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## التقرير اليومي



الخاص بأوضاع اللاجئين الفلسطينيين في سورية  
The situation of Palestinian refugees in Syria

### Number of Displaced Palestinian Children Taking Up Smoking in Syria Goes Up

- UN Syria Commission of Inquiry on Syria: Member States Must Establish Mechanism for Missing Persons
- Property-Theft ongoing in Syria's Yarmouk Camp for Palestinian Refugees
- Transportation Crisis Exacerbated by Fuel Shortage in Damascus



## Latest Developments

Scores of Palestinian children have been spotted taking up cigarettes and hookah in displacement camps across war-torn Syria as a means to escape the scenes of violence, bloodshed, and dislocation.

Many Palestinian children have dropped out of school as a result of the violent warfare. In live photos circulated on social media networks, Palestinian children appear to be sitting in cafés while taking up cigarettes and hookah.

The bloody warfare in Syria has had traumatic fallouts on Palestinian refugee children in and outside the Syrian territories.

Post-traumatic stress disorders, mental psychosis, sleeplessness, nightmares, eating disorders, and intense fear have all been among the symptoms with which Palestinian children have been diagnosed after they lost their homes, have had their parents killed in the war, underwent limb amputation, and witnessed daily scenes of death and destruction.

AGPS calls on all international institutions and NGOs, namely UNICEF and UNRWA, to take serious measures in order to provide Palestinian children with the physical and moral protection quite urgently needed at such turbulent times.

Palestinian children from Syria who fled with their parents to neighboring countries have also faced severe psychological breakdowns owing to the perpetual state of dislodgement, dispossession, and homelessness they have been facing.

In another development, Chair of the UN Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, Paulo Pinheiro, said that Member States must act now on behalf of the millions who are looking for their missing loved ones in Syria.

This came as the Commission released its paper “Syria’s Missing and Disappeared: Is there a Way Forward?”, containing its recommendations for a mechanism with an international mandate.

The UN Secretary-General will soon publish a study, requested in UN General Assembly resolution 76/228, on how to bolster efforts



to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing people in Syria, to identify human remains and provide support to their families.

“There is much that can be done to support victims and survivors in this search and families have waited too long already”, Pinheiro said, adding that “this issue gravely impacts people across the political and geographic spectrum in Syria and the upcoming report of the Secretary-General must lead to concrete action, without further delay.”

More than a decade into the Syrian conflict, at least 100,000 people are estimated to be missing or to have been disappeared by parties to the conflict - Government forces and non-State armed groups. Their whereabouts and fate remain unknown to date, leaving families suffering in limbo and detainees cut off from the outside world.

The Commission has long advocated for a body to consolidate claims filed with a wide variety of non-governmental and humanitarian organizations so as to efficiently and effectively track and identify those missing and disappeared and to assist their families. Family, victim, and survivor participation must be central to its functioning.

“Such a mechanism must ensure the participation of the families of missing persons in Syria, and be accessible to them, regardless of where they reside or actual or perceived links or affiliations. They are also victims, and the mechanism should amplify their voices as they seek information,” Commissioner Hanny Megally emphasized. “An effective mechanism is needed as soon as possible. Experience globally shows that the longer it takes to establish such a mechanism, the more difficult it will be to ever clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons and disappeared,” Megally pointed out.

“Families’ search for loved ones in Syria is fraught with danger of being arrested, extorted and abused. Last month, thousands waited in pain and in vain in the streets of Damascus hoping to find their loved ones alive, after the announcement of the Government’s most recent amnesty. Others watched agonizing videos of murders to discover if they were killed, after the recent release of the video allegedly showing summary executions of civilians in Tadamon in 2013”, Commissioner Lynn Welchman said, adding that “the





Government and other parties are deliberately prolonging the suffering of hundreds of thousands of family members by withholding information on the fate of those missing or disappeared. This must not be a reason for resignation but a call to action.”

AGPS data indicates that over 1,800 Palestinian refugees have been secretly held in Syrian government dungeons since the outburst of deadly hostilities.

AGPS also documented the death of 633 Palestinian refugees under torture in Syrian government lock-ups, including women, children, and elderly civilians.

Affidavits by ex-detainees provided evidence on the involvement of Syrian government officers in harsh torture tactics, including electric shocks, heavy beating using whips and iron sticks, and sexual abuse against Palestinian detainees, in a flagrant violation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, commonly known as the United Nations Convention against Torture (UNCAT).

AGPS continues to urge the Syrian government to disclose the fate of scores of Palestinians held in its lock-ups, release the bodies of those tortured to death, to seriously work on halting harsh torture tactics, launch fact-finding probes into crimes of torture, and to bring those involved in such crimes before courts.

Meanwhile, reports of burglary continue to emerge in Yarmouk Camp, south of Damascus, where hundreds of Palestinian refugees had been taking shelter.

Anonymous gangsters have reportedly stolen furniture from abandoned buildings in and around Yarmouk neighborhoods.

Palestinian families displaced from the area continue to call on the concerned authorities to allow them a safe return to their homes and to press ahead with reconstruction projects.

Over recent years, pro-government militias have been raking through evacuated homes in Damascus and holding sway over furniture, copper, iron, and kitchenware belonging to displaced families.



The Syrian government forces regained control over Yarmouk Camp and southern Damascus towns following a 33-day military operation launched in April 2018. Dozens of civilians were killed and dozens more injured in the offensive. Over 60% of buildings have gone either totally or partially destroyed in the warfare.

UN data indicates that before the eruption of the conflict in 2011, Yarmouk was home to approximately 160,000 Palestine refugees, making it the largest 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 the meantime, Damascus Governor issued a decision to stop supplying minibus drivers with fuel on Fridays and Saturdays due to fuel shortage.

Palestinian refugees sheltered in displacement camps in and near Damascus said their humanitarian situation has been exacerbated by the transportation crisis. Many Syrians and Palestinians working on the weekends will not be able to reach their destinations.



A number of Palestinian refugees said they have no other option than to board private vehicles at exorbitant prices.

Minibus drivers have also imposed a sum of up to 1,500 Syrian pounds to transfer the residents while the government tariff is 375 pounds per passenger.