

Solidarity with Palestinian and Syrian refugees in Lebanon

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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A rally outside the Lebanese Mission to the United Nations in New York City on July 30 protested the treatment of Palestinian and Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

Demonstrations were also held a few days before in Athens, Berlin, Copenhagen and London.

As the Palestinian Youth Movement wrote in their leaflet: “The Lebanese Ministry of Labor made the decision to ban Syrian and Palestinian refugees from working without visas. This has resulted in mass unemployment and a crackdown on refugee workers.”

Lebanese cabinet minister Kamil Abu Sleiman is the instigator of these attacks. Sleiman, according to Al-Awda, the Palestine Right to Return Coalition, “ordered authorities to raid and close down shops and factories to prevent the employment of ‘illegal foreign workers.’” That sounds like Trump and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Al-Awda pointed out that Sleiman “represents the right-wing Lebanese Forces party, well-known for its incitement against Palestinian and Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The history of the Lebanese Forces has been as a far-right militia led by warlords, most notoriously Samir Geagea.

“The Lebanese Forces militia and allied forces have a long history of committing genocide against the Palestinians as well as massacres against communities allied with the Lebanese national liberation movement and did so historically while receiving training and armaments from the Zionists.”

Generations living in misery

The New York demonstration occurred while Palestinians in Lebanon are rising up and striking against the terrible conditions they’ve endured since being driven out of Palestine in 1948.

* The half-million Palestinians in Lebanon live in 12 official refugee camps with poor housing and water. The overcrowded camps have never been allowed to expand and

have no access to Lebanese services.

* Palestinians are banned from 72 professions, including medicine, public transit, farming and fishing. Like undocumented workers in the U.S., they are limited to low-paying jobs in the private sector.

* Palestinians are paid less than Lebanese workers on the same job and are forced to get an annual permit, a long process that depends on the employer.

In response, Palestinian organizations in Lebanon are now demanding:

* Granting clear legal status to Palestinian refugees with civil, economic and social rights

* Amending Lebanese labor law to cancel the work permit requirement for Palestinian refugees and ending their exclusion from regulated professions

* Ending ongoing discrimination against Palestinian refugees in a range of areas, including allowing them to own property

Speakers from several organizations expressed their solidarity with Palestinian and Syrian refugees in front of the Lebanese United Nations Mission. Among them was a speaker from BAYAN USA, who linked the struggle of Filipino workers and migrants with the Palestinian people.

Steve Millies from Struggle-La Lucha newspaper pointed out that the attacks on Palestinians and Syrians in Lebanon came with a stamp of approval from the U.S. Embassy in Beirut.

Millies said that the U.S. invaded Lebanon in 1958 in response to the Iraqi revolution and that Lebanese and Palestinian people in 1983 defeated Reagan's occupation by blasting Marines out of Beirut.

Among the organizations sponsoring this action were Al-Awda N.Y.; American Muslims for Palestine, N.J. chapter; the Committee to Stop FBI Repression; Existence is Resistance; In Our Lifetime; Jews for the Palestinian Right of Return; N.Y. for Palestine; Labor for Palestine; the Palestinian Youth Movement; Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network; and Struggle for Socialism-La Lucha por el Socialismo.

