



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



### "UNRWA Calls for Urgent Assistance of Palestine Refugees"

- Residents of Jaramana Camp Denounce Gas Death
- Khan Eshieh Refugee Camp Grappling with Sanitation Crisis
- European Parliament: Syria Unsafe Place for Refugees' Return
- Palestinian Refugee Mohamed AlAskari Forcibly Disappeared in Syrian Prisons for 7<sup>th</sup> Year



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## Latest Developments

At the 5th Brussels conference on "Supporting the Future of Syria and of the Region", the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reiterated its call to support Palestine refugees who are in Syria and in neighboring countries.

In a press release issued on Monday, UNRWA said that since the start of the conflict, many of the Agency's installations inside Syria, such as schools and health centers, have become inaccessible or sustained severe damage. Forty per cent of UNRWA classrooms have been lost and almost 25 per cent of the Agency's health centres are currently unusable due to the conflict.

UNRWA in Syria has also lost 19 staff members during the 10-year conflict, said the release.

UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini addressed attendees: "Today, 90 per cent of the nearly 440,000 Palestine refugees who remain in Syria live in absolute poverty. The more than 45,000 Palestine refugees from Syria who are now in Jordan and Lebanon are also amongst the most vulnerable people as both countries struggle with the impact of COVID-19. As we painfully remember ten years of conflict, UNRWA remains dedicated to rebuilding its infrastructure to serve the Palestine refugee community in Syria."



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The annual conference seeks to generate international financial support to help meet the dramatically increasing humanitarian needs inside Syria, for Syrian refugees, and for refugee-hosting communities and countries in the region.

The United Nations and the European Union co-chair the annual conference which brings together governments and international organizations and Syrian civil society.

"Some 600 families have recently returned to Yarmouk camp; they live amidst rubble in very dire conditions. Ten years of conflict, displacement, soaring inflation, loss of livelihoods and now a year of COVID-19 all make their life untenable," said Michael-Ebye Amanya, Director of UNRWA Affairs in Syria. "UNRWA assistance to Palestine refugees in Syria and in neighbouring countries is vital and often their only lifeline and their last source of support," he added.

UNRWA said that in 2021 it requires US\$ 318 million to secure emergency humanitarian assistance to Palestine refugees affected by the conflict in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan through its Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal.

Palestine refugees in Syria and those who fled the conflict to Jordan and Lebanon rely entirely on the Agency's services to survive their continued displacement, added the release.

"As most Palestine refugees from Syria are today at least twice displaced, UNRWA calls on the international community to





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continue to include them in all humanitarian plans and responses around the Syria crisis,” said the release.

While images of the destroyed Yarmouk Palestine refugee camp have become iconic, several others of the 12 Palestine refugee camps across the country have also seen entire neighborhoods severely damaged.

"Where Palestine refugees are able to safely return, UNRWA must be able to provide services while it also continues to operate health centers, schools and social services to those who have been displaced inside the country and into Jordan and Lebanon," added Commissioner-General Lazzarini.

Along similar lines, sources inside Jaramana Camp for Palestinian refugees, in Rif Dimashq, said coronavirus-stricken cases have been left without oxygen cylinders.

Activists have failed to secure oxygen-generating devices which have gone scarce in the war-torn country.

Confirmed coronavirus cases have been increasingly reported in Palestinian refugee camps in Syria, at a time when residents have been launching cries for help over the absence of hygiene kit and medicines.

A few months earlier, AGPS also warned of an unabated outbreak of COVID-19 in Palestinian refugee camps in Syria. Limited access to running water, pharmacies and medical facilities mean



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displacement camps are more susceptible to the spread of the highly infectious virus.

Displacement camps set up in northern Syria are especially vulnerable as most hospitals and medical facilities have been bombed, rendering them out of order.

Meanwhile, Palestinian refugee families in Khan Eshieh camp, in Rif Dimashq, continue to rail against the poor sanitation networks and improper sewage disposal.

The displaced families warned of the life-threatening diseases wrought by the unpleasant smells stemming from contaminated sewage poured near their refugee camp. Frequent power/water outages have added bad to worse.

According to UN data, Khan Eshieh 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 living 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. The conflict exerted additional pressures.



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The camp was surrounded by armed opposition groups and many refugee families displaced from other areas of Damascus took refuge in the camp, tripling the number of residents to some 30,000 during the crisis. 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.

In another development, on Thursday, 11 March 2021, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Syrian conflict – 10 years after the uprising, by a large majority of votes; 568 for, 79 against, and 37 abstentions.

In the resolution, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) reminded the international community of the gravity and magnitude of human rights violations in Syria, perpetrated by all parties to the conflict, including killings, detention, enforced disappearance, torture and ill-treatment, sexual violence and rape, displacement, ethnic cleansing, persecution of minorities, and a dire humanitarian crisis.

MEPs called on the Syrian regime to immediately release the 130,000 political prisoners detained, including women, men and children forcibly disappeared. In this respect, MEPs urged the European Union (EU) and Member States to facilitate the creation of an independent mechanism with an international mandate and a victim-led approach to locate the missing or their remains, including those found in mass graves. This call is based on the recommendation made by the UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria in its March 2021 report, echoed by the UN High Commissioner



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for Human Rights, the High Representative/Vice-President (HR/VP) Joseph Borrell, and Syrian civil society.

“Arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance continue to be among the most urgent challenges to human rights in Syria with tens of thousands detained in prisons, primarily by the Syrian government. The release of detainees and the disclosure of the fate and location of those forcibly disappeared in Syria are urgent priorities for Syrians and Syrian civil society. It is crucial to realizing justice, accountability, and redress for victims and their families,” said Elizabeth Rghebi, Levant Researcher at the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS).

In addition, the resolution emphasizes that Syria remains unsafe for refugee return, and calls on EU Member States to refrain from depriving Syrian refugees of their protected status. MEPs urged the EU and Member States to continue supporting and providing humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees and IDPs.

In the meantime, Palestinian refugee Mohamed Ali AlAskari has been secretly locked up in Syrian government prisons for seven years running.

Mohamed was arrested by Syrian security forces in Jaramana Camp for Palestinian refugees, in Rif Dimashq, in 2014.

AGPS has documented the secret detention of 1,797 Palestinian refugees in state-run penal complexes across war-torn Syria, among them 110 women and girls.



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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).

AGPS estimates the real number to be far higher due to the gag orders slapped by the Syrian government on the detainees' names and fates, along with the families' reluctance to report such cases over retaliation concerns.

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.