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**"UNRWA Decision of Cutting Shelter Aid to the Palestinians of
Syria in Lebanon, and the Possible Scenarios"**



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Introduction:

44.000 Palestinian Syrian refugees in Lebanon are facing fears of UNRWA implementation to the decision of cutting urgent shelter allowance aid, which constitutes a threat to their social security, and exacerbating their legal and humanitarian conditions.

The report explained the situation of the Palestinian Syrian refugees in Lebanon, and expected four possible scenarios for the implementation of this resolution to enter into sit-ins, to accept the fait accompli, to move the mandate of UNRWA to the UNHCR, or the Palestinian Syrian refugees to go towards the Palestinian Lebanese borders.

Background:

The crisis of the Palestinians of Syria began since the beginning of protests in Syria on March 2011 in the cities of Der'aa and Lathekia, but they intensified after the transfer of such acts to the city of Damascus and its suburb, specifically after the Yarmouk camp south of Damascus was bombed repeatedly with MIG warplanes, the thing that constituted a turning point in the history of the Palestinian presence in it, and ended up with displacing 80% of its population to the inside and outside Syria.

Lebanon is one of the most countries that received Palestinian refugees from Syria at the beginning of the crisis for many considerations; the most important are: geographic considerations and facilities provided by the Lebanese government regarding the entry of refugees in the beginning before being prevented later almost completely.

The numbers of Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon, according to UNRWA statistics at the end of November 2014,



estimated with about 44.5 thousand refugees, equivalent to 12 720 families spread over five regions in Lebanese cities to varying degrees (Beirut 18.96% - Bekaa 16.20% - Sidon 32.07% - Tripoli 15.53% - Tyre 17.23%), inside and outside the camps by (50.17% and 49.83% respectively), where the majority of refugees live in rented houses at an average fare of the house inside the camps (200 \$) and (400 \$) outside.

According to UNRWA statistics, 91.46% of the Palestinian Syrian refugees in Lebanon fled from areas of Damascus and its refugee camps. Refugees from the Yarmouk camp constitute 49.48% of them, which means 5800 families, while refugees from the rest of the Syrian areas (center - North - South) constitute 8.54%.

The families of 1-3 members constitute 50.33% of the total families, which means up to 6400 families, while families of 4-6 members constitute an average of 43.58%, which means 5543 family, while the percentage of families consisting of 7 persons amounted to 6.09% or above at a rate of 775 families.

For the age segments of the refugees, the percentage of children up to the age of 5 years reached 13.88%, equivalent to 6175 children, while the number of those who are between 6-17 years has reached 25.88%, equivalent to 11 516 children.

In terms of point of dependency, the same statistics indicated that 26.40% of families are provided by woman, equivalent to 3360 families, where the wife is responsible for the care and management of the family owing to the death or the loss of a spouse or family separation.



UNRWA's Response to the Crisis of Palestinian Refugees of Syria in Lebanon:

UNRWA provided emergency assistance to Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon since the beginning of the asylum irregularly, that was a special program known as the adoption of (PRS) acronym for Palestinian Refugees from Syria included various service sectors of health, education, and relief in addition to providing legal advice.

➤ Gradual Cessation of Aid

UNRWA graded in decisions about Palestinian refugees from Syria regarding emergency aid provided to them. In October 2014, UNRWA cut off aid to about 1100 Palestinian families due to lack of assistance in accordance with standards established by the people entitled to assistance.

In April 2015, it reduced food allowance aid for all Palestinian Syrian refugees in Lebanon from 45,000 to 40,000 Lebanese Pound (30 to 27 \$).

On 14.05.2015, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA Mr. Pierre Krebnol, issued several resolutions aimed at reducing UNRWA services in all sectors in the five countries of the UNRWA's work under the pretext of the deficit in the UNRWA budget of 100 million\$, and that the cuts will lead to a cessation of UNRWA periodic aid for Palestinian refugees of Syria, especially the 100\$ of shelter allowance, reducing food and clothing allowance from 45000 to 40 000 Pounds that may stop later, the restructuring of schools so that the classroom accommodates 50 students, and the expelling employees who were hired in clinics and cleaners on the PRS program that serves the Palestinian Syrians in Lebanon.

On 20 May 2015, Director-General of UNRWA in Lebanon Mr. Matthias Schmale, announced the stoppage of urgent shelter



allowance aid related to all Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon under the pretext of fiscal deficit and lack of funding.

➤ Possible Scenarios

The exact follow-up of the previous decisions of the Department of UNRWA indicates a clear evade of their responsibilities towards the Palestinian refugees, and contrary to the decision of its founding (302) of 1949, which requires it to provide relief and help for Palestinian refugees until they realized their return to their homes from which they were expelled in 1948. The insistence of implementing this decision threatens the Palestinian refugee communities in general, and threatens a humanitarian catastrophe among the Palestinian Syrian refugees in particular, and would put them in front of one of the following scenarios:

First Scenario:

The entry of Palestinian Syrian refugees in peaceful mobilization against UNRWA's decisions, and it will be supported by the Palestinian factions and Palestinian and Lebanese civil institutions for many considerations, most important is the reflection of misery and homelessness resulted in the restrictions against refugees on the host communities.

This movement may develop to open, central, and zonal sit-ins that would live up to the closure of UNRWA installations or access into it as an alternative of shelter for thousands of refugee families who are unable to pay the rent.

Second Scenario:

Refugees' host community betrayal and abandon their support in any movement against the decision of cutting aid, and accepting the fait accompli and the new decision because of the lack of ability of refugees to take any actions alone because they do not enjoy any legal protection in Lebanon, and to search for alternative hand to



meet their growing needs. Otherwise, the society will go to chaos, confrontation, and the emergence of social diseases that would reach all segments of society from extremism, abuse, and begging, stealing, and leaking semester.

Third Scenario:

Transmission the custody of Palestinian refugees from UNRWA to the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and being subjected to programs pursued by the Commission either repatriation to the country of origin or resettlement in countries of asylum or resettlement in a third country through opening an immigration door for Palestinian refugees.

Fourth Scenario:

Starting marches of return for Palestinian refugees towards the Palestinian border along the lines of the march, which was launched back in May 2011, storming the border, and demanding the international community to implement Resolution 194, which stated the return of refugees to villages, towns, and homes from which they departed in 1948.

➤ Likely Scenario:

The second scenario could not be likely because of the absence of institutions capable of carrying out the tasks done by UNRWA including an exemption of direct responsibility towards refugees, as well as the host community for the refugees in Lebanon is characterized by high rates of unemployment and depriving Palestinian Lebanese refugees from the right to work, yet, in the same time, the second scenario cannot be excepted.

The third scenario of moving the custody of Palestinian refugees to the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), votes will rise to just allow immigration because of the categorically rejection and high sensitivity shown by the Lebanese government towards



resettlement, and the inability of return to Syria, and not having indicators to the acceptance of the international community towards this transition; the fourth scenario cannot be applied for the expected result of threaten the security and stability of the region.

The first scenario of putting pressure on UNRWA by all local, regional, and international parties in order to back down its decisions is the most possible one due to the availability of possibilities and means to achieve.

Proposals and recommendations:

- Taking serious and effective steps to form a collective Palestinian mobilization to put pressure on UNRWA by all available means to back down this decision, and to demand the international community, the Arab League, the Palestinian Authority, and the host countries for refugees to do what is necessary to preserve and maintain the dignity of the Palestinian refugees.
- Imbuing the mobilization with Palestinian national characteristics and managing it wisely in order to avoid clashes that might occur between Palestinian Syrian refugees with Palestinian Lebanese refugees.
- Rapidly provide immediate assistance to the refugee families, especially children, students, widows and orphans.