



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 Calls for Protection of Palestinian Refugees in/from Syria"

- Displaced Families of Yarmouk Camp Denounce Reluctance of Syrian Authorities
- 187 Palestinian Residents of AlAyedeen Camp in Homs Forcibly Disappeared in Syrian Jails
- Concerns Mount over Coronavirus Propagation in Palestinian Refugee Camp
- Swedish Migration Agency Issues New Eligibility Criteria for Asylum Seekers from Syria

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Latest Developments

On the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, AGPS calls on the international community and UNRWA to assume their responsibilities regarding the Palestinian refugee community and to work on providing those trapped in conflict zones, particularly Syria, with psycho-physical and legal protection.

AGPS also stresses the need to secure the refugees' access to their basic rights to free movement, healthcare, humanitarian assistance, and education, as per international laws and conventions.

Due to their fragile legal status, Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) have been subject to arbitrary arrests and movement crackdowns and denied their basic rights. Those who fled the war-torn country to other destinations remain at a constant risk of refoulement.

After ten years of conflict, PRS continue to be one of the most vulnerable groups in Syria with immense humanitarian needs.

PRS continue to launch cries for help over their deteriorating humanitarian condition due to the sharp decrease in the exchange rate of the Syrian pound compared to the USD and their lack of access to the local labor market. The price leap has also overburdened the cash-stripped refugees. House rents have also seen a striking hike from previous years.



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Over 90 per cent of Palestine refugee households in Syria live in poverty and 40 per cent remain in protracted displacement as a result of conflict and the damage and destruction of their homes.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) said in its 2020 Syria regional crisis emergency appeal that 126,000 PRS are identified as extremely vulnerable; 89% live in poverty; 91% live in extreme poverty; and 80% rely on UNRWA cash assistance as their main source of income.

UNRWA also said that 55% of PRS do not possess valid legal residency documents; 100% of PRS are in need of winterization assistance; and 86% of PRS households are reported to be in debt.

The majority of Palestinians sheltered in displacement camps set up across the Syrian territories have remained at bay from political calculations and frequently refused attempts by all warring parties to drag them into the raging warfare, saying their priority is to secure safe shelters for their children and families pending a just and lasting solution to their refugee plight and return to their motherland—Palestine.

In the meantime, residents of Yarmouk Camp have lashed out at local authorities over their reluctance regarding their appeals for implementing reconstruction projects and facilitating civilians' return to their homes.

An AGPS reporter said that a few days earlier, two Palestinian families returned to the camp.



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Palestinian families continue to call on the concerned authorities to allow them a safe return to their homes in Yarmouk Camp, in Damascus, and to press ahead with reconstruction projects.

A number of activists have also warned of ongoing attempts to alter the demographic character of the camp and blur its identity as a living witness to the Palestinian refugee plight.

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, activists from Khan Eshieh camp have called on the residents and local authorities to abide by safety protocols and social distancing to prevent further COVID-19 propagations.

Over recent months, AGPS has warned that an outbreak of COVID-19 in Palestinian refugee camps in Syria could be particularly catastrophic. 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.



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According to UN data, Khan Eshieh camp lies beside the ancient ruins of Khan Eshieh, 27km south-west of Damascus. The Khan historically served as an overnight shelter for trade caravans on the road between Damascus and the southwest, and in 1948, it provided shelter for the first refugees from Palestine. The camp was established in 1949 on an area of 0.69 square kilometers with refugees originally from the northern part of Palestine.

Before the conflict in Syria, the camp was home to more than 20,000 Palestine refugees. In 2012, the farms and fields surrounding the camp became active battlegrounds in which heavy weapons were deployed, often indiscriminately. The population more than halved to 9,000.

Some of the camp's buildings and infrastructure were severely affected including some UNRWA installations; two UNRWA schools and the community centre were almost razed to the ground. In 2016, UNRWA was able to re-access Khan Esheih and the Agency was able to rehabilitate some of its installations. Residents have also slowly started to return, with the camp now accommodating 12,000 people.

Meanwhile, AGPS documented the secret incarceration of 187 Palestinian refugees, including 10 women, taking shelter in AlAyedeen Camp, in Hums, in Syria's state run dungeons since the outburst of the bloody conflict.



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Field reporters believe the real numbers to be far higher due to the government's reticence to reveal the names and fates of Palestinian detainees' and the families' fears to disclose their relatives' names over retaliation concerns.

AGPS documented has the death of over 600 Palestinian refugees under torture in Syrian government prisons since the outburst of the bloody warfare.

According to data by AGPS, 1,797 Palestinian refugees, among them children, women and elderly refugees, have been enduring unknown fates in Syrian government lock-ups. Toddlers clinging to their mothers' arms have also been spotted in Syrian jails.

According to affidavits by ex-detainees, Palestinian refugees have been subjected to harsh psycho-physical torture tactics in Syrian penitentiaries, including electric shocks, heavy beating using iron sticks, and sexual abuse.

AGPS continues to urge the Syrian authorities to disclose the condition and whereabouts of Palestinian refugees held in its prisons.

AGPS believes that such practices represent flagrant violations of international law, which criminalizes all forms of torture and mistreatment against civilians.

In the meantime, the Swedish Migration Agency (SMA) has conducted a new assessment of asylum seekers from Syria.



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It said the security situation in Syria continues to be very serious. The level of conflict in over half of the country's provinces remains life-threatening. However, an asylum-seeker should submit strong proof that his/her life is at risk.

SMA said that in the past year, the Syrian state has increased its recruitment to the military. At the same time, the UN reports that the Syrian army is committing war crimes and crimes against humanity. In addition, anyone refusing to do military service or deserting is at risk of severe punishment.

The law states that anyone at risk of being forced to commit or participate in war crimes or crimes against humanity has a right to protection in Sweden. The Swedish Migration Agency therefore now assesses that individuals who are at risk of having to do military service if they return to Syria may have a right to refugee status.

It is mainly men aged 18 to 42 who are affected, but every application will be examined individually.

If an asylum seeker has received a refusal of entry or an expulsion order that no longer can be appealed, but risk being inducted into national military service if he/she must return to Syria, he/she can contact the Swedish Migration Agency. It will then make an individual examination of the circumstances in his/her case and decide if the grounds he/she presented give them the right to stay in Sweden.