



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



"Situation of Palestinian Refugees in Turkey Alarming as Coronavirus Infections Rise"

- Palestinian Families in Syria's Khan Eshieh Camp Unable to Cope With Price Leap
- Swedish Migration Authorities Conduct Thorough Reassessment of Asylum Seekers' Status
- Palestinian Refugee Tareq Mer'i Forcibly Disappeared in Syrian Prison for 8th Year

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Latest Developments

Palestinian refugees from Syria in Turkey have expressed concerns over their deteriorating condition particularly in light of the new movement clampdown imposed across Turkish provinces as part of anti-coronavirus measures.

A large number of companies, factories, and shops shut their doors for fear of further COVID-19 contaminations. Several Palestinian families have lost their sole sources of income as a result.

Palestinian refugees have urged the Palestine Embassy in Turkey and the Palestinians in Turkey Conference to assume their responsibilities regarding the Palestinian refugee community in Turkey and work on toning down their calamitous state of affairs in light of the socio-economic crisis and health setback wrought by the global coronavirus epidemic.



As many as 63 more people died of coronavirus in Turkey in the past 24 hours, the Turkish health minister said on Wednesday, bringing the death toll to 277.



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The tally of confirmed coronavirus cases climbed to 15,679, as 2,148 more people tested positive for the virus in the past 24 hours, Fahrettin Koca announced on the public broadcaster.

He noted that the fatality rate from the virus stands at 1.58% in Turkey, lower than many other countries.

A total of 333 patients have recovered and been discharged from hospitals since the beginning of the outbreak, according to the latest figures.

Koca said that all 81 provinces of Turkey have registered coronavirus cases, adding that fatalities were recorded in 39 provinces.

Most coronavirus cases were registered in country's largest metropolis Istanbul -- 8,852 cases, which make around 60% of all cases -- followed by 853 cases in the Aegean Izmir province, 712 cases in the capital Ankara, 584 cases in the central province of Konya, and 410 cases in the northwestern province of Kocaeli, he said.

Koca reiterated the importance of staying at home to combat the pandemic, adding that: "The more the mobility drops in the cities, the faster we will win."

He also said that the travel restriction will be further intensified.

After originating in China last December, COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, has spread to at least 180 countries and regions across the world, with its epicenter shifting to Europe.

The virus has killed more than 45,400 people and infected over 911,300 globally, while above 192,900 people recovered from the



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disease, according to figures collated by the U.S.-based Johns Hopkins University.

In another development, Palestinian refugees sheltered in Khan Eshieh camp, in Rif Dimashq's western outskirts, continue to rail against the steep prices imposed by merchants on food and non-food items over recent weeks, at a time when hundreds of cash-stripped families have been struggling for survival in light of the national home quarantines slapped in Syria over coronavirus outbreaks.

The residents said merchants and shopkeepers have been manipulating prices at the detriment of civilians' needs for vital items. A number of merchants continue also to withhold much-needed goods in an attempt to sell them at higher prices later on.



Local activists have called for serious action by the concerned authorities, particularly the Syrian Ministry of Supply and Domestic Commerce, in order to impeach market abusers and dispatch control staff to regulate prices and control supply and demand.

Over recent weeks, residents of Khan Eshieh camp have spoken up against the poor-quality and insufficient quantities of bread sold in



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the area, saying it is unfit for human consumption and holding the government's quality control staff responsible for the crisis.

Living conditions in Khan Eshieh have sharply deteriorated due to the lack of financial resources and high unemployment rates wrought by the raging warfare. The propagation of the novel coronavirus COVID-19 will further overburden the highly-vulnerable families who cannot afford to buy hygiene kit and life-saving medicines.

Meanwhile, the Swedish Migration Agency has carried out a reassessment of issues related to stateless refugees coming from the following Gulf states: Qatar, Bahrain, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Oman.

The new assessment delegitimizes the systematic invalidity of asylum-seeking applications by refugees coming from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCC) and who have reasonable ground to flee their countries of origin and their host countries before heading to a GCC country.

The list of those whose status should be reconsidered includes refugees fleeing war-torn Syria and who can no longer go back to the country or to the host Gulf state.

The reassessment conducted by the Swedish Migration Agency also takes into consideration that Gulf States quasi-systematically revoke visas for person's who stayed for six months outside the country. Even a work permit becomes very difficult to obtain in case of the person's return to the Gulf country.



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Other countries like Qatar deny the entry of Palestinian refugees who carry a travel document issued by another host country. Due to the aforementioned hurdles, the Swedish migration authorities said it is unreasonable to ask the asylum seeker who has been denied access into a Gulf State to go back to that country and reapply for a work or residence permit.

The Migration Agency said asylum seekers coming from GCC countries, including Palestinian refugees, will have their status reconsidered in line with the new reassessment. Those who have had their applications turned down for three times are now entitled to resubmit their demands following contacts with a lawyer.

AGPS has kept record of several cases of Palestinian refugees coming from GCC countries who have had their applications for humanitarian asylum rebuffed in Sweden. In many cases, authorities have pushed them back to Gulf States but the latter refused to let them in.

Official Swedish statistics have indicated that 3,296 Palestinian asylum-seekers categorized as “stateless” received citizenship documents in Sweden in 2019.

Since mid-July 2016, the Swedish authorities suspended permanent visa procedures for holders of temporary protection cards.

Over the past few years, thousands of Palestinian and Syrian refugees, among other migrants, who have applied for asylum in Sweden were granted two-year visas.

Eligibility criteria set by the Swedish authorities include a well-paid work contract valid for a minimum of two years and which enters



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into force before the expiration of the temporary visa. The employer should submit a recruitment declaration at the Swedish tax authority, taking into consideration the conditions defined by the national trade unions.

Those aged below 25 should be holders of secondary school diplomas from Sweden or other foreign institutions.

In the meantime, Palestinian refugee Tareq Ziad Mer'I has been secretly locked up in Syrian government jails for the eight consecutive year.

Tareq, born in 1990, was kidnapped from his workplace in Sehnaya town on August 06, 2012 and dragged to an unidentified location. His family continues to appeal for information about his condition and whereabouts.

AGPS has documented the secret detention of over 1,790 Palestinian refugees, including women and minors, in Syrian government lock-ups.

AGPS estimates the real number to be far higher due to the gag orders slapped by the Syrian government on the detainees' names and fates, along with the families' reluctance to report such cases over retaliation concerns.

Affidavits by ex-detainees provided evidence on the involvement of Syrian government officers in harsh torture tactics, including electric shocks, heavy beating using whips and iron sticks, and sexual abuse against Palestinian detainees, in a flagrant violation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or



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Degrading Treatment or Punishment, commonly known as the United Nations Convention against Torture (UNCAT).

AGPS continues to urge the Syrian government to disclose the fate of scores of Palestinians held in its lock-ups, release the bodies of those tortured to death, to seriously work on halting harsh torture tactics, launch fact-finding probes into crimes of torture, and to bring those involved in such crimes before courts.

