



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



"333 Palestinian Refugees Missing in War-Torn Syria"

- Palestinian Journalist Rafat Nabhan Released from Syrian Prisons
- 2 Palestinians Succumb to Coronavirus in Syria
- Displaced Palestinian Families in Northern Syria Struggling for Survival
- Palestinian Refugee Families in Lebanon on Verge of Famine, Warns Rights Group

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Latest developments

333 Palestinian refugees, including 37 women and girls, have gone missing since the outbreak of the Syrian warfare, AGPS has found out.

Most of those who have disappeared in the country are residents of Yarmouk Camp for Palestinian refugees, south of Damascus.

Activists have accused pro-government militias of targeting Palestinians in arbitrary abduction sweeps carried out under the security guise. Scores of families have been blackmailed over the release of their missing relatives and have paid large sums of money to brokers, crooked lawyers, or government officials to get pieces of information about their conditions and whereabouts.

AGPS believes that the number is far higher due to the gag orders enforced by the Syrian authorities on the detainees' fates and names, along with the reluctance of the refugee families to reveal the names of their deceased or missing relatives for fear of retaliation.

AGPS believes that the arbitrary internment and enforced disappearance of Palestinian refugees in war-torn Syria amounts to a war crime.

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 forcibly-disappeared Palestinians, 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).

AGPS continues to urge the Syrian government to disclose the fate of scores of Palestinians forcibly disappeared in state-run dungeons, release the bodies of those tortured to death, seriously work on halting harsh torture tactics, launch fact-finding probes into crimes of torture, and to bring those involved in such crimes before courts.

Along similar lines, Palestinian security forces released on August 31 Palestinian journalist Rafat Nabhan, after one year and a half in jail.

He was arrested on March 7, 2019 after he crossed the Jdeida border crossing, coming from Lebanon.

Meanwhile, Palestinian instructor Khaled Azzam, from AlNeirab camp, and another refugee from Khan Eshieh camp, in Rif Dimashq have died of coronavirus in Syria.

Sometime earlier, AGPS reported the death of 18 Palestinian refugees due to coronavirus infections in Syria.

Recently, a state of panic has overwhelmed the Palestinian refugee community taking shelter in war-torn Syria following reports of increased coronavirus cases.



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AGPS continues to urge UNRWA and the Syrian Health Ministry to provide the Palestinian refugee community in the war-ravaged country with hygiene kit and relief items in light of the coronavirus outbreak.

AGPS also stresses the need to supply Palestinian refugee camps with medicines, detergents, and disinfectants in order to help the displaced communities defend themselves against the deadly COVID-19 virus.

AGPS is deeply concerned that the lack of transparency maintained by the Syrian government regarding the pandemic will result in a catastrophic situation in displacement camps, at a time when the deadly virus continues to claim the lives of thousands of people across the globe.

AGPS fears the coronavirus could spread quickly in jails and in overcrowded displacement camps, where neither hygiene kit nor medical equipment are accessible.

Displacement camps set up in northern Syria are especially vulnerable as most hospitals and medical facilities have been bombed, rendering them out of order.

Along similar lines, hundreds of Palestinian and Syrian families who have been forcibly deported to northern Syria have been grappling with an abject humanitarian situation as most of them have been taking cover in underequipped tents.



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The families continue to appeal to the concerned human rights institutions to take urgent measures so as to supply them with much-needed items and hygiene kit, at a time when coronavirus cases have increasingly been confirmed in the war-torn country.

Families who were forcibly deported to northern Syria are also crammed into over-crowded camps where neither power nor water supplies are available. High rates of unemployment and lack of relief assistance have made the situation far worse for the displaced families.

In the meantime, SHAHED Organization for Human Rights has warned of a famine to strike Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon, where the socio-economic situation has taken a turn for the worse.

SHAHED warned that the coronavirus crisis along with the decision issued by former Labor Minister against migrant workers in August 2018 and the recent Beirut explosion have made Palestinians' situation far worse in the country.

SHAHED urged UNRWA to take up its legal and moral obligations towards the refugees, to launch pre-emptive responses to the imminent famine, to appeal to donors and the international community to increase their funds to the refugee agency, and to hold an international donor conference to that end.

According to information collected by UNRWA, more than 80 per cent of PRS indicate that the Agency's cash assistance is their main source of income. 95 per cent of PRS are food insecure, while about



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89 per cent of PRS live in poverty. 36 to 57 per cent of PRS youth face unemployment. In August and September 2019, UNRWA conducted a verification exercise of PRS in Lebanon and verified the physical presence of 27,803 PRS in the country.

The number of PRS in Lebanon has been gradually decreasing over the past two years, and UNRWA estimates that in 2020 the country will continue to host approximately 27,700 PRS (8,450 families). UNRWA said PRS's vulnerability is further compounded by their precarious legal status. According to the Agency's monitoring data, around 55 percent of PRS do not possess valid legal residency documents.

The lack of a valid legal status, often coupled with outdated civil registration documents, results in severely restricted freedom of movement for some PRS in Lebanon due to fear of arrest, detention and being issued a departure order.