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Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon: A State of Exception?

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ABSTRACT

As a result of the 1948-Arab – Israeli war, known as Nakba more than 700,000 Palestinians were displaced from their homeland. After that these people took asylum in neighbouring Arab countries like Jordan, Lebanon, Syrian and Egypt. Lebanon is home to the second-largest number of Palestinian refugees in the region. Among the host countries Palestinians in Lebanon is experiencing the most severe forms of vulnerabilities and exclusion. Palestinians are not granted citizenship, legal protections, or access to important civic and socioeconomic rights. This article examines the lived reality of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon by using Giorgio Agamben's theory of the state of exception, which holds that conventional legal safeguards are suspended by sovereign power, leaving people to live a bare life. It argued that the refugee camps are spaces in which people are sustained biologically but excluded politically. Furthermore, the Palestinian refugee camps are governed by informal groups and humanitarian agencies like UNRWA because the Lebanese government does not provide protection for them. This is an example of a biopolitical system that governs based on need rather than rights. This article also found that the Palestinians struggle to preserve their identity in light of the loss of their homeland and the challenges of being refugees, despite leading a "bare life" in Lebanon. This indicates that the camps serve as possible locations for political agency and resilience in addition to being places of exclusion.

Keywords: State of Exception; Palestinian Refugees; Bare Life; Lebanon; UNRWA

INTRODUCTION

The Palestinian refugee problem is one of the most prolonged and politically complex in recent history. Due to the 1948 Arab -Israeli war more than 700,000 Palestinians have been forcibly displaced from their homeland. After that these people took asylum in neighboring Arab countries like Jordan, Lebanon, Syrian and Egypt. Lebanon is home to the second-largest number of Palestinian refugees in the region. For over seventy years, majority of the Palestinians still live in Lebanon in twelve officially recognized refugee camps, where they have been facing spatial restrictions, socioeconomic marginalization, and legal ambiguity. These refugees continue to be denied full access to the legal, political, and economic life of the host nation, depriving them of Lebanese citizenship and essential civil rights.

The sectarian political system, which seeks to maintain a delicate balance of power among religious groups, has

influenced Lebanon's stance toward the Palestinian refugees. This delicate sectarian equilibrium will therefore be strained by the emergence of a sizable Sunni Muslim minority in Palestine. As a result, Palestinians face severe political and legal marginalization and exclusion. These measures were primarily taken by the Lebanese government to prevent the Palestinians from settling permanently in Lebanon. Furthermore, the Lebanese government was compelled to adopt a strong stance toward the Palestinians due to their status as stateless people.

Through the theory of Giorgio Agamben's idea of the state of exception, this article aims to comprehend the daily experiences of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. According to Agamben, the state of exception is a situation where sovereign power suspends the law, resulting in subjects who are deprived of their political rights and reduced to "bare life"—people who are politically excluded but biologically exist. According to Agamben's theory, the



refugee is an example of this status: someone who is outside the legal and political system but is yet subject to the authority of the state or its agents. A strong foundation for examining the political and legal systems that shape the lives of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is provided by this theoretical lens.

There are three main sections to this article. The first section explains Agamben's idea of the state of exception, emphasizing the connection between exclusion, sovereignty, and the creation of bare life. The socioeconomic and legal situation of Palestinians in Lebanon is analyzed in the second section, along with how exclusionary policies have been influenced by the sectarian basis of the Lebanese state.

The final section applies Agamben's theory to the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, arguing that these spaces function as zones of exception — where legal norms are suspended, humanitarian governance replaces state accountability, and refugees are excluded from political life while remaining under various forms of control. In order to provide a better understanding of how long-term statelessness, sectarian politics, legal exclusion, and humanitarian governance interact to maintain a condition of exception, this article will apply Agamben's theory to the Palestinian refugee experience in Lebanon. The stateless Palestinian refugees attempt to maintain their Palestinian identity in this unique and exclusive environment, demonstrating their enduring nature of their political agency.

AGAMBEN'S THEORY OF STATE OF EXCEPTION

A refugee is a person who has fled their own country because they fear violence, persecution, death, etc. Refugees who have lost their citizenship and nationality frequently live at the mercy of their host countries. It is important to examine how the decisions made by the sovereign host state impact the lives of refugees during a time when they are frequently viewed as a burden or a threat to national security. The problematic link between human existence and state authority is especially addressed in Agamben's theory of bare life and state of exception, which is highly helpful in this regard. Agamben's notion of exception has had a significant impact on how we view immigrants, refugees, and people who are placed outside of the national community. The word "biopolitics," which refers to the integration of life in the mechanism of power, was initially used by Michael Foucault. According to him, biopolitics first appeared in the seventeenth century when the population became a political, scientific, and biological issue of concern to the ruling class (1:245). According to Agamben, biopolitics is not a recent development because there has always been an implicit connection between biopolitics and sovereign authority, which he referred to as the "relation of exception" or "relation of ban."

In his book *Homosacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Giorgio Agamben primarily attempted to reexamine the

notions of sovereignty advanced by Hobbes and Rousseau (2:109). The concept of a state of exception—"a piece of land that is placed outside the normal juridical order and bare life, a life stripped of any political or juridical value"—is the foundation of his theory of sovereignty. According to Agamben, the Greeks distinguished between bios, or the qualified and political life, and zoe, which denotes the fundamental reality that anything is alive and not dead (2:9). Agamben referred to Zoe's life as "bare life," meaning it was devoid of any political or legal significance (2:9). All political rights can be taken away, all kinds of existence can be declared invalid, and life in this state is solely focused on survival (3:41). According to Agamben, the removal of biological life from polis is the foundation of the contemporary western biopolitical paradigm.

By referencing the ancient Roman concept of *Homosacer*, or sacred man, Agamben highlights this earliest political exclusion (4:3). Since the *Homosacer* is not protected by civil law and is outside the established legal system, he may be killed without consequence (2:78). The term "homosacer" indicated two things: first, it is not murder to kill one, and second, it is not possible to sacrifice a homosacer. As a result, according to Agamben *Homosacer* is subject to two types of exclusion: human law, which does not shield him from death, and divine law, which forbids him from being brought to God as a sacrifice because he is unworthy of being committed to him (2:78-79). Here, "sacred" refers to anything that is forbidden, impure, and untouchable, while "sacred" signifies both condemned and sacred.

Right to life is one of the basic ideas in all human rights declarations. Here right to life does not mean merely alive. Agamben follows Hannah Arendt who argued that primary right does not be the right to life rather the most fundamental right should be the right to have rights (3:45). When life reduced to bare life, survival as the ultimate and perhaps only realm of significance for a life. When there is a reduction of one's life to bare life, he is dead to this world except for the minimal fact that he is alive. Therefore, *Homosacer* exhibits the characteristic of a zone of indistinction in which life and death became indistinct. Through the production of homosacer and by creating a strange sphere such as zone of indistinction political power has extend the most radical control over life (3:49)

SOVEREIGN EXCEPTION

Agamben adopts Carl Schmitt's definition of sovereignty, which states that "the sovereign is the one who determines the exception" (5:5). Therefore, the exception is fundamentally connected to sovereignty. Agamben also adheres to Schmittian argument, which holds that in order to establish and uphold the standard, a state of exception is necessary (6:15). As a result, the state of exception is frequently employed as a strategy to keep out and distance those forces that pose a threat to the state's and the nation's security.



Both Agamben and Schmitt argued that state of exception originated from the state of emergency. The sovereign has the authority to declare a state of emergency, which would suspend the regular legal system and make everyone potentially dangerous. In the past, states of emergency were declared in response to wartime emergencies or as a sovereign's reaction to an internal or external threat to the state. However, in the modern era, incidents like 9/11 and the war on terror led to a constant state of emergency, where everyone was considered a threat to the state's security. Thus, Agamben contended that the state of necessity likewise leads to the state of exception. The state of exception is a new method of governance where the exception has turned into the rule due to the growing need to protect the state and public order (7: pp. 2–6).

When examining how sovereignty and law interact, Agamben criticizes the Schmittian concept of the state of exception. According to Schmitt, the person who makes the exception is sovereign. According to Schmitt (5:15), the sovereign who declares a state of exception is outside of the law or has no connection to it at all. Accordingly, a state of exception is likewise a type of legal void under Schmittian theory. Agamben uses the concept of the paradox of sovereignty to analyze Schmittian notions of sovereign exception. According to Agamben, sovereignty shouldn't be viewed as being entirely outside of the framework of the law. Rather, it ought to be interpreted as belonging to the paradoxical category of included exclusion (5:20).

Homosacer should not just to be understood as someone, who has been excluded from the legal order, instead he should be understood as the point where bare life is being included into the sovereign order. The original exclusion of basic life from political activity, according to Agamben, has actually evolved into an inclusive exclusion. In actuality, there is a form of political inclusion when bare life is excluded from well qualified political life. As a result, people who are deemed terrorists or fundamentalists, or who are denied access to liberty and the law, are not merely pushed out of politics but are instead included in a deeper political relationship (4:4). Thus, incorporating bare life into the legal system is the primary act of sovereign power.

REFUGEE CAMP AS SPACE OF EXCEPTION

The state of exception receives a permanent spatial configuration in the camp space, which is consistently outside the normal state of law. Agamben makes the case that the camps were created under martial law and a state of exception rather than under regular law by citing the examples of the Spanish-built camps in Cuba, the Nazi concentration camps, and the Guantanamo prisoners. (2:95). In the camp, the sovereign ruler's authority is characterized by both the ability to suspend law and order and the right to assert a lawful monopoly over the people. Since the camp's residents were deprived of any political standing and treated like

"homosacers," it was the most clear example of a biopolitical environment where the state had taken control of human life.

Therefore, the camping of foreigners, immigrants, asylum seekers, or refugees is justified not just for security concerns but also for cultural and racial ones. Understanding the relationship between racism, colonialism, biopolitics, and the camp is essential. Western sovereign states got involved in the differentiation and categorization of individuals through colonial management, which Foucault described as racism—a method of separating out the categories that exist within a population.

In an effort to contain, manage, or even eradicate real or perceived threats, camps are utilized as an exception (2:174). By grouping people together and setting up camps on the outskirts of the city, the residents are frequently left out of political life while still falling under the jurisdiction of the sovereign, who controls their lives through various methods. While analysing the reason behind the violence and atrocities against the camp inhabitants the answer lies in Hannah Arendt's observation that in camps everything becomes possible. As camps are maintained apart from the regular legal system, illegal immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers are all exposed to containment tactics and unrestricted physical or psychological abuse for which there are no legal repercussions. The people who live in camps—whether they are prison facilities, internment camps, or refugee camps—live in a place where it is difficult to distinguish between inclusion and exclusion, exception and rule, and life and death. Our idea of a camp should therefore not be restricted to historical or geographical examples; rather, camps are actual biopolitical areas in which the sovereign upholds its relationship by means of a sovereign ban or abandonment.

PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon represent the second largest community of the Palestinian diaspora, and they are the most disadvantaged and marginalized refugee community in any of the Arab host countries⁸. As of March 2023, the total number of UNRWA registered Palestine Refugees in Lebanon is 489,292 persons⁹. Majority of the registered Palestinian refugees are living in 12 UNRWA recognized refugee camps⁹. The remaining refugees were settled in informal gatherings and unofficial settlements in towns and rural areas outside the refugee camps. Because of its size, political activism history, support for the Palestinian national struggle until 1982, and geopolitical proximity to Israel, the Palestinian community in Lebanon has historical significance. More than any other Arab host nation, Lebanon has experienced severe issues since the 1948 arrival of Palestinian refugees. The Lebanese government has officially prohibited Palestinians from integrating and settling there permanently since they arrived. With its diverse Christian and Muslim groups, Lebanon is a fragile sectarian society.



As a result, Lebanon has created a special democratic system called "confessionalism" to serve the interests of many religious and ethnic communities. The Lebanese government's approach to Palestinian refugees has been impacted by the country's precarious sectarian balance. In contrast to Lebanon, where they are denied their fundamental socio-economic and civil rights, Arab host nations such as Jordan and Syria provide Palestinian refugees a variety of rights and permit them to integrate into the host society¹⁰.

The Lebanese government's discriminatory laws have prevented Palestinians from working in around 36 syndicated professions, increasing their likelihood of taking low-skilled, low-paying positions in the unorganized sector¹¹. Palestinian refugees are unable to work in the field of their choice because of unique laws and restrictions pertaining to labor unions. Many Palestinians with professional degrees and university degrees are compelled to perform manual labor that does not call for any kind of professional training. Due to their overwork, low pay, and illegal and informal sector employment, Palestinians are becoming more and more susceptible to exploitation. The exclusion of Palestinians from the advantages of Lebanon's national security plan is another act of discrimination against them. This national security plan offers maternity leave, family compensation, and coverage for illness and accidents at work. Although they are not eligible for social security benefits like maternity and family illness allowances, Palestinians employed in the formal sector are still obliged to contribute to the social security fund¹².

For Palestinians, the overall unemployment rate in 2023 is 32.3%⁹. This is around three times higher than the 11.3% national unemployment rate in Lebanon. The struggle for limited resources in the labor sector was heightened by the large-scale influx of Syrian refugees to Lebanon. Both of them are vying for the few low-skilled, low-paying jobs in the unorganized sector since the Syrian refugees are subject to the same labor limitations. Syrian refugees also pose a severe threat to Palestinians in Lebanon since they are prepared to work in physical labor and low-paying positions in the unorganized sector, where they will also put up with more exploitative conditions. Lebanon has the highest percentage of Palestinian refugees living in extreme poverty and registered with the agency's special hardship program. The vast majority of households (82.8 percent) are classified as poor because they are unable to meet the minimum level of expenditure necessary to ensure a reasonable level of basic livelihood (absolute poverty line)⁹. Other rights, such as the right to a sufficient quality of living, health care, education, and housing, are directly impacted by the severe restrictions that Palestinians face in Lebanon.

The education law of Lebanon, Law No. 686 of 1998, is another discriminatory statute that only allows Lebanese residents to get public education¹². Children and adults

who are socially and economically disenfranchised can, in fact, escape poverty and become fully engaged members of society via education. Every person, including migrants, refugees, and those who have been forcefully displaced, has the right to education as a way to overcome their vulnerabilities and struggles and to create a brighter future. According to Article 22 of the 1951 convention, signatory states must provide refugees with the same access to primary education as their citizens. In terms of education, Lebanon is a largely privatized society; according to the Danish Immigration Report (2014)¹³, around 70% of Lebanese students attend private schools. Although private schools are available to Palestinians, the majority of Palestinian households are unable to pay for them. Similar obstacles prevent Palestinians from pursuing higher education. Since it is difficult to obtain official employment in Lebanon even after completing higher school, many Palestinians are hesitant to pursue further study there.

Palestinian refugees rely heavily on UNRWA schools due to limited access to public education and the high expense of private education in Lebanon. For Palestinian refugees, UNRWA provides elementary, preparatory, and secondary education services. The UNRWA education program in Lebanon has several issues, including the changing security situation in some refugee camps, the barriers Palestinians confront on their right to work, and a lack of sufficient financing to cover education staffing and non-staffing services¹⁴. The socioeconomic situation of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is appalling. As a result, education ought to provide a means of improving their circumstances. However, the Palestinians' exclusion from the public education system by the Lebanese government means that they will never be able to empower themselves.

In April 2001, the Lebanese Parliament passed Law No. 296, an amendment that forbids Palestinians from inheriting or owning property in Lebanon (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2011). This amendment makes it clear that ownership cannot be granted to someone who is not a recognized citizen of any State or to anyone whose ownership violates the Constitution's naturalization or *tawteen* provisions. It is obvious that this law specifically targets Palestinian refugees because they are either stateless or not citizens of a recognized state, and the Lebanese government is always concerned about the permanent settlement of refugees due to their prolonged status as refugees. Since the reciprocity principle allows all other foreigners to purchase real estate in Lebanon, this law is unquestionably discriminatory against Palestinians. Furthermore, the 2001 amendment stipulates that the Lebanese government would inherit the property of the deceased Palestinian refugees, therefore those who owned property prior to 2001 will not be able to pass it on to their descendants. Poor housing conditions and a lack of infrastructure are among the issues facing Palestinian refugee camps. Palestinians are therefore



much less likely to settle outside of the camps as a result of the restrictions placed on their ability to own land. Since Palestinians are unable to purchase any real estate for their businesses, the prohibition on property ownership also has an impact on job prospects¹³.

The majority of officially recognized Palestinian refugees in Lebanon reside in one of the 12 UNRWA camps, which are all affected by severe problems such as overpopulation, inadequate housing, and insufficient infrastructure, particularly in the areas of sewage, water, and electric power¹⁵. The amount of land allotted for Palestinian refugee camps has remained unchanged since 1948, despite the country's population growth and the influx of thousands of Syrian refugees¹⁶. The ability of Palestinian refugees to enhance their living conditions is further restricted by the Lebanese government's prohibition on the entry of building materials into the camp. In the Lebanese refugee camps, Palestinian refugees endure inhumane and precarious living conditions due to a lack of essential infrastructure and housing facilities.

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon experience serious physical and mental health issues as a result of years of conflict, poverty, substandard housing, and unhealthy environment. Many places have sewage-contaminated drinking water, and dwelling conditions are characterized by high humidity, water leaks, inadequate ventilation, little sunlight, and close proximity to waste collection facilities¹⁵. These environmental factors increase the chance of chronic illnesses, respiratory infections, and other major health issues. Residents are more vulnerable since preventive healthcare services are mostly unavailable and access to medical and health support is still restricted, especially during disease outbreaks. Furthermore, older people's and people with disabilities' rights to health, dignity, and equal participation in daily life are further undermined by the lack of infrastructure to support their access to necessary services¹⁵.

The majority of the PR camps in Lebanon are heavily guarded by military checkpoints and security cordons, and since 2016, the security containment has gotten worse, especially around the camps in South Lebanon, particularly Ein ElHilweh in Saida, which is surrounded by concrete walls, iron gates, and control towers that restrict the movement of PR residents and put more psychological strain on them¹⁵. Increased security around several Palestinian refugee camps, especially in southern Lebanon and more lately in the north, has led to severe limitations on camp residents' freedom of movement, which has a direct negative impact on their day-to-day existence. These precautions include inspection checks at camp gates, traffic prohibitions at night, and occasionally daytime restrictions. The government defends these actions on security grounds, but they unfairly burden Palestinian refugees and deny them access to basic services and rights including healthcare, work, and education. The right to freedom of movement is violated by such limitations.

The physical integrity and well-being of camp occupants are directly threatened by the inability to move freely in emergency situations, such as during violent outbursts or urgent medical demands.

It is evident that Lebanon's discriminatory practices in employment, health, education, and property have left Palestinian refugees living in poverty and vulnerability. Prime Minister Saad Hariri acknowledged in December 2017 that the situation in the camp has deteriorated on all fronts and that the social and humanitarian issues facing Palestinian refugees have gotten worse over the previous few decades¹⁷. Despite admitting that the living conditions of Palestinians in Lebanon are appalling, the Lebanese government is unwilling to take any action to raise the socioeconomic status of Palestinian refugees. The Lebanese government is primarily afraid that giving civil rights may result in Palestinian refugees being granted permanent residency, which would upset the delicate sectarian balance in the country. Lebanon argues that denying the Palestinians their fundamental rights would negate their right of return. However, nations like Jordan protect Palestinian refugees' fundamental civic rights without compromising their right to return.

After the 1948 conflict, the Palestinian refugees fled to Lebanon; they did not claim the protection of their country states because they were stateless refugees. Thus, the safety and security of the Palestinians in the refugee camps is guaranteed by the Lebanese government. However, the Cairo Agreement, which was signed in 1969 between the PLO and the Lebanese government, states that the Lebanese government has no authority inside the camp. Accordingly, the Palestinians were permitted to take part in the Palestinian revolution through armed conflict and adherence to Lebanon's sovereignty and security standards. Thus, the Palestinians were given total power over the camp, establishing its enduring system of camp governance in which the security committees functioned as the camp's police force and the popular committees as its political authority¹⁸.

Palestinian armed organizations and political factions are exercising some degree of control over the majority of the Palestinian refugee camps without the Lebanese government's intervention. In addition to fighting for control, the Palestinian factions who were supposed to keep the camps safe also typically controlled the legal system within the camps. The refugee community is often impacted by political assassinations and sporadic factional violence between Palestinian and non-Palestinian groups that arise from political tensions and competition for control among armed organizations in the camp¹⁶. Regarding law enforcement in particular, no single recognized body has jurisdiction over the camps for refugees. With regular physical threats, sporadic violence between non-state armed players, and limited access to safety and justice for all camp



members, this has led to an unstable environment. The Palestinian organizations in the refugee camps operated an independent, arbitrary justice system outside of the state's purview¹⁶. Refugee camps are lawless areas or no-law zones with no Lebanese authority because no laws prohibit their functioning.

Numerous terrorist organizations are reportedly attempting to enlist Palestinians living in the camp¹⁹. Due to their social and economic marginalization and lack of hope for the future, Palestinian refugees have become susceptible to extremist beliefs. To get away from the Lebanese police, a large number of criminals from Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon sought refuge at the refugee camp. Syrians connected to DAESH who were hiding at the Burj Barajneh camp were among the suspects in the 2015 terror attack in South Beirut, which was under Hezbollah control¹⁹. The lawlessness of refugee camps is making them hubs for drug and weapon trafficking, endangering Palestinians' daily lives¹⁶.

These occurrences further damage the Palestinians' reputation in Lebanon and cause tensions in the refugee camps. The Palestinians are seen as a security danger by Lebanon, which also holds them accountable for political disputes like the Israeli invasion and the Civil War. The Lebanese government will be forced to impose additional military control and surveillance due to the violence and terrorist activity in the refugee camps. Furthermore, such events will heighten calls for the Palestinians to be barred from further political and economic endeavors and expelled from Lebanese territory. It is important to observe that Lebanon portrays the Palestinian refugee camp as a location where terrorist organizations and extremist organizations ignore and fail to solve its humanitarian issues.

The Lebanese government denies the Palestinians even the most fundamental rights, which leads to their exclusion from Lebanon's socioeconomic life. To put it another way, a number of discriminatory laws suspend or keep Palestinians outside the state's protection. By denying them access to legal protections and privileges through a sovereign ban or abandonment, the Lebanese government demonstrates its sovereign authority in the refugee camp. However, through surveillance and other control measures, refugees are integrated into the regular legal system. In addition to seeing the Palestinians as a security threat that needs to be contained, watched over, and managed, the Lebanese government will keep denying them the rights and advantages to which they are legally entitled as Lebanese citizens. The Palestinian refugees had to be detained and driven out because they were thought to pose a threat to Lebanon's security and delicate sectarian harmony. By suspending the law, the Lebanese government has made the camps an exemption. Palestinians' vulnerabilities are made worse by Lebanon's marginalization and rejection of their fundamental human rights as long-term stateless exiles.

PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMP AS SPACE OF EXCEPTION

Agamben's theory of State of exception is an appropriate framework for analysing the situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. The twelve Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon are in reality confinement zones for political exclusion and spatial segregation. According to Agamben Sovereign have the power of defining who is allowed to be part of political community and who is not. These camps, which are located on the periphery of Lebanese urban and legal institutions, established as a space to exclude and segregate the refugee population. Giorgio Agamben's idea of the camp as the "nomos of the modern," a place where the regular legal order is suspended and where people are isolated from political life but still under control, is in line with this spatial distinction. Although the Lebanese Government is not responsible for maintaining the law and order of the Country, but the refugees are continuously monitored, controlled by the Lebanese Government. Due to the lack of Lebanese authority, camps were controlled by local militia and popular committees, but they are also facing the issue of internal conflicts and political divisions which resulted in governance crisis. Therefore, no one can formally assume responsibility for the safety of Palestinians, leaving them in a state of legal limbo. Furthermore, The Palestinians' precarious and vulnerable position in Lebanon is further exacerbated by the Lebanese government's denial of them citizenship and basic civil rights. Since 1948, the Palestinians have been prohibited by the Lebanese government from owning property, engaging in over 30 occupations, and accessing Lebanese public health and educational institutions. Palestinians are portrayed as outsiders, spatially segregated and excluded from the Lebanese political and legal system. This exclusion makes Palestinians homosacer, according to Agamben, a person who can be excluded from the law without losing their position of authority. Palestinians were placed under the control of the Lebanese sovereign through monitoring and surveillance, despite the fact that the Lebanese government denies them basic civil rights and safeguards. Thus, the refugee is created as "bare life"—a human being whose existence is controlled but not acknowledged politically—rather than as a political subject.

Moreover, it should be noted that UNRWA is the most significant humanitarian organization that offers the Palestinian refugees basic services like food, medicines and educational facilities. Many of them argue that, despite the fact that their services are essential to their everyday survival, this depoliticizes them and renders them passive beneficiaries of refugee aid. In this approach, Palestinians are frequently portrayed as humanitarian aid recipients whose position is determined more by need than by citizenship or entitlement, rather than as political individuals with rights.



Giorgio Agamben's idea of state of exception helps us to see this shift as a part of a broader political logic in which immigrants are stripped of their legal, political, and representational agency and reduced to their biological existence. The Palestinians will continue to be denied the rights and privileges to which they are legally entitled as citizens of Lebanon, and they will be treated as a security threat that needs to be contained, monitored over, and controlled. The Palestinian refugees had to be detained and driven out because they were thought to pose a threat to Lebanon's security and delicate sectarian harmony. By suspending the law, the Lebanese government has made the camps an exemption. Palestinians' vulnerabilities are made worse by Lebanon's marginalization and rejection of their fundamental human rights as long-term stateless exiles. The Palestinians struggle to preserve their identity in light of the loss of their homeland and the challenges of being refugees, despite leading a "bare life" in Lebanon. In order to survive and reinforce their identities and return to their homes in Palestine, the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have developed a variety of coping mechanisms as a result of their prolonged presence and suffering in the country. Because they see Palestine as a location where they might regain their identity, rights, and security, the younger generation of Palestinian refugees continues to identify as Palestinian. In this way, despite being intended as places of exclusion, the refugee camps serve as places of resistance where, in the face of ongoing statelessness and structural oppression, political identity is actively recreated in addition to being preserved.

CONCLUSION

Agamben's state of exception can be used to analyze the condition of the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. They are exclusionary spaces where refugees are denied citizenship and basic legal rights and are kept aside from Lebanese law and society. Palestinian refugee camps were considered as lawless areas where Lebanese Government lacks official authority but through many informal ways Lebanese government exercise sovereignty over the refugee population by monitoring and controlling them. The suspension of legal norms and the lack of official protections reduce Palestinian refugees to what Agamben refers to as "bare life"—lives that are controlled biologically but politically excluded. UNRWA is the only humanitarian organization responsible for providing Palestinian refugees basic humanitarian services, but it also depoliticizes the refugee community in many ways. By portraying Palestinians as passive recipients of aid rather than political agents, UNRWA's services, while vital to the survival of refugees, perpetuate a biopolitical paradigm that prioritizes survival over agency and need above rights.

However, despite living in this exceptional space, Palestinian refugees have evolved coping mechanisms and political practices of resistance that contest their reduction

to bare life. The depoliticizing impacts of humanitarian administration and legal uncertainty are offset by the collective need for return, the memory of the Nakba, and the generational transfer of identity. Refugees use ordinary actions of survival, cultural reproduction, and political imagination based on the desire of return to express their agency rather than through official political engagement. Agamben's concept is thus both complicated and exemplified by the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. They show the boundaries of sovereign power even as they mirror the structural circumstances of the state of exception, such as political exclusion, legal suspension, and the production of bare life. It should be noted that Palestinian identity has still persisted over these years within this exclusionary and marginalised environment. Thus, the camps function as both places of exclusion and places of resiliency, where the fight for justice, dignity, and return goes on and statelessness does not equate to voicelessness.

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