



مجموعة العمل من أجل فلسطينيي سورية
Action Group For Palestinians of Syria

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الخاص بأوضاع اللاجئين الفلسطينيين في سورية

Daily report on the situation of Palestinian refugees in Syria



"Palestinians of Syria Rally Outside of Palestine Embassy in Beirut"

- Vulnerable Palestinian Families in Jordan in Need of Emergency Assistance
- Prisoners' Families Blackmailed in Syria
- Residents of AlSayeda Zeinab Camp Denounce Movement Restrictions
- Council of Europe: Asylum Seekers Should Not Be Pushed Back to Unsafe Countries



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Latest Developments

A number of Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon have joined a rally held outside of the Palestine Embassy in Beirut to call for urgent humanitarian assistance.

The refugees urged the Palestine Ambassador to work out their precarious legal condition and enhance the legal condition of those who illegally entered Lebanon.

The refugees voiced their firm rejection of their forcible deportation to war-ravaged Syria.

Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) in Lebanon are grappling with increased hardship and vulnerability, due to long-term displacement and difficult socio-economic conditions, coupled with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, said UNRWA in a fact sheet entitled “Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal 2021”.

According to UNRWA, 87% of PRS live in poverty in the Lebanese territories.

Nearly 65% of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (PRL) live in poverty.

UNRWA’s factsheet indicates that 257,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are in need of UNRWA emergency cash assistance.



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Over 470,000 refugees are registered with UNRWA in Lebanon. About 45 per cent of them live in the country's 12 refugee camps. Conditions in the camps are dire and characterized by overcrowding, poor housing conditions, unemployment, poverty and lack of access to justice.

Palestinians in Lebanon do not enjoy several important rights; for example, they cannot work in many professions and cannot own property (real estate). Because they are not formally citizens of another state, Palestine refugees are unable to claim the same rights as other foreigners living and working in Lebanon.

Along similar lines, activists have sounded the alarm over vulnerable Palestinian refugees in Jordan in light of the multiple hardships inflicted by the coronavirus pandemic.

In appeals emailed to AGPS, the activists called for shelling out monthly cash aid to elderly Palestinian refugees instead of the three-month grants and to provide them with in-kind and food items.

Palestinian refugees from Syria have also called on UNRWA to deliver the third batch of their cash grants.

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According to UNRWA, 100% of PRS in Jordan are in need of winterization assistance and 17,800 PRS are in need of UNRWA cash assistance.

UNRWA said that in 2021, the Agency requires US\$ 318 million to respond to the humanitarian needs of Palestine refugees in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.

More than 2 million Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA live in Jordan.

There are ten recognized Palestine refugee camps throughout the country, which accommodate nearly 370,000 Palestine refugees. Jordan hosts the largest number of Palestine refugees of all of the UNWRA fields.

The majority of Palestine refugees have sought humanitarian assistance in Jordan, where they continue to suffer from abject poverty and live in a precarious legal status.

In another development, the families of hundreds of Palestinian refugees secretly held in Syrian state jails have been blackmailed over their appeals for information.

Hundreds of families have paid large sums of money of up to \$20,000 to brokers, crooked lawyers, or government officials to get pieces of information about the condition and whereabouts of their missing relatives.

The families hardly ever receive the required pieces of information and the traffickers never show up again as soon as they are paid.



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In a report entitled “Syria: Between Prison and the Grave” and published in 2015, Amnesty International warned that tens of thousands of people in Syria have vanished without a trace. They are the victims of enforced disappearance – when a person is arrested, detained or abducted by a state or agents acting for the state, who then deny the person is being held or conceal their whereabouts, placing them outside the protection of the law. The disappeared are cut off from the outside world, packed into overcrowded, secret cells where torture is routine, disease is rampant and death is commonplace. Their families are forced to live in desperation with few, if any, safe ways of finding their loved ones.

According to the report, the number of actors seeking to use the system for their own personal gain or advantage has increased. As a result of this opportunism by state security officers, an even greater number of individuals have been subjected to enforced disappearance in Syria. Amnesty International’s research suggested that those who exploit the system are driven by two primary motivations: first, the pursuit of financial profit, and second, the settling of personal grievances.

AGPS documented the secret detention of 1,797 Palestinian refugees in state-run penal complexes across war-torn Syria, among them 110 women and girls.

AGPS also documented the death of over 550 Palestinian refugees under torture in Syrian government lock-ups, including women, children, and elderly civilians.



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Affidavits by ex-detainees provided evidence on the involvement of Syrian government officers in harsh torture tactics, including electric shocks, heavy beating using whips and iron sticks, and sexual abuse against Palestinian detainees, in a flagrant violation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, commonly known as the United Nations Convention against Torture (UNCAT).

Meanwhile, residents of AlSayeda Zeinab camp and adjacent areas have denounced the arbitrary closure of access roads, blocking their access to their schools and workplaces.

Recently, Syrian security forces have fenced off access roads to AlSayeda Zeinab with sand barriers and without prior notice.

Informed sources told AGPS that the closure was carried out under the security pretext.

Palestinian refugees and Syrian families taking shelter in the area continue to speak out against the arbitrary crackdowns and movement restrictions slapped by the Syrian regime against the residents.

UN data indicates that the camp was established on an area of 0.02 square kilometers in 1948, but the majority of the residents came in 1967. The inhabitants, who were displaced from the Quneitra Governorate in the Golan Heights during the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict, sought refuge for the second time in their lives in the area. Most had originally fled to the Golan Heights in 1948 from nearby villages in northern Palestine.



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Before the conflict in Syria, the camp was home to 23,700 Palestine refugees. The camp was affected by violent clashes that forced 40 per cent of the people to leave in late 2012.

Like other areas in Syria, displacement, unemployment, inflation, protection and security risks are among the major concerns shared not only by Palestine refugees but also Syrians alike during the ongoing conflict in Syria. The majority of Palestine refugees in AlSayeda Zeinab work as day laborers, government employees or vendors.

In the meantime, “European countries are failing to protect refugees and migrants trying to reach Europe via the Mediterranean. Backsliding in the protection of the lives and rights of refugees and migrants is worsening and causing thousands of avoidable deaths each year”, said Dunja Mijatović, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, while releasing a report entitled “A distress call for human rights. The widening gap in migrant protection in the Mediterranean”.

The report takes stock of member states’ implementation of the Commissioner’s 2019 Recommendation on rescuing migrants at sea and provides a set of actionable measures to be urgently taken by European states to ensure a human rights compliant approach to sea crossings. It covers developments from July 2019 until December 2020 in five key areas: effective search and rescue; timely and safe disembarkation of rescued persons; co-operation with non-governmental organisations; co-operation with third countries; and safe and legal routes; and focuses mainly on



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developments on the Central Mediterranean route. However, many of the required actions set out in this document are applicable to all other major migration routes in the Mediterranean region and on the Atlantic route from West Africa to Spain.

This report stresses that, despite some limited progress, the human rights situation in the Mediterranean remains deplorable. Shipwrecks continue to be worryingly recurrent, with more than 2,400 registered deaths in the period under consideration, a number which may well under-represent the real tally of deadly incidents. The growing disengagement of states' naval capacity from the Mediterranean and the hindrance of NGOs' rescue activities, as well as decisions to delay disembarkation and failure to assign a safe port, have undermined the integrity of the search and rescue system. Co-operation activities with third countries have been enhanced despite the undeniable evidence of serious human rights violations, and without the implementation of human rights safeguards including transparency and accountability principles. "On the Central Mediterranean route specifically, many developments appearing to be aimed at 'clearing the field' for interceptions by the Libyan Coast Guard have become institutionalised, leading to almost 20,000 recorded returns to serious human rights violations in Libya", wrote the Commissioner. The COVID-19 pandemic has also led to the adoption of more restrictive measures, which have a direct negative impact on the human rights of migrants.

In order to halt the widening of the gap in the protection of refugees and migrants crossing the Mediterranean and reverse the



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situation, the Commissioner renews her call on Council of Europe member states to implement swiftly her recommendations to ensure the preservation of human life and the protection of the human rights of people in distress at sea. In particular, she recommends guaranteeing the presence of adequate and sufficient state-led search and rescue capacity at sea; ensuring safe and prompt disembarkation of those rescued; allowing NGOs involved in search and rescue activities or human rights monitoring to carry out their work; ending pushbacks and other actions that expose refugees and migrants to return to serious human rights violations; and expanding safe and legal routes.

“It is high time for European countries to put an end to this shameful tragedy and to adopt human rights compliant migration policies. Member states must no longer delay taking action to save lives. It is a matter of life or death – and of the credibility of European countries’ commitment to human rights,” concluded the Commissioner.