

31-12-2022

No: 3806

مجموعة العمل

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Action Group For Palestinians of Syria



التقرير اليومي



الخاص بأوضاع اللاجئين الفلسطينيين في سورية
The situation of Palestinian refugees in Syria

Unrecognized Palestinian Refugees in/from Syria (PRS) Forgotten by International Community

- **18 Palestinian Journalists Killed in War-Torn Syria**
- **UNRWA Objects to Forced Deportation of Palestinian-Syrian Refugees from Lebanon**
- **Palestinian-Syrian Young Man Makes Outstanding Career in Germany**



Latest Developments

Syria received the first wave of Palestinian refugees after the Palestinian Nakba in 1948. This first wave of refugees was followed by others at different times: from Lebanon and the demilitarized border areas in the 1950s, from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the wake of the Israeli aggression of June 1967, from Jordan after clashes between the Jordanian army and other political factions, and from Lebanon following the Israeli invasion in the summer of 1982.

According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), about 528,000 Palestinian refugees lived in Syria when violence broke out in early spring of 2011. However, the actual number may have been as high as 600,000—UNRWA's registry does not include most Palestinians who came to Syria from Jordan, Lebanon, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip after the initial wave in 1948.

Many of these remain stateless, unregistered in their host countries' civil records, and, therefore, denied access to the most vital and basic services. A number of Palestinian refugees who moved from Gaza to Jordan or Egypt before they headed for Syria have not received identity documents from Jordanian or Egyptian authorities; Many of those who managed to get ones have been unable to renew them and were only being provided “identity certificates” by the Palestine Embassy in Damascus.

Therefore, many of Palestinian refugees in/from Syria are deprived of the right to the continuous, permanent and universal recording within the civil registry of the occurrence and characteristics of birth, in accordance with the national legal requirements which establish the existence of a person under law, and lays the foundation for safeguarding civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Non-registered PRS are deprived of their human rights and treated as foreigners by the Syrian government which stipulates that their visas be renewed every year and that fines be paid by those who overstay their visas.



There is no exact data on the number of Palestinian refugees in Syria. AGPS estimates that there are 500 families, 300 of them live in Deraa city, south of Syria, and its refugee camp. UN data indicates that before the eruption of the conflict in 2011, Yarmouk Camp alone was a bustling home to approximately 160,000 Palestine refugees, making it the largest Palestine refugee community in Syria.

Thousands of PRS fled to Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey through illegal and life-threatening routes, seeking safe shelters from the deadly strikes launched by the different warring parties in Syria.

Over 80% of PRS live in extreme poverty and rely on humanitarian assistance as their main source of income. 86% of PRS households are reported to be in debt.

Scores of Palestinian refugees have been deprived of vital items distributed via smart cards used by the Syrian government to ration bread and a wider range of subsidized goods, namely fuel, rice, tea, and sugar.

UN data indicates that over half of the Palestine refugees in the country have been displaced at least once because of the brutal conflict that ensued, including 120,000 who have sought safety in neighbouring countries, mainly Lebanon and Jordan, and beyond.

Palestinian refugees without identity documents are also subjected to daily movement crackdowns at military checkpoints across Syria. Even the identity certificate issued by the Palestine Embassy is valid for no more than three months in Syria.

Such a category of people also faces a mountainous journey trying to get their children enrolled at schools and universities. The Syrian Ministry of Higher Education requires exorbitant education fees that far outlive the families' capacity to shell them out.

A Palestinian refugee called "Fatema" and who was displaced from Yarmouk Camp in 2013 failed to get her four-year-old grandson registered at civil records as the child's father disappeared from the camp before he had been able to register his marriage contract at the Religious Court, depriving the child of the right to birth registration and the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.



Birth registration is a fundamental right, recognized by article 24, paragraph 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The fulfilment of the right to be registered at birth is closely linked to the realization of many other rights; Socioeconomic rights, such as the right to health and the right to education, are at particular risk where birth registration is not systematically carried out, and the protection of children is jeopardized.

The situation of Palestinians from Syria in Jordan is no better. More than half of the 6.3 million population of Jordan is of Palestinian origin—that is, from areas west of the River Jordan, including the West Bank, today's Israel, and Gaza. With the exception of persons from Gaza, the vast majority of those persons of Palestinian origin have Jordanian citizenship. However, since 1988, and especially over the past few years, the Jordanian government has been arbitrarily and without notice withdrawing Jordanian nationality from its citizens of Palestinian origin, making them stateless. For many of them this means they are again stateless Palestinians as they were before 1950.

AGPS warns that the ambivalent legal status of PRS has had and will continue to have dangerous psychological and humanitarian consequences for such an already vulnerable community.

All concerned bodies, namely the General Authority for Palestinian Arab Refugees, UNRWA, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Palestine Embassy, should do all they can to work out the abject situation endured by PRS, follow up on host countries' efforts to enhance their living conditions, and provide them with the legal and humanitarian protection they are in urgent need of.

PRS should be granted their rights to free movement, recognition and registration at birth, without any discrimination, and protection by the State, as per international law and relevant UN resolutions. Governments should take serious measures to that end and recognize that Palestinian refugees should enjoy their universally-acknowledged rights pending their return to their motherland—Palestine.

Meanwhile, AGPS has recorded the death of 18 Palestinian journalists in Syria and the secret detention of dozens more since the outburst of deadly hostilities in March 2011.



The casualties died while covering scenes on the battleground or while providing civilians with relief assistance across the ravaged Syrian territories.

The list includes nine journalists who died under shelling, five who were tortured to death, and four others who were fatally gunned down.

The casualties are photojournalists and activists Fady Abu Ajaj, Jamal Khalifa, Ahmad AlSahli, Bassam Hamidi, Ahmad Taha, and Bilal Sa'id. They were killed in onslaughts targeting Yarmouk Camp for Palestinian refugees.

Photojournalist Jihad Shehabi died in an air strike on Hjeira town, south of Damascus, while activist Yamen Dhaher was killed in a raid on Khan Eshieh Camp. News correspondent Tareq Ziad Khader was pronounced dead in Daraa Camp, south of Syria.

Yarmouk residents Niraz Sa'id, Khaled Bakrawi, Hassan Hassan, and Alaa Naji, along with Bilal Ahmad, from Muadhamiyat AlSham, were tortured to death in Syrian government prisons.

Iyas Farhat was the first journalist to be killed in Yarmouk as he covered a rally protesting the murder of 14 members of the Palestine Liberation Army in the bloody warfare north of Syria.

Ghassan Shehabi, director of AlShajara Center to document Palestinian heritage, along with activists Ahmad Kousa and Mounir AlKhatib were gunned down by a government sniper in Yarmouk Camp.

Scores of activists, journalists, and correspondents have, meanwhile, been locked up in Syrian government dungeons for years. The list includes Muhannad Omar, Ali Shehabi, Rami Hajou, Ali Musleh, and Ahmad Jalil.

Facts on the ground prove that the number of casualties is much higher. Difficulties in documentation stem from the absence of official statistics, lack of concern as regards the number of Palestinian casualties, journalists in particular, the intricacy of the name-identification process, and the families' reluctance to reveal the victims' names for fear of retaliation.

AGPS condemns the apathy maintained by the international community and Palestinian leadership as regards the extrajudicial



killing, harsh torture, and arbitrary detention of Palestinian journalists and activists in war-ravaged Syria.

In another development, UNRWA voiced its firm condemnation of all attempts to force Palestinian refugees in Lebanon back to Syria.

Lebanon's Supreme Council had ruled that migrants who illegally entered the country after April 24, 2019 be deported to the countries which they came from.

In a rally held on October 20 outside of UNRWA office in Lebanon, Palestinian refugees handed over a memorandum to UNRWA's director in Lebanon demanding urgent action regarding the refoulement decision and calling for international protection for Palestinian asylum seekers fleeing war-stricken zones.

UNRWA reiterated that forced deportation stands in contrast to international human rights and humanitarian laws.

AGPS is deeply alarmed by the dire situation of Palestine refugees in Lebanon and the precariousness in which they live, particularly in the last year of acute financial crisis and pandemic. Many Palestine refugees live in 12 overcrowded camps across the country.

The most vulnerable, including Palestine refugees who fled from Syria, do not get financial assistance to buy food and other basic necessities. With the current financial crisis, most Palestine refugees have found themselves slipping further into destitution.

The "dollar crisis" in Lebanon, where the official exchange rate of the US dollar against the Lebanese pound is nearly ten times lower than the black-market rate, has seen the purchasing power of the UNRWA cash assistance slashed tenfold.

Even before the pandemic and the financial meltdown of Lebanon, Palestine refugees lived in poverty and faced systemic restrictions that limited their employment, property ownership and, at times, movement. Joblessness has been high in Palestine refugee camps for many years, but the collapse of the Lebanese economy in the last few months has left many of them feeling desperate, especially as UNRWA has been struggling with an acute financial crisis itself. COVID-19 has been the latest in a series of recent devastating



blows to a community that has suffered marginalization and uncertainty for decades.

Meanwhile, Palestinian refugee Suleiman Abu Gheida was recruited by SAP company, the fourth largest Software Development company in the world.

Suleiman got his diploma from a German university. He studied at the Economics Faculty in Damascus before he fled to Germany following the conflict outbreak.

He learned the German language and created a Youtube channel to teach German to foreigners and asylum seekers. He has now over 55,000 followers.

In 2017, he received the integration prize and in 2022 was granted the German citizenship.

Hundreds of Palestinian refugees who fled war-torn Syria have achieved success stories in their host countries in Europe and other destinations despite the traumatic effects of the conflict.