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## 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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