



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

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## التقرير اليومي

الخاص بأوضاع اللاجئين الفلسطينيين في سورية

Daily report on the situation of Palestinian refugees in Syria



**"Palestinian Author Pronounced Dead after 25 Years in Syrian Prisons"**

- Fires Break Out in AlNeirab Camp for Palestinian Refugees
- Palestinian Refugees in Egypt Denounce Apathy by UNRWA, UNHCR
- Coats Distributed to Palestinian Students in Yarmouk Camp
- Migrants Stranded on Greek Island Call For Urgent Action by European Commission

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## Latest Developments

Palestinian novelist Ismail Schemale died on Wednesday in Syria's state-run AlSuweida prison, where he has been held for over 25 years.

According to the Syrian Press Center, the novelist was arrested in 1995 by Syrian security forces near the Syrian borders. He had been locked up for 21 years in Damascus prisons and for five years in Deraa prison, before he was transferred to Suweida prison, where he breathed his last.

Schemale, born in 1953, was sentenced to life by the State Security Court over a book about Iraq's executed president Saddam Husain and Bashar AlAssad's father, Hafedh.

The prison administration claimed he died of a heart attack. His family said he contracted coronavirus in prison. He was buried in Tafas town, in Deraa, south of Syria.

Over recent years, families of Palestinian refugees tortured to death in Syrian government penitentiaries said they have been made to sign fraudulent documents and certificates claiming that their relatives died of heart attacks.

Horroric photos showing thousands of people who were tortured to death in Syrian government penitentiaries were leaked by a military police photographer, codenamed Caesar.



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The Action Group for Palestinians of Syria has documented the secret incarceration of 1,797 Palestinian refugees in Syrian government prisons, including 110 women and girls.

In another development, fires broke out at a Palestinian refugees' house in AlNeirab Camp, in Aleppo, north of Syria.

The fire was attributed to a lit-candle at the house of Zaher Yousef Kasem, from Liwaa AlQuds armed group, affiliated with the Syrian regime. Material damage was reported in the incident.

Sounds of a heavy blast were detected in the area, sparking panic among the residents. Explosive devices reportedly went off after the fires broke out.

Meanwhile, Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) in Egypt continue to rail against the apathy maintained by UNRWA and the UNHCR regarding their appeals for humanitarian, legal, and socio-economic protection.

PRS have also denounced the mistreatment they have been subjected to by the staff members of the Palestine Embassy in Cairo.

Palestinian refugees who fled war-torn Syria have been subjected to a fragile legal status in Egypt, where they are treated as foreigners rather than asylum-seekers fleeing war-stricken zones. PRS have been denied the right to legal visas, refugee documents, safe accommodation, basic services, and relief assistance.



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Those who illegally entered Egypt via the Sudanese borders have been denied the right to free movement, education, and labor, among other basic necessities. Unlike Syrian nationals, who are granted safe asylum in Egypt and systematically assisted by the UNHCR, Palestinian refugees are left on their own.

AGPS data indicates that the number of Palestinian refugees from Syria in Egypt in 2018 was estimated at 3,500, down from over 6,000 in recent years. Some 500 refugees illegally entered Egypt through Sudan.

AGPS continues to stress the need to secure the rights of the Palestinians from Syria in Egypt to legal and physical protection, as per the Refugee Convention of 1951.

In the meantime, Director-General of the Political Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Damascus, Anwar Abdul Hadi, distributed on Saturday, December 26, coats to Palestinian refugee students in Yarmouk Camp, in Damascus, as part of a donation made by Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas.

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



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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.

Along similar lines, migrants on a camp set up in Greece to shelter migrants after fires broke out in Moria Camp sent a letter to Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, urging her to take serious measures in response to their appeals for humanitarian action.

Some 7,000 migrants and asylum seekers are sheltered in the new camp set up on Lesbos Island.



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In a recent report, Greece's government was accused of "neglect" and "risking migrants' lives" by the human rights organization Human Rights Watch (HRW) over what they claim has been poor handling of the COVID-19 crisis relating to health and safety measures at refugee and migrant camps around the country.

HRW said that the Greek authorities have simply not done enough to address the dangerous overcrowding and lack of health care, access to basic human needs such as adequate water, sanitation, and hygiene products to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in camps.

"While the Greek government is working to stop the spread of the virus, the images of the squalid conditions in camps on the islands make clear that it's not complying with minimum preventive and protective measures against Covid-19 there," said Belkis Wille, senior Crisis and Conflict researcher at Human Rights Watch.

"Even handwashing and social distancing are impossible in these circumstances."

According to the latest figures, a total of 34,875 migrants and asylum seekers are living in the migrant reception centers on the Greek Aegean islands of Chios, Kos, Leros, Lesbos, and Samos, which is more than six times their collective capacity.

HRW stated that Greece's government needs to take more immediate measures to protect those most vulnerable to COVID-19 in those camps to avert a full-blown, public health crisis.