



## Refugee Case Study in Lebanon

February 25, 2017

After visiting the Syrian refugee camp in the Bekaa-Barelias area in Lebanon, together with Tykn's foreign advisor [Randa Al-Rifai](#), we listened to the countless problems refugees there are facing. Even though this refugee camp is aided by the UN and other organisations (both international and local), they still face complex issues in the struggle to have their basic rights fulfilled, and have a staggering shortage of basic necessities on top of this.



The photo on the left was taken by us on location; 60 families are living in this refugee camp, where every family is made up of two parents and at least three children. Here, financial problems are leading to health problems and shortage of food; families are unable to take their children to the clinic each time the child is sick, because most of the times they pay the charges knowing that they are already facing financial crisis.

When a child visits the clinic, the parents pay between \$2 and \$10 for a simple check-up. They receive the required medicine or ailment from the clinic if it happens to be available at the time; if not, the parents will have to buy it separately at a pharmacy, at further personal expense.

### Case Study

#### Kholoud: A Pregnant Woman's Journey

Kholoud is a Syrian refugee who is registered with the **UNHCR**, living in the Bekaa-Barelias camp alongside her husband and three daughters, where the **UNHCR** aids in providing basic medical services. Kholoud shared with us her journey and struggles relating to the birth of her last-born daughter.

Whilst Kholoud is registered with the **UNHCR**, her husband is not, since he is a male who, in the eyes of the state, can still earn money from working a job. Unfortunately, his case is the same as many other refugees, in that he does not have the geographic mobility to work, effectively meaning that only Kholoud and their three daughters can be registered with **UNHCR**.

## Acquiring a Birth Certificate

Kholoud delivered her baby in the presence of a midwife, at a hospital in the Bekaa-Barelias area; a clinic which she had visited multiple times before the actual delivery, the costs of which were shared with the **UN**, due to her registration with the **UNHCR**, as seen below.

After the birth, the parents get a "Notification of Birth" from the hospital, stamped by the present doctor. Then parents take this document to the "Mukhtar" (head of the village/area), who transforms this notification into an actual birth certificate, certifying the:

- Name of the child
- Place of birth
- Date of birth
- Nationality
- Name of the parents
- Year of birth of the parents
- Names of witnesses to the birth
- Doctor who delivered the baby, including the name and professional title, date and signature of said doctor
- Place of residence of the parents

UNHCR  
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
UNHCR Office in Zahr  
Bekaa-Barelias area, Industrial City Roundabout  
Zahr - Baalbeck highway, Lebanon

شهادة تسجيل  
تاريخ الميلاد: [redacted]  
تاريخ التسجيل: [redacted]  
تاريخ الميلاد: [redacted]  
تاريخ الميلاد: [redacted]

Registration Certificate  
Date of issue: [redacted] 2016  
File Number: [redacted]  
Name: [redacted] Kholoud Ahmad  
Date of Birth: [redacted] 1984  
Country of Origin: Syrian Arab Republic

To Whom it May Concern:  
This is to certify that the above named person is registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), pursuant to its mandate.

This person's situation and contact information are known to the UNHCR who is ensuring extension of services to persons under its mandate. Any assistance accorded to the persons named herein would be most appreciated.

كما يؤكد على أن وضع الشخص المذكور أعلاه وبياناته الشخصية معروفة في هذه المنطقة من خلال الأمانة السورية للأمم المتحدة لتسهيل الشؤون الإنسانية التي من أنواع المساعدة التي توفر للأشخاص المتضررة استكمالهم في هذه المنطقة مرصداً به كل الشخص.

Questions regarding the information contained in this document may be directed to UNHCR at the address above.

This document is valid until: 2018  
The following documents are also required under the same file number:  
[redacted] Daughter: [redacted] 2018  
[redacted] Daughter: [redacted] 2005

Secure Paper Serial No: [redacted]

The costs of getting a signature from the Mukhtar are that of the 250 LBP (± \$0.1650) stamp and a payment of 20,000 LBP or \$13 to the Mukhtar, by the parents. This, of course, excludes any external costs incurred by having to travel and make an appointment with the Mukhtar.

## Barriers to Registration

When asked the question "Do you think it's important to register your child?" Kholoud replied: "Of course! My daughter should be recognised as an official, legal person with proof that she exists!"

This, however, turns into an incredibly complex procedure once the child has passed the age of one. Upon asking Kholoud why, she replied: "A lawyer associated with a Norwegian organisation told me that at age of one, the child needs a civil court to be registered; the lawyer takes the notification document from the Mukhtar to the Lebanese General Forces".

When the documents finally reach the Lebanese General Forces and have been stamped, the documents are subsequently forwarded to the Syrian Embassy in Lebanon. Unfortunately, if the documents have reached this phase, the parents often face another problem, which is renewing their own official documents as refugees, costing up to 300,000LBP or \$200. If not renewed, the Syrian Embassy will not register the child.



Kholoud herself mentioned that her one year old daughter is still not registered; if they would go back to Syria at any time, for any reason, this child would have no official documents to cross the borders! Kholoud has been waiting since December 2016 for a lawyer to finish registering her one year old daughter. So, before the age of one the child is unrecognised, not even legally existent.

Usually, the family tries to take the Notification of Birth to the Lebanese General Forces or Embassy themselves before the child turns one, but in this case, the father was too scared to go past the military stops, since his own documents had not been renewed yet, and they did not have the funds to do so. This is the same issue that limits his geographic mobility to the extent where he cannot work and earn money for his family.

*"Lyn" (secretly known as "Batgirl") is one of the lucky few children in the refugee camp to actually have an official birth certificate (pictured above)."*

However, since then, a new initiative has been put in place where the cost of renewing the documents of the parents are now passed on to supporting international organisations, which in turn significantly improves the chance of children to be registered. Whilst this is a great step forward, there is still a lot of work to be done, since this new initiative has also caused the formation of a sizeable waiting list for those wanting to gain access to lawyers.

Finally, one more important piece of information Kholoud shared with us was that the grand majority of people inside the camp actually have smartphones\*, and also a fair internet connection within the camp. This delighted us greatly, since it opens up a myriad of opportunities in providing help to these people, hopefully in a very near future.

\*These claims have been confirmed by a study conducted by Newcastle University in collaboration with the American University of Beirut and Microsoft Research UK: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/research/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/p331-talhok.pdf>