



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

04-07-2020

No. 2811

التقرير اليومي

الخاص بأوضاع اللاجئين الفلسطينيين في سورية

Daily report on the situation of Palestinian refugees in Syria



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PRESS RELEASE

"AGPS Urges Damascus Governor to Refrain from Implementing Yarmouk's New Rehabilitation Plan"

- Committee Assesses Yarmouk's New Organizational Plan
- Palestinian Child Drowns in Northern Syria
- Palestinian Refugee Goes Missing in Damascus
- Residents of Khan Dannun Camp Launch Cry for Help
- Vigil Held in Germany to Push for Release of Detainees from Syria Jails

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Latest developments

AGPS has called on the Syrian authorities in Damascus to re-examine the new organizational plan put forth by Damascus governorate to rehabilitate Yarmouk Camp and to rather implement the old plan which was approved in 2004.

In a statement, AGPS said plans that do not take into account Palestinians' inalienable rights make part of underway conspiracies to further displace the Palestinian people and destroy displacement camps as living witnesses to their refugee plight.

The statement said the new organizational 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.

Along similar lines, the General Authority for Palestinian Arab Refugees (GAPAR) tasked a new five-member committee to thoroughly re-assess the new organizational plan issued by the Damascus governorate to rehabilitate Yarmouk Camp.

The committee is expected to note down legal objections to the plan and the protection concerns it raises for the Palestinian refugee community.

The report is slated to be submitted to GAPAR's Director Ali Mustafa in ten days. The committee is entitled to seek assistance from concerned parties to reach a set of findings taking into



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account the residents' rights and facilitating their return to their homes.

In another development, a Palestinian family displaced from Harasta city, in Ghouta, to the northern Syrian city of Efrin, was shocked by a report confirming the death of their son after he drowned in the Maydanki lake.

An AGPS reporter said Omar Kablawi, born in 2009, drowned while swimming in the lake, in Aleppo's northern outskirts, on Saturday, July 4.

Hundreds of Palestinian and Syrian families who have been forcibly deported to northern Syria have been grappling with an abject humanitarian situation as most of them have been taking cover in underequipped tents and denied access to vital facilities and services. Children's life has also been marred by the absence of leisure facilities.

Along similar lines, Palestinian refugee Asem Mahmoud Ayedi, a resident of Yarmouk camp, disappeared from Damascus city some three days ago.

Asem is a taxi driver. His family continues to appeal for information about his condition and whereabouts.

According to AGPS database, 333 Palestinian refugees, including 37 women, have gone missing since the outbreak of the Syrian warfare.



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Most of those who have disappeared in the country are residents of Yarmouk Camp for Palestinian refugees, south of Damascus.

Activists have accused pro-government militias of targeting Palestinians in arbitrary abduction sweeps carried out under the security guise. Scores of families have been blackmailed over the release of their missing relatives and have paid large sums of money to brokers, crooked lawyers, or government officials to get pieces of information about their conditions.

Meanwhile, living conditions in Khan Dannun camp have sharply deteriorated due to the lack of financial resources and high unemployment rates wrought by the raging warfare. A transportation crisis has made life difficult in the camp.

Upon more than once occasion, civilians have railed against the mounds of trash and debris piled up in civilian neighborhoods and around the main access roads to the camp, resulting in bad smells and the spread of life-threatening diseases.

Water supplies have also been repeatedly cut off across residential neighborhoods in Khan Dannun, forcing civilians to buy drinking water from privately-owned tanks at steep prices.

The situation has been exacerbated by the sanctions implemented by the US as part of the so-called “Caesar Act” targeting anyone doing business with the Assad regime, including in opposition-held zones.



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The sanctions are the result of legislation known as the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act, named after the pseudonym of a Syrian who worked with the military police and turned over photographs of thousands of victims of torture by al-Assad's government.

The implementation of the sanctions has led to a further deterioration of the exchange rate of the Syrian pound, resulting in a worse economic situation for vulnerable families whose sole sources of income have been already affected by the unbridled war.

According to UN data, Khan Dannun camp was built several centuries ago to give overnight accommodation to trading caravans on the ancient route between Jerusalem and Constantinople (modern day Istanbul). In 1948, the ruins of the city provided shelter for refugees from villages in northern Palestine.

The camp, which lies 23 km south of Damascus, was officially established in 1950-1951 on an area of 0.03 square kilometers. The camp was home to 10,000 Palestine refugees by 2011, almost all of whom were live in irregular housing, constructed without any formal approval from the municipality.

Before the conflict in Syria, the camp was already one of the poorest camps in Syria. Most refugees worked as farm workers on Syrian-owned lands, others are wage laborers, while a few commuted to industrial plants.

The conflict exerted additional pressures. The camp was surrounded by armed opposition groups and many refugee families



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displaced from other areas of Damascus took refuge in the camp, tripling the number of residents to some 30,000 during the crisis. Two UNRWA schools premises were converted into collective shelters to give accommodation to more than 130 families between 2012 and 2018. Currently, the camp is home to 12,650 Palestine refugees.

The increase of the camp population has had a negative impact on the camp's infrastructure, affecting the electric network and the sewerage system. The camp suffers from sporadic sewage blockages due to the increased pressure on the existent sewerage system, which was designed for only 10,000 inhabitants, while there are now significantly more. Water supply resources have also been affected and the camp suffers from water shortages, especially during the summer months.

Many school children have dropped out or work after school hours to support their families. The camp also suffers from a high incidence of inherited diseases such as thalassaemia and sickle-cell anemia.

In the meantime, Palestinian and Syrian activists along with relatives of detainees and victims of torture in Syrian prisons joined a vigil held outside of the Provincial Court of Appeal in Koblenz (OLG) on Friday, July 3, to urge the Syrian government and all warring parties to release prisoners and disclose the fate of secretly-detained people.

The vigil coincides with the 16th court hearing of the so-called AlKhatib trials in reference to hearings held in Koblenz courtroom



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providing evidence on Syrian state torture and the frankly unimaginable horror of the Al Khatib detention center in Damascus.

The rally-goers carried photos of over 121 torture victims and detainees forcibly disappeared in Syrian jails.

According to AGPS statistics, some 617 Palestinian refugees died under torture in a Syrian prisons.

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 prisoners, 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.