



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



**"Italy Could Have Saved 200 Drowning Migrants: UN committee"**

- 57 Palestinian Refugees from Syria Drown on Migration Route since Conflict Outbreak
- UNRWA in Syria Warns of Fake News
- Palestinian Refugees' Property in Yarmouk Camp Turned into Bargaining Chips
- Palestinian Refugee Kasem Jaryan Forcibly Disappeared by Syrian Regime

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## Latest Developments

Italy failed to protect the “right to life” of more than 200 migrants and refugees who died when the boat they were on capsized in the Mediterranean Sea more than seven years ago, independent human rights experts who work with the United Nations said.

The Human Rights Committee said on Wednesday that Italy “failed to respond promptly to various distress calls from the sinking boat, which was carrying more than 400 adults and children”.

It also called on Italian authorities to “proceed with an independent and timely investigation and to prosecute those responsible” for the deaths.

The boat departed Zuwarah, a fishing port in Libya, on October 10, 2013, carrying mostly Syrians. A few hours later, water flooded the vessel.

Italy “failed to respond promptly” to distress calls after the vessel was shot at “by a boat flying a Berber flag in international waters”, some 113km (70 miles) south of the Italian island of Lampedusa, the committee of 18 experts said.

It added that distress calls to Italian authorities were redirected to Malta, which was some 218km (135 miles) away. By the time a Maltese patrol boat arrived, the boat carrying the migrants and refugees had capsized.



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Committee member Helene Tigroudja called it a “complex case” since the migrants’ boat was in international waters within Malta’s search and rescue zone, but said a timely response might have averted the tragedy.

The committee’s decision followed a joint complaint by three Syrians and a Palestine refugee who survived the accident but lost their families.

One of those on board the vessel called Italian authorities, saying the boat was sinking and sent them the GPS coordinates.

He rang several times again, only to be told they were in the Maltese search and rescue zone. The Italian operator only passed the phone number of Malta’s Rescue Coordination Centre to them.

The migrants then made increasingly desperate phone calls to the Rescue Coordination Centre and the Armed Forces of Malta for two hours.

When a Maltese patrol boat arrived at the scene at 5:50pm, the vessel had already capsized.

Italy finally instructed its navy ship ITS Libra, which was in the vicinity, to come to the rescue after 6pm in response to Malta’s request.

“Had the Italian authorities immediately directed its naval ship and coastguard boats after the distress calls, the rescue would have reached the vessel at the latest two hours before it sank,” Tigroudja said.



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War-torn Libya acts as a major gateway for migrants and refugees fleeing war and poverty in Africa and the Middle East, hoping to reach Europe.

Human smugglers based in Libya launch vessels, many of them flimsy rubber dinghies or rickety fishing boats, crowded with migrants who hope to reach European shores to seek asylum.

The central Mediterranean route is described by the UNHCR as the most dangerous migration route in the world – one in six people who depart the shores of North Africa dies.

Since 2014, more than 20,000 migrants and refugees have died at sea while trying to reach Europe from Africa.

While many have drowned at sea, thousands have been intercepted by the Libyan coastguard, which has been backed by Italy and the European Union, and returned to Libya.

They mostly end up in detention, often in horrific conditions.

Along similar lines, AGPS data statistics indicate that 57 Palestinians from Syria, mostly women, children, and elderly refugees, drowned onboard the death boats to Europe, fleeing the tattered Syrian territories.



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A number of casualties breathed their last off the Libyan seashores on way to Italy while others sunk in Marmara waters as they tried to reach the Greek coast. Dozens of migrants have gone missing.

In another development, UNRWA denied having sent text messages to the refugees as regards cash aid transfers.

UNRWA added that authentic pieces of information are only published on UNRWA's official website and social media pages.

Meanwhile, 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



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founded with the participation of Iranian investors, has also reportedly been involved in such deals.

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.

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.

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.



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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 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.

In the meantime, Palestinian refugee Kasem Jaryan has been secretly held in Syrian government prisons for the fifth consecutive year.

Kasem, formerly sheltered in Khan Dannun refugee camp, in Rif Dimashq, was arrested by Syrian security forces on his way back home on April 29, 2016.

His family continues to appeal for information about his condition and whereabouts.



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AGPS has been deeply concerned about the upsurge in the number of Palestinian victims of torture and enforced disappearance in Syria.

Over 1,790 Palestinian refugees have been secretly held in Syrian government dungeons since the outburst of deadly hostilities.

AGPS also documented the death of over 600 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).