



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



"Palestinians among Dozens of Migrants Pronounced Dead, Missing off Greek Coast"

- Palestinian Refugee Missing in Rif Dimashq
- Humanitarian Situation in AlSayeda Zeinab Camp Exacerbated by Power Blackout
- UNRWA Chief: Austerity Reached Its Limit

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Latest Developments

Greek coast guard recovered late Friday 16 bodies of migrants after their boat capsized off a Greek island.

The list includes 12 men, three women and an infant. They were boarding a boat carrying 88 irregular migrants.

At least 16 people have died after their boat overturned off the Greek island of Paros in the central Aegean Sea in the third maritime disaster involving migrants this week.

Between 21 and 25 December 2021, the Alarm Phone has been alerted to three deadly shipwrecks in the Aegean. At the same time the Hellenic Coast Guard continues its violent pushback regime.

In the evening of 21 December 2021, the Alarm Phone was informed about a boat in distress in the Aegean Sea (AP914). A relative said that there were around 60 people on board, that water was entering the boat and that the boat was sinking. According to information received by the Hellenic Coast Guard, 13 people were rescued, one of them after surviving 24 hours in the water.

A day later, on the early evening of 23 December, relatives informed the Alarm Phone about a group of people stranded on a small rocky islet near the Greek island Antikythera (AP925). At the time, media had already reported at least four dead passengers. Between 90 people were stuck on the islet and had to spend the night there.



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On 24 December, the Hellenic Coast Guard confirmed that 90 people were rescued off the islet – according to information at that time, 11 dead bodies were found. In a video of the rescue operation, one could see the rest of the sunken vessel. Equally visible on the video were orange life rafts to transport people from the islet to the vessel of the Hellenic Coast Guard. The same life rafts are usually used in brutal pushback operations that leave people adrift at sea – a practice used by the very same Hellenic Coast Guard. Up until now, it is reported that 90 people (among them 52 men, 11 women and 27 children) have been rescued. 11 people lost their lives.

Human rights groups said these deaths could have been prevented by a more immediate reaction of the responsible authorities.

The Alarm Phone said dozens of people have died on the Aegean route despite being close to shores. Such tragedies are the direct result of the violent pushback regime put into practice by the Greek government and in the name of the EU. All three ships that sank were on their way from Turkey to Italy. This very long and dangerous route is increasingly taken by more and more people. They often sail in boats, which they cannot properly steer, and get into serious distress.

Along similar lines, Palestinian refugee Ibrahim Saleh Ali, born in 1952, disappeared on Thursday evening after he left his house in AlSabina.

Ibrahim's family continues to appeal for information about his condition and whereabouts.



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In another development, residents of AlSayeda Zeinab camp for Palestinian refugees, in Rif Dimashq, said power has been operative only for one hour a day, resulting in food spoilage.

Civilians said power lines have been unevenly operated across residential neighborhoods.

Eleven years into the conflict, Palestinian refugee families in AlSayeda Zeinab Camp continue to grapple with abject conditions. More than half of the residents lost their sources of income. Scores of families continue to live below the poverty line due to exorbitant prices of food and non-food items. As a result, scores of civilians have fled the camp while others have been forced to join pro-government battalions.

UN data indicates that the camp was established on an area of 0.02 square kilometers in 1948, but the majority of the residents came in 1967. The inhabitants, who were displaced from the Quneitra Governorate in the Golan Heights during the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict, sought refuge for the second time in their lives in the area. Most had originally fled to the Golan Heights in 1948 from nearby villages in northern Palestine.

Before the conflict in Syria, the camp was home to 23,700 Palestine refugees. The camp was affected by violent clashes that forced 40 per cent of the people to leave in late 2012.

Like other areas in Syria, displacement, unemployment, inflation, protection and security risks are among the major concerns shared not only by Palestine refugees but also Syrians alike during the



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ongoing conflict in Syria. The majority of Palestine refugees in AlSayeda Zeinab work as day laborers, government employees or vendors.

In the meantime, Philippe Lazzarini, Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), has warned that chronic and drastic funding shortfalls could even lead to its collapse.

“Today, austerity has reached its limit and is impacting the quality of our services”, he said, highlighting that despite “rampant” poverty, the agency can no longer increase the number of refugees that it supports.

He added that "austerity reaches its limit when we put 50 children in a classroom or leave the most deprived children without transportation or stationery...when a doctor can only spend three minutes with a patient...[and] when many teachers and sanitation laborers are daily paid workers. These are frontline staff and it really pains me that UNRWA cannot yet give them more stable jobs”.

In an open letter to Palestine refugees, Lazzarini wrote that he was “painfully aware” that further uncertainty about UNRWA’s “dire” financial situation added another layer of distress to their lives.

“When everything around you falls apart, being able to send your children to school, receive health care and be part of a social safety net are a lifeline”, he added.



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The UNRWA Commissioner-General spoke of his many meetings with Palestine refugees throughout the year, including children in Gaza who were mentally scarred in May by 10 days of rocket fire and airstrike exchanges between Israeli forces and armed groups in the enclave.

He also recalled encountering refugee families in the West Bank “living with the daily threat of forced displacement; young graduates in Burj Baranjeh camp in Lebanon whose only hope for a better future was to emigrate through dangerous migration routes; and refugees in Jordan who faced immense financial hardships under COVID-19”.

To date, over five million Palestinians are registered with UNRWA as refugees in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.