



ICLA

INFORMATION, COUNSELLING & LEGAL ASSISTANCE

NORWEGIAN
REFUGEE COUNCIL

NRC



Photo: Joshua Benson



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Background

NRC's ICLA programme in Lebanon started in 2012, assisting Palestinian refugees and expanded to respond to legal protection challenges faced by refugees from Syria. Obtaining legal residency and civil documentation can be complex, expensive, and difficult to access for displaced populations. ICLA services help refugees navigate these processes, raise awareness of refugees' rights in Lebanon, and conduct advocacy on protection priorities.

Syrian refugees must renew their legal residency annually for a fee of 200 USD per person above 15 years of age. A partial fee waiver introduced in 2017 has to date not brought major improvements, with 73% of Syrians not holding legal residency. This results in refugees living with severely restricted freedom of movement and limited access to rights and services. Access to civil documentation such as birth and marriage registration remains challenging for most refugees due to lack of information on procedures, inability to cover fees, restricted freedom of movement and lack of required documents.

At the request of the Government, UNHCR registration was discontinued in early 2015, leaving many Syrians without registration and thus with more limited access to legal residency, humanitarian aid and resettlement.

NRC Lebanon ICLA Response

NRC's ICLA programme provides assistance to refugees through more than 40 legal clinics and conducts mobile legal clinics that travel to refugee communities throughout Lebanon. Clinics provide group information sessions as well as individual counselling, followed by direct legal assistance, as needed. The ICLA programme covers civil documentation (birth, marriage, divorce and death registration), legal residency, and housing, land and property (HLP) rights.

NRC's ICLA teams include programme staff across Lebanon, and contracted lawyers. ICLA is one of the main responders to referrals for legal services. In an effort to overcome the movement restrictions that many refugees face, NRC facilitates mobile sessions of Sharia courts that mainly cover proof of marriage cases related to helping refugees register children born in Lebanon.

ICLA services also work to address legal challenges faced by the Palestinian refugee community in Lebanon, mostly related to housing and property rights, and select civil documentation issues.



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ICLA Programme Reach in 2018

-  257,149 refugees received information, counselling or legal assistance
-  22,156 group information sessions provided
-  16,437 children assisted with obtaining birth registration
-  7,694 couples assisted with marriage registration
-  9,530 individuals assisted with legal stay/residency issues
-  215,208 total supported beneficiaries:
 - 135,594 females supported
 - 79,614 males supported



Ongoing ICLA Modalities

The ICLA programme is implemented through several complementary projects benefitting vulnerable Syrian refugees and Palestinian refugees from Syria and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, consisting of the following modalities:

Outreach and awareness: Information on the main procedures for birth and marriage registration and legal residency is provided to refugees through group information sessions (GIS). These sessions regularly identify cases that require counselling or legal assistance follow-up. Sensitive protection issues or complex cases are referred to relevant actors.

Counselling: Individual confidential counselling by lawyers on civil documentation, legal residency and/or housing rights.

Legal representation: In select priority cases, lawyers represent refugees in front of a court or administrative body. In routine administrative procedures, staff represent refugees, especially when refugees face movement restrictions.

Collaborative dispute resolution: When housing-related disputes arise, NRC facilitates the resolution of these disputes, including threats of eviction.

Capacity building of local officials (including mukhtars and nofous offices) and protection/humanitarian actors on legal protection issues affecting refugees.

ICLA for shelter: provision of legal services to people benefiting from NRC's shelter programme.

Referrals: Identification and referral of protection issues to specialized agencies.

Legal coordination: Coordination with other legal service providers to ensure geographic and thematic coverage of most vulnerable refugee communities, and to enhance joint analysis of legal challenges and strengthens advocacy initiatives on priority concerns.

2019 Strategic focus

In 2019 the NRC ICLA programme is adjusting its interventions to the current and future return context, seeking to ensure that refugees from Syria are able to make informed decisions and can secure their civil documentation before a potential return to Syria. Focuses will include importance of death registration, which has a direct impact on reclaiming property left behind in Syria, as well as specific challenges related to lack of legal residency and exit procedures from Lebanon. The programme will further strengthen its response to major protection challenges such as child marriage or the situation of persons with disabilities.

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