

Action Group for Palestinians of Syria
Special Reports and Studies Department

Yarmouk Siege has not Ended

Prepared by

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مجموعة العمل من أجل فلسطينيين سورية
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A documentary report discussing the "Decision of Humanitarian Affairs Coordination Office of the United Nations States regarding lifting the Yarmouk camp from the list of besieged areas, issued on June 23, 2015."

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Introduction

The suffering of Palestinians of Syrian within the Syrian camps, compounds, and cities continues along with the prolonged crisis, extended conflict, and acts of protest while they are powerless. All gains achieved by the refugees during 67 years of preparation and planning for the day of returning back to their homeland, where parents and grandparents were born, were lost. They found themselves facing a new Nakba, with all of its details, including the displacement, refuge, and pain.

The suffering of the Yarmouk residents and other camps; such as Deraa, Khan Al Shieh, Handarat, Sbeina, Husseinia, and others, has reached the peak in the bloody events of Syria, but in varying degrees. However, the siege imposed on the Yarmouk refugee camp, which is called the capital of the Palestinian Diaspora due to the presence of more than 220,000 Palestinian refugees before December 16, 2012, and the dire conditions of its inhabitants have both made it on the facade of events compared to other camps.

➤ Continuing Siege of the Yarmouk Camp

The Yarmouk camp for Palestinian refugees is subjected to strict siege since mid-July, 2013, preventing its residents from entering or leaving it only strictly for humanitarian reasons. Additionally, humanitarian aid is prevented but only to Al-Rija Square, which is located on the first part of the camp near the regime's checkpoints where numerous arrests for residents who are coming to receive aids took place.

The number of victims among Yarmouk residents has reached 1200, including 180 victims died due to starvation and lack of medical care, as well as the spread of infectious diseases and epidemics.

In the beginning of April, ISIS alongside Al-Nusra seized control over most parts of the Yarmouk camp after a bloody conflict between them and Aknaf brigades; as a result, many of its residents were displaced at the adjacent areas of Beit Sahem, Babila, and Yalda, escaping the brutality of ISIS and Nusra, as well as the strict siege

imposed on the camp under the pretext of the presence of the two mentioned factions.

Media outlets affiliated to the Brigades and ISIS that control the camp practiced news blackout, and prevented media activists from leaking any news that would describe the scene inside the camp. They even proceeded to issue reports and transmit images that indicate the improvement of the humanitarian situation. In addition, they broadcasted films in which the besieged are shown in a state of satisfaction and acceptance for the new situation, as they directed accusations and held responsibility of the previously deteriorated humanitarian situation to one specific faction.

➤ **Removing the Camp from the List of Besieged Areas**

Observers of the situation of Palestinian refugees in Syria in general, and in the Yarmouk camp in particular, were surprised by the decision issued by the Office of Humanitarian Affairs Coordination of the United Nations on June 23, 2015, which removes the Yarmouk camp from the list of besieged areas in Syria.

As a result of the decision, besieged residents were cancelled from UN statistics of trapped civilian numbers in Syria; this forms a threat to all attempts to end the suffering of the camp which had lasted for more than two years. In addition, it would emphasize the quo situation of besieging civilians and unending displacement and homelessness of displaced refugees as a result of the growing violence, bombing, and destruction of most of the camp surrounding areas.

This contradicts the statements of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, who described the camp as "a piece of hell, and its residents are in need for protection and cannot be abandoned," and that "ISIS" has committed crimes against humanity".

➤ Indicators of Continuity of the Siege

The Syrian regime has used the siege as a means to control the besieged residents in various areas in Syria; such as eastern and western Ghouta, the Yarmouk camp, and other besieged areas without any consideration to any civilians, women, elderly, or children. Accordingly, many of them were starved, and died due to the siege and lack of basic food and medical materials (see Table 1).

The siege imposed on the Yarmouk camp since mid-July 2013 is still ongoing until the date of preparing this report, which makes the decision of the Humanitarian Affairs Coordination Office of the United Nations to lift it from the list of besieged areas based on people's ability to access the neighborhoods of (Yalda, Babbila, Bait Sahem) - According to the decision - based on inaccurate information and false understanding. This report highlights the following evidence:

- ❖ The Syrian regime forces are still preventing the entry and exit of people to and from the Yarmouk camp. Checkpoints at the only entrance are still present and practice the same role of preventing, arresting, as they form a starting station for military operations against militants who are inside the camp.
- ❖ Prevention of fuel and basic foods entry; such as rice, sugar, flour, vegetables, and baby milk, as well as demanding residents to receive aid from neighboring areas (Yalda - Babbila – Bait Sahem) that have arranged reconciliations with the regime. This led to the emergence of beneficiary groups of war traders from both sides who manipulated people and controlled prices in light of the absence of purchasing power of residents due to the loss of work opportunities, not to mention spending their savings.
- ❖ Continuing power cuts for more than 850 days, and increasing the daily suffering of population in general, and students and patients in particular

owning to the importance of electricity used in lighting, warming, essential medical devices within hospitals, and electric generators for extracting water from wells in light of preventing the entry of fuels and frenzied rise in prices of diesel needed for those machines.

- ❖ Continuing potable water cuts since September 2014, which prompted residents to drink non-potable water from wells, which led to the spread of renal disease (stones - sand) and digestive diseases for a large segment of population, especially children, or to go to neighboring regions despite the risks they face as a result of taking roads surrounded by snipers or clashes areas.
- ❖ Continuing prevention of medicines and medical supplies entry to clinics and hospitals of the camp after the halt of all medical facilities inside the camp except Palestine Hospital of the PRCS; the only one which works in the camp, despite of the repeated targeting as well as severe shortages of necessary medicines needed for treatment. "Medical and Surgical Rescue Center in the Yarmouk camp" appealed to medical commissions, institutions, and doctors unions to live up to their responsibilities towards the trapped people in the Yarmouk refugee camp. Due to the lack of medicines, health care, and suitable potentials, there were a number of deaths for the center has become unable to perform ambulatory operations owing to the lack of anesthesia drugs. "The region is facing health epidemics such as typhoid fever, hepatitis, and others, in addition to the inability to provide the necessary medicines for chronic diseases; such as diabetes and blood pressure, which was confirmed by UNRWA spokesman, Chris Kunis, who said, "We confirm the spread of typhoid among those who are helped by the UN insuring at least six cases." (See table 2).
- ❖ The withdrawal of most relief agencies from the camp owing to the threat of "ISIS" to activists, and stopping the introduction of aid to the camp including UNRWA aid upon "ISIS" control over 70% of the camp in the beginning of April, 2015. Some relief agencies limited its work in the neighboring new areas of displacement in Yalda, Babbila, Beit Sahem, and shelters. After visiting areas in which the residents of the Yarmouk camp

resorted to, UNRWA spokesman, Chris Gunness, said in a statement on 19 August, 2015, "UNRWA reached civilians from the Yarmouk camp in Damascus for the first time since 8 June." He also called for "allowing the agency to enter the Yarmouk camp due to the urgent need for humanitarian aid access." He stated that UNRWA's priority was to deliver humanitarian aid to civilians inside the Yarmouk camp.

- ❖ Continuing clashes and hostilities (bombing - sniping - clashes - execution - assassination) by the Syrian regime forces and committees affiliated to it on one hand, and the Syrian opposition militants of "ISIS" and "Al- Nasrah" and others on the other hand, with large number of victims from the parts of the conflict and trapped civilians inside the camp. (See tables 3-4-5-6).

➤ Signs and Numbers

These tables issued by the AGPS documentation and archive department provide full illustration for the field conditions taking place in the Yarmouk camp since it was controlled by "ISIS" and Al- Nasrah Front in the beginning of April 2015, and the following acts of violence and violations against Human Rights, which categorically confirm the siege imposed on the camp.

Table (1) Victims of Siege from April 1 till August 13, 2015

No.	Name	Date of Death	Other Information
1.	Mohammad Abed Qasem	4/7/2015	Due to lack of food and medical care
2.	Fathya Khaleel Abu Jwaid	4/8/2015	Born in 1935 and died due to lack of food and medical care
3.	Abu Said El- Hadeedi	8/2/2015	pulmonary edema due to cardiac insufficiency
4.	Infant Fatimah Al- Hussien	8/7/2015	6-month-old infant died due to siege, lack

			of medicine and medical care
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Table (2) Most Common Infectious Diseases Diagnosed from April 8, 2015 till August, 2015¹

Disease	Number of Cases
Hepatitis (A)	69
Typhoid fever	94
Upper respiratory infections	160
Gastrointestinal infections	94
Brucellosis	5

Table (3) Victims of Executions and Assassinations inside the Yarmouk Camp from April, 1st till August 13, 2015

No.	Name	Date	Accident Type	Other Information
1.	Naem Yunis Bahnasawi	7/2/2015	Execution	Born in 1972 from Sbeina camp. He was executed by ISIS because of his belonging to Aknaf Bait Al- Maqdis Brigades

¹ Statistics of the Medical center in the Yarmouk camp

2.	Mostafah Al-Shar'an	7/12/2015	Assassination	A relief Activist and Former Director for the Palestinian Charity Commission after being shot by masked group escaped after the accident.
3.	Iyad Ayoob	8/3/2015	Execution	He was shot by ISIS after being detained for about 2 months

Table (4) Victims of Sniping inside the Yarmouk Camp from April 1, till August 1, 2015

No.	Name	Date of Death	Other Information
1.	Mohammad Khair Tameem	1/4/2015	He was shot by a sniper of ISIS in the Yarmouk camp
2.	Tamer Abbass	5/4/2015	Killed by a sniper near Al- Oroobah neighborhood while bringing food and water to his family
3.	Zainab Daghistane	9/4/2015	A 12- year –old child , killed by a sniper , from Al- Orooba camp, near the Yarmouk camp
4.	Sana'a Mohammad Khaleeli	20/4/2015	Killed by a sniper in front of her house next to Al- Yarmouk court
5.	Said Fourani	20/4/2015	Killed by a sniper near Samed Center in the Yarmouk camp
6.	Abu Ra'ed Khaleeli	30/4/2015	Died after being shot near Ibn Al- Omara'a in the middle of Al- Yarmouk main street
7.	Baha'a Abu Shaqra	4/6/2015	He was shot by a sniper near Al- Rejah yard
8.	Mohammad Zuhair Abd Al- Mahmood	23/6/2015	30- year- old man, died after being shot by a sniper when he was in the balcony of his home in Al- Yarmouk

			Street opposite to Al- Yarmouk Secondary school for girls
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Table (5) Victims of Clashes inside the Yarmouk Camp from April 1, till August 13, 2015

No.	Name	Date of Death	Other Information
1.	Mohammad Saleh Isah	2/4/2015	Died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp
2.	Radwan Al- Ahmad	3/4/2015	Died due to bombing in the Yarmouk camp
3.	Abdullah Hassan Abdullah	3/4/2015	A member of Fateh Al- Intifada, died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp
4.	Majed Al- Emary	3/4/015	Died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp
5.	Omar Khatab	4/4/2015	Died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp between Aknaf Bait Al- Maqdis and ISIS
6.	Ala'a Derbas	4/4/2015	Died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp between Aknaf Bait Al- Maqdis and ISIS
7.	Khaled Al- Hassan	6/4/2015	Leader of Jaish Al- Tahreer of Al- Ahrar group, died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp
8.	Amer Al- Rasheed	6/4/2015	Died during clashes in the vicinity of Palestine Hospital in the Yarmouk camp while trying to face the attack of ISIS and Al- Jabha Front

9.	Ahmad Waleed Al- Boolad	6/4/2015	Died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp; a member of pro-Syrian regime groups
10.	Rami Basim Abu Ras	8/4/2015	Died during clashes in Dair Yaseen neighborhood behind Palestine Hospital
11.	Amjad Khatab	8/4/2015	A PFGC member pro- Syrian regime. He died during clashes with ISIS in the axis of the Yarmouk camp
12.	Hassan Haitham Al- Sallal	15/4/2015	A PFGC member and died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp
13.	Ahmad Abu Rashid	16/4/2015	Died during clashes between Al- Aknaf and ISIS
14.	Ebrahiem Ahmad Abd El- Rahman	17/4/2015	A member at Fatah Al- Intefada Movement and died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp
15.	Abd El- Rahman Sayel	2/5/2015	A PFGC member and died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp
16.	Mohammad Zagllol	2/5/2015	A PFGC member and died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp
17.	Abd El- Hadi El- Ahmad	7/5/2015	A PFGC member and died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp
18.	Magdi El- Bakri	7/5/2015	A PFGC member and died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp
19.	Emad Al- Kurdi	7/5/2015	A PFGC member and died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp
20.	Basil El- Thaqali	0/5/2015	A PFGC member and died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp with ISIS
21.	Mostafa El- Thaqali	10/5/2015	A PFGC member and died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp with ISIS and Al- Nasrah Front
22.	Rafe'a El- Nemer	14/5/2015	A PFGC member and died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp
23.	Mahmoud Fanteezah	12/6/2015	A PFGC member and died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp with ISIS and Al- Nasrah Front
24.	Abd El- Razeq El- Zaher	7/7/2015	Lieutenant of Fatah Al-Intifada movement in Syria province. He died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp
25.	Mohammad El- Rayan	9/7/2015	A PFGC member and died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp with ISIS and Al- Nasrah Front

26.	Hussien Tameem	9/7/2015	A PFGC member and died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp with ISIS and Al- Nasrah Front
27.	Nedal Hijo	9/7/2015	A PFGC member and died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp with ISIS and Al- Nasrah Front
28.	Mufeed Salam	9/7/2015	A PFGC member and died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp with ISIS and Al- Nasrah Front
29.	Maher Abu Zurd	9/7/2015	A PFGC member and died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp with ISIS and Al- Nasrah Front
30.	Zuhair Al- Bagdadi	9/7/2015	A PFGC member and died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp with ISIS and Al- Nasrah Front
31.	Ahmad Nazzal	9/7/2015	A PFGC member and died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp with ISIS and Al- Nasrah Front
32.	Adnan Amairy	9/7/2015	A PFGC member and died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp with ISIS and Al- Nasrah Front
33.	Nasir Odah	9/7/2015	A PFGC member and died during clashes in the Yarmouk camp with ISIS and Al- Nasrah Front
34.	Mahmoud Abd El- Wahaab El- Zabeeq	9/7/2015	A member in the Palestinian Democratic Party pro-Syrian regime, died during clashes with ISIS and Al-Nasrah Front on the outskirts of the Yarmouk camp.
35.	Saleem Bashtawee	15/7/2015	A resident of the Yarmouk camp and a member of the pro-Syrian regime armed groups. He died during clashes with Al-Nosrah Front in the Yarmouk camp secondary school for girls and militants of Al- Nasrah Front pulled the corpse to the areas under its control in the camp.
36	Belal Al- Saqah	22/7/2015	A member in the Palestinian National Defending pro-Syrian regime. He died during clashes in the axis of Palestine Street in the Yarmouk camp between ISIS and Al- Nasrah Front

Table (6) Victims of Bombing inside the Yarmouk Camp from April 1, till August 13, 2015

No.	Name	Date of Death	Other Information
1.	Jamal Khalifah	1/4/2015	Died during media covering for battels when ISIS stormed the Yarmouk camp after being injured with shrapnel; he was buried in the garden of Abd Al- Qader Al- Hussieni mosque due to the inability to access the camp because of the violent clashes.
2.	Abd Al- lateef Al- Reemwy	1/4/2015	Died as a result of bombing, and was buried in the garden of Abd Al- Qader Al- Hussieni mosque due to the inability to access the camp because of the violent clashes.
3.	Mohammad Ebraheem Maw'ed	6/4/2015	Died due to bombing of the camp
4.	Hussien Taha	7/4/2015	Died after the fall of an explosive barrel by the Syrian aircraft on Monday evening on April 6, 2015, at his house in the Yarmouk camp.
5.	Mohammad Al- Sabagh	13/4/2015	Died with his wife due to bombing, while their bodies were found in their house behind Palestine Hospital
6.	Mohammad Nassar Al- Ibrahiem	13/4/2015	Died after being injured with shrapnel in Al- Oroobah Street
7.	Rami Yussif Ibrahiem	15/4/2015	Died due to injury because of the bombing that targeted Al- Rejah Square in the Yarmouk camp
8.	Ibrahiem Majid Kallash	1/5/2015	A resident of the Yarmouk camp, died after being injured in the violent bombing of the camp
9.	Ahmad Safwan Kallash	26/5/2015	Died due to explosive barrels which targeted the Yarmouk camp in which the process of recovering his body lasted for 14 hours before being buried in Al- Shohada'a cemetery inside the camp
10	Sameer Saed Adrah	13/7/2015	A child from the Yarmouk camp who died as a result of injury during bombing
11.	Mohammad Mahmoud Shaker	15/7/2015	Named by Abu Qasim; died after being injured by bombing with explosive barrels that targeted the Yarmouk camp
12.	Fadel Ma'ed	21/7/2015	Died after being injured in the bombing of the Yarmouk camp

Results and Recommendations

Based on the fact that Yarmouk residents are able to reach adjacent areas, the Humanitarian Affairs Coordination Office had reached a decision to lift Yarmouk Camp from the list of the besieged areas; a decision which is considered as arbitrary because it contradicts the facts on the ground since residents undergo scores of risks to reach these areas in addition to the suffering and extortion to get food be it aids or paid ones.

Furthermore, facts on the ground and acts of hostilities the camp witnesses as well as statements issued by UNRWA, as an international authority, contradict this decision and reflect the true image of the siege of the camp. So:

There should be a formal movement on all local, regional, and international levels to conduct quick reviews for this decision which is based on erroneous information that will increase the suffering of approximately 3,000 Palestinian refugees inside the camp and deepen the tragedy of dozens of thousands of displaced people waiting for the lift of the siege to return to their houses for they have been drained of displacement.

Taking Initiatives to lift the siege off the Yarmouk camp, provide the required protection for Palestinian refugees in Syria, and enable displaced people to return to their homes.

Continuing the provision of relief support, that is necessary to the sustainability of refugees' lives, securing the entry of aid to the camp, restoring water, and electricity, and restoring the infrastructure that was destroyed by the war.