

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	235
Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN).
Titel:	Syria: Palestinian refugees flee port city camp
Udgivet:	17. august 2011
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	1. september 2011

Title	Syria: Palestinian refugees flee port city camp
Publisher	Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)
Country	Syrian Arab Republic
Publication Date	17 August 2011
Cite as	Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), <i>Syria: Palestinian refugees flee port city camp</i> , 17 August 2011, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4e4e0d5b2.html [accessed 22 August 2011]
Disclaimer	This is not a UNHCR publication. UNHCR is not responsible for, nor does it endorse, its content. Any views expressed are solely those of the author or publisher.

Syria: Palestinian refugees flee port city camp

Syria should allow humanitarian access to Palestinian refugees living in the Mediterranean port city of Latakia following reports that violence has forced thousands of them to flee a camp in the area.

"It is almost impossible to get information out of Syria at the moment. We have no idea where these people are," said Chris Gunness, spokesman for the UN Relief and Works Agency which helps Palestinian refugees across the Middle East (UNRWA).

"A forgotten population has now become a disappeared population," Gunness told IRIN on 16 August. "We have no idea where the women and children have gone. This is why we are pushing the Syrian government for immediate access to the camp to assess the situation there and resume services."

At least 5,000 Palestinian refugees have fled their camp situated in Latakia's El Ramel district, according to UNRWA.

"UNRWA condemns the use of force against civilians," it said in a statement. "We call on the Syrian authorities to order their security forces to exercise utmost restraint in accordance with international law and ensure that all civilians including Palestinian refugees are unharmed."

There are 472,109 Palestinian refugees in Syria, according to UN figures, many living in sprawling, under-serviced camps. These are people and their descendants who fled Palestine during the 1948 war, during the creation of the Israeli state. The right for Palestinian refugees to return is a central demand of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the occupied Palestinian territory in its negotiations with Israel.

"We demand expeditious and unhindered access for humanitarian workers to tend to the injured and dying," Gunness said in the statement. "In addition we demand unhindered access for UNRWA so that the Agency can resume its full services in the camp, which have been severely affected by the unrest."

PLO condemns Syria

The violence has prompted the secretary-general of the Palestinian Liberation Organization to take the unusual step of strongly condemning the Syrian government's actions.

Yasser Abed Rabbo said such violence was "part of the crimes against humanity" suffered by both Syrian and Palestinian civilians. The PA has urged the Syrian government to

protect the lives of Palestinian refugees.

The crackdown on Latakia began on 14 August, a day after mass anti-government protests in the city. Activists said Syrian warships joined the attack the next day, shelling the city.

However, the official state news agency SANA denied that the city had been shelled. Two policemen and four unidentified armed men were killed when security forces pursued "armed men who were terrorizing residents... and using machine-guns and explosives from rooftops and from behind barricades," it said.

Syria has witnessed violent protests in the last few months and, according to observers, President Assad's attempts to crush the pro-democracy uprising have been marked by brutality. In five months, more than 1,700 people have reportedly died and more than 30,000 have been detained, according to human rights groups.

On 5 August, independent experts from the UN Human Rights Council said they had continued to receive reports of systematic use of excessive force resulting in killings and injuries; allegations of torture, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests and detention of protesters; targeting of human rights defenders; and unjustified limitations on freedoms of peaceful assembly and expression.

"The indiscriminate use of heavy artillery against demonstrators cannot be justified; no State is allowed to use its military force against an unarmed civilian population regardless of the situation prevailing on the ground," said the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Christof Heyns.

"The killings that result are clearly arbitrary executions and punishable under international law."
