



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

"UN Palestine Refugee Agency Issues Call for Humanitarian Assistance amid End-of-Year Shortfall"

- Displaced Palestinian Families Long For Return to Yarmouk Camp
- Humanitarian Drive Launched in Khan Eshieh Refugee Camp
- Situation of Palestinian Refugees in Syria Displacement Camp Exacerbated by Exorbitant Transportation Fees

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Latest Developments

Commissioner-General for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Philippe Lazzarini announced that the Agency has run out of money to pay the salaries of 28,000 UNRWA staff in November.

In a call for urgent humanitarian assistance issued on November 9, the Agency said it needs to raise US\$ 70 million by the end of the month if it is to pay full salaries for the months of November and December.

“Despite all of our efforts to raise the resources needed to keep our humanitarian and development programmes running, it was with great regret that I informed our staff today that we don’t have sufficient funding at this stage to honor their salaries this month,” said Lazzarini.

“If additional funding is not pledged in the next weeks, UNRWA will be forced to defer partial salaries to all staff. I am deeply saddened to know that the earned salaries of our fearless, resilient social, sanitation and health-care workers on the front lines and our teachers working to ensure students’ education continue during this emergency health crisis are at risk”, he said.

UNRWA is the main UN body responsible for delivering assistance, education, and protection to millions of Palestine refugees living in the Middle East today. The COVID-19 global pandemic has only exacerbated the insecurity that many vulnerable refugees already experience on a daily basis.



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Over the last five years, UNRWA cut US\$ 500 million out of its budget by enacting efficiency and cost-reduction measures. This has included cutting staff, stopping needed repairs and investments in its infrastructure, increasing classroom size to 50 students per teacher, and reducing life-saving humanitarian assistance at a time of rising needs.

“Today’s call to the international community comes with the utmost urgency,” continued the UNRWA Commissioner-General. “To ensure the Agency can continue its critical services and live-saving operations, it is imperative that UN Member States match their political commitment with sufficient and predictable financial contributions so that UNRWA has a reliable stream of funding to purchase medical supplies, continue fighting the COVID-19 pandemic in refugees camps, and deliver on social services and emergency response programmes. Without their income, UNRWA staff, the vast majority of whom are refugees themselves, will see their source of livelihoods disappear, and they are very likely to descend into deep poverty.”

UNRWA is confronted with an increased demand for services resulting from a growth in the number of registered Palestine refugees, the extent of their vulnerability and their deepening poverty. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions and financial support has been outpaced by the growth in needs. As a result, the UNRWA programme budget, which supports the delivery of core essential services, operates with a large shortfall.



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UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and mandated to provide assistance and protection to some 5.7 million Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA across its five fields of operation. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip achieve their full human development potential, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight.

In another development, families displaced from Yarmouk Camp, in Damascus, have expressed their hope that they would return to the camp and retrieve their property in the near future.

Activists said practical measures have started to materialize on the ground to pave the way for the families' return to the camp, including greenlighting the entry of minibuses to transfer the residents to and from the 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.

Last year, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) published the results of an assessment of the damage to Syrian cities caused by seven years of relentless bombardment by the incumbent regime and its allies since 2011.

The analysis found out that as many as 5,489 buildings were destroyed in Yarmouk Camp for Palestinian refugees. The damage



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atlas used satellite-detected damage analysis to identify buildings that are either destroyed, or severely or moderately damaged.

Meanwhile, activists from Khan Eshieh camp have launched an initiative to collect money in order to help the residents secure fuel and heating items as a cold winter season has drawn near.

The activists called on Palestinian migrants and expatriates to support the campaign.

Palestinian families taking refuge in Khan Eshieh camp have been struggling with squalid humanitarian conditions inflicted by the nine-year long warfare.

According to UN data, Khan Eshieh camp lies beside the ancient ruins of Khan Eshieh, 27km south-west of Damascus. The Khan historically served as an overnight shelter for trade caravans on the road between Damascus and the southwest, and in 1948, it provided shelter for the first refugees from Palestine. The camp was established in 1949 on an area of 0.69 square kilometers with refugees originally from the northern part of Palestine.

Before the conflict in Syria, the camp was home to more than 20,000 Palestine refugees. In 2012, the farms and fields surrounding the camp became active battlegrounds in which heavy weapons were deployed, often indiscriminately. The population more than halved to 9,000.

Some of the camp's buildings and infrastructure were severely affected including some UNRWA installations; two UNRWA



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schools and the community centre were almost razed to the ground. In 2016, UNRWA was able to re-access Khan Esheih and the Agency was able to rehabilitate some of its installations. Residents have also slowly started to return, with the camp now accommodating 12,000 people.

Along similar lines, residents of AlSabina camp have denounced the exorbitant transportation charges imposed by bus drivers in and around the area.

The residents said transportation fees are three times higher than the price set by the government.

Activists have called on the residents to report cases of price inflation by bus drivers to local authorities.