



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



"With Advent of Holy Ramadan Palestinian Refugees from Syria Continue to Suffer Abject Poverty"

- Palestinian Refugees from Syria Rally Outside of UNRWA Office in Lebanon
- Anti-Coronavirus Response by UUNRWA Ongoing in Baalbek Refugee Camp
- Almost 400 migrants moved from Lesbos to Greek mainland

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Latest Developments

This year's Holy Ramadan month has been tough for Palestinian refugees inside and outside the Syrian territories (PRS), as the coronavirus outbreak means that many PRS have not been able to reunite with or provide for their families.

Several PRS families have been scattered in displacement camps set up in Syria and on borderlands with the war-torn country. Scores of others have been stranded in reception facilities set up in European and Asian countries, where they have been facing dire living conditions due to overcrowding, poor hygiene, and lack of access to vital services.

At the same time, hundreds of families taking shelter in displacement camps in northern Syria continue to struggle for survival as they have been deprived of much-needed items and vital services, particularly healthcare, at a time when the novel coronavirus continues to claim the lives of thousands of people around the world.





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Palestinian refugees in Syria continue to launch cries for help over their deteriorating humanitarian condition due to the sharp decrease in the exchange rate of the Syrian pound compared to the USD and their lack of access to the local labor market. The price leap has overburdened the cash-stripped refugees. House rents have also seen a striking leap from previous years.

At the same time, Palestinian refugees from Syria have been denied easy access to neighboring countries, including Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, and North African countries.

The Turkish embassies have suspended visas for Palestinian refugees from Syria for over five years. Jordan also issued a decision officially banning the entry of the Palestinians of Syria regardless of their condition.

Palestinian refugees from Syria are reported to lack legal status in Lebanon. The absence of a specific legislation addressing the unique situation of the Palestinians of Syria has made them vulnerable to marginalization within the Lebanese polity.

Most of the Gulf countries have also outlawed granting visas to Palestinians with Syrian travel documents since 2013.

After nine years of conflict, Palestinian refugees in and from Syria continue to face significant humanitarian and protection needs. In the absence of a durable political settlement, intense hostilities and violence resulting in deaths and injuries, internal displacement, loss of livelihoods, decreases in the provision of public services, and extensive damage to civilian infrastructure have disrupted the lives of civilians and forced thousands to become internally displaced.



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UN data indicates that as many as 120,000 Palestine refugees have fled war-stricken Syria since 2011, including 28,000 to Lebanon.

The Syrian conflict has impacted Palestine refugees inside and outside the Syrian territories. There used to be 560'000 countrywide, mainly in Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Latakia, Damascus and Deraa.

According to the UN, today, some 440,000 Palestine refugees remain in Syria, more than half of them are internally displaced, and nearly all require sustained humanitarian assistance.

AGPS continues to call on UNRWA, the Palestinian Authority, and all other concerned bodies to immediately intervene in order to enhance the alarming humanitarian situation of the cash-stripped Palestinian refugees in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Gaza, among other destinations.

Economic hardship forced thousands of PRS to embark on life-threatening journeys to neighboring countries or to try to get to safety to a European destination. Hundreds have died at sea.

Meanwhile, Palestinian refugees from Syria gathered on Tuesday outside of the offices of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in the Lebanese cities of Sidon and Bar Elias to protest the Agency's reluctance regarding their appeals for urgent humanitarian assistance.

The refugees called on UNRWA to take up its humanitarian and moral duties and to transfer their cash grants in US dollars and on



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time, in light of the economic hardship inflicted by the coronavirus pandemic.

UNRWA has identified PRS in Lebanon as one of the most marginalized and poorest communities in the region.

In its 2020 Syria crisis emergency appeal, UNRWA said that PRS in Lebanon continue to face high vulnerability and marginalization, making them heavily reliant on UNRWA humanitarian support to cover their basic needs. The socio-economic hardships and unrest experienced by the country have compounded PRS' already dire living conditions.



According to a survey conducted by the American University of Beirut in 2015, nearly 90 percent of the PRS population in Lebanon live in poverty, including 9 per cent who are in extreme poverty and unable to meet even their most essential food requirements.

PRS's vulnerability is further compounded by their precarious legal status. The lack of a valid legal status, often coupled with outdated civil registration documents, results in severely restricted freedom



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of movement for some PRS in Lebanon due to fear of arrest, detention or forced deportation.

In another development, UNRWA said it has been following up the health condition of coronavirus-stricken refugees in AlJalil camp, in the Lebanese city of Baalek. Six coronavirus cases have been confirmed in the camp.

UNRWA said the patients are placed under medical control around the clock.

The Agency said that, in partnership with Save the Children organization, it had appointed a care provider for minors quarantined at its school.

UNRWA called on the residents to abide by the safety protocols and hygiene measures prescribed by the health ministry, including social distancing and mask-wearing.

Last week, a photo circulated on social media networks sparked outrage after it revealed the unequipped quarantine room in which a coronavirus-stricken Palestinian family from Syria has been confined in AlJaleel refugee camp, in Lebanon's Baalbek city. Only a handful of mattresses and pillows figure on the circulated picture.

Activists said the facility is similar to a prison room and is unfit for extended home quarantines. They lashed out at UNRWA's Director of Lebanon Operations, urging him to take immediate steps in order to transfer the family to Rafic Hariri Hospital or other equipped quarantine facilities.



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The calls were launched shortly after UNRWA said five residents of the Jalil (Wavel) Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon tested positive for the novel coronavirus.

Authorities closed all entrances to AlJalil Palestinian camp in eastern Lebanon, heightening concerns the virus could further spread among its overcrowded population.

The people infected with the virus are relatives of a Palestinian woman from Syria who tested positive earlier and have been quarantined inside their home, according to a statement from UNRWA.

Lebanon, a tiny country of five million people, is host to tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees and their descendants, most of them living in squalid camps with no access to public services, with limited employment opportunities and no rights to ownership.

Wavel refugee camp was originally a site of French Mandate-era army barracks situated 90 km east of Beirut in the Beqaa Valley near Baalbek. It provided shelter to Palestine refugees in 1948. In 1952, UNRWA assumed responsibility for providing services in the camp. Many refugees still live in the original army barracks, which lack daylight and adequate ventilation. Conditions are particularly harsh in winter.

The ongoing Syria crisis has also led to the additional presence of Syrian refugees and Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) in the camp.



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Camp residents are only able to find seasonal work in agriculture and sometimes construction. Students often drop out of school in order to support their families. The camp's water, sewerage and storm water drainage systems were rehabilitated between 2004 and 2005. However access to potable water remains a persistent challenge, as elsewhere in Lebanon.

In the meantime, the Greek government began moving 395 of the most vulnerable migrants from the overcrowded Moria refugee camp on Lesbos to secure accommodation on the mainland.

The migrants were transferred by ferry from Mytilene to Athen's Piraeus port.

The Greek newspaper Ekathimerini reported Monday morning that two ferries had arrived in Piraeus. "Buses were waiting at the port to collect the migrants and transfer them to reception facilities on the mainland." The Greek news agency ANA-MPA tweeted pictures of their arrival.

Euronews reported that this is the "first massive transfer" of migrants from the islands to the mainland since the lockdown began in Greece.

Authorities are expecting to move at least 2,400 in the coming weeks, according to a migration ministry official, reported the news agency Reuters.

The move came after the EU added its voice to requests that Greece do something to ease the severe overcrowding in the island camps,



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because of fears that if the novel coronavirus takes hold in the camps it would be very difficult to eradicate and could spread like wildfire.

According to the latest UNHCR data, there are about 38,700 migrants and asylum seekers on the Greek Islands. Reuters reports that across Greece about 110,000 migrants are living in some kind of migrant facility.

The Greek government put the country into lockdown towards the end of March and it is already starting to ease up on some of its measures. So far the country has only a couple of thousand confirmed cases of infection and deaths remain, for now, in the hundreds.

