

# NUEVA LUZ

photographic journal



**RANIA MATAR**

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**NEW WORKS #12 BY DEBORAH WILLIS**

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**Rania Matar**, *Refugee ID Card*, Bourj El Barajneh Refugee Camp, Beirut. *The Forgotten People* series, 2005. Archival pigment print, 24x36"

## Artist Statement

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"I grew up in Lebanon during the civil war. After living in the US for almost twenty years, I started photographing the aftermath of Lebanon's war which led me to the Shatila Palestinian refugee camp, a five-minute drive from cosmopolitan Beirut. Shocked by the conditions people were living in, I started photographing the numerous refugee camps around Lebanon, hoping to portray the humanity and resilience of the inhabitants coping with conditions many would find unacceptable. This is not a political project and does not try to promote any solution to a complicated and sensitive issue, but a photographic portrait of a 'forgotten people'.

There are an estimated 360,000 Palestinian refugees in twelve refugee camps scattered around Lebanon. Their temporary refugee status spanning 60 years is becoming permanent, as fourth generations are now born and raised. The camps are not integrated in Lebanese social or economic life. Lebanon, healing itself from a brutal civil war and afraid of upsetting its delicate sectarian balance, is afraid of granting Palestinian refugees any rights that might bring them closer to naturalization. As a result they are banned from most professions and have to depend on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and local NGOs for education, health and basic human services. In addition, with things having changed in the world political arena, donations to NGOs have substantially dropped. Compounded with a population increase in the camps due to high birth rates, conditions have worsened substantially over the last few years.

Despite such a gloomy picture, I found inspiration in people struggling to keep their roots, spirit and culture alive, who are hospitable and welcoming into their homes, and kids who make the best out of the little the camp offers them. I found inspiration in the incredible capacity and resilience of people to adapt and make the best of their circumstances so they can preserve their dignity, their hope and their humanity. As such, these photographs put a human face on a long forgotten people in search of a home."

Rania Matar

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*Water Pipes, Bourj El Barajneh Refugee Camp, Beirut. The Forgotten People series, 2005. Archival pigment print, 24x36"*



Rania Matar

*The Dead Mother, Bourj El Barajneh Refugee Camp, Beirut. The Forgotten People series, 2005. Archival pigment print, 24x36"*



Rania Matar

*At the Cemetery, Outskirts of Shatila Refugee Camp, Beirut. The Forgotten People series, 2005. Archival pigment print, 24x36"*



Rania Matar

*Playing on the Roof, Shatila Refugee Camp, Beirut. The Forgotten People series, 2005. Archival pigment print, 24x36"*



Rania Matar

*Breakfast in Bed, Bourj El Shemali Refugee Camp, Tyre, Lebanon. The Forgotten People series, 2005. Archival pigment print, 24x36"*



Rania Matar

*Feeling Good after Haircut, Beddawi Refugee Camp, Tripoli, Lebanon, The Forgotten People series, 2007. Archival pigment print, 24x36"*





Rania Matar

*Bathtime for Baby, Bourj El Shemali Refugee Camp, Tyre, Lebanon. The Forgotten People series, 2005. Archival pigment print, 24x36"*



## Rania Matar

*Baby and Arafat Posters, Shatila Refugee Camp, Beirut. The Forgotten People series, 2003. Archival pigment print, 24x36"*



## Rania Matar

*Ghost Girl, Bourj El Barajneh Refugee Camp, Beirut. The Forgotten People series, 2004. Archival pigment print, 24x36"*