



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



"Foreign Policy: Refugees at Risk as Germany Forces Them to Return to Syria"

- **Palestinian Refugees Struggling for Survival South of Damascus**
- **Commission of Displaced Palestinian Refugees Calls for Emergency Meeting at UNRWA Headquarters**
- **Palestinian Girl Salma Abdul Razaq Secretly Held in Syrian Jail for 6th Year**

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Latest Developments

As the Syrian war draws to an end, refugees are being encouraged to return home by the countries to which they have fled. Those who do so, however, are finding the persecution that caused them to flee has not gone away, Foreign Policy magazine said in a report issued last week.

According to the report, a number of those who have returned have disappeared into the country's notorious prison system, a stark reminder of the dangers the country's former refugees face.



Foreign Policy has spoken to the relatives of two such Palestinian refugees, and activists confirm there are many more. Several others, meanwhile, have been rounded up and conscripted into the army.

Syria was and continues to be a police state with the same government and the same security apparatus in place, which is accused of thousands of politically motivated detentions. But governments hosting large numbers of refugees, including Lebanon and Germany, are under domestic political pressure to give incentives to refugees to go back home, it added.



One young man, Asser, chose to go back home from Germany after he was unable to surmount the bureaucratic hurdles preventing him from having his fiancée from Syria join him.

Two weeks after arriving back in Damascus, he was called in for questioning at the local intelligence branch. He phoned his family and told them he would be home soon. He has not been heard from since. His parents, who remain anonymous to protect them from regime retaliation, paid a mediator, who found out that Asser had been detained. Such go-betweens are widely used to gather information on the disappeared and imprisoned because officially no such information is made available by the government.

Asser's cousin, still based in Germany, told FP his story, also on the condition of anonymity. "He tried several times to claim the reunion [with his fiancée], but he couldn't," he said. "He missed her and started to feel tired and depressed. That's the most important reason he left."

Yasim, another refugee who left Germany under similar circumstances, has also disappeared. His cousin Mohammad, still based in Germany, said Yasim could not obtain the papers required to enable his wife to join him. All their documents had been destroyed in Yarmouk, the Palestinian refugee camp in southern Damascus where they had lived.

"He left Germany and was detained near the Lebanese-Syria border. We don't know anything about him after that," Mohammad said, adding that without his wife Yasim had found it difficult to adjust to life in Germany, a culture alien to him. "He could not cope with it."



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FP said the lingering backlash to Chancellor Angela Merkel’s open-door policy toward refugees in 2015 has forced the government to pursue policies that are ultimately placing refugees from Syria in the same danger from which they had fled. The dynamic raises questions of whether governments have a duty of care toward refugees who return, beyond the letter of the law.

Thousands of Palestinian refugees have simply disappeared into the regime’s prison system, with no record of their fate or whereabouts, since the start of the war, and returning refugees are especially vulnerable to such harsh treatment.

The 1951 U.N. Refugee Convention says clearly that compulsory returns are disallowed if “life or freedom would be threatened on account of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.”

Meanwhile, Palestinian refugees taking shelter in such southern Damascus towns as Yalda, Babila, and Beit Sahem have been grappling with dire conditions as a result of the price hike, steep rental fees, and high rates of unemployment.





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Palestinians are forced to rent homes at prices of up to 40,000 Syrian pounds, a sum that outlives the refugees' budget.

Local municipalities stipulated that displaced families sign a lease agreement with the house owner, forcing dozens of families to share tiny rooms.

The Syrian government forces stipulated that in order for Palestinian refugees sheltered in Yarmouk Camp and the towns of Yalda, Babila, and Beit Sahem to gain access to Damascus a formal consent should be issued to that very end.

Nearly 5,000 Palestinian refugees have been taking shelter in southern Damascus towns after they were displaced from the embattled Yarmouk Camp.

The Syrian government forces regained control over Yarmouk Camp and southern Damascus towns following a 33-day military operation launched on April 19, 2018. Dozens of civilians were killed and dozens more injured in the offensive. Over 80% of buildings have gone either totally or partially destroyed in the warfare.

In the meantime, Palestinian student Salma Abdul Razak, enrolled at the Architectural Engineering University in Damascus, has been enduring a mysterious fate in Syrian government penitentiaries.

Born on March 30, 1990, Salma fled Yarmouk Camp after it was struck with Mig fighter jets. She was kidnapped as she attempted to re-enter the camp on December 30, 2012 via a checkpoint pitched



near AlBashir Mosque, after reports emerged that her brother was injured with sniper fire.

She was transferred, along with Palestinian refugee Husam Maw'ed, to an unknown location and charged with assisting refugees and tending to the wounded.

Several appeals were sent by her family to the Palestine Liberation Organization and Palestinian factions. However no data has been revealed on Salma's condition and whereabouts.

According to AGPS statistics, 108 Palestinian women and girls figure on a list of 1,729 refugees secretly held in Syrian government dungeons.

AGPS believes the exact numbers to be far higher due to the gag orders slapped by the Syrian government on the fates and whereabouts of the detainees and the families' reluctance to report cases of torture and enforced disappearance over retaliation concerns.

In another development, the Association of Displaced Palestinians from Syria in Jordan called for an emergency gathering at the UNRWA office in Amman to urge the agency to meet their demands.

Over recent months, Palestinian refugees from Syria in Jordan have railed against the reluctance maintained by UNRWA regarding their cries for help. The refugees urged the agency to shell out its monthly aids, including fuel, power/water, and shelter allowances, and to increase cash and in-kind aids.



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Over 17,000 Palestinian refugees have sought shelter in Jordan, fleeing war-torn Syria.

