Palestinian professionals in Lebanon: an exception

Palestine refugees in Lebanon, being classified as foreigners or migrants, suffer restrictions on their employment. Generally, non-Lebanese nationals who want to work in the professions in Lebanon can do so under the ‘principle of reciprocity’ between nations. However, Palestinians were excluded due to the fact that this principle presupposes the existence of a legally recognised state with which to have a reciprocal relationship. So the Lebanese Ministry of Labour had the Cabinet approve an interpretation of the law to grant an exception to Palestinian workers – provided that they were born on Lebanese territory and officially registered with the Lebanese Ministry of Interior.

However, problems remain for Palestinians. The reciprocity principle entitles foreign workers to obtain work permits or receive social security benefits provided that their state grants the same benefits to Lebanese workers. But the law did not take into account the fact that the Palestinian refugees have no state, and there are cases where the rights provided for in the Labour Code are denied, citing the non-availability of reciprocity, despite Lebanon having ratified the 1958 Convention on the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation. Whatever the normative position, there have been warnings of the risk, both in human terms and in terms of security, of exclusion of Palestinians from the Lebanese labour market. The work to provide for the rights of self-employed Palestinian workers in professions in Lebanon is a central part of the struggle to provide civil rights for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

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Doing business in Ecuador

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Engaging refugees in the economic development of Ecuador’s Esmeraldas Province would provide them with livelihoods and also combat the perception that they are a burden on society.

Esmeraldas, one of Ecuador’s least developed provinces, has seen the arrival of over 6,000 refugees and 18,000 asylum seekers in the past ten years, mostly from the Pacific Coast of Colombia. Their considerable humanitarian needs have only increased over time, as have negative local attitudes towards them.

In the complex environment of Esmeraldas with its high unemployment rates and scant industry, UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency) has engaged with government, private sector, social entrepreneurs, NGOs and academic and financial institutions in a programme that is the first of its kind in Ecuador. The goal of this initiative is to help make refugees economic actors in their communities and agents of their own integration in Ecuador, while also contributing to the development of the province by generating employment and supporting the creation of small businesses.

The programme concentrates resources on increasing production, manufacturing and service activities, supporting markets and establishing a ‘business incubator’ to foment private sector development with a social component – in other words, the development of small enterprises that create employment and wealth for refugees and the local community.

The business incubator

The business incubator concept refers to an entity that helps new and start-up companies develop capacities to become successful. In North America, a number of business incubators have been set up in major business