



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

14-03-2021

No. 3160

## التقرير اليومي

الخاص بأوضاع اللاجئين الفلسطينيين في سورية

Daily report on the situation of Palestinian refugees in Syria



**"135,000 Palestine Refugees in Syria Belong to Most Vulnerable Categories"**

- Residents of Deraa Refugee Camp Appeal for Reconstruction of Vital Facilities
- Palestinian Refugees in Syria Displacement Camp Appeal for Life-Saving Medicines
- Palestinian Refugee Ahmad Fayad Forcibly Disappeared by Syrian Regime for 8<sup>th</sup> Year
- 21 Migrants Pushed Back by Greek Authorities



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## Latest Developments

For the last ten years, Syria has been devastated by prolonged conflict, destroying countless lives and displacing millions.

According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Palestinian refugees, already displaced, have been among the worst affected by the crisis. Each displacement triggered by the conflict follows an earlier displacement -- the first generation of Palestine refugees in Syria originally fled from northern Palestine in 1948. Others came from the Golan Heights in 1967 and Lebanon at the height of the civil war in 1982.

UNRWA data indicates that 135,000 Palestine refugees belong to the most vulnerable categories such as households with a single female or older person at the head, persons with disabilities, or orphans and unaccompanied minors.

Over half of the Palestine refugees in the country have been displaced at least once because of the brutal conflict that ensued, including 120,000 who have sought safety in neighbouring countries, mainly Lebanon and Jordan, and beyond.

Once a vibrant community of over 550,000 people, Palestinians had come to Syria in two main waves in 1948 and 1967 to settle in 12 camps across the country. Yarmouk, the most famous of the Palestine refugee camps, became known as “the capital of Palestine refugees.”



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UNRWA is the main provider of humanitarian assistance and basic services to 438,000 Palestine refugees who remain in Syria – 91 per cent of whom live in absolute poverty - and who have been among those worst affected by the conflict.

“As a Palestine refugee, you are already born with a tag that says “displaced”, said UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini. “If you are a Palestine refugee in Syria, then you are at least doubly displaced and most likely living in extreme hardship.”

Since the start of the conflict, many UNRWA installations inside Syria, such as schools and health centers, have become inaccessible or sustained severe damage. Forty per cent of UNRWA classrooms have been lost and almost 25 per cent of the Agency’s health centres are currently unusable due to the conflict. UNRWA in Syria has also lost 19 staff members during the 10-year conflict.

“The daunting images of destruction in Yarmouk camp remain with me, even a few months after I visited Syria,” said Lazzarini. “Children in pink and blue school uniforms stepping out of the rubble to get on a school bus was a surreal sight.”

Along similar lines, residents of Deraa Camp for Palestinian refugees, south of Syria, have called on the international human rights organizations to work on rehabilitating schools and vital premises, particularly healthcare facilities, which have been destroyed in the ten-year warfare.



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All the way through Syria's conflict, residents of Deraa Camp have been grappling with dire humanitarian conditions owing to the high rates of unemployment and absence of vital facilities.

Civilians continue to sound distress signals over the absence of health services and life-saving medical kit. Most of the clinics and medical centers in the area have gone out of operation in the warfare. Dozens of sick and elderly civilians face mountainous journeys trying to reach AlKashef area for treatment.

UN data indicates that Deraa refugee camp is located inside Deraa City, in southern Syria. Palestinian refugees came to the Deraa area in two waves in 1948 and in 1967.

However, as the recent conflict unraveled, the camp became engulfed by violence and 90 per cent of the camp population had to leave the camp and seek safety in other areas such as Deraa city, Damascus or Jordan. Most UNRWA services were moved to alternative premises in Deraa city.

Deraa camp and its surroundings returned to government control in the summer of 2018. The camp is now largely destroyed. UNRWA was able to return to Deraa camp in November 2018 to conduct a needs assessment. Inside Deraa camp, all premises including three school buildings and a clinic need substantial repairs or complete rebuilding.

Deraa camp was home to 10,500 Palestine refugees before 2011. As of November 2018, 400 Palestine refugee families have returned since the camp returned to government hands.



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As of February 2020, some 800 families had returned to Daraa camp and 750 students to the UNRWA schools, according to UNRWA.

The camp was initially set up on an area of 0.04 square kilometers, and it now covers an area of 1.3 square kilometers. In addition to the 10,500 Palestine refugees in the camp, there were more than 17,500 Palestine refugees living in neighboring Syrian villages before the conflict. Most of them worked as farmers on Syrian-owned lands, others were employed as wage laborers, government workers and a few as UNRWA staff.

The older part of the camp was established in 1950-51 for refugees from the northern and eastern parts of Palestine following the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict. Next to the old camp is the newer part, which was set up in 1967 for some 4,200 Palestine refugees who were forced to leave the Quneitra Governorate in the Golan following the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict.

Meanwhile, Jaramana Camp for Palestinian refugees, in Rif Dimashq, continue to launch distress signals over the acute shortage in much-needed medicines and medical kit.

The residents said expired medicines have been sold in the area at exorbitant prices.

Jaramana camp is 8km from Damascus on the road to Damascus International Airport. The camp was established in 1948.



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UN data indicates that before the start of the conflict in 2011, there were over 18,000 Palestine refugees living in Jaramana camp. During the Syrian crisis, the number of Palestine refugees in the camp and the surrounding area increased to 49,000 due to an influx of displaced Palestine refugees from other areas, including the camp of Yarmouk. As a result, Jaramana has become one of the most densely populated areas of Damascus.

Many of the refugees worked as street vendors, government employees or in nearby industrial plants. Some inhabitants find work in the informal sector through collecting garbage for recycling. The majority of women are domestic workers in Damascus to supplement family income. Like other areas in Syria, displacement, unemployment, inflation, protection and security risks are among the main concerns shared by Palestine refugees and Syrians alike.

This is not the first time that UNRWA operations in the camp were affected; the construction of a highway to Jaramana in 2006 meant that parts of the community centre, a health centre, a sanitation office, the newly installed sewerage network, urban development projects and schools had to be vacated. This was accompanied by a large number of refugee families being moved to a nearby new government housing project in the Palestine refugee gathering of al-Husseinieh or to shelters in the nearby villages and camps.

The camp occupies an area of 0.03 square kilometres. Historically, the camp has been inhabited by those displaced by the conflict in



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1948, as well as Palestinians who had taken refuge in the Golan Heights and were displaced as a result of the 1967 hostilities.

In the meantime, Palestinian refugee Mohamed Saoud Fayad, in his 50s, has been secretly held in Syrian prisons for the 8<sup>th</sup> consecutive year.

Mohamed, a resident of AlHusainiya Camp and the father of six children, was arrested by Syrian security forces on November 04, 2013.

In another development, 21 migrants were forcibly pushed back by Greek Coast Guard as they tried to disembark on Greek islands.

The pushback took place onboard an orange-colored liferaft that set sail off Samos Island.

Greek authorities reportedly reached out to Turkish coast guard to rescue the migrants.

Recently, human rights groups have warned that Greek police have been using tear gas, water cannon, and stun grenades to push back the border crossers.

Greek authorities have made no secret of their resolve and even their use of aggressive tactics to block illegal crossings. But the government in Athens is denying accusations of deadly attacks on migrants.

In a 2019 report, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said Greek security forces and unidentified armed men at the Greece-Turkey land



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border have detained, assaulted, sexually assaulted, robbed, and stripped asylum seekers and migrants, then forced them back to Turkey.

Between March 7 and 9 that year, Human Rights Watch interviewed 21 asylum seekers and migrants, 17 of whom were men and 4 women, in Turkey about how they tried to enter Greece over the land border following the Turkish government's February 27 announcement that it would no longer stop asylum seekers and migrants from leaving Turkey to reach the European Union.

All those interviewed said that within hours after they crossed in boats or waded through the river, armed men wearing various law enforcement uniforms or in civilian clothes, including all in black with balaclavas, intercepted everyone in their group. All said the men detained them in official or informal detention centers, or on the roadside, and stole their money, mobile phones, and bags before summarily pushing them back to Turkey.

Seventeen interviewees also described how the men assaulted them and others, including women and children, through electric shocks, beating with wooden or metal rods, prolonged beating of the soles of feet, punching, kicking, and stomping.