



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



### "Displaced Palestinian Families Raise Concerns over Health Risks of Plastic Incineration"

- Situation of Palestinians from Syria in Sudan Exacerbated by Coronavirus
- Palestinian Child in Need of Urgent Treatment in Lebanon
- Palestinian Refugee Adnan Loulou Forcibly Disappeared in Syrian Prisons for 7<sup>th</sup> Year
- Migrants on Lesbos Island at Risk of Lead Poisoning

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## Latest Developments

Desperate for warmth, displaced Palestinian and Syrian families taking refuge in under-equipped camps and substandard facilities north of Syria have been burning their clothes and plastic materials to stave off winter cold after they failed to afford firewood and fuel supplies.

This has resulted in heavy smokes engulfing the area from all corners and engendering civilians', particularly children's, health condition.

Activists sounded the alarm over the health hazards emanating from toxic smokes. Scores of children have sustained costochondritis (chest inflammation) and bronchitis due to heavy smoke inhalation.

Palestinian refugees sheltered in Idlib, AlMuhammadiya Camp, and Deir Ballout Camp, in northern Syria have been enduring a tragic situation. Most of them have been crammed in poorly-equipped tents and denied their rights to vital services.

The families continue to lash out at the apathy maintained by UNRWA, the Palestinian Authority, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and all other local and international bodies regarding their tragic situation.

For many displaced Palestinian refugees, the perils of winter weather add to the torment already experienced throughout the conflict.



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Along similar lines, hundreds of Palestinian refugees from Syria in Sudan have raised concerns about their fate in light of the security turmoil rocking the Sudanese territories and the lockdown measures imposed across the country in response to the coronavirus outbreak.

According to unofficial statistics, 1,000 Palestinian refugees have sought shelter in Sudan, fleeing war-ragged Syria.

Low wages, high rates of unemployment, and socio-economic marginalization have made life unbearable for Palestinian refugees in Sudan, forcing dozens of refugees to beg in the streets in order to feed their starved families.

Palestinians from Syria in Sudan are not granted a refugee status and are, thus, deprived of their basic rights and subjected to costly visa fees. The lack of relief aid and humanitarian assistance has made the situation far worse.

Meanwhile, Palestinian child from Syria Nour AlDeen, displaced to Lebanon, is in need of urgent bone marrow biopsy that costs 275 USD.

Palestinian refugees continue to call on the concerned authorities to enhance healthcare services for Palestinians in Lebanon.

The refugees have slammed the complicated red tape imposed by Lebanese hospital administrations and UNRWA-run health centres in the country.





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According to information collected by UNRWA, more than 80 per cent of PRS indicate that the Agency's cash assistance is their main source of income. 95 per cent of PRS are food insecure, while about 89 per cent of PRS live in poverty. 36 to 57 per cent of PRS youth face unemployment. In August and September 2019, UNRWA conducted a verification exercise of PRS in Lebanon and verified the physical presence of 27,803 PRS in the country.

The number of PRS in Lebanon has been gradually decreasing over the past two years, and UNRWA estimates that in 2020 the country will continue to host approximately 27,700 PRS (8,450 families). UNRWA said PRS's vulnerability is further compounded by their precarious legal status. According to the Agency's monitoring data, around 55 percent of PRS do not possess valid legal residency documents.

The lack of a valid legal status, often coupled with outdated civil registration documents, results in severely restricted freedom of movement for some PRS in Lebanon due to fear of arrest, detention and being issued a departure order.

In the meantime, the condition and whereabouts of Palestinian refugee Adnan Tal'at Aloulou, born in 1962, have been shrouded in mystery in Syria's state-run prisons.

He was kidnapped at the Batikha checkpoint, set up at the main entrance to Yarmouk Camp, on February 12, 2013.

AGPS has kept record of the secret incarceration of 1,797 Palestinian refugees in Syrian government prisons.



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In another development, thousands of asylum seekers, aid workers, United Nations, and Greek and European Union employees may be at risk of lead poisoning in a new migrant camp that Greek authorities have built on a repurposed military firing range on the island of Lesbos, Human Rights Watch (HRW) warned last week.

In a report entitled “Greece: Lead Poisoning Concerns in New Migrant Camp”, HRW said firing ranges are commonly contaminated with lead from munitions, nevertheless the authorities did not conduct comprehensive lead testing or soil remediation before moving migrants to the site in September 2020.

Evidence collected by migrants moved to the site also indicated that authorities have failed to clear all unexploded mortar projectiles and live small arms ammunition, which could injure or kill if disturbed or handled.

“Putting thousands of migrant adults and children, along with aid workers, on top of a former firing range without taking the necessary steps to guarantee they would not be exposed to toxic lead is unconscionable,” said Belkis Wille, senior crisis and conflict researcher at Human Rights Watch. “The Greek authorities should promptly conduct a comprehensive site assessment of soil lead levels and release the results.”

In November and early December, HRW interviewed four people living in the camp, two aid workers, one Greek migration ministry employee working in the camp, and four medical and



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environmental experts, and reviewed academic research on the risk of soil lead contamination at shooting ranges and medical research on the health risks of lead poisoning. Human Rights Watch did not have access to conduct on-site research, but analyzed photos and videos of the site and satellite imagery to confirm the firing range location.

The Asylum and Migration Ministry began major construction work at the end of November at the site, called Mavrovouni camp, that could disturb any lead contaminated soil, further exposing residents and workers. The work to improve access to electricity and water and reduce the risk of flooding began despite warnings from Human Rights Watch of the potential of increased risk of lead poisoning.

In early September, large fires broke out inside the Moria camp, the Reception and Identification Center on Lesbos that was housing 12,767 migrants, mostly women and child migrants. Within days, authorities constructed Mavrovouni (also known as new Kara Tepe) as a temporary camp and told people that they would begin construction of a new permanent camp for use by June 2021. According to the media, Migration and Asylum Minister Notis Mitarachi, has recently indicated the new camp will only be ready by Autumn 2021. Currently 7,517 people, mostly from Afghanistan and Syria, are staying at Mavrovouni, which started functioning as a military firing range in 1926 and was in use until the camp was constructed in September 2020, Mitarachi said.



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In response to letters from Human Rights Watch, Migration and Asylum Minister Notis Mitarachi stated in a November 19 letter that the camp had “no lead contamination,” but provided no evidence for the basis of that assertion. He said the government has agreed to conduct soil testing with the European Commission within one month, but has not revealed the nature of the testing, the areas to be tested, or the methodology.

“No one just shows up without a plan,” Dr. Gordon Binkhorst, vice president of global programs at Pure Earth, told Human Rights Watch. “Sharing of a well-founded work plan beforehand is key to transparency and ensuring confidence in the findings.” Greek authorities should allow independent experts to comment on investigative work plans, audit the soil testing process and collect split samples for independent testing.

“The authorities should share documentation of work completed and a comprehensive site investigation work plan based on a review of the site history, contaminants of concern, a conceptual site model of how such contaminants are released to and migrated in the environment, and a comprehensive testing plan that evaluates the degree and extent of contamination in the environment, and potential exposure routes,” Dr. Binkhorst said.

Firing ranges are well-recognized as sites with lead contamination because of bullets, shot, and casings that contain lead and end up in the ground. Lead in the soil from bullet residue can readily become airborne, especially under dry and windy conditions, which often exist on Lesbos. Lead is a heavy metal that is highly



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toxic to humans when ingested or inhaled, particularly by children and during pregnancy. It degrades very slowly, so sites can remain dangerous for decades.

The World Health Organization maintains that there is no known safe level of lead exposure. Elevated levels can impair the body's neurological, biological, and cognitive functions, leading to learning barriers or disabilities; behavioral problems; impaired growth; anemia; brain, liver, kidney, nerve, and stomach damage; coma and convulsions; and even death. Lead also increases the risk of miscarriage and can be transmitted through both the placenta and breast milk.