



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



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PRESS RELEASE

"Following Death of Palestinian Refugees, AGPS Urges EU to Reconsider Family Reunion Policy"

- 72 Palestinian Refugees Died at Sea since Outbreak of Syrian Conflict
- Palestinians of Syria Deeply Alarmed by Death of 8 Palestinian Refugees in Greece Boat Tragedy
- Palestinian Refugees in Northern Syria Displacement Camps Appeal for Urgent Humanitarian Action

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Latest Developments

AGPS has called upon European Union parliaments to revise migration policy and family reunification procedures for migrant children aged above 18.

AGPS has been receiving deeply alarming reports about what the Greek Coast Guard described in a statement as a “gigantic” operation that began on Friday, December 24, after a boat foundered off the island of Paros. Two earlier wrecks occurred farther south in the Aegean, off the islands of Folegandros and Antikythera. 17 migrants, including eight Palestinian refugees, breathed their last at sea. A number of others have been unaccounted for.

The European Court of Justice (ECJ) should take serious action regarding the situation of refugees aged 18 and above and who wish to reunite with their families in Europe. This category of people has fallen prey to fraud and blackmailing by traffickers and smugglers.

The list of victims of the latest tragedy includes Rawnd Alayde, a Palestinian-Syrian refugee born on November 21, 1998, and who risked her life onboard the Greek-bound “death boat” wishing to reunite with her family whom she has not seen for over six years after the German authorities turned their back on her appeals for family reunion, forcing her to seek alternative routes.



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The tragedy is the result of the denial of the right to family reunification by German and other EU States which continue to overlook the fact that protection of the family unit is a fundamental human right. Separation of families are of particular concern when they lead to migrant boys and girls being separated from their legal guardians or left unaccompanied. The longer-term separation of families due to migration, in particular when girls, like Rawnd, grow up in a host country without one or both parents, can also have a range of psychological, social and other adverse repercussions.

While EU States have the right to determine the conditions of entry, stay and the status of family members in their territories, EU governments should remember that the importance of family unity and its potential benefits for both migrants and their host communities should form a key part of migration policy considerations in Europe.

The EU and European Parliament should immediately embark on a fact-finding probe to determine the root causes of the Greece boat tragedy and hold those responsible for the migrant deaths to account in order to save more lives and help bring such crimes against humanity to a halt.

The EU should urgently reconsider its migration policy and family reunion red tape at embassies, migration departments, and consulates in host countries and to work on protecting the lives of migrants, among them hundreds of children, who are the victims of displacement, poverty, and economic marginalization.



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Along similar lines, so far, at least 72 Palestinian refugees from Syria drowned onboard migrant vessels, fleeing war-torn Syria. Scores of others died of cold on route to EU destinations.

A number of casualties breathed their last off the Libyan seashore on way to Italy while others sunk in Marmara waters as they tried to reach the Greek coast. Dozens of migrants have gone missing.

At the same time, Palestinian refugees in/from Syria (PRS) have mourned the death of their relatives and friends in the latest tragic boat accident off a Greek coast.

Hundreds of posts have been published and shared on social media networks to lament the tragedy and mourn the victims, who risked their lives onboard “death-boats” fleeing war, economic hardship, and persecution.

In a post, a refugee said: “The families have pulled out all the stops to secure funds for the trip. However death had quicker wings than smuggler’s boats”.

CSOs have urged the EU and European Parliament to immediately launch a fact-finding probe to determine the root causes of the Greece boat tragedy and hold smugglers to account in order to save more lives and help bring such crimes against humanity to a halt.

The accident is the latest in a series of similar tragic incidents at sea that claimed the lives of at least 72 Palestinian refugees fleeing war-torn Syria since the outbreak of the conflict in 2011.



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Meanwhile, Palestinian refugee families sheltered in displacement camps set up north of Syria continue to appeal for urgent humanitarian action by the concerned authorities in Syria, United Nations bodies, and international humanitarian organizations.

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.

Hundreds of Palestinian families have been struggling for survival in the poorly-equipped Deir Ballout and Muhammadiya camps, after they were forced out of Yarmouk and southern Damascus towns. For many displaced Palestinian refugees, the perils of winter weather add to the torment already experienced throughout the conflict.