



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

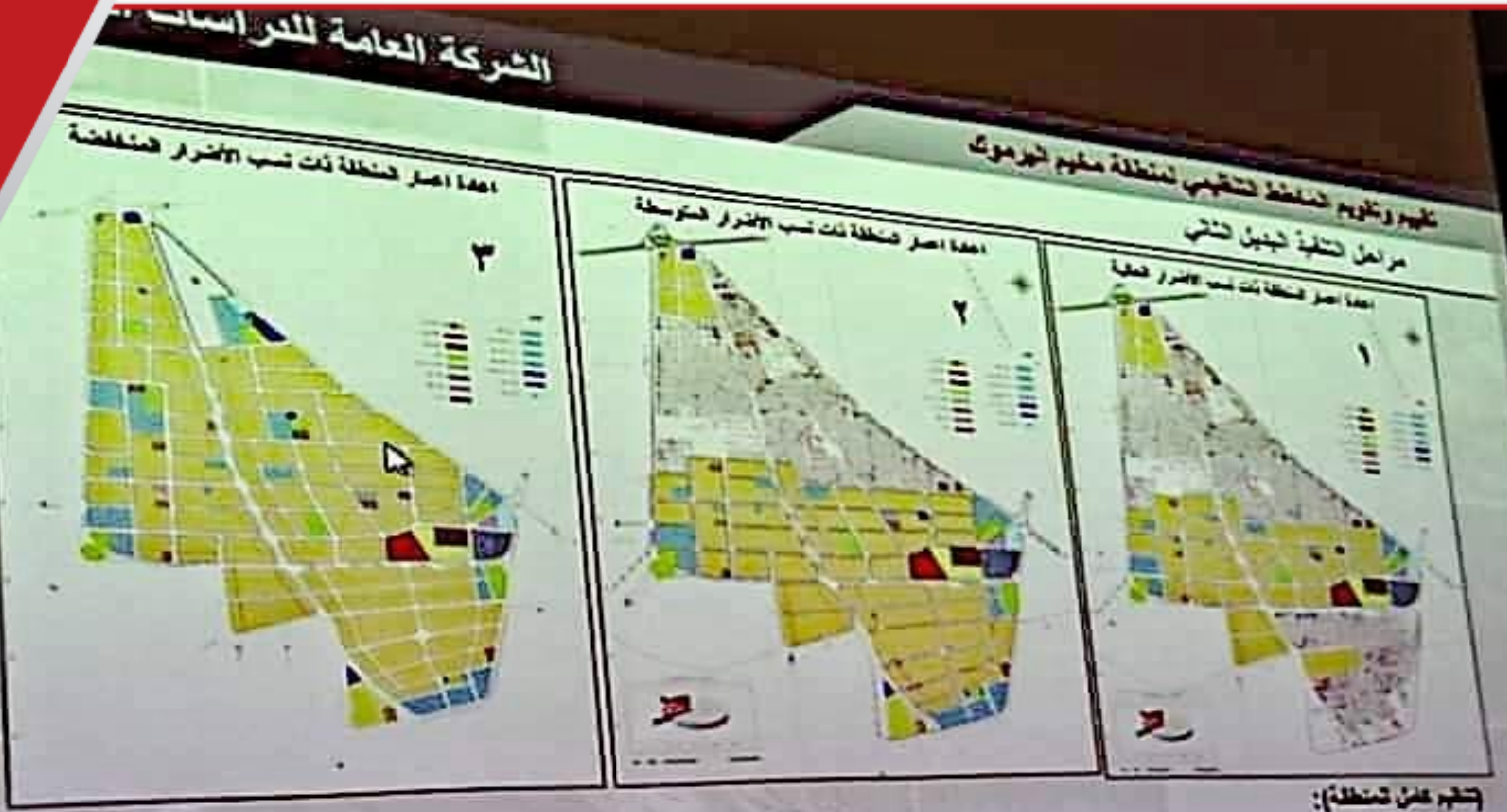
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التقرير اليومي

الخاخر بأوضاع الللاجئين الفلسطينيين في سورية

Daily report on the situation of Palestinian refugees in Syria



"Engineers Association: Yarmouk's New Organization Plan Lacks Professionalism, Transparency"

- Palestinian Refugee from Syria Detained in Turkey for over 40 Days
- Palestinian Refugees in Northern Syria Panic-Stricken following New Coronavirus Cases
- Activists in Palestinian Refugee Camp Warn of COVID-19 Outbreak
- Palestinian Refugee Ali Steiteh Forcibly Disappeared in Syrian Prisons for 8th Year

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Latest developments

The Association of Palestinian Engineers in Syria said the new organizational plan put forth by Damascus Governorate to rehabilitate Yarmouk Camp for Palestinian refugees, in Damascus, is devoid of professionalism and transparency, adding that reconstruction zones have been picked at random.

In a statement, the Engineers Association said authorities should have rather worked on facilitating the return of displaced families to their homes and property in the camp.

It said 80% of homes are habitable and just need maintenance works. As for the remaining 20% of houses that have been severely damaged, there should be practical solutions to help reconstruct them instead of removing them altogether from the new organizational chart.

It added that authorities should rather implement the organizational plan approved in 2004 and later in 2013.

The Association warned of “suspicious” deals struck behind closed doors in order to blur the historical identity of the camp, in line with the US President Donald Trump’s pro-Israel “deal of the century”.

Palestinian refugees and human rights groups continue to voice their firm rejection of the new organizational plan for Yarmouk Camp, which has been subjected to massive destruction in the bloody conflict.



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Tension has been running high in the area as thousands of refugees continue to rail against the proposed plan, amid growing fears that their homes and property will be removed from the new plan.

Sometime earlier, the Damascus Governorate said parts of Yarmouk Camp are state property, which implies that the residents are not entitled to own the land but only the property built on it.

Recently, AGPS has called on the Syrian authorities in Damascus to re-examine the new organizational plan and to rather implement the old plan which was approved in 2004.

In a statement, AGPS said plans that do not take into account Palestinians' inalienable rights make part of underway conspiracies to further displace the Palestinian people and destroy displacement camps as living witnesses to their refugee plight.

The statement said the new organizational plan will remarkably change the demographic and architectural identity of the camp. Several buildings and facilities will be removed, which will lead to a mass displacement of refugee families and a further deterioration of their humanitarian condition.

Activists warned that in case the plan is implemented, over half of the residents will not be able to return to their houses which they have abandoned in the bloody warfare.

Before the eruption of the conflict in 2011, Yarmouk was home to approximately 160,000 Palestine refugees, making it the largest



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Palestine refugee community in Syria. Located eight kilometers from Damascus, it is one of three unofficial camps in Syria.

In December 2012, fierce clashes erupted in Yarmouk, causing numerous civilian casualties, severe damage to property and the displacement of thousands of Palestine refugees and Syrians. The camp was under siege from July 2013, drastically restricting the entry of commercial and humanitarian goods.

In April 2015, armed opposition groups captured over 60 per cent of the camp, containing over 90 per cent of the remaining civilian population. This not only made UNRWA unable to carry out any distributions inside Yarmouk but also displaced most of the remaining 18,000 Palestine refugees and other civilians to the neighboring areas of Yalda, Babila and Beit Saham (YBB).

Almost all the remaining Palestine refugees left during the final government offensive for Yarmouk in April-May 2018, after which the government retook control of the camp.

UNRWA was able to return to the camp to conduct a needs assessment in October 2018. Of the 23 UNRWA premises in the camp and nearby Hajjar al Aswad, including 16 school buildings, all have been affected by the conflict.

In another development, Palestinian refugee from Syria Redwan Ali Helal, aged 58, has been held in Turkish custody for over 40 days after he tried to illegally cross Turkish-Greek borders.



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The refugee had taken shelter in Lebanon over the past five years, before he fled the tension-stricken country in search of a living.

As Turkey does not grant visas to Palestinian refugees with Syrian travel documents, he illegally crept into the borders, before he was caught by Turkish police. He was transferred from a prison in Pendik district to Edirne.

Meanwhile, the White Helmets group of the Syrian Civil Defense has embarked on a sterilization campaign in opposition-held zones in northern Syria in an attempt to prevent a coronavirus outbreak in the area.

The group's chief Raed AlSaleh told Turkish news agency Anadolu that the White Helmets started the campaign in March and worked on disinfecting mosques, bakeries, and hospitals, among other public amenities.

The group has been active in over 16,000 locations in the area and has increased efforts to disinfect streets and buildings following reports of a confirmed coronavirus infection on July 9. 11 cases have been recorded in opposition-held zones in the area so far.

Over recent months, AGPS has warned of a projected outbreak of COVID-19 in Palestinian refugee camps in Syria, where limited access to running water, pharmacies and medical facilities means displacement camps are more susceptible to the spread of the highly infectious virus.



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

AGPS stresses the need to supply Palestinian refugee camps with medicines, detergents, and disinfectants in order to help the displaced communities defend themselves against the deadly COVID-19 virus.

AGPS is deeply concerned that the lack of transparency maintained by the Syrian government regarding the pandemic will result in a catastrophic situation in displacement camps, at a time when the deadly virus continues to claim the lives of thousands of people across the globe.

At the same time, the Syria Response Coordinators group has called on the national and international humanitarian organizations and concerned authorities to set an emergency plan in order to help prevent a coronavirus outbreak before it is too late.

Along similar lines, residents of Handarat Camp in Aleppo warned of an unabated coronavirus outbreak in and around the area due to the absence of preventive measures.

Activists called on the residents to abide by safety protocols, wear face masks, keep to social distancing, and wash their hands regularly.

Palestinian refugees have been grappling with dire conditions in Handarat due to the lack of humanitarian assistance and life-



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saving services. The majority of families have been taking shelter in buildings rented at extremely steep costs in the poverty-stricken area. A severe water and power crisis also continues to rock the camp.

Heavy shelling on Handarat and bloody shootouts between the government forces and the opposition outfits led to the destruction of over 90% of buildings in the camp. The confrontations culminated in the government's takeover of the camp along with other zones in Aleppo and the displacement of its residents on April 27, 2013.

UN data indicates that Handarat camp (also known as Ein El-Tal camp) is on a hillside 13km north-east of the city of Aleppo in the Syrian Arab Republic. The camp was established in 1962 on an area of 0.16 square kilometers. Most of the inhabitants are refugees who fled from northern Palestine.

Ein El Tal camp was once home to around 7,000 residents. Around three hundred families moved to newly constructed houses in Ein El-Tal from Neirab camp under a 2003 project to reduce overcrowding in Neirab.

In April 2013, armed groups entered Ein El-Tal camp, forcibly displacing the entire population over a period of some 48 hours. The camp was a theatre of armed conflict until 2016, sustaining extreme damage in the process.

In the summer of 2017, families started to return to Ein El-Tal camp. Most of these families had been displaced to a government



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collective shelter in Aleppo city. As of the end of 2018, there are 90 Palestine refugee families that have returned. The camp is almost completely destroyed and lacks basic infrastructure including water, sewage and electricity.

In the meantime, Palestinian refugee Ali Hamed Steiteh has been secretly held in Syrian government prisons for the eighth consecutive year.

Ali, born in 1986 and raised in Eastern AlGhouta, was arrested by Syrian security forces on July 17, 2012. His condition and whereabouts could not be identified.

AGPS has recorded the secret detention of 1,797 Palestinian refugees in Syrian government jails, including dozens of women and minors.