



مجموعة العمل من أجل فلسطينيين سورية
Action Group For Palestinians of Syria

28-07-2020

No. 2835

التقرير اليومي

الخاص بأوضاع اللاجئين الفلسطينيين في سورية

Daily report on the situation of Palestinian refugees in Syria



"Calls Launched for International Drive to Cancel Yarmouk's New Reconstruction Plan"

- Palestinians from Syria Hold Vigil Outside of Swedish Embassy in Beirut
- UNRWA Advisory Commission Warns of "Worst Scenario" in Palestinian Displacement Camps due to COVID-19 Outbreak
- Palestinian mother and Her 2 Daughters Forcibly Disappeared in Syrian Prisons for 7th Year

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Latest developments

Palestinian activists have called on the international community and concerned legal bodies to pressurize the Syrian government to withdraw the new plan issued by Damascus Governorate to reconstruct Yarmouk Camp for Palestinian refugees, in Damascus.

Lawyers and human rights activists said all attempts to alter the demographic character of a region by means of displacement and forced deportation is a war crime under the Four Geneva Conventions and a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

They added that the plan amounts to a crime and called for serious international moves to push for imposing sanctions on parties, companies, and individuals involved in the execution of the plan.

A recent report issued by AGPS under the title “Yarmouk Camp: What’s Behind the New Reconstruction Plan” has spotlighted the projected impact of the new master plan issued by Damascus Governorate on June 06, 2020 to reconstruct Yarmouk Camp.

The report warns that the new plan violates the residents’ ownership rights and swells up over 50% of old buildings and property owned by civilians. No compensations, except for small shares, are, however, proposed in the plan.

The reconstruction plan will also result in a removal of the camp’s demographic character. No more than 40% of the residents will be allowed to return to their homes in mildly damaged areas. Several



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families will not be able to prove property ownership due to such laws and regulations as Law 10, which allows the Syrian government to designate zones for redevelopment. The situation is even more complicated for those who lost their documents in the warfare as well as those currently sheltered abroad.

Palestinian refugees and human rights groups continue to voice their firm rejection of the new reconstruction plan for Yarmouk Camp, which has been subjected to massive destruction in the bloody conflict.

Activists said the new plan will remarkably change the demographic and architectural identity of the camp. Several buildings and facilities will be removed, which will lead to a mass displacement of refugee families and a further deterioration of their humanitarian condition.

It is believed that in case the plan is implemented, over half of the residents will not be able to return to their houses which they have abandoned in the bloody warfare.

UN data indicates that before the eruption of the conflict in 2011, Yarmouk was home to approximately 160,000 Palestine refugees, making it the largest Palestine refugee community in Syria. Located eight kilometers from Damascus, it is one of three unofficial camps in Syria.

In April 2015, armed opposition groups captured over 60 per cent of the camp, containing over 90 per cent of the remaining civilian population. This not only made relief institutions unable to carry



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out any distributions inside Yarmouk but also displaced most of the remaining 18,000 Palestine refugees and other civilians to the neighboring areas of Yalda, Babila and Beit Saham (YBB).

Almost all the remaining Palestine refugees left during the final government offensive for Yarmouk in April-May 2018, after which the government retook control of the camp.

In another development, dozens of Palestinian refugees from Syria rallied outside of the Swedish embassy in Beirut to push for humanitarian asylum in the Nordic kingdom.

The refugees lifted banners saying they cannot return to their destroyed homes in Syria, urging Sweden to include their names on the list of quota refugees allowed to enter the country following mediation by the UNHCR.

Recently, the Swedish Migration Agency has given greenlight for the entry of quota refugees coming from Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and for holders of Syrian and Palestinian travel documents, among other nationalities.

Quota refugees or resettlement refugees are usually people who are registered as refugees by the UNHCR, but who cannot be offered a permanent solution in the country they are currently in and who are therefore offered resettlement in a third country.

For many refugees, it is impossible to return to their home country or to be integrated in the country where they are staying.



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Media reports said that during 2020, Sweden will accept 5,000 quota refugees for resettlement. But so far, only 13,000 have been allowed in.

The Migration Agency said sometime earlier that the Swedish resettlement programme will help to resolve protracted refugee situations that are at risk of becoming permanent. It can also offer timely protection for people in vulnerable situations. Refugees who are selected for resettlement may be in refugee camps, but they may also be in cities or rural areas.

Resettling in a third country may be the only solution for people who can neither remain in their first country of asylum nor return home. Such is the situation like for thousands of Palestinian refugees. The process is administered by the UN refugee agency, UNHCR.

Most refugees are resettled from areas bordering on crises or conflict regions. Resettlement is therefore becoming an increasingly important action in the effort to prevent people from risking their lives in an attempt to cross the Mediterranean.

Meanwhile, representatives of Arab states hosting Palestinian refugees have warned of the “worst scenarios” in Palestinian refugee camps in their fight against the coronavirus pandemic, at a time when hundreds of cases have been reported in those camps.

This came in a meeting of the Advisory Commission of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) held under Jordan’s chairmanship.



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The meeting discussed support for the Agency as it continues to meet the needs of millions of Palestine refugees who face hardship and denial of rights in the Gaza Strip and West Bank (including East Jerusalem), Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

The meeting further underscored the anti-coronavirus responses in Palestinian refugee camps and UNRWA's plan for the new academic year 2020/2021.

The parties present at the meeting urged the United Nations to live up to its responsibilities regarding the Palestinian refugee community, calling on UN bodies and donor countries to meet their funding pledges and help UNRWA overcome its deficit.

The meeting was attended by the head of the General Authority for Palestinian Arab Refugees, Ali Mustafa, and a number of Palestinian officials along with representatives of Arab countries hosting Palestinian refugees.

UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and mandated to provide assistance and protection to some 5.4 million Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA across its five fields of operation. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip achieve their full human development potential, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. UNRWA services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, protection and microfinance.



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In the meantime, Palestinian refugee Fidaa Atiyeh Ajaj and her daughters Aya Mohamed Khalil and Israa Mohamed Khalil have been secretly held in Syrian government prisons for the seventh consecutive year.

Sometime earlier, an ex-detainee released from Syrian lock-ups said that the woman and her daughters were transferred from a penal complex run by the Air Force Intelligence to an unknown destination. They were last seen in 2013, when they were arrested by the Syrian regime troops at a checkpoint pitched in Sehnaya town, in Rif Dimashq. Their condition and whereabouts have been shrouded in mystery.

Affidavits released by ex-detainees confirmed the presence of Palestinian refugee toddlers held in their mothers' arms in Syrian government lock-ups.

AGPS documented the secret incarceration of 1,797 Palestinian refugees in Syrian prisons, including 110 women and girls.

Hundreds of Palestinian refugees have also been tortured to death behind Syria's prison bars. The government forces have been withholding their cadavers in unknown locations, preventing their families from bidding them last farewell.