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2.4.7. Palestinians

In 2024, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) estimated the number of Palestine refugees in Syria at 438 000. Around 40 % of them were estimated to live in ‘protracted internal displacement’, facing deteriorating socio-economic conditions.483 Palestine refugees are spread across 12 refugee camps and ‘various other gatherings’ throughout the country.484

According to UNRWA, 89 % of Palestinian refugees in Syria live below the poverty line, defined as living on 2.15 US dollars or less per day.485 Food insecurity has reportedly increased, affecting 62 % of Palestine refugees in Syria as of March 2024, up from 46 % in September 2022,486 despite allocating most of their total expenditure to food.487 As noted by UNOCHA, malnutrition particularly affected children, pregnant women, and the elderly.488

As noted by UNOCHA, 25 % of households of Palestine refugees are female-headed, while 30 % of Palestine refugees ‘are classified as extremely vulnerable.’ With only 33 % of adults employed, child labour and early marriage are increasingly affecting children and women. Furthermore, prolonged displacement has also deepened trauma and mental health concerns, yet access to healthcare and education remains limited.489 Almost 96 % of Palestine refugees in Syria rely on UNRWA assistance, particularly cash support to cover basic needs and access to medical care.490

As of early 2025, three Palestine refugee camps in Syria – Yarmouk, Ein al Tal, and Dera’a – remain largely destroyed,491 despite ongoing efforts to rehabilitate them. 492In 2024, UNRWA recorded the return of 2 308 Palestine refugees, most of whom came from Lebanon.493 In March 2025, UNOCHA reported that thousands of displaced Palestine refugees had returned to Syria, primarily from Lebanon. Additionally, 1 010 internally displaced Palestine refugee families, amounting to 3 406 individuals, ‘originally from Idlib governorate, have returned to various camps across Syria.’494

Palestinian refugee families returning to Syria face ‘significant challenges’, including limited access to essential services and economic hardship. They rely on UNRWA emergency cash assistance to cover basic needs. In addition to cash support, there is a critical need for non-food items and shelter repair,495 with efforts being constrained by ongoing funding shortages.496

Return movements to Yarmouk, the largest Palestinian refugee camp in Syria,497 began in late 2020, with the population of the camp estimated at 15 300 people (4 500 families), 80 % of whom were Palestine refugees, as of February 2025.498 A UN assessment conducted between April 2024 to June 2024 found that 72 % of homes of the camp were damaged in the war.499 In addition to the destruction and damage of the camp's buildings,500 returnees also reported a lack of electricity, water, and basic services.501

Under the Assad government, Palestinian factions maintained a decades-long presence in Syria, 502 operating parallel structures that provided community services such as education, public libraries, healthcare, and day-care and also served as means of recruitment of new members and fighters.503 After taking control in Syria, HTS prohibited these factions from possessing weapons and running training camps and military headquarters.504 The new authorities subsequently closed and confiscated the offices, weapons, and military camps of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), Fatah al-Intifada, and al-Sa'iqa.505

At the end of March 2025, HTS permitted the offices of Islamic Jihad, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), Fatah, and Hamas to stay open, provided they 'operate within the permissible limits' imposed by the new government.506 At the end of May 2025, AFP reported that most of the leadership of Tehran-backed Palestinian factions had left Damascus under pressure from the new government.507

No additional information was found regarding the treatment of Palestinians by state and non-state actors within the time constraints of this report.

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