

7.7.4 Cross-border movements and returns

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In May 2024, Lebanon's General Directorate of General Security announced a stop on the renewal[878] or issuance of residency permits through housing lease contracts, sponsorship and financial guarantees,[879] heightening vulnerabilities for this group of Palestinians.[880]

The major escalation of aerial attacks by Israeli forces in September 2024 prompted large waves of people to cross the border into Syria,[881] including thousands of Syrian Palestinians.[882] General Security later announced facilitating the departure of Palestinians (and Syrians) irrespective of their legal status or conditions at initial entry.[883]

Following the fall of Assad's rule in Syria,[884] Lebanon's national plan on returns to Syria, presented by UNHCR in April 2025, anticipated the return of up to 400 000 people, including 5 000 Palestinians from Syria, by year's end.[885] In July 2025, the General Security waived exit fees, overstay fines, and bans on re-entry for all Syrians and Syrian Palestinian refugees wishing to return to Syria.[886] These waivers, valid for three months until 30 September 2025, allowed Syrians and Palestinian residents of Syria who entered Lebanon illegally or overstayed their legal stay to return to Syria via official border crossings without being subjected to fees, fines, or bans on future re-entry into Lebanon.[887] Jaber Suleiman, a Palestinian independent researcher and consultant, reported in October 2025 in correspondence with the EUAA that Syrian Palestinians in Lebanon holding Syrian documents were able to return to Syria and that their return was moreover encouraged by the Lebanese authorities in order to diminish their numbers in the country.[888] The same month, UNHCR launched its Self-Organized Voluntary Repatriation Programme, followed by the joint launch by UNHCR and IOM of an Organized Voluntary Repatriation Programme in August 2025.[889] For more detailed information on these programmes, see section 7.6.4 Return procedures.

As for travel documentation, the General Directorate of General Security explains on its website that since 2016, Palestinian refugees have been issued biometric passports registered under their refugee status.[890] These travel documents were issued to Palestinian refugees registered with both UNRWA and the DPAR[891] (an entity that is part of the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities and is directly linked to General Security and the Ministry of National Defense)[892] and to those without UNRWA registration if they were registered with the DPAR.[893] The travel documents for registered Palestinians remained valid for one, three or five years.[894] Regarding undocumented Palestinians, the Palestinian Embassy in Lebanon, in coordination with Lebanese authorities, has been providing Palestinian passports/travel documents since 2011 that allow these individuals to travel abroad.[895] As for possibilities for Palestinians from Lebanon to return to Lebanon from abroad, Suleiman reported in October 2025, in correspondence with the EUAA,

that in principle, holders of such travel documents are eligible to leave and come back to Lebanon without restrictions, because this is part of Lebanon's legal obligations under the Casablanca Protocol (1965) issued by the Arab League. However, this right of Palestinian refugees to freedom of movement has occasionally been subjected to violation.[896]A report by Asylos quoted Jasmin Lilian Diab, Director of the Institute for Migration Studies at the Lebanese American University (Beirut), as saying in October 2022 that Palestinians who had left Lebanon were 'always at risk of not being permitted to re-enter'. According to her, such re-entry was 'less likely' if they were in possession of a Palestine refugee document issued by the Lebanese authorities. But those who had left Lebanon through irregular means, or those whose asylum application was rejected in a third country, were typically not allowed to re-entry into Lebanon. [897] No information could be found specifically addressing the possibilities for Syrian Palestinians with Syrian documents to return to Syria.

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