



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

حوار مع والد إحدى ضحايا
القارب المنكوب



"Father of Victim of Greece Boat Tragedy Reveals Shocking Details"

- Palestinian Authority Criticized over Apathy Regarding Greece Boat Tragedy
- Palestinian Refugees in Syria Displacement Camps Lament Death of Palestinian Migrants off Greece

+442084530978

/Actgroup.palsyria

reports@actionpal.org.uk

www.actionpal.org.uk



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Latest Developments

AGPS has conducted an interview with the father of Palestinian refugee Rawnd Alayedi who drowned at sea after a boat capsized off a Greek coast on Friday, December 24.

Rawnd Alayde, a Palestinian-Syrian refugee born on November 21, 1998, risked her life onboard the Greek-bound “death boat” wishing to reunite with her family whom she has not seen for over six years after the German authorities turned their back on her appeals for family reunion, forcing her to seek alternative routes.

Rawnd’s mother holds Jordanian citizenship. She fled war-torn Syria to Jordan with her five children, the eldest of them is Rawnd. The father remained in the then-besieged Yarmouk Camp, where he worked as a rescuer tending to wounded people. He was later displaced to Idlib and reached Turkey shortly after. The family, except for Rawnd, managed to obtain asylum in Germany.

The father, Mohamed AlAyedi, told AGPS that the German embassy in Jordan invited his wife and daughters for an interview. At the time, Rawnd was aged 19. One month later, the family showed up at the embassy to receive their visas. Only Rawnd was excluded on claims she is aged over 18.

“A staff member of the German Embassy obliged Rawnd to sign a document. Later on, she learnt that her demand was turned down. She burst into tears and fell into a faint”, the father said. “The



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staffer insulted her: ‘Come on it’s not an execution decision’. For my daughter, the decision amounted to a life-sentence with a stay of execution.”

“My daughter remained in her grandfather’s house while my wife and four sisters joined me in Germany in 2018. Rawnd had gone through hard times due to her separation from us. My wife’s appeals to the Red Cross, churches, and human rights organizations have gone unheeded.”

“We’ve had no option left than to seek alternative routes. We’d left no stone unturned to have Rawnd reunite with us in Germany. We raised funds for her after we learnt that migrants have reached the EU through a smuggler called Abu Nasser. The latter smuggles refugees from Turkey to Italy by sea. They are then transferred to Germany through a private car. The trip costs 9,700 Euros”.

The smuggler told the family that “the sea is calm this week. She will disembark in Italy and be transferred to Germany just two days later. No more than 45 migrants will be onboard.”

“On the day of the tragedy, the migrants were gathered in Izmir and crammed in a truck bound for the smuggling shore. The trip was delayed due to heavy patrolling by Turkish police and army”, the father added.

On Friday, at 5 a.m., Rawnd told her father that she had to switch off her mobile phone as the vessel was about to set sail. As many as 88 migrants were onboard, two times the real capacity of the vessel.



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At 6:50 p.m. the father received a phone call from the smuggler's relative who told him that the boat engine broke down off a Greek island due to unstable weather conditions. Shortly after, water began to seep into the boat.

One of the three captains, all Syrians, climbed over the sail. The panic-stricken migrants started screaming and calling for help. As the boat leaned, desperate people started jumping into the water to try to swim toward the shore which was 9 km away. A fishing vessel rescued a number of migrants. Greece coast guards showed up in the scene two hours and a half after they received emergency calls. The initial search and rescue operation lasted for over eight hours.

Mohammed said until Monday 5 p.m. the condition and whereabouts of the missing migrants had been kept under wraps. "We've had sleepless nights and nightmarish times. We were later told that 12 people died and others have been unaccounted for".

"There was a young man accompanying Rawnd in the trip. I begged him to tell me the truth. I learnt that my daughter and all the other women onboard breathed their last at sea".

Mohamed traveled to Athens to follow-up on his daughter's case. The Palestine Embassy promised to bring his daughter's body. "All my wife dreams of now is to kiss her daughter for the last time, to bid her last farewell".



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Alayedi said his daughter is among 18 people who died in the tragic accident. He held smugglers accountable for what he called “murder at sea”.

AGPS has been receiving deeply alarming reports about what the Greek Coast Guard described in a statement as a “gigantic” operation that began on Friday, December 24, after a boat foundered off Greek coast.

The accident is the latest in a series of similar tragic incidents at sea that claimed the lives of at least 72 Palestinian refugees fleeing war-torn Syria since the outbreak of the conflict in 2011. Scores of others died of cold on route to EU destinations.

AGPS believes that authorities could have saved Rawnd’s and other refugees’ lives had they granted them the right to humanitarian asylum and to family reunion.

The tragedy is the result of the denial of the right to family reunification by German and other EU States which continue to overlook the fact that protection of the family unit is a fundamental human right. Separation of families are of particular concern when they lead to migrant boys and girls being separated from their legal guardians or left unaccompanied. The longer-term separation of families due to migration, in particular when girls, like Rawnd, grow up in a host country without one or both parents, can also have a range of psychological, social and other adverse repercussions.



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While EU States have the right to determine the conditions of entry, stay and the status of family members in their territories, EU governments should remember that the importance of family unity and its potential benefits for both migrants and their host communities should form a key part of migration policy considerations in Europe.

The EU and European Parliament should immediately embark on a fact-finding probe to determine the root causes of the Greece boat tragedy and hold those responsible for the migrant deaths to account in order to save more lives and help bring such crimes against humanity to a halt.

The EU should urgently reconsider its migration policy and family reunion red tape at embassies, migration departments, and consulates in host countries and to work on protecting the lives of migrants, among them hundreds of children, who are the victims of displacement, poverty, and economic marginalization.

Along similar lines, Palestinian refugees and activists have slammed the Palestinian authority over its “passive response” following the Greece tragic boat accident.

Except for a statement by the political adviser of the Palestinian Authority’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ahmad AlDick, no other reactions have been made by the PA.

AlDick said the Palestine embassies in Turkey and Greece are following up around the clock with authorities on the tragic accident which occurred a few days earlier off the Aegean coast.



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The official added that the embassy has reached out to concerned authorities over the condition of Palestinian refugees onboard and vowed that the ministry will release precise data about the tragedy. No other details have, however, been released so far by the ministry.

Meanwhile, displacement camps for Palestinian refugees across war-torn Syria have showed mass solidarity with the victims of the Greece boat accident and their families.

Hundreds of posts have been published and shared on social media networks to lament the tragedy and mourn the victims, who risked their lives onboard “death-boats” fleeing war, economic hardship, and persecution.

In a post, a refugee said: “The families have pulled out all the stops to secure funds for the trip. However death had quicker wings than smuggler’s boats”.

Activists have urged the EU and European Parliament to immediately launch a fact-finding probe to determine the root causes of the Greece boat tragedy and hold smugglers to account in order to save more lives and help bring such crimes against humanity to a halt.

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