

65th Commemoration: Ongoing Nakba and Secondary Forcible Displacement

Ramallah, 15 May 2013

Of the 11.4 million Palestinians worldwide, 66% are forcible displaced, (refugees and internally displaced people) and over half live in the *shatāt* (forced exile). Instead of an event relegated to history, the Nakba continues into its 65th year – the central source for the annual increase of these displacement statistics.

In the past year, for example, Israeli colonization, occupation and apartheid have targeted the indigenous presence of Palestinians particularly in Jerusalem, Area C of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip Buffer Zone and the Naqab. On 6 May 2013, Israel approved the Praver Plan, which threatens to forcibly displace up to 70,000 Palestinian Bedouin in the Naqab. On the same day, Israel issued 11 home demolition orders in Deir Nidham village near Ramallah, which, if carried out, will make 40 Palestinians homeless. On large and small scales, the displacement of the ongoing Nakba repeats the original crime and tragedy producing Palestinian refugees and Internally Displaced Persons annually.

Ongoing forcible displacement targets Palestinians residing on both sides of the Green Line: in the 1967 occupied territory and on the Israeli side of the “1949 Armistice Line”, as well as those living in enforced exile. Nevertheless, the Palestinian people remain steadfast in their struggle to end the systematic violations of their human rights, political and national rights, and to practice their right of return.

In 1948, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 194. This resolution set a framework for providing Palestinian refugees with special protection and called for the return of Palestinian refugees to their homes from which Israeli forces displaced them, the restitution of their properties and compensation for the costs and injury done to them, rehabilitation and other entitlements of reparations. In 1967, the UN Security Council issued resolution 237 demanding that Israel allow the return of those displaced by the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights and Sinai Peninsula. The international community, however, did not employ existing mechanisms to compel Israel’s compliance with international law and standards in a failure to implement either Resolution 194 or 237.

Within this context, the escalation of the confrontation in Syria exposes Palestinian refugees living in exile there to the reality of secondary forcible displacement in addition to imminent and extreme danger to their lives and well-being. Currently, conditions for the Palestinian refugee community in Syria include:

- 400,000 of the total 500,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria are in urgent need of assistance. Moreover, Palestinians displaced from Iraq and now residing in Syria still do not have their statuses determined and, as a result, lack the minimal levels of protection to which they are entitled;
- Palestinian refugees fleeing Syria to Jordan have both been detained at the border and denied entry, or simply exist in limbo, facing the perpetual threat of deportation. The Jordanian Interior Minister has explicitly stated that Jordan will not deal with Palestinians who come from Syria as refugees, “[they] will only treat them as guests;”
- Palestinians granted entry into Lebanon are settled into already overcrowded refugee camps. Lebanese authorities invoked discriminatory laws differentiating between Syrian and Palestinian

refugees, favoring the former and thus exacerbating hardship endured by the Palestinian refugee population;

- In Egypt, no Palestinian refugee is issued a residency permit. They are simply denied refugee rights by a bureaucracy that either does not recognize them or lacks the flexibility to do so.

The lack of adequate protection is the most glaring feature of the condition of Palestinian refugees. Therefore, we, the undersigned organizations and networks, mark the 65th year of the ongoing Nakba by calling on the international community and the Palestine Liberation Organization to:

- Ensure effective protection of Palestinian refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and those at risk of forced displacement by realizing the responsibility of UNCCP, UNRWA, UN Committee for the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and UNHCR to search for and implement durable solutions in accordance to UNGA resolution 194 and UNSC resolution 237;
- Promote initiatives that hold Israel accountable to international law including calls for criminal investigation and prosecution, reparations for Palestinian victims and rights-based durable solutions for displaced persons;
- Improve response mechanisms in the occupied Palestinian territory, in Israel-proper and for those Palestinians living in forced exile through short-term emergency aid within the framework of filling medium and long-term protection gaps, a central requirement of which, is preventing institutionalized forced displacement;
- Afford assistance to all Palestinian refugee communities living in forced exile and in particular to those currently fleeing Syria;
- Call upon Arab States, the Arab League and Palestinian political parties and organizations to take effective measures to protect Palestinian human rights and to actively promote the Palestinian refugees' rights to return to their homes and places of origin.

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1. Occupied Palestine and Syrian Golan Heights Advocacy Initiative (OPGAI)
 2. BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights
 3. Defense for Children International (DCI) / Palestine Section
 4. Addameer - Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association
 5. Alternative Information Center (AIC)
 6. Gaza Strip Refugee Committees
 7. Society of St. Yves – Catholic Center for Human Rights
 8. Aidoun – Syria
 9. Housing and Land Rights Network Habitat International Coalition
 10. Association of Tunisienne et Tunisiens in Switzerland
 11. Arab- Group Tamkeen Switzerland
 12. Right of Return Organization Geneva