



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



"AGPS Issues Report about Yarmouk's New Reconstruction Plan"

- Activists Warn Yarmouk Residents against Attempts to Turn Their Property into Bargaining Chips
- Suspected COVID-19 Infections Reported in Palestinian Refugee Camp in Syria
- Palestinian Refugees with Special Needs Facing High Marginalization in Syria
- 56 Palestinian Residents of AlSabina Camp Secretly Held in Syrian Gov't Jails

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Latest developments

A recent report issued by AGPS under the title “Yarmouk Camp: What’s Behind the New Reconstruction Plan” has spotlighted the projected impact of the new master plan issued by Damascus Governorate on June 06, 2020 to reconstruct Yarmouk Camp.

The report warns that the new plan violates the residents’ ownership rights and swells up over 50% of old buildings and property owned by civilians. No compensations, except for small shares, are, however, proposed in the plan.

The reconstruction plan will also result in a removal of the camp’s demographic character. No more than 40% of the residents will be allowed to return to their homes in mildly damaged areas. Several families will not be able to prove property ownership due to such laws and regulations as Law 10, which allows the Syrian government to designate zones for redevelopment. The situation is even more complicated for those who lost their documents in the warfare as well as those currently sheltered abroad.

The report includes a historical overview about the establishment of Yarmouk Camp, the reconstruction initiatives, and the pre-war and post-war conditions of the camp.

Palestinian refugees and human rights groups continue to voice their firm rejection of the new reconstruction 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.

To download the report, click here:

<https://www.actionpal.org.uk/ar/reports/special/yarmoukreconstruction.pdf>

Along similar lines, activists have called on the residents of Yarmouk Camp, in Damascus, to stand on guard to all attempts to force them to forfeit their houses and property at low prices.

The activists have warned against attempts by crooked real estate brokers to pressurize civilians to sell their homes and properties following the widely-condemned reconstruction plan proposed by Damascus Governorate.

Real estate dealers have reportedly established limited-liability contracting companies to buy real estate from the residents at extremely cheap prices. Civilians who have lost their property ownership documents have particularly come under simmering pressure.

Human rights activists have accused dealers affiliated with the Free Palestine Movement, led by Palestinian-Syrian businessman Yasser Qashlaq, of standing behind the purchase of property from Yarmouk residents. The Nikken Syria company, which was founded with the participation of Iranian investors, has also reportedly been involved in such deals.



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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.

Activists said the new 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.

It is believed 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.

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.



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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 relief institutions 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.

Meanwhile, six suspected cases of novel coronavirus have been recorded in AlNeirab camp for Palestinian refugees, in Aleppo.

The suspected cases have been home-quarantined and kept under observation to curtail a propagation of the lethal disease in the displacement camp.

An AGPS news correspondent denied reports about confirmed coronavirus cases in the camp, saying he has reached out to people suspected of contracting COVID-19 but they denied the claims.



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Head of the Health Department at the UNRWA clinic in the camp said a number of suspected cases show up daily at the clinic and are instructed to keep to home quarantines.

Activists have called on the residents to abide by safety protocols, keep to social distancing, wear face masks, and wash their hands regularly to prevent an unabated outbreak of COVID-19 in the area.

Recently, state of panic has overwhelmed the Palestinian refugee community taking shelter in war-torn Syria following reports of increased coronavirus cases in and around Damascus.

State-run media outlets in Syria said Health Minister Nizar Yazaji ordered the closure of wedding halls to help curtail COVID-19 contaminations after a number of Syrian nationals have tested positive for the lethal virus.

AGPS continues to urge UNRWA and the Syrian Health Ministry to provide the Palestinian refugee community in the war-ravaged country with hygiene kit and relief items in light of the coronavirus outbreak.

AGPS also 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



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catastrophic situation in displacement camps, at a time when the deadly virus continues to claim the lives of thousands of people across the globe.

AGPS fears the coronavirus could spread quickly in jails and in overcrowded displacement camps, where neither hygiene kit nor medical equipment are accessible.

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

Though campaigns to help spread awareness among the camps' residents have seen the day, limited access to running water, pharmacies and medical facilities means displacement camps are more susceptible to the spread of the highly infectious virus.

In the meantime, displaced Palestinian refugees with special needs have been gripped with dire conditions in camps and shelters across the Syrian territories.

The situation of dozens of children with disabilities has gone far worse after they lost their parents in the bloody warfare. Others have endured limb amputation owing to the violent onslaughts.

UNRWA said it assists more than 2,300 Palestine refugees with disabilities in Syria, who have had their lives marred by the unabated warfare and bloody strife.

Assistance to the most vulnerable Palestinian refugees, including persons with disabilities, is provided by donors like the European



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Union. The European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid department (ECHO) has funded assistance to those with disabilities, as well as female-headed households.

In another development, 56 Palestinians taking refuge in AlSabina Camp, among them two women, have been enduring mysterious fates in Syria's state dungeons.

AGPS kept record of the death of 620 Palestinian refugees under torture in Syrian government penitentiaries.

AGPS has documented the secret detention of over 1,790 Palestinian refugees, including women and minors, in Syrian government lock-ups.

AGPS estimates the real number to be far higher due to the gag orders slapped by the Syrian government on the detainees' names and fates, along with the families' reluctance to report such cases over retaliation concerns.

Affidavits by ex-detainees have 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).



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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.