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## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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The Board		29 October 2009
About the Board	<b>ZZZ103297.E</b>	
Biographies		
Organization Chart	Lebanon and Syria: Documents required by Syrians to reside and/or work in Lebanon; whether Syrians residing in Lebanon are required to return periodically to Syria to meet residency requirements of either Lebanese or Syrian authorities	
Employment	Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa	
Legal and Policy References		
Publications	Information on documents required by Lebanese or Syrian authorities to allow Syrians to reside in Lebanon could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. However, the following information regarding documentation requirements for Syrians to work in Lebanon may be useful.	
Tribunal		
Refugee Protection Division		
Immigration Division	Articles published by the United Nations (UN) Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) report that Syrian workers do not require a visa to enter Lebanon (UN 3 Dec. 2007; <i>ibid.</i> 13 Apr. 2009). In his book, <i>The Invisible Cage: Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon</i> , John Chalcraft, a Reader at the London School of Economics, indicates that the 1994 Bilateral Labour Agreement established joint border offices in Lebanon and Syria granting entry and temporary permits to seasonal workers (Chalcraft 2009, 141). Although Syrian workers are supposed to obtain contracts specifying requirements such as wages, hours, and length of contract, the work contract is not a condition of the work permit and, in practice, Syrian workers only need to state that they are temporary workers to be issued a stamped card and allowed across the border ( <i>ibid.</i> ). Chalcraft claims that, in practice, many Syrian workers do not obtain work permits and "were waved in and out of the country by the busload, whether or not they showed their 'red card'" ( <i>ibid.</i> , 145, 146). According to the <i>Middle East Quarterly</i> , an American journal on Middle Eastern affairs (n.d.), in 2005 the Lebanese government could not limit the number of Syrian workers in Lebanon, even though they did not pay taxes or permit fees as required by other foreign workers in Lebanon ( <i>Middle East Quarterly</i> Fall 2005). On 8 November 2005, the Lebanese newspaper <i>Daily Star</i> reported that the Lebanese Labour Ministry planned to open special border posts to register Syrian workers, issue work permits (for an unspecified price), and require Syrians to pay the same taxes as other foreign workers. However, the Labour Minister conceded that it would be difficult to enforce the rules and control the borders ( <i>Daily Star</i> 8 Nov. 2005). IRIN reports that almost none of the estimated 300,000 Syrian workers in Lebanon have official status; in 2006 the Labour Ministry issued only 471 work permits to Syrian nationals, while the remaining Syrian workers were unregistered (UN 13 Apr. 2009). Sources indicate that as of 2009, Syrian workers in Lebanon remained unregulated ( <i>ibid.</i> ; Chalcraft 2009, 224-225; <i>Mideast Monitor</i> 19 Oct. 2009).	
Immigration Appeal Division		
Decisions		
Forms		
Statistics		
Research		
Research Program		
National Documentation Packages		
Issue Papers and Country Fact Sheets		
Responses to Information Requests		
Recent Research		
Media Centre		
News		
Information Sheets		
Media Relations		
Proactive Disclosure		

Information on documentation that Syrian authorities require of Syrian workers wishing to work or travel in Lebanon could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate on 19 October 2009, an editor of *Mideast Monitor*, a non-profit publication that provides political analysis on Middle East issues (n.d.), alleged that Syrian authorities likely exercise jurisdiction over who can exit Syria to work in Lebanon. The London-based Syrian Human Rights Committee (SHRC) indicates that many Syrians have been banned from leaving Syria because of "security concerns"; they include political activists and relatives of detainees (SHRC Jan. 2009, 41). Similarly, the United States (US) Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008* indicates that the Syrian government banned "more than 100 critics of the regime, human rights activists, political reformers, and civil society leaders from leaving the country" (US 25 Feb. 2009, Sec. 2d). SHRC cites two cases where Syrian authorities denied Syrian nationals from travelling to Lebanon (SHRC Jan. 2009, 41, 43). In one case, on 3 March 2008, six Syrian Kurdish workers were detained at the border, were not allowed to travel to their workplace in Lebanon and were referred to the intelligence services (ibid., 41). In another case, in November 2008 a human rights activist with both Syrian and Lebanese citizenship was not allowed to travel to Lebanon to visit her family (ibid., 43).

Information on whether Syrians residing in Lebanon are required to return to Syria to meet residency requirements of either the Lebanese or Syrian authorities could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

#### References

Chalcraft, John. 2009. *The Invisible Cage: Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

*Daily Star* [Beirut]. 8 November 2005. John Thorne. "New Permit Plan for Syrian Workers; Increased Labor Cost Likely to be Reflected in Higher Housing Prices." (Factiva)

*Middle East Quarterly*. Fall 2005. Gary C. Gambill. "Syria After Lebanon: Hooked on Lebanon." <<http://www.meforum.org/769/syria-after-lebanon-hooked-on-lebanon>> [Accessed 16 Oct. 2009]

\_\_\_\_\_. N.d. "The Middle East Quarterly." <<http://www.meforum.org/meq/>> [Accessed 23 Oct. 2009]

*Mideast Monitor*. 19 October 2009. Telephone interview with editor.

\_\_\_\_\_. N.d. "About Mideast Monitor." <<http://www.mideastmonitor.org/about.htm>> [Accessed 27 Oct. 2009]

Syrian Human Rights Committee (SHRC). January 2009. *SHRC Eighth Annual Report on Human Rights Status in Syria*. <<http://www.shrc.org/data/pdf/ANNUALREPORT2009.pdf>> [Accessed 15 Oct. 2009]

United Nations (UN). 13 April 2009. "Wretched Conditions for Syrian Workers." <<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83900>> [Accessed 8 Oct. 2009]

\_\_\_\_\_. 3 December 2007. Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN).

"Syrian Workers Living 'in a World of Enemies'."

<<http://www.irinnews.org/PrintReport.aspx?ReportId=75651>> [Accessed 8 Oct. 2009]

United States (US). 25 February 2009. Department of State. "Syria." *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008*.

<<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/nea/119127.htm>> [Accessed 23 Oct. 2009]

#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Attempts to reach officials at the Embassy of Lebanon in Ottawa and the Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic in Ottawa were unsuccessful within the time constraints of this Response.

**Internet sites, including:** *Al Bawaba*, *Al Jazeera*, Amnesty International (AI), European Country of Origin Network (ecoi.net), Human Rights First (HRF), Human Rights Watch (HRW), Insitute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), International Crisis Group, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Refworld, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

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