

## Joint Statement

**Regarding the measures taken  
by UNHCR and the Lebanese  
Government to prevent the  
spread of the COVID-19 virus  
in Syrian refugee camps**

**SNHR**

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Saturday, March 28, 2020

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, independent group that is considered a primary source for the OHCHR on all death toll-related analyses in Syria.

Following the Lebanese Government's decision of "limiting mobilization" to prevent the spread of COVID-19, taking preventive measures and imposing curfew to ensure the health of its residents as of March 15, 2020, all the organizations that worked on this statement, observed the general preventive measures and procedures to be taken by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Lebanon (UNHCR) to protect Syrian refugees in the camps.

Three COVID-19 cases were registered among Syrian refugees, and we are concerned about their inability to access the appropriate health care and the necessary referral mechanism to diagnose laboratory cases. It's the responsibility of the UNHCR and medical agencies working with refugees to provide them with the necessary medical care and take the necessary precautions to avoid new cases

While the signatories of this statement welcome the cooperation of the Lebanese government with the security forces through curfew implementation in Lebanon, it has come to our attention that some Lebanese municipalities have adopted circulars containing discriminatory language targeting Syrian refugees, including decisions and instructions of staying inside the camps and adhering to the Ministry of Health instructions to restrict mobility, cancel social occasions, reduce gatherings, and not receiving visitors. Although these measures are being applied to all local residents and not only to Syrian refugees, this discriminatory language may increase the tension between the host and refugee communities especially during this pandemic.

During these circumstances, the Lebanese community, in several towns, has shown very positive and responsible initiatives supporting Syrian refugees such as exempting them of house rentals due to their work suspension based on governmental preventive measures of closing shops, institutions, and workshops.



While the signatories' parties welcome these procedures, they have great concerns regarding implementing these measures in a discriminatory manner against Syrian refugees. Moreover, refugees' accessibility to health services depends on their legal status and the services provided by the UNHCR and the health organizations therefore, they should have full access to health services. In addition to that, the general health and hygiene conditions in the camps (both regulated and spontaneous) which are designated to host refugees, make camps highly contagious places and requires rapid response to provide personal hygiene and public health requirements for all camp residents.

Signed parties under this statement require

### **The Lebanese government to:**

- Unify the language of instructions and directives for all residents in Lebanon on preventing the spread of the virus.
- Monitor discriminatory procedures and decisions against refugees issued by local councils without referring to the Ministry of Interior and councils.
- Implement the curfew in non-discriminatory process to avoid higher restrictions on camps compared to of the Lebanese regions.
- Refrain from arresting refugees for not having legal residence permits or imposing any heightened security measures on them, as it would lead to fear among refugees causing them to hide their symptoms, and/or avoid visiting the hospital.
- Urge landlords of camps to postpone the dues of housing rentals to avoid evictions during this pandemic.

### **The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees recommended the following:**

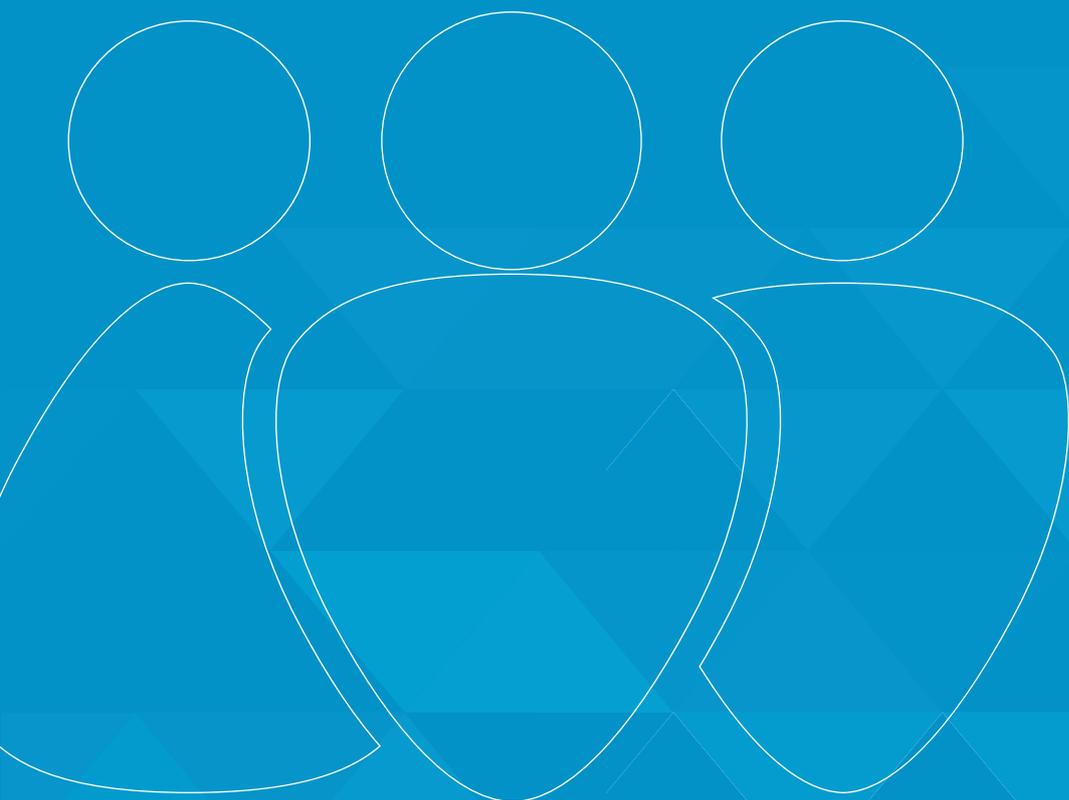
- Support civil society organizations working with refugees in providing necessary assistance such as food and health supplies and in raising awareness on public health conditions.
- Prepare plans to provide food and financial aid, as many refugees lost their jobs, and most of businesses have stopped in Lebanon.



## **Organizations and institutions signatory :**

1. International humanitarian relief-IHR
2. phoenix
3. Syrian Women Network
4. Syrian Association for citizens' dignity
5. La justice et le développement durable
6. Basamat for Development
7. Syrian Human Rights Committee (SHRC)
8. violet organization
9. Humena for Human Rights and Civic Engagement
10. Syrian Network for Human Rights
11. House of Peace
12. Impunity Watch
13. Jana Watan
14. WOMAN SUPPORT ASSOCIATION
15. Horan Foundation
16. Hope Team
17. Syrian Expatriate Medical Association
18. Syrian American Council
19. Centre for Defending Civil Rights & Liberties
20. Lebanese Foundation for Democracy and Human Rights - LIFE
21. Access Center for Human Rights - ACHR
22. Violations Documentation center in Syrie - VDC





@snhr



Info@sn4hr.org

www.sn4hr.org

