Syrian refugee issue overwhelmed the issues of other refugees in Lebanon that used to preoccupy the Lebanese in the past like Palestinian or Iraqi refugees.

This also confirms that the media coverage mostly focuses on new events rather than on any other elements of the news

Distribution of published materials by press genre



Distribution of published materials by press genre



stories.

**Demographic distribution of published material – gender- and age-sensitive data**

The press materials often dealt with the refugees as one solid group. 84% of the materials referred to them as refugees in general without mentioning the gender (women or men) or age group, while only 11% and 3% of the materials were about children and women respectively.

Although a small percentage of the materials focused on men directly (2%), most of them depicted men in their traditional gender role in times of conflict, i.e. as a fighter. And in our case, men were portrait as terrorists or outlaws.

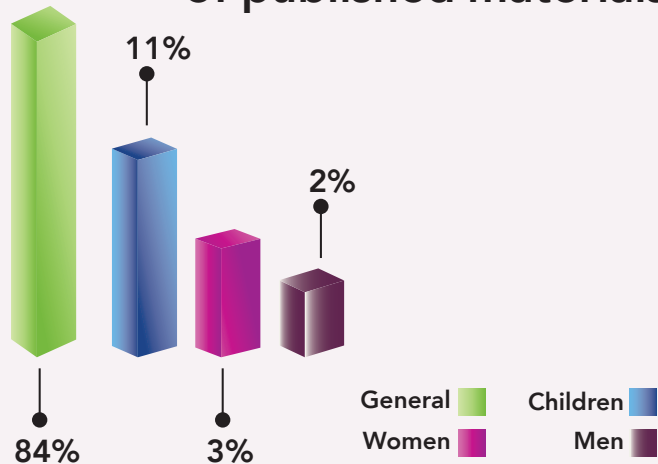
**Published materials by attitude towards refugees**

Nearly 50% of the published materials were neutral towards refugees. 26% con-

tained pro-refugee discourse while 24% contained a negative attitude. Although the neutral materials were mostly statements or reports issued by relief agencies, they contributed to most of the negative perspectives towards refugees following some security events or as a result of political stances of certain actors. An example of press materials that supported refugees is the article “Syrian Labour in Beqaa: Limited Impact” published in Assafir on 09/07/2015:

“The Syrian flux has increased consumption in Beqaa through their financial transactions estimated at hundreds of thousands of dollars. This flux has been essential in creating over 3,000 jobs for Beqaa populations who work in UN agencies and partner organizations apart from more than 154 shops that receive thousands of dollars every month as proceeds of food cards of displaced Syrians.”

**Demographic distribution of published materials**



An example of negative discourse is an article also published by Assafir on 26/11/2015 under the title: "Security Alert in Beqaa... and Camp Organization":

"For caution purposes, each group of Syrian tents should be no less than 350 meters away from military patrols' routes."

Another article was published in Assafir on 07/03/2016 entitled: "Akkar Beach after Removing Violations: Deliberate Negligence":

"These steps were accompanied by special procedures carried out by the military to remove the violations of Syrian refugee camps that had been scattered all over Akkar, specifically the coastal areas. Hosting displaced Syrians and gypsies, the camps have been removed by virtue of a military decision. This has cleared Akkar beach of violating communities."

Also Oyoon Assafir (means special scoop

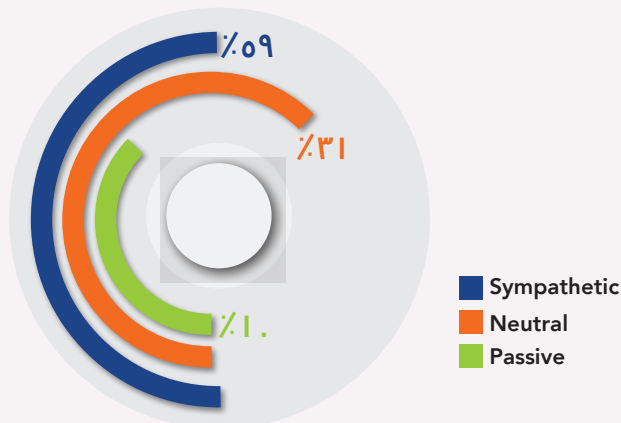
acquired exclusively by Assafir Newspaper) published an article on 24/03/2016:

"Lebanese security services monitor instigations of displaced Syrians in the camps in the mountainous area of Aarsal by the Nusra Front to stage demonstrations against the Syrian regime."

Another example of negative discourse is an article published in An-Nahar on 28/05/2015 under the title: "Will Refugees' Resettlement Become Available through Schools? Education Attracts Hundreds of Thousands of Children and Lebanese Market Absorbs Them":

"The fact that Lebanon's schools host 215,000 refugee students and aspire to accommodate over 500,000 is enough to wonder about what measures have been taken to prevent resettlement through education... The question is, what about newborns? There are talks about more than 150,000 new births among refugees,

### Distribution of published materials by attitude toward refugees



and the Lebanese authorities have covered the costs of a large part of these Syrian births... The number of Lebanese students in State schools has become less than that of refugee children, considering the two shifts and the newly opened schools.”

**Published materials by type of image**

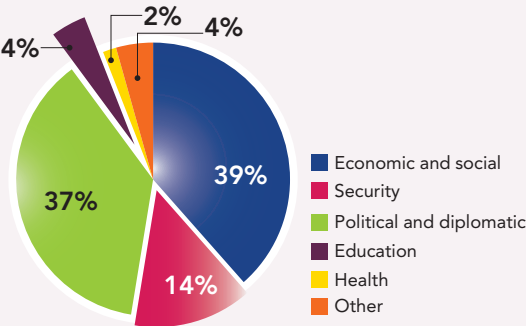
The ratio of the materials that had a picture was 70%, while 30 of the analyzed materials had no photo. Among the photo articles, women playing a traditional caring role or accompanied by their children accounted for 29%, while 26% of the pictures were of camps featuring also families and children. Outstandingly, 22% of the photos were of local or international politicians, and 21% of public spaces.

**Published materials by sector**

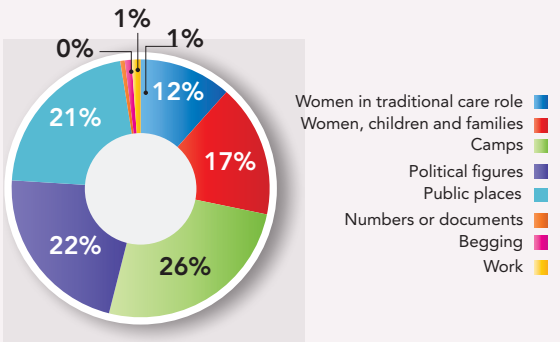
The economic and social issues topped

the areas covered by the published materials on refugees with 39%. It included refugees’ conditions and impact on the Lebanese economy and society, and Lebanese demands for international assistance to support the economy and host communities. Political and diplomatic topics followed (by 37%), which confirms the great attention given to the political components in the refugee file. This main focus here was the refugees’ resettlement. In addition, 4% of the reports were about the educational sector which is backed by the international community and many international donors. Remarkably, the rate of reports on the security and terrorism sector was 14%. These figures indicate that political and security concerns are the most important when it comes to treating the refugee issue at the expense of aid and humanitarian and living conditions.

**Distribution of published materials by sector**

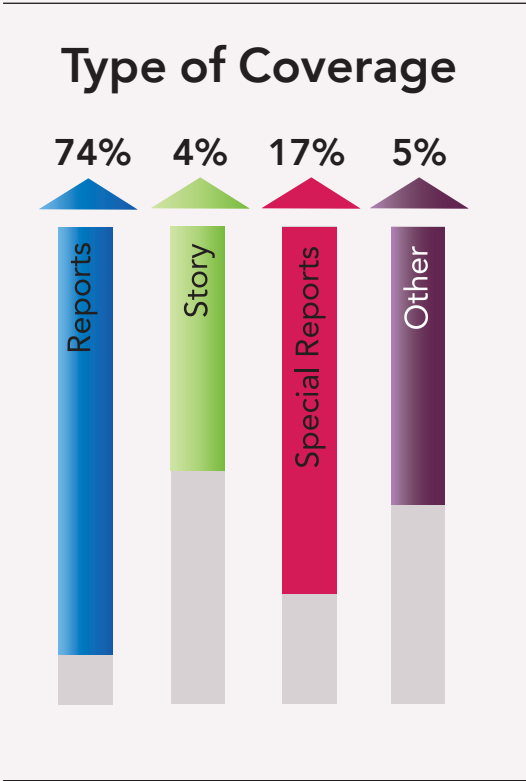


**Distribution of published materials by type of interested picture**





# Findings | Broadcast press



The study includes all the news reports (and one introduction to an MTV newscast) on refugees, broadcast during the study period. The number of these reports was 142: LBC (50 reports or 35%), MTV (50, 35%) and Al Jadeed (42, 30%). The research was limited to this number of reports given the archive problem experienced by these channels (see “Survey Limitations and Challenges” paragraph). The study shows that 93% of these reports addressed the situation or problems of refugees in Lebanon, while the rest focused on refugees in Jordan, Europe or within Syria itself. Therefore, all the numbers below came from the 132 reports on refugees in Lebanon:

LBC (48 reports or 36%), MTV (48, 36%), and Al Jadeed (36, 27%).

**Coverage by genre**

TV stations always try to broadcast special reports even if the published story is a public source; they try to adapt it to reflect their own imprint. Generally speaking, the three surveyed channels always try to convert any news or information to a story or feature based on the available information to attract the largest number of viewers. This falls under competition over ratings and viewership. Strikingly enough, the special reports on the refugee issue published by these channels accounted for only 4% of the reports, while regular coverage overshadowed 74% of the reports, meaning that these channels did not find any attractive stories in the Syrian refugee issue that amount to special reports as is the case with so many internal issues addressed in their newscasts. The said channels raised the refugee issues in the form of stories (failing to amount to a report) in 17% of the cases, while only one report featured interviews. The channels tackled Syrian stories live five times during the said period, and one time in the introduction to a newscast, which together accounts for 5%.

**Sources of published materials**

With regards to the sources of reports, private and official sources, as well as refugees themselves had nearly the same proportions of 30%, 28%, and 26% respectively. Although civil society organizations (CSOs), in general, work with

refugees and are therefore a good source of information about them, they only accounted for 5% of story sources of the surveyed channels. However, the LBC had an advantage over the two other channels. It adopted a new reporting system; namely, ready reports prepared by the UNHCR Media Center. The UNHCR prepares reports from Syrian refugee camps and communities and distributes them to news agencies and TV channels.

Concerning official sources, political sources (ministers, parliamentarians and ministry officials concerned with refugees) accounted for 55% of official sources, followed by security sources (27%) and then other sources (local, municipalities and burgomasters) (18%).

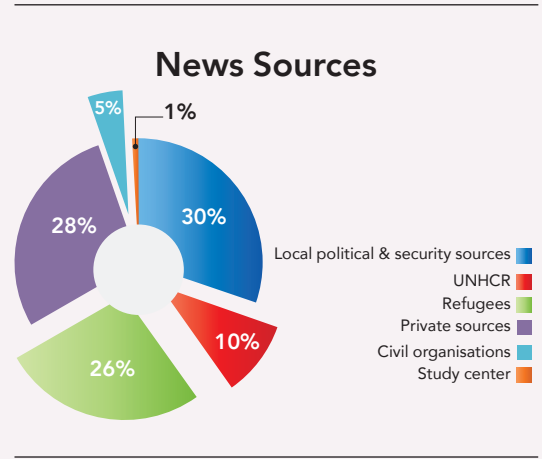
### Published materials by nationality of refugees

As expected, reports on the Syrian refugees accounted for 97% of all reports on refugees in Lebanon. Around 3% of the reports were about Palestinian refugees fleeing Syria to Lebanon (two reports) and the same percentage (two reports too) was about Palestine refugees already living in Lebanon.

### Demographic distribution – gender- and age-sensitive data

The broadcast reports often dealt with the refugee issue as one solid group referring to them as refugees in general (66% of the materials) without mentioning the gender (women or men) or age group, while 20% and 13% of the materials were about women and children respectively.

This reflects an approach seeking easy



coverage and dealing with refugees as one block instead of highlighting the conditions of each group of them. Considering this and the fact that the largest proportion of reports are linked to political or economic events, it can be concluded that these outlets, while the most prominent in Lebanon, did not address the refugee file in depth.

### Published materials by attitude towards refugees

The study suggests a positive attitude towards refugees. 59% of the reports sympathized with or supported the refugee issue, and only 10% of the reports had a negative perception regarding refugee problems and conditions. 31% of the reports were neutral.

Remarkably, the LBC did not broadcast any negative report on refugees since it mainly relied on the UNHCR reports. Therefore, the LBC had 54% of the positive or supporting reports, while MTV and Al Jadeed shared the remaining 46%. Also strikingly, Al Jadeed, which many regards

as defending Syrian refugees in Lebanon, had more negative reports on them (69%) than MTV had (31%). This might be due to growing fear by MTV of continuous criticism by print media and social media given their negative treatment of the refugee issue. This has made it resort to a somewhat neutral approach in dealing with the Syrian refugees.

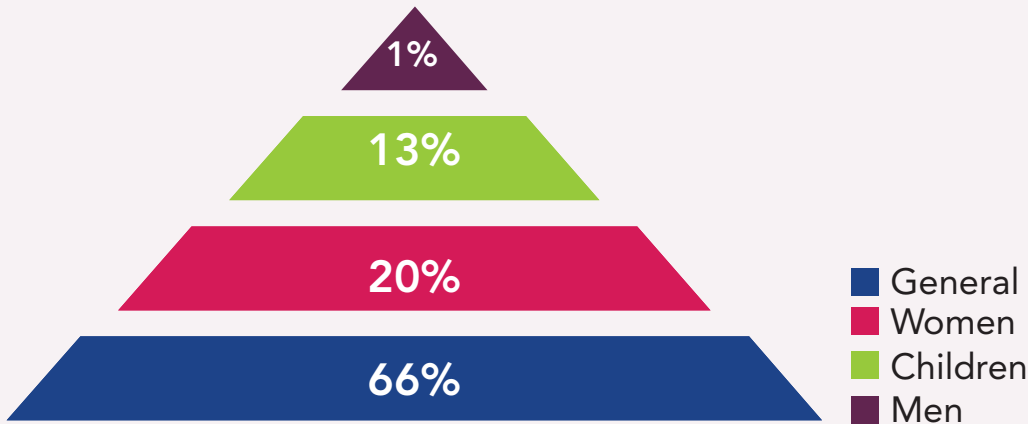
It should also be noted that highlighting refugees' issue in a negative manner was also made by political programs,

notably talk shows and programs addressing social issues. Thus, newscast reports while important and have great outreach, cannot completely reflect the media position toward refugees.

**Published materials by sector**

The largest proportion of reports (50%) dealt with economic and social areas. This included refugees' economic and social conditions, an impact of the refugee issue on the Lebanese economy and society,

Gender



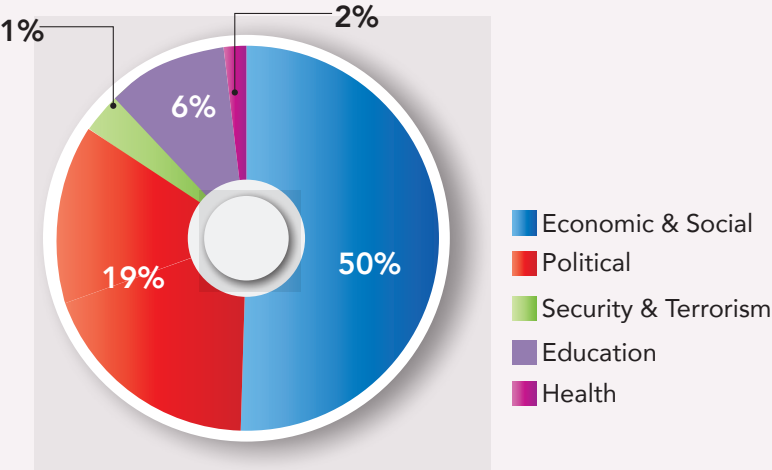
and Lebanon demands for international assistance to support the economy and host communities. This sector also included the issue of human trafficking which received extensive coverage in Lebanon in the spring of 2016. The coverage was sympathetic with the victims who were mostly Syrian refugee women. One report also addressed the issue of early marriage.

The security sector ranked second with 23% of the reports. These mainly dealt with the situation in the border town of Arsal and its

surrounding areas as well as the daily arrests of Syrians on suspicion of committing security or terrorist offenses. It was followed by the political sector with 19% of the reports. Most of these reports addressed the issue of resettlement raised by officials and politicians, and it received much attention by people and politicians.

Unfortunately, however, education and health issues ranked last among the Lebanese media priorities, with 6% and 2% respectively of the reports.

### Reports by sectors



# Syrian refugee women in the Lebanese media

## Women in print press

As noted earlier, only 14 out of the 504 press materials (3%) on Syrian refugees in Lebanon addressed women's issues directly. The discourse and content of these 14 materials focused on the following issues:

1. Women trafficking network: A sexual exploitation network was disrupted in April 2016 and this event was covered by 6 articles (42% of the total number of reports on women). Human trafficking became a concern for the Lebanese public opinion and a rich material for media outlets due to the gravity of the subject and because such criminal activities were rare in Lebanon.
2. Women's traditional family caring role: Four articles (28%) covered this issue, of which one article was a thorough reportage on refugees' conditions in winter. It depicts a woman who raises five children with no breadwinner. The report shows how she faces difficulties where she and her children collect dry and broken branches from a nearby forest.
3. Domestic violence: Only one article (7%) was on domestic violence: a child ran away from the violence of her father and brother. When she went back home, she was exposed to all forms of torture before the competent authorities intervened.
4. Early marriage: One report also (7%) was on early marriage, but the coverage was remarkable. The report analysed early marriage in Lebanon and the impact of the growing number of Syrian refugees on it.
5. Health issues: One report (7%) was about the death of a pregnant woman and her baby because hospitals did not admit her.
6. Security: One article (7%) was about the trial of Saja al-Dulaimi, the ex-wife of ISIS Leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The article only referred to al-Dulaimi as "the wife of the Caliph of Muslims", "Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's ex-wife", "al-Baghdadi's ex-wife", "mother of al-Baghdadi's daughter", and "Commander of the Faithful's ex-wife."
7. One article (7%) about a small story.

### Attitude towards women

Most of these materials, except for the security report, seemed in solidarity of or at least dealt neutrally with, refugee women. The report on the health situation was about a medical error that led to the death of a pregnant refugee after two hospitals refused to take her in. The report used a picture referring to women's caring role. The caring role was the subject of most photos in other materials on women.

## Coverage shortcomings

### Women trafficking network

- The newspapers only presented news on the issue over the days following the network disruption by the Internal Security Forces (ISF). The newspapers used suspense to attract readers. However, the issue was not followed-up during the subsequent weeks and many questions on how the network had been operational for years were not answered. The media materials published on the network suggested an involvement of security services in protecting it, but no investigatory reportage was published on this matter. The trial of the network members was not covered too.
- The surveyed newspapers did not follow-up on the fate of the network victims or the subsequently arrested network members although press materials pointed out to possible involvement of security officials and services in women smuggling across the Lebanese-Syrian border and in protecting the network members.
- The newspapers used some pictures distributed by the ISF of torture marks on victims' bodies. They also used collage images or photos taken from other stories on sex trade to highlight women commodification. In addition, some press reports used pictures of Syrian refugee women.
- There was an attempt to employ the

network disruption in the political competition where some newspapers credited it to an unofficial security service.

- These reports repeatedly used such expressions like "practice of indecency", "repulsive practices" and "prostitution", rather than "human trafficking." This does not suggest a negative attitude toward the female victims because the reports showed sympathy with them. It rather reflects a lack of knowledge of relevant terminology.
- Despite widespread talk of "the buying of young women" through the practices of networks that traffic in young women but claim that they actually marry them, this was neither proven nor refuted through the press or media coverage.

### Early marriage

- The study shows that 13% of women in Lebanon and 23% of Syrian women in Lebanon got married before the age of 18. This means that 4,454 Syrian young women in Lebanon aged 12-17 out of 70,269 young women (6.3%) got married under 18. However, the press materials covering this issue only published proportions and figures without further investigating the other aspects of the subject.
- Some other changing gender roles were not covered in the press although some reports by regional

correspondents reported signs of such changing roles through reference to refugee women working in agriculture without elaborating further. According to UNHCR statistics, women aged 18-59 (the most productive period of life) account for 24.5% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. On the other hand, the same age group among men accounts for 19.3%. It is worth mentioning that women constitute 52% of the total number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

### Domestic violence

- Gender-based violence among refugees was not covered although there was news that a female refugee who was subjected to domestic violence survived death, but such cases were only covered quickly and narrowly.
- Additionally, there was no coverage of the issue of physical, sexual, mental and verbal violence against refugee women by host communities, especially since the above women trafficking network showed that such a criminal activity against refugee women was present in Lebanon. Moreover, the local authorities (municipal councils) in several Lebanese areas imposed a curfew against refugees or even demanded their departure and security services did evacuate some camps. However, the press coverage showed this as mere security measures, thus holding the refugee communities somewhat responsible for security deterioration or even suspecting them without highlighting the effects of such practices on women's situation.

## Women in broadcast press

Twenty-six reports (20%) broadcast on the three TV channels tackled women's issues directly. Although this is a high ratio compared to those published in the newspapers, it is still low relative to the coverage volume of the refugee issue by Lebanese TV channels.

The 26 reports addressed the following topics:

1. Fourteen reports (54%) were about the women trafficking network disrupted in Jounieh in April 2016. Human trafficking became a concern for the Lebanese public opinion and a rich material for media organizations due to the gravity of the subject and because such criminal activities were rare in Lebanon. There were two types of reports: four reports presented the merits of the case with a special focus on women trafficking, while the remaining 10 reports covered the subsequent ramifications of the issue from political, security and social perspectives.
2. 38% of the reports dealing with women's issues were about women's traditional caring roles. They tackled refugees' situation in winter, especially women suffering from difficult conditions, coupled with reports on poor women.
3. One report (4%) was about the health status of refugee women, and another report (4%) talked about a play performed by refugee women about their suffering. It is clear from the foregoing that this issue was not a priority for the broadcast media coverage.

### Attitude towards women

Most reports on women's issues were in solidarity with women or at least dealt neutral, especially those addressing the women trafficking network. No media outlet blamed the victims as is the usual case in similar situations.

### Coverage shortcomings

#### Women trafficking network

- Coverage was limited to reporting the issue in the days that followed the ISF declaration of the network arrest. The issue, however, was not covered in subsequent weeks although there were many questions about how the network had managed to remain in business for many years. The published materials suggested an involvement of security services in protecting the network, but no investigatory reportage was published on the matter. Furthermore, the trial of the network was not covered. Apart from two reports on the victims, the channels did not follow-up on the fate of the women victims. Strikingly, the media coverage, assumingly in good faith, used collage photos on the trafficking in women in some reports and on the screen behind newscasters.

#### Early marriage

- The only report that addressed early marriage was not in Lebanon so it was ruled out. It was about the activity of a Syrian teenager in Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan trying to control this phenomenon.

## Domestic violence

- There was a lack of reports on GBV among the refugees. Moreover, there was no coverage of the issue of physical, sexual, mental and verbal violence against refugee women by host communities, especially since the above women trafficking network showed that such a criminal activity against refugee women was present in Lebanon. Moreover, the local authorities (municipal councils)

in several Lebanese areas imposed a curfew against refugees or even demanded their departure and security services did evacuate some camps. However, the press covered showed this as mere security measures, thus holding the refugee communities somewhat responsible for security deterioration or even suspecting them without highlighting the effects of such practices on women's situation.



## Conclusion | Print journalism

The refugee issue was covered by Lebanese newspapers on a daily basis and by Lebanese channels continuously in general over the study period. This indicates the importance of the issue and its impact at various levels in Lebanon, especially since the number of refugees registered with the UNHCR amounts to 1.017 million, plus nearly half a million unregistered refugees, according to the Lebanese Prime Minister Tammam Salam who, in a speech before the UN General Assembly on September 22, 2016, said the number of refugees in Lebanon equaled a third of its population.

However, the approaches of both the media and the government were almost the same, especially in addressing refugee women issues. Syrian women remained neglected though to a lesser extent than in newspapers where only 3% of the materials published in the three newspapers were about women compared to 20% of the TV reports.

Thus, Syrian women remained neglected in print media in particular. Their issue was only highlighted on the backdrop of revealing the women trafficking network in Maamelt-ein in April 2016. Then the gender issue was extensively covered, but only to underline the women's traditional roles and to depict Syrian refugee women as vulnerable and helpless victims. This was actually established in most of the photos attached to the published materials where women's role was highlighted as merely caring for family and children, which the public system seeks to promote in the Lebanese society. TV channels tackled all issues with generalization, attributing all reported problems to refugees in general without specifying to which group they belonged except in a few cases. Remarkably, most reportages, though few,

were supportive of refugees. On the other hand, the majority of negative materials about refugees were based on anonymous sources of information. Newspapers focused on political articles which accounted for 37% of the total materials, while security and terrorism items accounted for 14%.

Observing the materials published by the most prominent Lebanese media on Syrian refugees in Lebanon will lead to many conclusions, mainly:

- The Lebanese media dealt with the Syrian refugees' issue with generalization. Reportages with specific details accounted for only 3% of the published materials. They, however, were positive towards refugees.
- Most of the stories depicting the refugees' own narrative were made by regional reporters and were positive. In contrast, materials published by journalists in the capital were politicized and negative towards refugees.
- The political concerns were obvious in dealing with the refugee issue at the expense of aid and humanitarian issues and living conditions.
- The general attitude towards the Syrian refugees was negative and racist reflecting some security incidents or political positions by some forces. The neutral materials were mostly statements or reports by relief agencies.
- Only 3% of the materials covered women's issues and women were negatively stereotyped. In 29% of photo articles, they were depicted as playing a traditional caring role or accompanied by

their children. The majority of materials dealt with refugees as one component without any grouping based on gender, age, or economic situation.

- These reports did not use standard terms in describing Syrian refugees. In the bulk of materials, refugees were called displaced people, which reflects the media compliance with the government policy that refuses to call them refugees to avoid ensuing responsibilities.
- Around 94% of the published materials on refugees in Lebanon were about Syrian refugees. And if we consider the 3% about Palestinian refugees fleeing Syria to Lebanon, then 97% of articles were about refugees fleeing Syria regardless of nationality.
- Gender-based reports only presented news on the human trafficking network over the days following its arrest by the ISF. The reports used suspense to attract readers. The surveyed newspapers did not follow-up on the fate of the women victims of the network or the subsequently arrested network members. This shows how print media deal with such cases.
- Inadequate rights perspective: The coverage of women's issues did not seriously address early marriage and other issues including alternative gender roles like women's work in production sectors. The newspapers also dealt superficially with young women's employment, mainly in agriculture, and their access to educational pro-

grammes for refugee children.

The most prominent conclusions from examining the three TV channels are as follow:

- The associations concerned with refugees only accounted for 5% of story sources on the surveyed TV channels, which reflect a tensed relationship between these associations and the media.
- News coverage of women's issues constituted the highest ratio in broadcast journalism. Fourteen reports (54%) were about the women trafficking network disrupted in April 2016 in Jounieh. 38% of the reports dealing with women's issues were about women's traditional caring role. They tackled refugees' situations in winter, especially women with difficult conditions, coupled with reports on poor women. Only 4% of the reports covered the health situation and a similar percentage covered education. These are issues related to protection and prevention in times of conflict. There were no TV reportages on women's issues, such as GBV, women's initiatives or profiles of women activists.
- TV channels tackled refugees as one block and did not differentiate among them, dealing with them in a generalized manner. For example, 66% of the reports on refugees treated them as merely refugees without observing gender (women or men) or age group. On the other hand, 20% and 13% of the materials were about women and children respectively.

<sup>4</sup><http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122> last accessed on the 5th of November 2016

<sup>5</sup><http://www.pcm.gov.lb/arabic/subpg.aspx?pageid=8769> last accessed on 28 of October 2016

<sup>6</sup><http://www.pcm.gov.lb/arabic/subpg.aspx?pageid=8768> last accessed on 28 of October 2016

# Conclusion from a perspective of Women, Peace and Security Agenda– UNSCR 1325 as a model

Women's participation in peacemaking in Syria is perhaps very weak, especially since the peace process itself is facing a critical deadlock. However, there was significant failure in covering women's roles in community peacemaking. Peace is not just a political process at the level of States; rather, it is an integrated process that begins at the level of small communities and then reaches to the general political level. The question remains: What is the role of women in preventing refugees from turning into mobile crises in Lebanon, especially given the high pressure on the refugee community at various levels including political, legal, economic, housing, and educational or employment conditions as well as racist and discriminatory practices.

The conclusion of the study that covers six of the most prominent Lebanese broadcast and print media outlets is that Syrian refugee women, at best, are no more than victims without any political, social or economic roles. They are part neither of the decision-making process in the

peace negotiations in Syria nor even of the management of their own life. There is no coverage for their potential access to the regular refugee services despite the repeated complaints about the relief aid. Perhaps, the only positive point is that refugee women, unlike refugee men, were not depicted as a source of violence and terrorism. However, refugee women, like other refugees, were subjected to generalization and gender stereotyping and burdened with political responsibilities.

In this context, women did not appear on the front pages of newspapers. Most prominently, women were even absent from the reports on women's issues including girls' education access to labour market.

The Lebanese media coverage directly reflected the official government policy in dealing with refugees as a comprehensive issue where no attention was paid to women's special needs like protection from violence caused by the conflict. The media perhaps focused on the issues that attract

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The UNSC resolution 1325 calls for protection of women in armed conflict, holding the perpetrators accountable, and empowerment of women in relief and recovery operations as well as in maintaining peace and stability. Resolution 1325 has changed the approach to women's relation and vulnerability to armed conflicts. Besides considering women as victims who need protection, resolution 1325 focuses on the importance of their role and active participation in pushing towards peaceful solutions and strengthening of domestic and international security and stability. The resolution can be divided into four pillars

1. Participation: Resolution 1325 calls for an increase in the participation of women at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes. This call is a form of pressure on States to achieve this step.
2. Protection: Women are among the most vulnerable and affected groups by armed conflicts and their consequences at all levels. Reiterating this concept, resolution 1325 calls for the need to consider the implications of violence on women, security and stability; protect women and activate accountability mechanisms of violators.
3. Prevention: Especially prevention based on awareness and education and other means whose results take time to appear. Although prevention is an inappropriate tool to address the consequences of conflicts while they are taking place, it is an influential and important factor in easing tension and consolidating post-conflict peace and security. Engaging women in making decisions on peace and security is a preventive measure so that their presence is reflected in the relevant legislation through integrating gender into policies and applications.
4. Relief and recovery: It is necessary in relief and recovery processes to ensure that all community members have access to security, food, healthcare, housing and other basic needs. The beneficiaries of such processes are often seen as one homogeneous group without any regard to their societal roles, gender, age group or different needs. Therefore, integrating gender in all phases of relief and recovery processes would reflect the size and nature of the different needs of beneficiaries.

the public, ignoring all privacy standards, both concerning women trafficking and GBV, and not making any effort to highlight the issues of concern to women.

Strikingly enough, the issue of GBV was absent from the media coverage, as was the debate on the best government policy or initiatives to prevent GBV during the conflict, within the refugee community in general or the GBV against women in the host communities. Instead, there was an inciting discourse against refugees, reflecting the general Lebanese political mood. It is worth mentioning however that

there was a discrepancy among the media organizations in terms of the volume and type of incitement against refugees. The most prominent inciting headlines were about both holding refugees responsible for terrorist acts, and resettlement.

In conclusion, conflicts and wars are still a male arena, and the media coverage of their spillovers is just a tool governments or norm setters use for incitement or mobilization, with no political will to operationalize Resolution 1325 and other resolutions in relation to women during and after conflict.

# Conclusion

The survey suggests a real problem in the way the Lebanese media treated sensitive issues. Its findings clearly showed that the media mirrored the government and major political powers in how they view the Syrian refugee issue. This was evident in the failure to do a professional work throughout the study period except in extremely rare cases. The function of investigative reports is to reveal data and information unknown to the public to assist them to form an opinion and position of these events. This also applies to reportages and studies. A portrait introduces the public to individuals as independent human beings not just numbers within a community. Accordingly, the absence of such journalistic genres in favor of political reports or materials based on generalization would consolidate the treatment of refugees as a group where individual rights and privacy are nonexistent. This would also perpetuate the refugee stereotypes made by the authority and fundamental political forces.

Hence, it can be said that the media,

through press materials, are transforming into a propaganda agency of the authority and major political parties which are mostly sectarian forces that approach the refugee issue (and most other issues) from their sectarian perspectives. Besides, the study shows that when it comes to refugees, journalists are willing to report only on security and political issues that aim to feed into the political propaganda. Moreover, the bulk of journalists does not know the proper terms that should be used in similar issues.

This research also reveals a real weakness in the refugee support and relief agencies. It might be just a lack of information capabilities, or of the desire to communicate the real image and situation of refugee communities.

The third conclusion is the refugees' vulnerability and inability to convey real data about their communities to the Lebanese media. This weakness is understandable during the first years of refuge, but it must be later addressed through building the capacity of refugee activists and leaders.

# Recommendations

This survey has come up with several recommendations calling upon government officials to implement the UNSC Resolution 1325. The following recommendations involve all relief actors of international, UN and non-governmental organizations operating in Lebanon:

1. Create a media platform specializing in the production of media products on refugees' situations including their relationship with the host communities and the Lebanese authority. The platform should include an electronic observatory to monitor how the Lebanese media, social media and websites deal with women's issues with a view to raising the public awareness and creating social pressure on media organizations to deal more seriously and sensitively with women's issues.
2. Work with various media outlets, in coordination with the competent authorities, to raise their awareness of Resolution 1325 and its significance, and engage them in making press and media products reflect its provisions.
3. Build stronger relationships between CSOs and regional correspondents, enhance their ability to access information and train them on Resolution 1325 provisions.
4. Work with a number of veteran journalists to train young journalists how to possess the necessary skills, sensitivity and ability to deal with women's issues and to move from simple story coverage to investigative reporting of women's economic, legal and social issues.
5. Train the media offices of Lebanese and international CSOs with a view to strengthening their ability to communicate with the media and journalists, and promote these institutions among the information sources of the media.
6. Train women with leadership roles in refugee communities on dealing with the media and turning their stories into publishable materials in print and broadcast media seek to create a social media network speaking for refugees.

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### **About ABAAD - Resource Center for Gender Equality**

ABAAD is a non-profit, non-politically affiliated, non-religious civil association that aims to achieve gender equality as an essential condition to sustainable social and economic development in the MENA region.

ABAAD seeks to promote women's equality and participation through policy development, legal reform, and gender mainstreaming, engaging men, eliminating discrimination, and advancing and empowering women to participate effectively and fully in their communities.

ABAAD also seeks to support and collaborate with civil society organizations that are involved in gender equality programs and advocacy campaigns.

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**Women's International League for Peace and Freedom**

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) with National Sections covering every continent, an International Secretariat based in Geneva, and a New York office focused on the work of the United Nations (UN).

Since their establishment in 1915, they have brought together women from around the world who are united in working for peace by non-violent means and promoting political, economic and social justice for all.

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