

LEBANON'S NATIONAL APPROACH FOR MANAGING THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS



Lebanon's migrant integration differs significantly from the norm.

**Globally, there are 280 million migrants seeking better opportunities .
Approximately 40 million of them are refugees displaced by conflict or natural disasters.**

In Lebanon, Syrian refugees now exceed half of the resident population. Integrating such a monolithic , growing migrant group into Lebanon's society cannot realistically be an option. This mass migration has prompted numerous Lebanese, especially young generation, to leave the country at an alarming rate..

Within a generation, the inevitable outcome of such a policy risks diluting Lebanon's contracting and aging citizenry with a rapidly growing Syrian majority, jeopardizing its national identity.



Despite verbal commitments to Lebanon's perpetuity, stability and security, the international community's actions paint a different picture.

Discord with the Syrian government, divergent refugee policies and lack of border control efforts collectively threaten Lebanon's stability, economy, social peace, cohesion, and ultimately, it's very **EXISTENCE**.

Causing huge demographic change in a very delicate multi religious and sectarian country

Abuse of subsidized resources causing more pressure on treasury and debt

Increasing animosity between Lebanese and Syrians

A Burden of unprecedented magnitude with dire consequences


The Syrian conflict triggered the largest refugee exodus, with Lebanon shouldering the highest per capita refugee burden. This has severely strained the country's healthcare, education, transportation, water and sanitation, power supply, waste management, environmental impact and law enforcement.

Despite not signing the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, Lebanon has taken on the role of a **transit** nation for displaced individuals, driven by humanitarian and moral obligations. However, funding limitations pose the primary obstacle in addressing the profound humanitarian, social and economic crisis and meeting the escalating needs of vulnerable populations.

In 2023, only **37%** of the 3,6 billion \$ appeal was funded, comprising \$939.4 million received in 2023 and \$397.7 million from carry over and multi-year funds received in 2022.

A remarkable diminishing support





UNHCR notified the Lebanese health ministry of its intention to cut refugee health coverage in half due to recent global crises. This decision is attributed to successive global crises in recent years. The reduction in support will adversely impact Syrians' access to essential services.

A new uniform cost model in the educational sector was implemented from the academic year 2023-2024. Fees are set at 80\$ per non-Lebanese child and 40\$ per Lebanese child. Official schools report a 40% enrollment of non-Lebanese children.

Health security is critical due to epidemics like hepatitis A and impetigo in Syrian camps. UNICEF has decreased individual drinking water allocation from 20 liters to 12 liters per day. The sewage water extraction mechanism has significantly deteriorated, exacerbating the situation.



The maximum amount that refugee families can receive from UNHCR and the World Food Program combined is 115\$ per family.
As for 2023, 33% of refugees were receiving cash assistance from the United Nations.



The annual birth rate of Syrians constitutes 40% of the total birth rate in Lebanon.



According to the latest studies, the percentage of Syrians in Lebanon could exceed 40% of the total population by 2038.

51,9% of displaced Syrians are under 20
39,6% of Lebanese are under 20



Severely damaging water infrastructure by random drilling



83% of Syrians in Lebanon do not have residency permits.

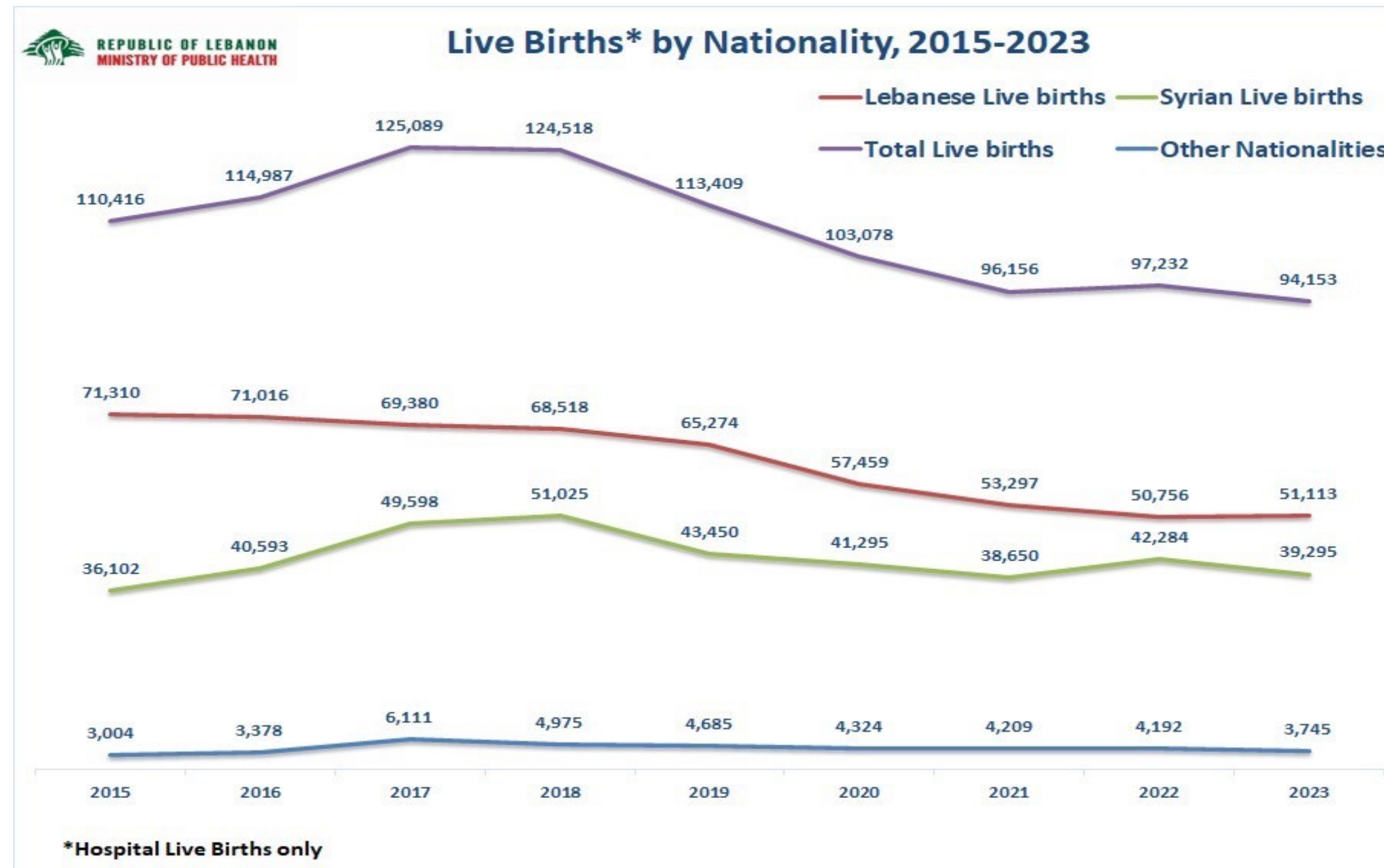


In 2023, the return of 10,130 displaced people to Syria was recorded, a low number compared to 2019 when more than 23,000 were returned.



Syrian students make up 44% of the total number in official schools for both the morning and afternoon shifts.

- The General Directorate of General Security, tasked with admitting and overseeing foreigners' stay in the country, has reported that Lebanon hosts a total of 2,800,000 Syrians nationals. This figure continues to rise annually due to thousands of births among Syrians, **reaching 39,000 in 2023 compared to 65,000 for Lebanese births**



- However, it's apparent that the number of Syrian births exceeds official hospital records for various reasons :



UNHCR reduced healthcare coverage expenses for Syrians in 2018, which explains the decrease in hospital births from 51,025 in 2018 to 39,295 in 2023.

Studies show that the under-five mortality rate among Syrians is 43%, compared to 4% for Lebanese. Research consistently indicates that higher birth rates correlate with increased infant and child mortality.

Some births occur inside the camps or within Syrian territories.

The average fertility rate in Syria from 2013 to 2023 stood at 2,9. With approximately 450,000 women aged 15-49 in the reproductive age group, this translates to an estimated 1,500,000 births over the past 11 years.

Syrians legal status

UNHCR unilaterally granted “refugee” status to 1,486,000 individuals, a term not recognized by Lebanon. According to international legal lexicon, the right designation should be “**DISPLACED**”.

886,000 REGISTERED by UNHCR between 2011 and 2015.

-Registration card to receive financial aid.
-Entitled to legal protection.


600,000 RECORDED when the Government requested UNHCR to halt the registration process due to large-scale Syrian influx.

-A code allowing their identification and receipt of aid
-Are not entitled to legal protection

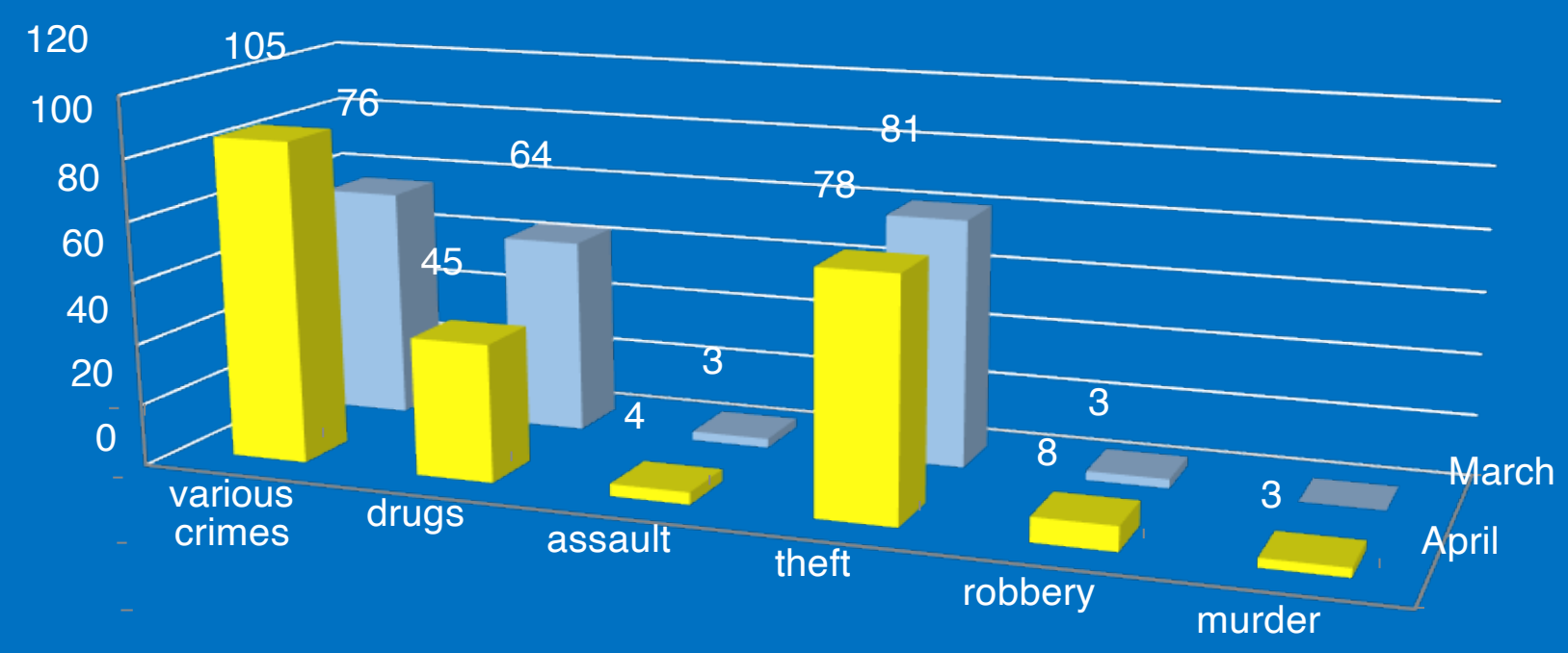
Approximately **594,000** Syrian individuals reside in Lebanon under various statuses, including workers, business owners, students, visitors and spouses of Lebanese citizens. Some have overstayed their residence permits or entered the country illegally.

Initially employed in construction, seasonal agriculture and industry, these individuals used to send their earnings back to their families. However, a shift has occurred where entire families, led by the worker or household head, have relocated to settle in Lebanon, regardless of labor market demands.

Urgent need for a policy to address the displaced Syrians presence

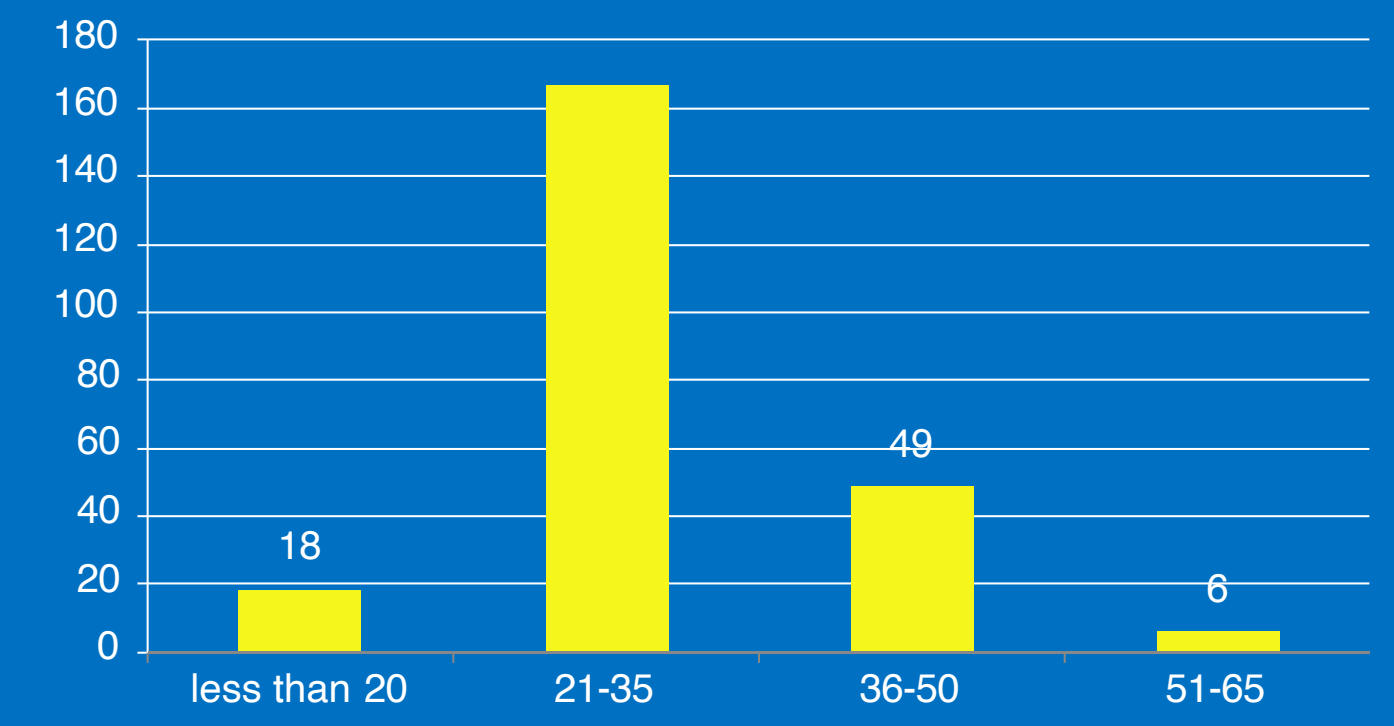
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- Deporting Syrians convicted of crimes through a process adhering to international standards is imperative. The substantial presence of Syrians in Lebanese prisons exacerbates the prison crisis and strains the state's finances.
 - Syrians represent 30,7% (2,511) of the prison population, comprising nearly one-third of all inmates (8,189) .
 - The influx adds pressure on food and medical resources and contributes to the backlog of cases in Lebanon courts.

Crime increasing rate due to extreme poverty



Various crimes :forgery-fraud-bounced checks-
human traffickling and -traffic violations...


Age group distribution



The majority of Syrian detainees, approximately 77%, are under the age of 35, highlighting a serious social indicator.




Revoking the UNHCR – bestowed “refugee” status on registered I recorded displaced who cross the border back-and-forth into Syria (which requires major investment in technology , equipments and border control framework) .




Discussions with UNHCR for more refugee **data** yielded no results . That failure to cooperate constitutes a violation of legal and diplomatic principles governing the work of international organizations in Lebanon . Simultaneously, General Security and municipalities were directed to start gathering detailed data on Syrian refugees . This will cover names , family sizes , entry dates into Lebanon, whether they entered legally or illegally,, their Syrian origins , and any political or security issues.




The minority among UNHCR’s 1,486,000 displaced who are fleeing for their lives should be considered for **asylum and timely resettlement to third countries open for immigration**



For the 594,000 Syrian workers already employed in Lebanon, ensure their legal status, alignment with Lebanon’s economic needs, and prevent unfair competition with local workers and businesses. This mitigates social conflicts and fosters trust with host communities.




The majority, who are seeking improved livelihoods, should be considered for **repatriation arrangements**, as they do not face significant threats in Syria, especially considering that **many areas are now safe.**



Lebanon needs to reassess the institutional and logistical arrangements for registered / recorded Syrians, with authorities leading efforts in coordination with UNHCR and donors as seen in neighboring Jordan and Turkey . All agencies should operate under Government guidance and a clear roadmap. UNHCR must keep authorities informed of the following:

Its implementation plans regarding the number of displaced Syrians to be **resettled in third countries**, the expected period it could take and alternative solutions for those not granted resettlement (as per the **agreement between The General Security and UNHCR approved by Decree No.1162 dated 10/30/2003**)

The donor communities policies to ensure ongoing funding for the Syrians until their return home. In fact, UNHCR is facing significant financial challenges. As a result, support for Syrian refugees in Lebanon has been reduced. This will affect more than 88,000 families (400,000 people) while aid will continue for approximately 190,000 families, which means that support will be completely cut off for some families and will continue for others, representing a 32% decrease in the number of beneficiaries.



Starting the registration processes at their three levels (residences, marriages and births) including facilitating the registration of marriages and births despite the loss of Syrians identification documents. This is to avoid the risk arising from cases of unregistered individuals especially since the registration rate of births amount displaced persons did not exceed %36 by the end of 2022 .

In fact , one of the biggest challenges in Lebanon is that of tens of thousands of refugee children born in host countries **not being registered** . Without official papers establishing their identity and rights to Syrian nationality , the children could face a life of statelessness and deprivation of basic rights including education , freedom of movement and the right to cross borders .



Consolidating the myriad of informal settlements of displaced Syrians into formal organized centers on public land .

Optimize aid delivery by the donor community

Protect natural sites and reduce environmental degradations as the existing settlements are largely dispersed in agricultural fields and along waterways that have become dumps for untreated effluents and solid wastes .

The formal camps , being near the border, it will allow field coordination with the Syrian authorities and facilitate the journey home for displaced Syrians.

These are the next steps the Lebanese government will be taking:

1. All Syrians in Lebanon will be treated as foreigners, and all related laws on foreigners will apply to them.
2. The data requested by the GSO from UNHCR is a national sovereign right, and is of high importance for the segmentation and classifications of Syrians in Lebanon. The Lebanese Government has the full right to request this data and to use it to organize the Syrian presence in Lebanon.
3. Syrians who entered legally before 2011 and have expired residency and work permits should reapply to make their status legal.
4. The UNHCR should reassess the number of recorded and registered Syrians to identify who is a refugee and who is an economic migrant.
5. Any registered or recorded Syrian who leaves Lebanon illegally by sea or legally through the land borders to Syria will not be allowed reentry into Lebanon, and should lose their UNHCR registration status.
6. Efforts to voluntarily return Syrians to Syria will be increased.

These are the next steps the Lebanese government will be taking:

7. Syrians who entered Lebanon illegally and are not registered nor recorded by UNHCR will be deported.
8. The GSO and UNHCR will coordinate to ensure no Syrian deported back to Syria will face the risk of prosecution upon their return.
9. The Lebanese government will be working on anti-smuggling regulations.
10. The Lebanese government will seek international assistance for the implementation of its Anti-Trafficking law.
11. The Lebanese Government will be working through its security institutions to strengthen its border control and border management.

Let's work on this together for a better future for Lebanon & the region.

The background is a blue-tinted photograph of a city skyline, likely Hong Kong, with numerous high-rise buildings. A large flag, possibly the flag of the Chinese People's Association for Democracy and Freedom, is flying in the foreground, partially obscuring the buildings. The text "Thank You!" is centered over the image in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

Thank You!