



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



"Palestinian Refugee Families in Damascus Facing Calamitous Fate"

- Medicines Collected for Residents of Palestinian Refugee Camp in Syria
- 5 Migrants Commit Suicide on Greek Islands
- Sweden Sets Off Parliament Debate over Future Migrant Policies

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Latest Developments

Nine years into the Syrian conflict, Palestinian refugees living in the war-torn country continue to face unbearable hardship and security threats.

This has been the case for the residents of Jober neighborhood in Damascus, who have been increasingly chased down in arbitrary arrest sweeps. A number of residents have been extra-judicially executed; others fled to neighboring countries or risked their lives onboard “death boats” trying to get to safety to European destinations.

A large number of families have become internally displaced across Damascus and its suburbs at the same time as their appeals to return to their homes have gone unheeded by the Syrian government and concerned institutions.

Almost all of Jober’s structures, buildings, mosques, and groceries have been reduced to rubble in the military operations launched by the Syrian government forces and their Russian partners.

In the best of cases, displaced families are allowed to stay for 15 minutes in the neighborhood to inspect their homes and property in return for money given to government officers deployed at checkpoints pitched around the area.

Nearly 10,000 Palestinian refugees, mostly from northern occupied Palestine, have been taking shelter in Jober neighborhood.



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In another development, young man Osama Ahmad and volunteers from Khan Eshieh camp for Palestinian refugees, has embarked on an initiative to collect medicines for vulnerable and poor families in the camp.

Over recent months, residents of Khan Eshieh camp said they have run out of life-saving medicines and urgently-needed medical kit.

A resident told AGPS that sick Palestinians with hypertension and diabetes have to line up in long queues to receive prescribed medicines. Elderly people with chronic diseases have also failed to secure much-needed drugs due to high poverty.

Recently, AGPS has urged UNRWA along with the Syrian Health Ministry to provide the Palestinian refugee community in the war-torn country with hygiene kit and relief items in light of the coronavirus outbreak.

AGPS also stressed the need to supply Palestinian refugee camps with medicines, detergents, and disinfectants in order to help the displaced communities defend themselves against the deadly COVID-19 virus.

Palestinian families taking refuge in Khan Eshieh camp have been struggling with squalid humanitarian conditions inflicted by the nine-year long warfare.

According to UN data, Khan Eshieh camp lies beside the ancient ruins of Khan Eshieh, 27km south-west of Damascus. The Khan historically served as an overnight shelter for trade caravans on the road between Damascus and the southwest, and in 1948, it provided shelter for the first refugees from Palestine.



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The camp was established in 1949 on an area of 0.69 square kilometers with refugees originally from the northern part of Palestine.

Before the conflict in Syria, the camp was home to more than 20,000 Palestine refugees. In 2012, the farms and fields surrounding the camp became active battlegrounds in which heavy weapons were deployed, often indiscriminately. The population more than halved to 9,000.

Some of the camp's buildings and infrastructure were severely affected including some UNRWA installations; two UNRWA schools and the community centre were almost razed to the ground. In 2016, UNRWA was able to re-access Khan Esheih and the Agency was able to rehabilitate some of its installations. Residents have also slowly started to return, with the camp now accommodating 12,000 people.

Meanwhile, five migrants, including a Palestinian refugee, committed suicide on the Greek islands of Leros and Chios.

The list of victims also includes a woman from Syria and an Iranian national.

Local sources said the migrants committed suicide after the Greek authorities turned down their asylum applications, leaving them at the risk of refoulement.

Human rights sources continue to slam the Greek coast guard and migration authorities for the simmering crackdowns against refugees and asylum-seekers.



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Athens' centre right government, rallying EU support earlier this year, deployed riot police and military patrols to the land border while dispatching gunships and coastguard vessels to conduct around-the-clock patrols off the Turkish coast.

Human rights groups claim conditions in island camps have also worsened as a result of restrictive measures to stem the spread of the virus. Although lockdown policies have gradually been lifted across Greece they are still enforced in holding centers with night curfews still in place.

“We have seen a noticeable rise in all sorts of violence, from tent violence to sexual violence because people are forced to spend much more time in camps,” said Apostolos Veizis, the medical director of Médecins Sans Frontières in Greece. “These people are not treated as human but numbers. The situation for them is utterly inhumane.”

Activists held the Greek authorities responsible for the mounting tension in overcrowded migrant facilities, saying refugees have been psychologically distressed due to the substandard living conditions they have been made to endure in reception centers and the absence of life-saving healthcare services at a time when reports of coronavirus cases have soared.

The migrants, including hundreds of Palestinian refugees, have been subjected to dire conditions on the island and deprived of their basic human rights, including access to water, power, and relief services.



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Recently, human rights groups have warned that Greek police have been using tear gas, water cannon, and stun grenades to push back the border crossers. Turkey has accused Greek forces of shooting and killing at least four migrants – a charge Greece denies.

Greek authorities have made no secret of their resolve and even their use of aggressive tactics to block illegal crossings. But the government in Athens is denying accusations of deadly attacks on migrants.

In a March 17 report, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said Greek security forces and unidentified armed men at the Greece-Turkey land border have detained, assaulted, sexually assaulted, robbed, and stripped asylum seekers and migrants, then forced them back to Turkey.

“The European Union is hiding behind a shield of Greek security force abuse instead of helping Greece protect asylum seekers and relocate them safely throughout the EU,” said Nadia Hardman, refugee rights researcher and advocate at Human Rights Watch. “The EU should protect people in need rather than support forces who beat, rob, strip, and dump asylum seekers and migrants back across the river.”

Between March 7 and 9, Human Rights Watch interviewed 21 asylum seekers and migrants, 17 of whom were men and 4 women, in Turkey about how they tried to enter Greece over the land border following the Turkish government’s February 27 announcement that it would no longer stop asylum seekers and migrants from leaving Turkey to reach the European Union.



All those interviewed said that within hours after they crossed in boats or waded through the river, armed men wearing various law enforcement uniforms or in civilian clothes, including all in black with balaclavas, intercepted everyone in their group. All said the men detained them in official or informal detention centers, or on the roadside, and stole their money, mobile phones, and bags before summarily pushing them back to Turkey.

Seventeen interviewees also described how the men assaulted them and others, including women and children, through electric shocks, beating with wooden or metal rods, prolonged beating of the soles of feet, punching, kicking, and stomping.

In the meantime, a new debate has been opened by the migration committee at the Swedish parliament to determine post-coronavirus migration policy in the kingdom. The proposed draft law seeks to replace the temporary asylum law that will remain into effect until next summer.

According to Swedish media outlets, the Social Democrats Party will take part in a debate to determine the number of migrants to be hosted by Sweden in line with the new migration policy.

At the same time, the Christian Democrats Party has launched calls to reduce the number of migrants and implement tougher regulations. The Green Party strongly condemned such closed-door immigration policies.

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



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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 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.