In defence of European border policies ? Integrated Border Management, development without accountability, and the role of European partners in the securitisation of Lebanon.

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Little has so far been written about border security and the influence of international donors in Lebanon. Lebanon has not proved a major transit point for migrants in the same way that countries such as Turkey, Morocco or Libya have captured the attention of the media. Rather, over 1.5 million Syrian migrants have remained in Lebanon whilst others transited through Turkey towards the European Union. Lebanon's border with Syria, heavily funded and sponsored by international benefactors, brings together a complex politico-security landscape with donors that seek to bolster the presence of Lebanese security agencies in border policies. In the last seven years, the UK alongside the EU-funded International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) have supported Lebanese security agencies with training, financial support and infrastructure, developing Lebanese control over the Syrian-Lebanese border. Whilst this has had a certain but limited impact, it is the lack of accountability from such donors that is the particular focus of this short paper. In particular, National Strategic Guidelines have not been enforced in the eleven years since they were first mentioned. These aim to centralise the administration of the border, provide legal safeguards and direct the role of each agency. The consequence is a security system in which donors operate directly with security agencies and bypass coordination mechanisms. This has led to increased competition between Lebanese security agencies and a loss of accountability for donors. Of greatest concern, the lack of National Strategic Guidelines has meant that basic accountability mechanisms are not in place for partners in border management. Donors have involuntarily strengthened the capabilities of security agencies that have expanded into policing civil society. Most worryingly this has occurred in a context of a rise in anti-refugee

sentiment and militarisation of the governments' interactions with refugees. This paper argues that the close cooperation between European international donors and Lebanese security agencies on border management demonstrates that EU member states and security partners tolerate human rights violations in order to pursue a policy of security and stability. Most blatantly, the EU has funded one project that directly caused the eviction of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

A growing concern has emerged amongst scholars, journalists and interested parties with regard to the EU's neighbourhood policy and the externalisation of its border to third parties. The literature on the European Union's foreign policy towards its immediate Mediterranean neighbours has evolved considerably in the last decade. The so-called 'Arab Spring' challenged the claim that the EU is a uniquely 'normative' foreign policy actor. Rather, alternative analyses of European policy have outlined a "realist pursuit of interests at the expense of values."[1] Roccu and Voltolini's idea of an EU master-frame whereby "security is maximised through the preservation of stability in the region" has proved influential and reflective of the pragmaticism which EU actors have often demonstrated.[2] The case of Lebanon and more specifically Integrated Border Management (IBM), an EU embraced concept for border management that champions controls on the flow of individuals, goods and services, is no exception. The EU, through the ICMPD and European External Action Service has supported a policy of border externalisation started by Germany in 2007 and pursued by the UK in 2012. In this way, the Union's territorial borders and border controls

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[1] Vincent Durac, 2018. Counterterrorism and democracy: EU policy in the Middle East and North Africa after the uprisings. *Mediterranean Politics,* 23(1), p. 111.
[2] Roberto Roccu, & Benedetta Voltolini, 2018. Framing and reframing the EU's engagement with the Mediterranean: Examining the security-stability nexus before and after the Arab uprisings. *Mediterranean Politics*, 23(1), p. 10.

have moved to the periphery while border control duties are partially outsourced to the governments of third countries.[3] The UK's forty watch towers, seven of which were decommissioned in Northern Ireland and brought to the Lebanese-Syrian border, are a physical representation of such externalisation.

Tower 1 at Aboudiyeh.

The internationalisation of Lebanon's security in the wake of UNSC 1701.

Lebanon's "green border," which broadly encapsulates the state's east and north, has undergone significant changes in the last fifteen years. United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1559 in September 2004, marked the beginning of the internationalisation of Lebanon's security apparatus. It called both for the withdrawal of "foreign forces," an implicit reference to Syria, as well as the disarming of Hizbullah and announced renewed scrutiny from the international community on Lebanon's security. This was strengthened by UNSCR 1701 in the immediate aftermath of the July 2006 Lebanon War.

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[3] Durac. Counterterrorism and democracy: EU policy in the Middle East and North Africa after the uprisings. p. 109.

In turn, UNSCR 1701 provided the legitimisation for increased international involvement. Concretely, it implied that Lebanon was a "weak state" in need of the full help of the international community.[4] In a clear reference to Hizbullah, the resolution sought for the government "to exercise its full sovereignty, so that there will be no weapons without the consent of the Government of Lebanon and no authority other than that of the Government of Lebanon."[5] Accordingly this was to be remedied by a strengthened contingent of 15,000 UNIFIL troops and a call on the International Community to "consider further assistance in the future to contribute to the reconstruction and development of Lebanon." Finally, borders and other entry points were to be secured to control the flow of weapons and related materiel.[6]

This marked a turning point with regard to Lebanon's security assemblage. Countries that had been involved in the drafting of UNSCR 1701, namely EU and NATO members such as Germany, France and Italy sought to strengthen Lebanon's security entities. In 2007, a German financed Northern Border Pilot Project (NBPP) began with the aim of providing capabilities for Lebanon's security agencies in border management. The Common Border Force that was created was initially successful but ran into difficulty in its second year as German aid was reduced and no coherent strategy was developed by the Lebanese security agencies. In July 2008, The Security Council's Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team II concluded that "little progress was observed."[7]

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[4] Karim Makdisi, 2011. Constructing Security Council Resolution 1701 for Lebanon in the Shadow of the 'War on Terror'. *International Peacekeeping,* 18(1), p. 14.

[5] Security Council resolution SC/1701. August 2011. *Security Council calls for end to Hostilities between Hizbollah, Israel, unanimously adopting resolution 1701.*

[6] Ibid.

[7] Security Council report S/2008/135. February 2008. *Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006).*

The development of Lebanon's Border capabilities was blighted by a lack of resources and by inter-agency tension. In 2009, the Common Border Force was expanded with the Lebanese Armed Forces' First Land Border Regiment, which operated in parallel with the Common Border Force on the northern border. Requests by the LAF to integrate both entities were initially rejected by the government and four months later, a Second Land Border Regiment was rolled out in the Hermel region in the North East of the country. At the same time, the Border Control Committee (BCC) was established to coordinate between the different security agencies. Crucially, the BCC has until today, been severely impeded by a lack of an official, national strategy to legitimise its work. No security agency has the ability to direct others and although the LAF lead the committee as the largest player, it remains an organ of coordination rather than leadership. This is deeply problematic as outlined below.

The onset of the Syrian civil war in 2011 brought renewed scrutiny to Lebanon's border region and British aid focused on supporting Lebanese capabilities on the border. In October 2012, the International Center for Migration and Policy Development, a 'preferred partner' of the EU started the first phase of its Integrated Border Management (IBM) project which focused on capacity building for different security agencies, the provision of training schemes and the enhancement of the coordination capabilities amongst security agencies. This held a budget of €3.7 million. The second phase began in January 2016 held a budget of €14 million allocated over six years.[8] Finally, three "bolt-on" projects emerged through the ICMPD. Swiss support, established in November 2018 for two years, focuses on the enhancement of human rights-

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[8] Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon. October 2018. *International Border Management Conference Brings Together International Experience in Lebanon*.

based and gender-responsive border and migration management. The Netherlands have also provided assistance for the development of the Lebanese Armed Forces' Land Border Regiment Central Training Centre, Rayak (CTC) since January 2019. Finally, a Danish project aims to provide expertise on cybersecurity capacities in the border management area.[9]

Lebanese security agencies as rival collaborators.

Despite this increase in focus on Lebanon's green border, the Lebanese security system in border management has remained plagued by issues of competitivity amongst agencies, an absence of clarity with regard to specific roles and a chronic lack of resources. Security agencies operate as institutional agents of the state within a system of plural governance. As such, they are defined by the political cleavages of competing, often sectarian, political groupings.[10] Five agencies act within often over-lapping mandates in the remit of border management. The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) under the direction of the Ministry of Defence, are the most important security entity who guard all areas in between Border Crossing Points and present themselves as the only entity that transcend sectarian and political divides. Over the course of the interviews undertaken for this paper, analysts have described the LAF both as "cannon fodder" and, more optimistically as "a beacon that shines in the night." This highlights their perceived weakness as well as the ambitions that they espouse as a non-partisan military entity.[11] The General Security Directorate (GS) under the direction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs hold the mandate to control formal border

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[9] International Center for Migration Policy Development. October 2019. Ongoing Projects.
[10] Waleed Hazbun, 2016. Assembling security in a 'weak state:' the contentious politics of plural governance in Lebanon since 2005. Third World Quarterly, 37(6). p. 1054.
[11] Author's interviews with European Embassy personnel, Beirut, September 2019.

crossings and have in recent years developed world-leading expertise in the detection of fake Syrian passports.[12] Since 2005, leadership of GS has become part of the Shi'ite quota of security positions. This was confirmed by the extension of the current head Abbas Ibrahim in March 2018 by Amal and Hizbullah for another six years which hints at its political affiliations.[13] On the other hand, the Internal Security Forces (ISF), often labelled 'the national police' are seen to be under the personal remit of Saad Hariri and his Sunni dominated Future Movement. Under the control of the ministry of Interior, the ISF's mandate incorporates policing within the borders of Lebanon which includes counter-terrorism. Customs, under the responsibility of the ministry of finance also hold an important position in Lebanon's border security apparatus. Yet, since 2006, its organisational structure, split between military and civilian branches have hindered effective coordination whilst a lack of political support has left it as a marginal player.[14] The work of customs, policing the flow of goods, is undermined by allegations of corruption which are particularly harmful for an entity responsible for the collection of taxes.[15] Finally, the General Directorate of Lebanese Civil Defence are an additional agency, mostly consisted of volunteers that work with the Lebanese Red Cross to provide emergency services throughout Lebanon.

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[12] Author's interview with Project Manager of ICMPD 'Enhanced Capability for Integrated Border Management in Lebanon,' Beirut, September 13th 2019

[13] Macaron, Joe, 2017. Lebanon's Oligarchy Consolidates Control over the Security Establishment. Arab Center Washington DC.

[14] Tholens. Border management in an era of 'statebuilding lite': security assistance and Lebanon's hybrid sovereignty. p. 878.

[15] Interview with member of ICMPD IBM project, Beirut, September 16th 2019.

The importance of the Syrian-Lebanese border in the context of the Syrian Civil War.

The necessity for a border with controls on the flow of goods and people that enter Lebanon is relatively new. Before 2005, Syrian hegemony prevented Lebanon from developing any form of demarcation with Syria. Syria only recognised the sovereignty of its neighbour in October 2008. Today, the border remains contested. A lack of clear demarcation means that in areas such as the Maasna border crossing, twelve kilometres separate the Lebanese and Syrian border points.[16] However, it was the onset of the Syrian civil war that brought real urgency and attention to the need for Lebanon to have control over its own frontiers.

The reasoning behind increased European aid for border control is no accident. As the ICMPD's project manager for IBM told me, before increased flows of migration in 2014, "I was banging my head against a wall to get funding."[17] The policies of EU embassies rapidly changed afterwards: a circumstance that was exploited both by European donors as well as security agencies. Indeed, a senior military figure in the LAF stated plainly that European states were, and still are, "ready to give whatever we need" as the 1.5 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon are viewed with considerable unease. In his eyes it is a financial game as it costs European states four or five times less to stop migrants in Lebanon than in Europe itself. This is certainly not a new policy for the European Union. Already in 2012, Hollis outlined "the concern of Europe to try 'to stem the flow of migrants into the Union by throwing money at

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[16] Author's interview with European External Action Service Counter-Terrorism Expert, Beirut, September 13th 2019.

[17] Author's interview with Project Manager of ICMPD 'Enhanced Capability for Integrated Border Management in Lebanon,' Beirut, September 13th 2019.

the problem.'"[18] Nonetheless this externalisation of the European Union's border is quite concerning and reinforces the pragmatic nature of its policies and those of its member states.

The roll out of the Northern Border Pilot Project and later Land Border Regiments from 2007, that now operate on the entirety of the 'green line,' have led to imperfect but existent controls over the boundaries of the Lebanese state. Their importance should not be underestimated. Since 2012, forty border watch towers and forty forward operating bases were donated mainly by the UK. These allow trained soldiers to provide continuous and permanent supervision over the border. As a consequence, the Land Border Regiments have reduced smuggling from illegal crossing points, especially across the Al Kabir river in the north of the country. This aid and expertise is particularly significant in the mountainous north east of the country where the fourth Land Border Regiment operate. Whilst the FCO's emphasis on the impact this had in the fight against Daesh may be slightly exaggerated, the aid has had a significant impact in the monitoring of the border.[19] The highest watch tower, at 2600 metres above sea level and others at similar altitudes, require significant infrastructure and logistical expertise which countries such as the UK were able to provide. As a high-ranking military figure in the LAF confessed to me, "without them [international donors] we could never have done it."[20] Despite a reduction in illegal crossing points, the IBM project at large does not have any ambition to control or curtail Hezbollah's ability to cross between Syria and Lebanon. It has attracted large amounts of international aid due to the fact that it builds a visible, symbolically important, psychological barrier in opposition to Daesh and small-scale

[18] Rosemary Hollis, 2012. No friend of democratization: Europe's role in the genesis of the 'Arab Spring.' International Affairs, 88(1), p. 84.

[19] Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2019. Life on the frontline. The UK watch towers protecting Lebanon from Daesh.

[20] Author's interviews with Senior Figure in the Lebanese Armed Forces, Beirut, September 25th 2019.

smuggler-criminals. However, it does not come into conflict with much more serious traffics of weaponry or drugs that permeate the Lebanese border.

On the other hand, the work of the EU-funded ICMPD has had a significant impact in bringing invaluable expertise to Lebanese security agencies, providing operational standards and to a lesser extent fostering cross agency coordination. Skill in the detection of fraudulent documents has been one of the major success stories of the ICMPD project with GS now a leading expert in the detection of fake Syrian passports. However, whilst such programs are beneficial to the policing of Lebanon's borders, these programs are flawed by a profound lack of accountability.

The lack of National Strategic Guidelines as a recurrent issue for Integrated Border Management.

The lack of National Strategic Guidelines for Integrated Border Management remains the biggest issue with the work of security partners in Lebanon and is not a new development. As early as 2008, the United Nations Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team II "suggested that the Government of Lebanon instigate without delay the formulation of a strategic plan which should include its desired end state and objectives as well as the ways and means of achieving them."[21] The national IBM strategy has since been written as part of the first phase of the ICMPD's IBM project that lasted from October 2012 to September 2015. It outlines the roles of each security agency, sets out cooperation processes through the establishment of hierarchical structures within the Border Control Committee (BCC) and

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[21] Security Council report S/2008/135, February 2008. *Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006).*

legally sets a national benchmark for border management. It has so far been signed and approved by the Ministries of Interior, Defence and Foreign Affairs as well as every security agency that takes part in the IBM project. However, for two main reasons, the Strategic Guidelines have not been approved by the government and are still "dusting away in the drawer of some minister."[22]

This is, first of all, the product of the complexities of the Lebanese political system. A presidential vacuum from May 2014 until October 31st 2016, preceded a nine month period without a government that ended in February 2019 and was quickly followed by months of negotiations before the approval of the government's budget. Although the Guidelines were back on the cabinet's agenda for its September 12th 2019 meeting, for the first time in almost a year, they were once again overlooked. This is not surprising if one considers that the Guidelines were signed by different ministers who have since moved on.

Secondly, the approval of the Strategic Guidelines impacts the delicate balance of power which Lebanon's unity government is built upon. As outlined above, each agency is linked to a particular political group and no security agency wishes to have its mandate narrowed or see it fall under the jurisdiction of another agency. This is deeply problematic as such Strategic Guidelines are necessary to enshrine how different agencies ought to cooperate, what each agency's role is within the law and to prevent the escalation of tension amongst rival security agencies. Although this may seem exaggerated, on September 26th 2018 a fight broke out between ISF and LAF security personnel at Beirut's Rafik Hariri airport, precisely due to a lack of clarity concerning hierarchical structures amongst agencies.[23]

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[22] Tholens. Border management in an era of 'statebuilding lite': security assistance and Lebanon's hybrid sovereignty. p. 881.
[23] El-Hage, Anne-Marie, November 2011. La sécurité de l'aéroport de Beyrouth, histoire d'un enchevêtrement de pouvoirs. *L'Orient le Jour.*

Beyond the security agencies themselves, the lack of National Strategic Guidelines is a serious issue for Lebanon's European governmental and non-governmental partners, involved in the IBM project. At its core, the lack of legal and governmental oversight mean that EU partners and member countries are directly in relation with individual security agencies and bypass the Lebanese government. The lack of Strategic Guidelines have allowed donors to become increasingly "depoliticized and decentralized" as they pursue individual projects and objectives with partner agencies directly and outside of a coordinating body.[24] This is evident in the case of the UK who are the main funder and largest supporter of Integrated Border Management. Despite their involvement, it is not entirely clear why the UK do not attend the Border Control Committee's bi-weekly meetings and prefer a direct relationship with the LAF and the ISF. As a consequence, their coordination with the ICMPD and other European partners remains largely ad hoc although mechanisms of coordination do exist. Such a lack of cooperation undermines all of the work undertaken by the UK. As an example, in September 2019, the Masnaa border crossing was still not linked with efficient communications to the airport. Thus, it was possible for individuals to enter Lebanon from Syria as long as they carried a plane ticket from Beirut's Rafik Hariri airport.[25] Such blatant lapses in the security apparatus not only highlight the need for donor coordination but demonstrate the lack of efficiency of building a visible, hard border if basics of coordination are not established first.

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[24] Tholens. Border management in an era of 'statebuilding lite': security assistance and Lebanon's hybrid sovereignty. p. 866.
[25] Author's interview with European External Action Service Counter-Terrorism Expert, Beirut, September 13th 2019.

Why the National Security Guidelines matter: The contribution of international donors to inter-agency competition without leverage.

Such decentralised and depoliticised processes undermine the entirety of the work undertaken to securitise the Lebanese border. They encourage competition between security agencies, reduce donors' leverage capabilities over agencies and thus their accountability. Tholens has described the process of an uncontrolled increase and proliferation in security assistance with little formal political steering and coordination as the "security bonanza." This is a useful term to explain the manner in which subnational actors have begun competing for resources.[26] In other words, different security agencies seek ways to increase their own influence, often at the expense of their partner agencies. This is in part due to the chronic lack of resources that underlies the Lebanese security apparatus. As a senior ICMPD IBM expert told me "all agencies are under resourced and are looking to IBM as a way to resource up." This means that "no agency will say that IBM is not its priority."[27]

Secondly, and most importantly for the analysis of border policy, without National Guidelines it is much more difficult for donors to hold Lebanese security agencies accountable in the same way as they might do with the Lebanese government. The multitude of potential donors mean that security agencies operate with several different benefactors at any one time. These do not agree on the importance of the National Guidelines which allows security agencies to broadly ignore their implementation as it is not a prerequisite for all European security

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[26] Tholens. Border management in an era of 'statebuilding lite': security assistance and Lebanon's hybrid sovereignty. p. 870.
[27] Author's interview with Project Manager of ICMPD 'Enhanced Capability for Integrated Border Management in Lebanon,' Beirut, September 13th 2019.

donors. As a consequence, donor countries and partners that wish to be involved in border security choose to press on without such checks and balances. A clear example is the timing of the ICMPD phase II project from January 2016 to December 2018. The five successive module formats assigned a set of goals which did not place the approval of the Guidelines as a prerequisite for further aid.[28] Moreover, as a non-governmental organisation they do not have the same leverage mechanisms as a governmental body.

Inadequate mechanisms of accountability can be found in almost every project funded by the EU, ICMPD or European donors. In theory, the Swiss 'bolt-on' project, in partnership with ICMPD, clearly improves the experience of migrants at the Masnaa border. It enhances Lebanese security agencies' border management through the provision of operational expertise and infrastructure. Most visibly, a structure has been built at Masnaa to provide shelter for individuals waiting to enter or leave Lebanon. This prevents people from waiting for hours, sitting on concrete under the beating sun. Yet, this project lacks accountability tools. Over the course of the interviews done for this research, I was told of various accounts of this structure being used for a different purposes by General Security be it for their own accommodation or even as a car-park.[29] Whilst this is a clear violation of the reasons why such a structure was provided, it reflects a lack of accountability and that significant leverage cannot be operated by the ICMPD or the Swiss embassy. This is due to the fact that the National Strategic Guidelines have not been officially endorsed.

In addition, the division of labour enshrined in the National Strategic Guidelines is not enforced which prevents Lebanese border agencies from working with greater efficiency,

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[28] International Centre for Migration Policy Development, October 2019. Ongoing Projects.
[29] Ibid.

coordination and impact. In conjunction with the work of the ICMPD, the European External Action Service (EEAS) have provided expertise in the detection of potential chemical precursors such as aluminium perchlorate and ammonium nitrate.[30] These chemicals, used to produce high explosives, were until recently legally imported from Lebanon into Syria. Coordination between General Security, Customs and the ISF on such issues is of prime importance in order to be able to identify potential risks. Moreover, the lack of a judiciary customs unit makes communication vital in attempts to dismantle such traffics which might otherwise go unnoticed. Yet as the development of efficient coordination tools have lagged behind there are no concrete way for experts involved in the provision of such training to tell if it has had a significant impact.

A lack of accountability in a context of growing militarisation and anti-refugee sentiment

Since Syrian withdrawal, the Lebanese state has suffered significantly from successive political crises as well as economic constraints and has increased its reliance on visible securitisation to assert itself. Lebanon's public debt is currently estimated at 150 percent of GDP. In addition, the current austerity budget reflects the difficulties faced by the current government. It was approved in July 2019 by parliament after two months of negotiations. Such financial and political constraints have led to a decrease in the ability of security agencies to receive sufficient resources from the government and have led to increased reliance on foreign donors. As a senior figure in the LAF told me, the government "only pays for salaries."[31] At the same time, financial difficulties have increased "reliance on security

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[30] Author's interviews with European External Action Service Counter-Terrorism Expert, Beirut, September 13th 2019.

[31] Author's interviews with Senior Figure in the Lebanese Armed Forces, Beirut, September 25th 2019.

governance as the main manifestation of the state."[32] The LAF checkpoints that permeate the country's roads are a symbolic reminder of the government's claim to a monopoly of violence which it no longer has. Such checkpoints are a psychological tool which attempt to make up for the weakness of an army that is forced to share the Lebanese security apparatus with Hizbullah. Nonetheless, security agencies more broadly, but the LAF in particular have attempted to re-establish themselves, even if symbolically, in areas which are beyond its administrative control. Language of "taking back and securing the territory" in an FCO blog highlights the desired impact of the LAFs new watch towers and Forward Operating Bases.[33]

Most importantly, Lebanon has experienced a growing trend of militarisation in the way that it deals with Syrian refugees. Security agencies have expanded their reach beyond their own mandate as part of the "security bonanza." In particular the LAF has become increasingly present within Lebanon itself. When I asked the project manager of ICMPD's IBM project what its main achievements to date were, he made a convincing case for the extent to which LAF policing tactics have developed. In particular, he mentioned the ways in which thanks to the IBM project as a whole, the LAF is more capable to deal with potential criminals, organisers of trafficking and victims.[34] Whilst this may be beneficial, it is not entirely clear why the LAF are expanding into areas that fall under the remits of other security agencies such as the ISF. Again, it is the lack of National Strategic Guidelines that prevents coherent policies from being developed. Moreover, it is clear that international donors enjoy cooperation with the LAF due

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[32] Tholens. Border management in an era of 'statebuilding lite': security assistance and Lebanon's hybrid sovereignty. p. 868.
[33] FCO
[34] Author's interview with Project Manager of ICMPD 'Enhanced Capability for Integrated Border Management in Lebanon,' Beirut, September 13th 2019.

to their professionalism. As a consequence, international donors are being played by the security agency game.

The Lebanese Armed Forces and Rayak Air Base, EU funded LAF "empire-building."

Rayak Air Base, an obsolete aerodrome has, since 2018, been converted into a Central Training Center (CTC) and "educational centre of border management excellence." Refurbished thanks to the LAF's engineers with a $377,240 EU grant, it has received significant aid and attention from the IBM project and is the focus of ongoing assistance from the Netherlands in Phase II of the IBM project.[35] Theoretically, this centre is the flagship of the Lebanon IBM project. It was opened by EU Ambassador Christina Lassen and aims to "improve intra-agency, inter-agency and international training coordination in Lebanon."[36] However, this is far from the case again due to the lack of implementation of National Strategic Guidelines delineating each agency's role. As the project manager of the ICMPD IBM project told me, the Rayak Air Base is under the control of its owner, the LAF, and represents "a bit of empire building" from the Lebanese Armed Forces. In fact, there is only "joint training when donors or implementing partners insist" and this is understood by other agencies who "won't send their own guys for training."[37] EU attempts at the creation of a joint centre for excellence to foster a clear message of cooperation have backfired and rather contributed to the expansion of the LAF into an already cramped security landscape. By allowing the LAF to build and own the project, the EU saved costs but allowed one security agency to take

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[35] International Centre for Migration Policy Development, October 2019. Factsheet Netherlands' Assistance to Lebanese Border Agencies (IBM).
[36] International Centre for Migration Policy Development, October 2019. Ongoing Projects.
[37] Author's interview with Project Manager of ICMPD 'Enhanced Capability for Integrated Border Management in Lebanon,' Beirut, September 13th 2019.

leadership of the base. In this case, the LAF were able to harness funds for themselves and further develop their standing as the main border security agency.

In addition, the Rayak Air base is much more problematic as it is representative of an EU funded project that lacks necessary accountability mechanisms. Rayak has directly led to the eviction of Syrian refugees In the spring of 2017, the LAF threatened Syrians living within a seven kilometre radius of Rayak air base with eviction for "security" reasons.[38] This culminated in December 2017, when 7,524 Syrians were evicted from this area.[39] This same air base was opened in May 2018, some five months later, by the ICMPD and the EU's ambassador Christina Lassen. In addition, the Dutch government runs a joint project with the ICMPD in Rayak since January 2019. The claimed focus on "gender sensitivity, environmental accountability and social responsibility"[40] seems particularly unreal as the UNHCR has highlighted that during the evictions, violence was used, as a consequence children missed out on educational opportunities and no alternative shelter was provided.[41]

[38] Limoges, Barrett, 2017. Thousands of Syrians face eviction from Lebanon camps. Feature, Lebanon. Al-Jazeera.
[39] Human Rights Watch, Lebanon, April 2018. *Mass Evictions of Syrian Refugees*.
[40] International Centre for Migration Policy Development, October 2019. Factsheet Netherlands' Assistance to Lebanese Border Agencies (IBM).
[41] Human Rights Watch, Lebanon, April 2018. *Mass Evictions of Syrian Refugees*.

Pictures taken from Google Earth, show the eviction of refugees in Aali Al Nahri, and

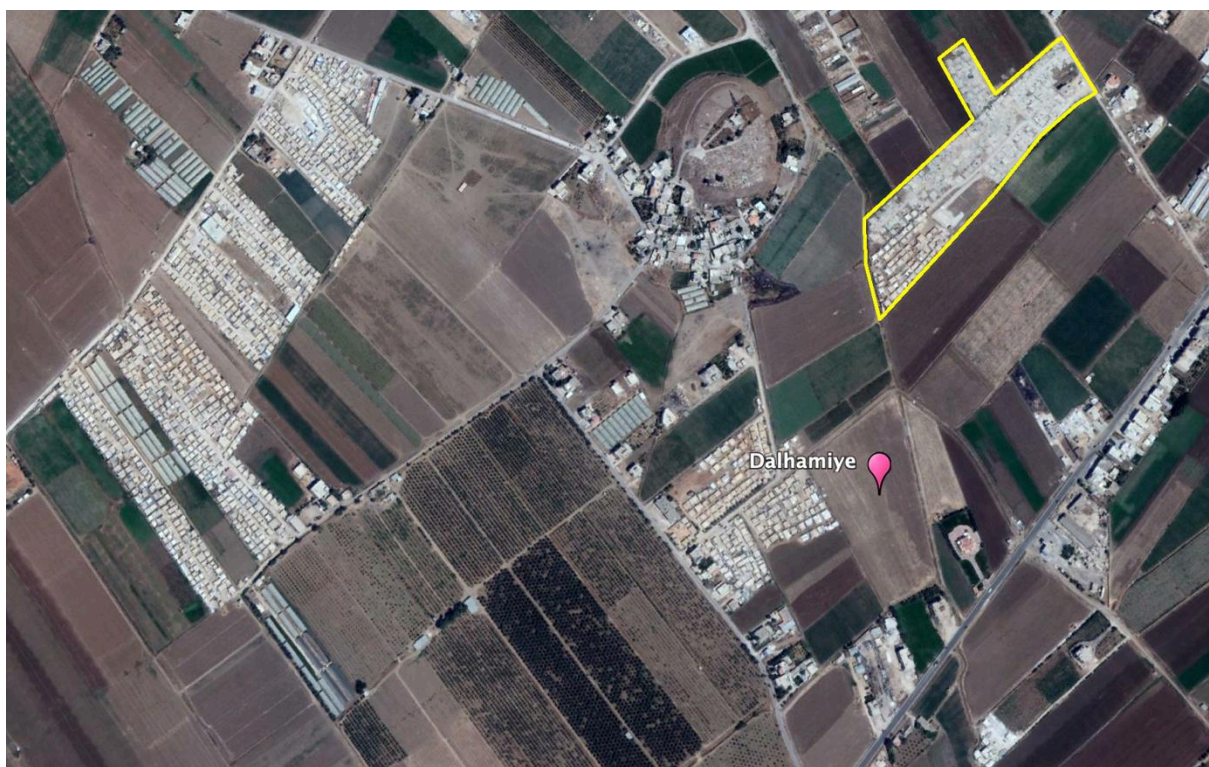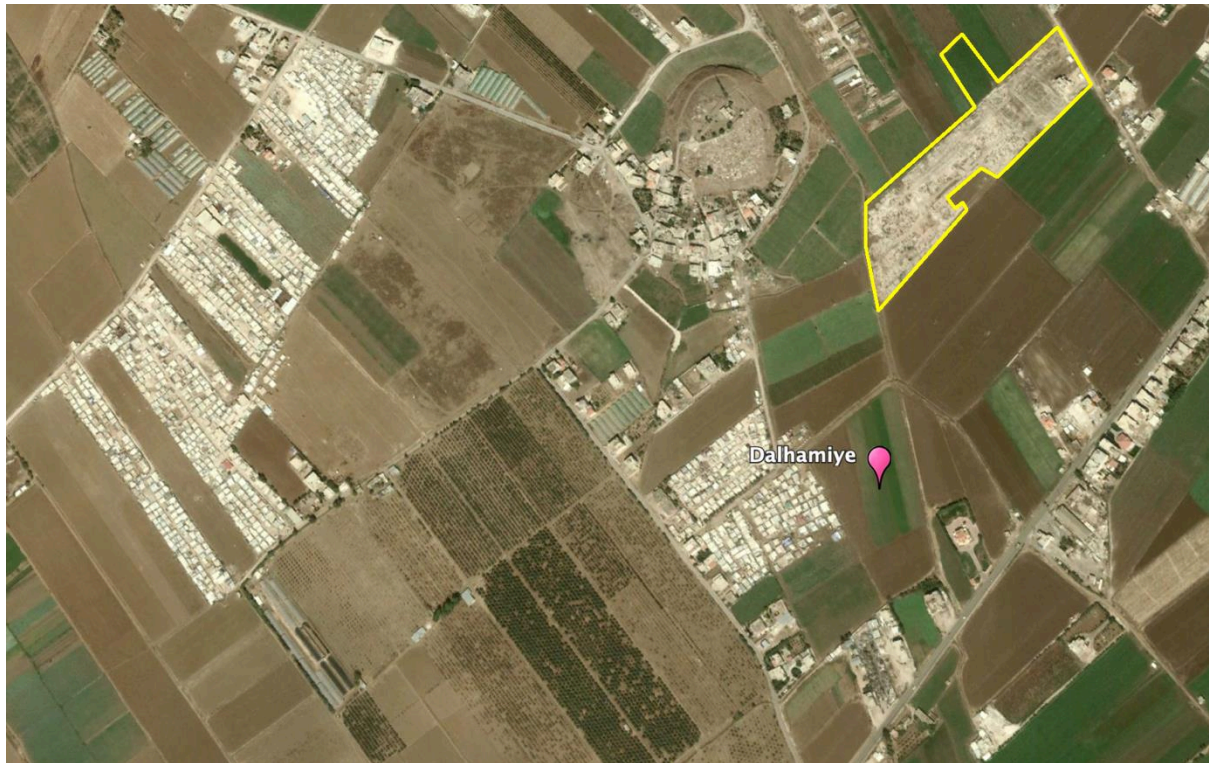Dalhamiye, both sites within the seven kilometre radius of Rayak Air base.
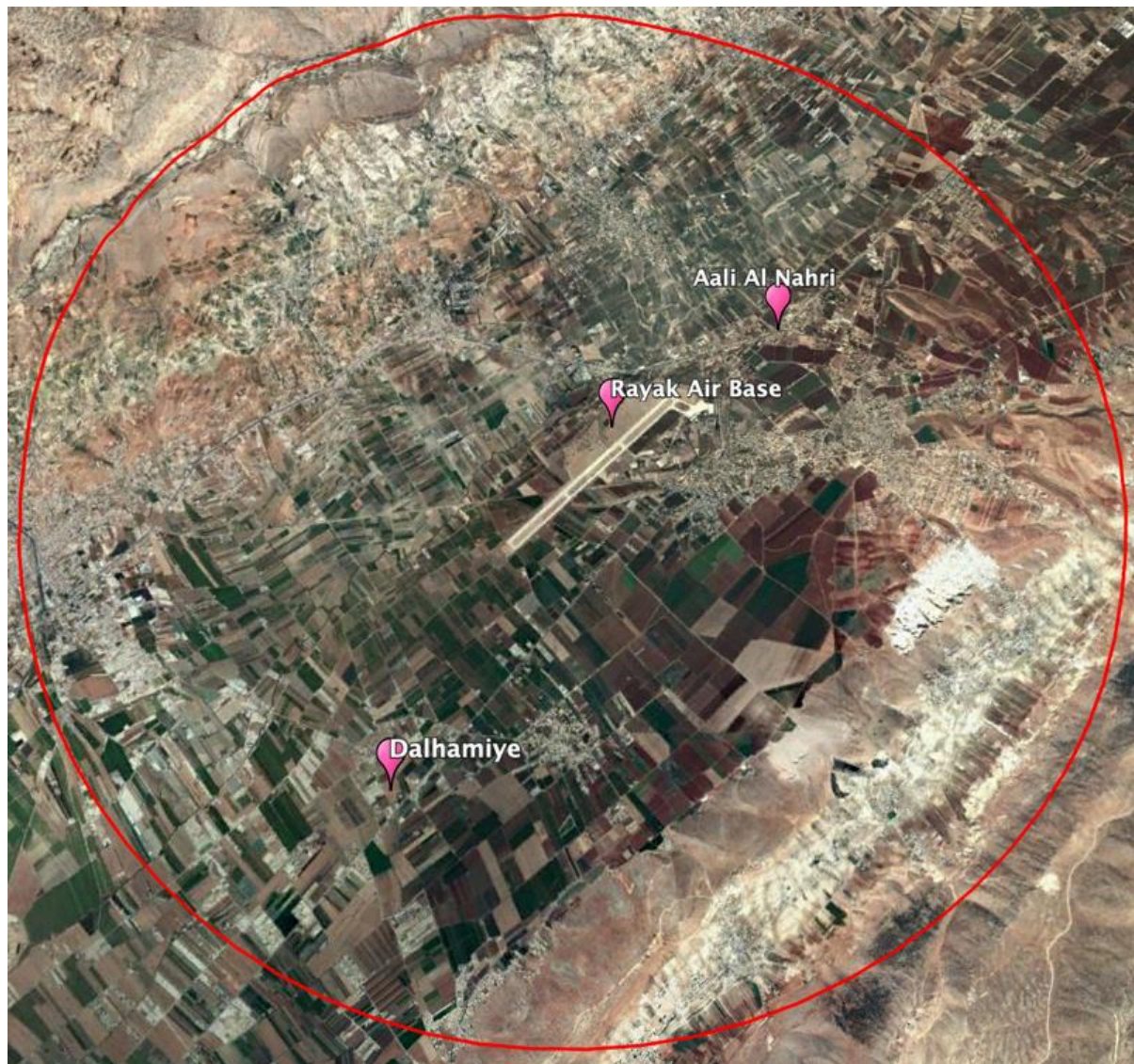
Picture of Aali Al NAhri on June 23rd 2016.

Picture of Aali Al NAhri on September 2nd 2018.

Picture of Dalhamiye on October 9th 2017.

Picture of Dalhamiye on February 10th 2018

In fact, this is hardly surprising. On the same day that the centre was opened, the International Court of Justice produced a memorandum that urged the government to restrict the LAF's military courts that still retain jurisdiction over civilians and children.[42] Moreover, the LAF, directed by the Higher Defense Council, has spearheaded a wave of demolitions and dismantlement of refugee homes. This culminated on July 1st 2019 when the army entered several camps in Arsal with heavy machinery and destroyed homes that were deemed semi-permanent structures. This impacted some 13,500 people with no alternative shelters offered

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[42] Human Rights Watch, January 2017. "It's Not the Right Place for Us." The Trial of Civilians by Military Courts in Lebanon.

and no alternative offered for the land use. [43] In fact, UNHCR claim that 25,900 Syrians were evicted from their homes over the course of 2017 and 2018.[44] On November 3rd 2018, the Minister of State for Refugee Affairs, Mouin Merehbi, further stated that 20 refugees and at least two children had been killed since their forced eviction and subsequent return.[45]

This Air Base is most of all representative of the lack of leverage that the ICMPD and EU partners have over Lebanese security agencies in conjunction with their current security assistance. One might argue that the instalment of National Strategic Guidelines would be a very important and overdue first step in producing mechanisms of accountability for international donors. However, one of the very reasons why these guidelines have yet to be approved is that they would provide legal standards and safeguards for the way security agencies police migrants. In the current Lebanese political climate of growing anti-refugee xenophobia, no political faction wishes to endorse a document that would at the very minimum recognise the rights of migrants and refugees in the country. Of even greater significance, the close cooperation between European international donors and the LAF demonstrates that EU member states and security partners are willing to turn a blind eye to blatant human rights violations in order to pursue a policy of security and stability.

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[43] Norwegian Refugee Council, July 2019. Demolition of homes in Arsal.
[44] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, February 2019. *In Focus: Evictions of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon in 2018.*
[45]The Daily Star, November 2018. About 20 refugees who returned have been killed: Merehbi.

Conclusion: Why does this all matter for freedom?

The expansion of the capabilities of Lebanese security agencies have led to an increased securitisation of Lebanese civil society and in particular a growing militarisation of the government's relationship with refugees. Within this, EU donors have played a role as funders and supporters of such agencies as they push their support without sufficient safeguards. The approval of the National Strategic Guidelines represent a much overdue first step in producing mechanisms of accountability for international donors in Lebanon. Yet, beyond such policy implementations, this case study reinforces the pragmatism in the approach of European donors. Not only do funders, such as the EU, ICMPD and partner countries, cooperate closely with security agencies with different priorities, the lack of safeguards and oversight is of concern. This has already led to severe negative consequences as was shown in the case of Rayak. In the longer term, it is the credibility of the European Union's claim to the promotion of liberal values that is at risk.

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