

December 2010

The Palestinian
Return Centre

PALESTINIAN REFUGEES

MONTHLY MEMO

This monthly memo provides news, updates, commentaries and analysis of events relating to Palestinian refugees around the world, over the past month. It covers stories from Palestine 1948, the Occupied Territories, host countries and Palestinians in diaspora. It also offers news and updates on institutions directly working with Palestinian refugees such as UNRWA.

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INTRODUCTION

For the past 62 years, millions of Palestinians have been living as refugees in areas of the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT) and in surrounding host countries - mostly in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has described their plight as “by far the most protracted and largest of all refugee problems in the world today”

While there is much focus on the Israeli Palestinian conflict on a political level there is very little, if any, mention of the refugees and internally displaced Palestinians who comprise three quarters of the global Palestinian population. There is also very little attention given to the routine demolition and expulsion which continue to swell the number of refugees. The 7.1 Million Palestinian refugees face many difficult challenges which require greater attention from the international community.

This bulletin provides an update on the condition of Palestinian refugees around the world over the past month. It covers stories from the Occupied Territories, internally displaced Palestinians in Israel, UNRWA, host countries, Palestinians in the Diaspora and commentaries relating to the refugees.

HEADLINES

- Israel: rabbis' ban on housing for non-Jews condemned
- Israeli policies in the West Bank harshly discriminate against Palestinian residents. Human Rights Watch Reports
- Four Palestinians killed in Gaza and 47 others injured throughout the oPt
- Stormy weather adds to plight of Gaza's refugees
- Despite Easing of Gaza Blockade, Situation Still Desperate UN Official Warns
- NGOs vow to fight for Palestinian right of return

1 ISRAEL and the OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Palestinians are continually evicted from their homes in East Jerusalem. Since its occupation in 1967 Israel has boosted its Jewish population to the great detriment of Palestinians. It is estimated that 180,000 or more Palestinians have been evicted from their homes.

1.1 Israel: rabbis' ban on housing for non-Jews condemned

Amnesty International today condemned a religious ruling signed by dozens of Israel's municipal chief rabbis that bans the renting or sale of homes to non-Jews. While the ruling is not official government policy, the rabbis issuing it include the influential Shmuel Eliyahu, chief rabbi of Safed, and his counterparts in a number of other Israeli cities and municipalities, all of whom are essentially government employees..

Read More:

http://www.amnesty.org.uk/news_details.asp?NewsID=19132

1.2 Statement on the increase in house demolitions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem by Mr Maxwell Gaylard, the United Nations

Earlier today Maxwell Gaylard, the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, visited the site of a Palestinian home which had been demolished just twenty four hours earlier, following an order by the relevant authorities of the Government of Israel. In a statement Mr Gaylard said, "the destruction of this home and the displacement of these people raises serious concerns with regard to Israel's obligations under international law."

Read More:

http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/house_demolition_23_12_2010_press_release_english.pdf

1.3 Israel/West Bank: Separate and Unequal

Under Discriminatory Policies, Settlers Flourish, Palestinians Suffer

(Jerusalem) - Israeli policies in the West Bank harshly discriminate against Palestinian residents, depriving them of basic necessities while providing lavish amenities for Jewish settlements, Human Rights Watch said in a report released today.

Read more:

<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/12/18/israelwest-bank-separate-and-unequal>

2 REFUGEES IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Refugees are the most vulnerable within the occupied territory. Three quarters of Gaza's 1.7 million, who are still under siege, are refugees, and in the West Bank a quarter of the population are refugees

2.1 UN Report: Protection of Civilians Weekly Report | 22 - 28 December 2010

Four Palestinians killed in Gaza and 47 others injured throughout the oPt. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, there is an increase in settler violence. Demolitions and demolition orders continue. In the Gaza Strip, limited exports continue; wheat reserves remain low. Daily power cuts remain up to 6 hours. Cooking gas shortages continue.

Read More:

http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_protection_of_civilians_2010_12_31_english.pdf

2.2 Stormy weather adds to plight of Gaza's refugees

GAZA CITY (Ma'an) – Homes of Palestinian refugees living in camps in Gaza have suffered serious damage from the stormy weather which hit the region over the past two days, civil defense officials said. Heavy rain cracked the densely populated homes built of bricks and asbestos by UNRWA after the expulsion of 1948.

Read More:

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=341705>

3 UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency)

UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) provides assistance, protection and advocacy for some 4.7 million registered Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the occupied Palestinian territory, pending a solution to their plight.

UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions from UN member states.

3.1 Solution to Palestine refugees imperative for peace

UNRWA was established in 1949 under a General Assembly resolution that called upon the agency to assist and support Palestine refugees pending a just and lasting resolution of their plight.

As a temporary agency, the duration of whose mandate is tied to the resolution of the Palestine refugee situation, UNRWA looks forward to the day when its services will no longer be required, allowing it to fold its operations. The arrival of that day, however, is contingent upon a real peace process that bears tangible results for Palestine refugees in line with United Nations resolutions and with international law and practice.

Read More:

<http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=868>

3.2 Helping the children of Gaza, two years on

Watch:

<http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=873>

3.3 UAE Red Crescent brings new life to old camp in Aleppo

Thanks to a generous donation from the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent, Palestinian refugee families from Neirab Camp in Aleppo have recently been given brand-new homes.

Tarek Mansour Hussein and Sameeh Yousef Abdallah, along with their wives and children, are just two of 29 families who have so far benefited from the implementation of phase two of UNRWA's Neirab Rehabilitation Project (NRP).

Read More:

<http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=876>

3.4 Despite Easing of Gaza Blockade, Situation Still Desperate UN Official Warns

Despite encouraging developments in Gaza since Israel eased its blockade in June, with shops now full of consumer goods, the economic, humanitarian, and physical situation is still extremely bleak, John Ging, UNRWA's director of operations in Gaza, said yesterday, calling for speedy moves to revive the territory's economy.

Read More:

<http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=849>

3.5 Response to "Refugeeism" by Michael Bernstam

The essay published on your website, "Refugeeism" by Michael Bernstam contains a number of false statements and misrepresents many aspects of the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

UNRWA does not perpetuate refugee status. Rather, through its human development work, it empowers refugees to become self-reliant and productive members of the communities in which they live. Every year, UNRWA educates some 500,000 children in the occupied Palestinian territory (that is, the West Bank and Gaza) and in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

Read More:

<http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=877>

4 LEBANON

Lebanon's estimated 400,000 Palestinian refugees live in appalling social and economic conditions - most of them in crowded camps that lack essential infrastructure. In 2001, Parliament passed a law prohibiting Palestinians from owning property, a right they had for decades. Lebanese law also restricts their ability to work in many areas. In 2005, Lebanon eliminated a ban on Palestinians holding most clerical and technical positions, provided they obtain a temporary work permit from the Labour Ministry, but more than 20 high-level professions remain off-limits to Palestinians.

4.1 Belgium Donates 600,000 Euros to Help Palestinian Refugees

Belgium donated 600,000 euros (\$786,000) to help with relief for displaced Palestinian refugees in northern Lebanon, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees said. The donation supplements Belgian assistance for reconstruction of the Nahr Al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp that was destroyed during combat between the Lebanese army and Fatah al-Islam militants in 2007, the agency said in an e-mailed statement today.

Read More:

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-12-01/belgium-donates-600-000-euros-to-help-palestinian-refugees.html>

4.2 Nahr al-Bared reconstruction delay throws civil rights into spotlight

process runs at a slow pace and remains only partially funded as further political obstacles appear on the horizon.

Read More:

<http://sabbah.biz/mt/archives/2010/12/04/nahr-al-bared-reconstruction-delay/>

4.3 NGOs vow to fight for Palestinian right of return

BEIRUT: Now in its tenth year and still no closer to achieving its goal, the Palestinian Right of Return Coalition vowed Monday to continue its fight for the right to return to Palestine, and not just for third-country resettlement.

The collection of international NGOs, advocating for the millions of displaced Palestinians across the region, is headed in the country by Palestinian human rights group A'idoun and operates under the joint slogan "Return is an Inalienable Right and Cannot be Nullified by the Passage of Time."

Read More:

http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=1&article_id=122282#axzz1A4JA4w5
[H](#)

4.4 Palestinian war refugees housed in 'containers'

NAHR EL-BARED CAMP, Lebanon | The apartments are called "containers" or "barracks" and were built to be temporary housing for Palestinian refugees displaced by war more than three years ago. Some are made of concrete. Others are made of tin.

"We don't see the sun here," said Yazmine Khaleel, who has lived with her husband and four children in a one-room barrack since she fled the fighting. "They told me we would have nice temporary houses. It's only a container."

Read More

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/dec/6/palestinian-war-refugees-housed-in-containers/>

5 INTERNATIONAL NEWS. Selection of news and articles relating to the question of refugees.

5.1 Palestinian refugee top issue as Mitchell arrives

US envoy to begin talks on "core issues"; in Jerusalem, With US Mideast envoy George Mitchell set to begin a new phase in the diplomatic process when he meets with Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem on Monday, Israeli officials reacted sharply on Sunday to recent "hard-line" Palestinian comments on the "right of return" for descendants of Palestinian refugees from 1948.

Read More:

5.2 UAE pledges \$ 1 million for UNRWA budget

WAM New York, Dec 8th, 2010 (WAM) -- UAE last night pledged \$1,000,000 in support of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) budget for the year 2011.

Read More:

<http://www.wam.org.ae/servlet/Satellite?c=WamLocEnews&cid=1289830948885&p=1135099400124&pagename=WAM/WamLocEnews/W-T-LEN-FullNews>

5.3 Kuwait set to join UNRWA Advisory Commission

BRUSSELS: Due to its generous contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees (UNRWA), Kuwait is set to join the agency's Advisory Commission soon, according to UNRWA Commissioner-General Filippo Grandi. Kuwait is in an interesting position. Last year they made a very large contribution to the emergency in Gaza. It was the Amir himself who donated \$34 million," Grandi said.

Read More:

http://www.kuwaittimes.net/read_news.php?newsid=OTE4MjM3NDc5

5.4 Foreign minister distances government from Wilders' Jordan line

Foreign minister Uri Rosenthal has distanced himself from comments made by PVV leader Geert Wilders about Palestine and Jordan, news agency ANP reports. In a speech in Tel Aviv at the weekend, Wilders said Palestinian refugees should have the right to resettle in Jordan and 'the truth is that Jordan is Palestine'. Rosenthal told MPs during a debate he had made it clear to the Jordanian government the government does not share this position..

Read More:

http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2010/12/foreign_minister_distances_gov.php

5.5 Coming to America: Gaza boys take trip of a lifetime

Film documents experience of 15 students who were taken on an eye-opening journey to New York arranged by a UN agency.

Read more:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/dec/10/gaza-boys-film-new-york>

6 COMMENTARY and ANALYSIS

The Commentaries are taken from blogs and articles. They are all selected for their significance to the moral legal and political debate on the plight of refugees. PRC does not necessarily agree with all the views and opinions held by the authors.

6.1 The returning issue of Palestine's refugees

Before his murder in 1948, Lord Folke Bernadotte, the first UN mediator to the Arab-Israeli conflict, stated: "It would be an offence against the principles of elemental justice if these innocent [Palestinian] victims of the conflict were denied the right to return to their homes, while Jewish immigrants flow into Palestine." Lord Bernadotte paid for his candour with his life as Jewish militants assassinated him under the direction of Yitzhak Shamir, the man who would later become prime minister of Israel.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/dec/10/israel-palestine-refugee-rights>

6.2 Danny Ayalon plays a losing blame game

While taking apart an argument made by Danny Ayalon may seem like shooting fish in a barrel, his op-ed in today's LA Times contains so many inaccuracies or outright falsehoods, and there are enough people, both in the US and Israel, who will take this piece seriously, that it seems worth the time. Ayalon offered up a fine brew of classic myths and his own, odd version of reality, so let's dig into it and see what the facts are.

Read More:

<http://palestinote.com/blogs/blogs/archive/2010/12/15/danny-ayalon-plays-a-losing-blame-game.aspx>

6.3 Latner has a good argument, but Israel isn't as innocent as he claims

A viral e-mail has been making its way from inbox to inbox lately. In it, a very clever law student flips a Cambridge University debate on its head and in doing so has attracted quite a bit of attention. Gabriel Latner, a second year law student, was assigned the position of supporting the resolution, "Israel is a rogue state." To convince the audience of the statement's truth, he says

"rogue" simply means "anomalous", and goes on to articulate five positive ways in which Israel is different from other nations. He's wrong about the definition of rogue. Merriam Webster gives this definition: "of or being a nation whose leaders defy international law or norms of international behavior." Nevertheless, I'd like to take this opportunity to look more deeply into Latner's five arguments, as long as Israel continues to treat Palestinians like sub-class human beings, none of these particulars matter..

Read More:

<http://www.thedaonline.com/opinion/latner-has-a-good-argument-but-israel-isn-t-as-innocent-as-he-claims-1.1821952>

6.4 Life in a Palestinian Refugee Camps

A Bahrain-based author hopes his personal account of life as an exiled Palestinian will help drum up global support for fellow refugees. ALICIA DE HALDEVANG reports...LIKE many other Palestinians, Jamal Krayem Kanj was born and raised in a Lebanese refugee camp after his parents fled their home in 1948 with his elder brother Ghazi. However, life in the Nahr El Bared refugee camp, located 10 miles north of Tripoli, was never easy..

Read More:

<http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=293364>

6.5 Zionist settlement policy: Time running out for Israel

It is apparent that President Barack Obama has become a thorn in Zionist terror flesh. Israel had never expected an African to become US president. Supported John McCain for the presidential race but Obama won the election. Israel maintains Obama is against Zionist proliferation and genocides in Palestine and doesn't encourage the US-Israeli strong lobbyists to do their "job" in White House and Pentagon.

Read More:

<http://arabnews.com/middleeast/article216273.ece>

UPCOMING EVENTS

A. International Conference in London ‘The Ongoing Nakba’.

Date: 15th January 2011

Time: 10 AM to 6 PM

Venue: Brunei Gallery SOAS

Address: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG

B. PALESTINE MEMORIAL WEEK

Date: 15th January 2011 – 22 January 2011

Venue: Week of Events all across the UK. Please visit our website www.prc.org.uk for more details