



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 Families from Syria Grappling with Abject Conditions in Besieged Gaza"

- Palestinian Families in Yarmouk Camp Appeal for Urgent Medical Assistance
- Palestinian Refugee Released after 5 Years in Syrian Jail
- 31 Migrants Rescued off Turkish Seashore
- Germany Suspends Deportation/Reception of Asylum-Seekers over Coronavirus Outbreak

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## Latest Developments

Palestinian refugees from Syria who returned to the blockaded Gaza Strip have appealed to UNRWA and the Palestinian Authority (PA) to take urgent action in response to the abject humanitarian situation they have been enduring in the Israeli-blockaded enclave.

The refugees said their situation has taken a tragic turn for the worse due to UNRWA's suspension of its cash assistance. They have also been deprived of relief aids provided by other charities due to the registration of their names by the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah on the employees' list.



Member of the Follow-Up Committee of Palestinians from Syria in Gaza, Omar Odeh, told AGPS that such measures have overburdened even further the cash-stripped families in Gaza, in light of the swift propagation of the global pandemic COVID-19.

Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip have been enduring dire living conditions due to the 12-year-long Israeli siege and the devastating upshots of the Israeli onslaughts on the coastal enclave.

Civilians continue to launch cries for help over the high rates of unemployment, lack of financial resources, and movement



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crackdowns, which they said have made life quite unbearable in Gaza.

The offensives launched by the Israeli military on Gaza have turned the enclave into a hell on earth as most families have lost their sources of incomes, homes, and property.

A few days earlier, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed concern over the alarming situation in the besieged Gaza Strip in light of the propagation of the novel coronavirus COVID-19.

Speaking with AlJazeera Channel on Wednesday, Guterres said urgent action should be made to help Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip counter the deadly virus.

Guterres said the United Nations is pleading for \$2bn in international humanitarian aid to tackle the coronavirus pandemic in poorer countries.

"There are dramatic humanitarian needs for these people even without this pandemic. But now, with COVID-19, we need to do everything possible to prevent the disease from coming to these areas," Guterres told James Bays, Al Jazeera's diplomatic editor.

"It is very difficult for these people to be living in self-isolation. There, households often don't have water, no soap, and healthcare facilities are extremely rudimentary. So we need to boost the response capacity in those areas," Guterres said.

According to the Palestinian Health Ministry, 84 Palestinians tested positive for COVID-19, including nine cases in the Gaza enclave.



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Last week, activists raised concerns over an imminent coronavirus outbreak in the besieged Gaza Strip and its refugee camps after a number of returnees were allowed access into the enclave through the Rafah border crossing with Egypt.

The concerns coincided with calls launched by human rights groups in the Gaza Strip urging the Israeli occupation authorities to allow the entry of medical supplies needed to fight the coronavirus pandemic into the besieged territory.

According to data by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Gaza is one of the world's most densely populated areas, with more than 5,000 inhabitants per square kilometer. The Gaza Strip is smaller than the city of Oslo but is home to three times as many people. The population is expected to rise to 2.1 million by 2020.

A 2012 UN report predicted the Palestinian enclave would be “unlivable” by 2020 if nothing was done to ease the blockade, but in June 2017 a UN report on living conditions in Gaza stated that all the indicators were going in the wrong direction and that deadline was actually approaching even faster than earlier predicted.

Gaza is described by many Palestinians and humanitarian actors as the world’s largest open-air prison, where nearly 2 million Palestinians live behind a blockade and are refused access to the other occupied Palestinian areas and the rest of the world.

NRC said 7 out of 10 Palestinians in Gaza are registered as refugees, and many of these come from families who were forced to leave their villages in 1948. Many have also been forced to leave their homes due to war, violence, and economic hardship.



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Along similar lines, human rights activists have appealed to the Palestinian and international NGOs to provide medical and humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian families who remained in Yarmouk refugee camp.

The activists stressed the need to secure bread, drinking water, and vital food items to the residents, in light of the movement restrictions slapped across the country in response to the coronavirus outbreak.

Civilians lashed out at UNRWA, saying the only action made by the Agency regarding their appeals was limited to awareness-raising messages and calls for home quarantines.

The residents have urged UNRWA to open its clinic in Yarmouk, equip it with medical supplies, and spray disinfectants across residential alleyways.



Unofficial statistics indicate that some 40 families have remained in Yarmouk Camp. Scores of stranded families fled the camp following the 33-day military operation launched by the government forces on April 19, 2018. The Syrian government forces regained control over the area and southern Damascus towns following the operation. Dozens of civilians were killed and dozens more injured in the



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offensive. Over 60% of buildings in Yarmouk have gone either totally or partially destroyed.

Last year, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) published the results of an assessment of the damage to Syrian cities caused by seven years of relentless bombardment by the incumbent regime and its allies since 2011.

The analysis found out that as many as 5,489 buildings were destroyed in Yarmouk Camp for Palestinian refugees. The damage atlas used satellite-detected damage analysis to identify buildings that are either destroyed, or severely or moderately damaged.

In another development, Palestinian refugee Anas Hayel AlSabrouji, a resident of Daraa AlBalad, south of Syria, was released from the Sednaya military prison, where he had been held for five years.

Last year, the Association of Detainees and The Missing in Sednaya Prison (ADMSP) stated in its first report, entitled “Sednaya Prison: Factory of death and enforced disappearance in Syria”, that inmates have been tortured to death in the highly-secretive penal complex.

The report, released in Gaziantep in Turkey on November 12, 2019 monitors the procedures and consequences of detention in Sednaya Prison in Syria, which the Assad regime continues to use as a main centre for the detention and enforced disappearance of political detainees, denying them any contact with the outside world and subjecting them to poor conditions that often lead to death.

The report devotes a whole chapter to the trials of detainees in Sednaya prison. It illustrates the Assad regime’s resort to the



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Military Field Court after 2011 and shows how the number of Sednaya detainees increased dramatically from 24.3% before 2011 to 87.6% after 2011. The military field court lacks the minimum requirements of a fair trial as the detainee is not allowed to have access to a lawyer or any contact with the outside world.

In addition, the report states that there is a large network of officials, and influential persons within the regime, along with some judges and lawyers who are extorting the families of the detainees and forcibly disappeared persons in order to secure visits to their loved ones in places of detention, or to make promises to release them.



The ADMSP identified 24 types of psychological torture which included mock executions, being forced to watch other inmates being tortured, and threats against prisoners' families.

Almost all those interviewed by the group reported being whipped or beaten while trapped inside a tire, with other forms of torture including being suspended from the arms, electrocution, and the "German chair", which sees inmates tied around a chair with pressure applied.



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Sexual abuse has also significantly increased under the Assad regime, with around a third of detainees admitted to have suffered from this form of torture at Sednaya.

Few inmates expect to emerge from Syria's Sednaya prison alive, a place where routine torture and inhumane living conditions are, obviously, all designed to break the hope and dignity of prisoners, according to human rights groups.

Meanwhile, 31 migrants were rescued by the Turkish coast guard off Mugla seashore, southwest of Turkey, trying to get to safety to Greek islands.

According to a statement by the Turkish coast guard, the migrant boat was pushed back by Greek coast guard from a Greek island.

31 migrants, including 11 children and four women, were onboard. Their nationalities could not be identified.

In 2019, Turkish authorities held nearly 455,000 irregular migrants across the country, including about 60,000 trying to cross the Mediterranean.

As many as 268,000 irregular migrants were held in Turkey in 2018, 175,000 each in 2017 and 2016 and 146,000 in 2015.

Palestinian refugees from Syria continue to risk their lives onboard the “death boats” to Greece, rummaging around for a momentary respite from the daily scenes of bloodshed and destruction. AGPS has kept record of the death of dozens of refugees onboard Greece-bound ships. Several others have been arrested by Turkish coast guards.





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Activists estimate that around 4,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria are taking cover on such Greek islands as Lesbos, Mytilene, Chios, Leros, and Kos, among other areas.

Along similar lines, the German Foreign Ministry has temporarily suspended deportation/reception flights to/from European countries in line with its plan to respond to the novel coronavirus COVID-19.

Last week, Germany's Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) said it was no longer conducting in person asylum hearings to reduce the risk of infection with the coronavirus. However, BAMF said written applications would still be processed and that there were exceptions to the rule.

The measure dovetails The Dublin III Regulation, which has been ratified in all the EU countries, as well as Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland. In principle, the state responsible for asylum application is the European country the asylum seeker first entered when he/she arrived in the EU or the one which has issued the entry visa.

As part of Dublin procedures, the asylum seeker's initial fingerprint is entered into a database that is searchable by police throughout the EU. If they apply for asylum in another country, their fingerprint will come up; Their claim does not have to be considered and they can face deportation back to the country where they were first registered. Those who are sent back are referred to as having been "Dublined".



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Hundreds of Palestinian refugees fleeing war-torn Syria have been subjected to refoulement by European countries, where they had landed after being rescued from over-packed vessels off the Mediterranean coast.

As political attitudes in Europe have shifted against asylum seekers and refugees, the number of deportation requests under Dublin has skyrocketed. Palestinian refugees are separated from friends and sometimes family in communities where they have started to build new lives.

