

Brief Report

Nearly 1,000 Families with no Access to Drinking Water for Five Consecutive Days in Deir Ballout Camp

IDPs Camps in Syria
Are Forsaken Tragedies

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, independent group that is considered a primary source for the OHCHR on all death toll-related analyses in Syria.



Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Deir Ballout Camp is an Example of the Suffering at IDPs Camps in Syria
- III. Legal Description and Recommendations

I. Introduction

Around 8,500 individuals were forced to leave their homes, villages, and cities at the end of April 2018, as waves of the forcibly displaced started fleeing the towns of southern Damascus (Babbila, Yalda, Beit Sahm, and al Yarmouk Camp) heading for north Syria in accordance with evacuation agreements that are in violation of the international human rights law. These agreements were struck after the residents had endured the suffocating siege imposed by Syrian regime forces on their areas for approximately five years. On the other hand, al Yarmouk Camp saw a Syrian-Russian offensive that was launched on April 19, 2018, and lasted for about a month, during which large numbers of houses and shops were destroyed as hundreds of residents were forced to flee al Yarmouk Camp to Babbila and Yalda towns, and then flee again along with the large numbers of Babbila's and Yalda's families to north Syria, while those who opted to stay had to suffer grave indignities that we detailed in our [recent reports on forced displacement](#).

Our estimations suggest that approximately 5,000 of those IDPs settled in the armed opposition-held Deir Ballout Camp in northern suburbs of Aleppo. In light of the overwhelming influx of IDPs from different areas in Syria towards the camps in the north, in addition to the non-existence of new camps or any areas that they could go to, the management of those camps found themselves between two very difficult choices – either rejecting any newcomers, since these camps have already exceeded their maximum capacity, or leave people with no choice but to sleep in the open.



According to many of those camps' residents who spoke to SNHR about disastrous living conditions, these camps lack the most basic services, such as water, restrooms, and medical care, not to mention the irregular and scarce food aids delivered to those camps. What made matters even worse is the fact that most IDPs are children and women, including pregnant women, in addition to a number of wounded people who were injured in the shelling and aerial bombardment on their hometowns by Russian and Syrian regime forces, as those require special medical care.

II. Deir Ballout Camp is an Example of the Suffering at IDPs Camps in Syria

Some of the camp's residents noted to SNHR that the living conditions in Deir Ballout Camp have become unbearable in light of the high temperatures. However, what was even more dire is losing access to drinking water for five consecutive days, from June 7 until June 11. Safe-to-drink water didn't come back until Tuesday, June 12, when some groups who support the camp distributed bottles of drinking water. The lack of drinking water during that time caused major panic between the camp's residents.

As drinking water was lost during that period, the residents were forced to use water from the wells which caused cases of diarrhea and gastronomical infections. Given that the camp has no medical centers or even an ambulance to transfer critical cases to the nearest medical center, which is 7 km away from the camp, injuries numbers increased while some of the injured suffered from complications.

Mohammad, a father of three, told SNHR that his kids contracted severe diarrhea only one day after using well water. Mohammad wasn't able to get them to a medical center as the camp has no ambulances, "We are living in a barren land, in the open under the sky. The primitive camps can hardly protect us from the sun. We are living under poor conditions here. We have left a harsh siege for a harsher living conditions."

Additionally, many are suffering from extreme shortage of money, according to some of the residents we've spoken to, as people just got out of a draining siege that consumed all of their resources and left them with no source of income that would help them cover their basic needs. They are relying entirely on the scarce aids they can get.



III. Legal Description and Recommendations

Russian-Syrian alliance forces have practiced acts of displacement against civilian residents in a systematic, organized, and widespread manner. This constitutes a blatant violation of Geneva Conventions and qualifies as a crime against humanity according to Article 7 of Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. We haven't recorded that said forces have taken any measures to provide shelter, medical care, or food for the displaced civilians. In addition, all of the displacements, which were carried out by Syrian regime forces and their allies, are the result of agreements and truces under coercion and oppression, as well as a violation of the international humanitarian law through siege, indiscriminate shelling, starvation, and obstructing the delivery and exit of aids and civilian residents, which forced the residents to agree to these truces and agreements.

Recommendations

Donor States and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

The international community and donor states should make more of an effort to secure the basic life needs and care for the IDPs camps in Syria. Most importantly, water, food, residence, clothing, and medical care services.

Security Council

The Security Council should adopt a resolution on 7 million IDPs in Syria to address the forced displacement process and prevent displacement from turning into a permanent state. The Security Council should also apply pressure on the Syrian regime to stop displacement and legalizing laws that aim to seize the IDPs' properties and estates.

United Nations General Assembly

Hold the Syrian regime fully responsible for displacing one-third of the Syrian people, including legal and material responsibilities, and make sure that the victims will be fully compensated for the severe losses they had to suffer, including returning seized properties to their rightful owners.





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