



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

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التقرير اليومي

الخاص بأوضاع اللاجئين الفلسطينيين في سورية

Daily report on the situation of Palestinian refugees in Syria



"Health Condition of Palestinian Refugees at Risk in War-Torn Syria"

- Families of Palestinian Prisoners Blackmailed in Syria's Jaramana Camp
- Palestinian Refugee Families Facing Squalid Conditions in Khan Dannun Camp
- Committee of Palestinians of Syria Calls for Urgent Humanitarian Assistance
- Palestinian Refugee Ali Fares Forcibly Disappeared by Syrian Regime for 8th Year

+442084530978

/Actgroup.palsyria

reports@actionpal.org.uk

www.actionpal.org.uk



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Latest Developments

Entering its 11th year, the Syrian conflict has severely impacted Palestinian refugees who have been living in the war-torn country after they were displaced from their homes in the Israeli-occupied territories.

Palestinian refugees in Syria (PRS) have had scant access to vital services, particularly healthcare, leaving thousands of vulnerable cases at the risk of death.

As the coronavirus pandemic has rebounded around the MENA region and the globe, PRS continue to struggle with growing poverty, economic hardship, and medical neglect.

The destruction wrought on hospitals, health centres, and pharmacies has made the situation far more alarming. Children, expectant women, people with chronic diseases, and the elderly have received no special attention.

Palestinian medics and relief activists have been permanently targeted by the Syrian government forces on claims of assisting rival parties. Several paramedics and volunteers have also died under torture in government lock-ups.

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



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water, pharmacies and medical facilities means residents of these displacement camps risk to lose their lives.

Palestinians have been living in Syria as refugees since they were displaced from their homes in 1948. Approximately 560,000 Palestinian refugees lived in Syria before the Syrian uprising in March 2011, with access to education, healthcare and employment.

However, in the years that followed, an estimated 100,000-150,000 Palestinian refugees fled Syria, becoming displaced once more. On arrival in neighbouring countries, many faced legal restrictions and an unavoidable reliance on underfunded UNRWA institutions for basic services.

Along similar lines, Palestinian refugee families taking shelter in Khan Dannun camp, in Rif Dimashq, continue to rail against the poor infrastructure and absence of vital facilities in the area.

Water supplies have been repeatedly cut off across residential neighborhoods in Khan Dannun, forcing civilians to buy drinking water from privately-owned tanks at steep prices. The residents have also denounced the ongoing electricity blackout.

At the same time, civilians continue to appeal to the concerned authorities to secure transportation means to give them daily lifts to their destinations and workplaces. Students, workers, and sick people are made to wait for over two hours daily to reach their destinations.



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Living conditions in Khan Dannun have sharply deteriorated due to the lack of financial resources and high unemployment rates wrought by the unbridled warfare.

According to UN data, Khan Dannun camp was built several centuries ago to give overnight accommodation to trading caravans on the ancient route between Jerusalem and Constantinople (modern day Istanbul). In 1948, the ruins of the city provided shelter for refugees from villages in northern Palestine.

The camp, which lies 23 km south of Damascus, was officially established in 1950-1951 on an area of 0.03 square kilometers. The camp was home to 10,000 Palestine refugees by 2011, almost all of whom were living in irregular housing, constructed without any formal approval from the municipality.

Before the conflict in Syria, the camp was already one of the poorest camps in Syria. The conflict exerted additional pressures. The camp was surrounded by armed opposition groups and many refugee families displaced from other areas of Damascus took refuge in the camp, tripling the number of residents to some 30,000 during the crisis. Currently, the camp is home to 12,650 Palestine refugees. The increase of the camp population has had a negative impact on the camp's infrastructure.

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



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Speaking with AGPS, activists said a so-called “Marwan Abu Khader”, a resident of Qutna city, has been blackmailing Palestinian families sheltered in Jaramana refugee camp, in Rif Dimashq, and alleging that he knows the condition and whereabouts of a number of detainees.

Over recent years, hundreds of families have paid large sums of money to brokers, crooked lawyers, or government officials to get pieces of information about the condition and whereabouts of their missing relatives in Syria.

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

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



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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.

Affidavits by ex-detainees have 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, the Follow-Up Committee of Displaced Palestinians in Lebanon's AlBekaa region lashed out at UNRWA and all other concerned bodies in Lebanon for dragging their feet over the dire situation of Palestinian refugees.



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In a press statement, the committee called on UNRWA to adopt an emergency plan in order to provide urgent assistance to Palestinian refugees, including healthcare and cash aid.

The committee also called on UNRWA to deliver cash grants for Palestinian refugees on a monthly-basis and in US dollars in order to help this vulnerable group fight the multiple hardships inflicted by the coronavirus crisis.

The statement expressed Palestinians' firm rejection of any attempt to settle refugees in other destinations and their commitment to their right of return to their motherland—Palestine.

In the meantime, Palestinian refugee Ali Fares, living in Jaramana Camp, in Rif Dimashq, has been secretly held in Syrian government prisons for the eighth year in a row.

Ali was arrested by Syrian intelligence forces in Damascus on January 28, 2013.

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