



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



"UNRWA Deputy Commissioner-General Calls For Increased Services For Palestine Refugees in Syria"

- Palestinian Activists Call For Holding Eid Prayers in Yarmouk Camp
- Residents of Khan Eshieh Camp Slam Water Company
- Situation of Palestinian Refugees Exacerbated by Rationalization of Economic Support
- Palestinian Refugee Mohamed Mohamed Secretly Held in Syrian Prisons for 9th Year

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Latest Developments

During her first official visit to Syria from 24-28 April 2021, newly appointed UNRWA Deputy Commissioner-General, Leni Stenseth, met with Palestine refugees and inspected UNRWA installations in Syria.

She met with several Government officials, including Dr. Bashar al-Jaafari, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and expatriates, Dr. Salwa al-Abdallah, Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, and Mr. Ali Mustafa, Director-General of the General Authority for Palestinian Arab Refugees (GAPAR).

The UNRWA official briefed them on UNRWA operations and the Agency's efforts to modernize and become more efficient, and the ongoing financial challenges. Ms. Stenseth particularly emphasized the Agency's deep appreciation for strong, continuous support to Palestine refugees by the Government of Syria.

“The excellent cooperation has not only allowed UNRWA to provide 438,000 Palestine refugees across the country with essential services, but also to jointly respond to overwhelming challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic,” she said.

During her visits to the Sbeineh and Yarmouk camps in Rif Damascus, Ms. Stenseth witnessed the extreme hardship and increasing needs of Palestine refugees. In Sbeineh, she talked to staff who briefed her about how UNRWA quickly adjusted its services at the beginning of the pandemic, including the change to



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remote learning, telehealth and increased safety measures. Palestine refugee women at the food distribution point expressed the multiple challenges they face and how they depend on UNRWA assistance.

In Yarmouk, once home to approximately 160,000 Palestine refugees and now laying in ruins, Stenseth was troubled by the level of destruction. She talked to Palestine refugees who have returned to the camp, and who shared testimonies of pain and despair, but were also full of hope and resilience.

All UNRWA installations in Yarmouk camp were either severely damaged or destroyed during the now over ten-year-long conflict. “Rehabilitation of UNRWA installations is one of our top priorities,” Stenseth said. “More Palestine refugees are expected to return to Yarmouk, where living conditions are unbearable. Coping mechanism are depleted, and enormous efforts need to be put in place to make sure the camp becomes a habitable place for Palestine refugees. The international community needs to step up to make sure when the refugees return to the camp they can live in dignity.”

Updating UNRWA staff on the Agency’s financial situation, Stenseth noted: “2020 was an extremely difficult year for UNRWA and for all of you, with unprecedented and compounded financial, public health and socio-economic crises. It is only thanks to your dedication and hard work that UNRWA has been able to continue providing services to the Palestine refugee community in Syria without interruption. You gave an example to the world. I promise



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you that we are working relentlessly to overcome UNRWA financial challenges. We urgently need additional contributions to ensure sufficient, predictable, and sustained funding for UNRWA. Having met with you and the Palestine refugee community will help me and the Commissioner-General to be your voice when meeting with our donors,” she said.

Along similar lines, Palestinian activists have called for holding Muslim prayers in congregation on the holy Eid Day in Yarmouk Camp for Palestinian refugees.

The activists posted calls on social media using the hashtag #Eid_prayers_in_our_camp.

Palestinian families continue to call on the concerned authorities to allow them a safe return to their homes in Yarmouk Camp, in Damascus, and to press ahead with reconstruction projects.

Mounds of debris continue to be spotted everywhere across the ravaged Yarmouk Camp for Palestinian refugees, which has come under heavy shelling all the way through Syria’s ten-year conflict.

Some three years ago, precisely on April 19, 2018, Syrian regime forces and their Russian allies showered the camp with missiles and mortars, resulting in dozens of deaths among Palestinian refugees and hundreds of injuries.

Over 60% of buildings and facilities in Yarmouk Camp have been reduced to rubble and civilian homes razed to the ground.



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Before the crisis started in 2011, Yarmouk was a bustling home to almost 30 percent of the Palestine refugee population in Syria. Today, the weight of displacement, hardship and the loss of loved ones add to the difficult living conditions in Yarmouk.

In the meantime, residents of Khan Eshieh camp have accused staff of the Water Company of favoritism and corruption, saying water supplies have been unevenly distributed across residential neighborhoods.

Palestinian families taking refuge in Khan Eshieh camp, in Rif Dimashq, said water has been frequently cut off across residential neighborhoods.

The residents have warned of the repercussions of the water crisis on their children's health condition in light of the global propagation of the COVID-19 pandemic.

An AGPS reporter said most of the families sheltered in the camp are cash-stripped and cannot afford to buy drinking water from privately-owned tanks.

Palestinian families continue to appeal to UNRWA and the concerned authorities to take urgent action regarding the alarming humanitarian condition in the camp.

Meanwhile, Association 302 to Defend Refugee Rights said the humanitarian condition of Palestinians of Syria in Lebanon will be severely affected by the rationalization of economic assistance.



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In a statement, Association 302 said the government's economic rationalization measures are to be put into effect by the end of June 2021.

Fuel, gas, petrol, medicines, along with other commodities, are slated to be rationed by the Lebanese government.

In its fact sheet entitled "Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal 2021", UNRWA said that 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.

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.

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



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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.

In another development, the family of Palestinian refugee Mohamed Mahmoud Mohamed, born in 1976, continues to appeal for information over their forcibly disappeared relative, who has been locked up in Syrian government jails since January 24, 2013.

A resident of Yarmouk Camp, the refugee was kidnapped from his workplace in Dumar area, in western Damascus.

An ex-prisoner who was released from the Syrian air intelligence prison in Sumaria, in Damascus, said he last met him in November 2018.

AGPS documented the secret incarceration of 1,797 Palestinian refugees in Syrian state-run lock-ups, among them 108 women and girls.