

January 2011

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

- Israeli negotiators, including Tzipi Livni, proposed "swapping" some of Israel's Arab villages into a Palestinian state
- Members of the European Parliament and three Palestinian Legislators under an Israeli expulsion order will be joined via videoconference on Tuesday 25 January from 18:15 to 19:00.
- Israel uses arcane laws to Expel Palestinians
- Condoleezza Rice: send Palestinian refugees to South America
- In 2007, Israel's then-foreign minister proclaimed herself "against law, international law in particular

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 Expelling Israel's Arab population?

Israeli negotiators, including Tzipi Livni, proposed "swapping" some of Israel's Arab villages into a Palestinian state

During several 2008 meetings with Palestinian negotiators, Livni proposed annexing Arab villages to the future Palestinian state, forcing tens of thousands of Israeli Arabs to choose between their citizenship and their land..

Read More:

<http://english.aljazeera.net/palestinepapers/2011/01/2011124105622779946.html>

1.2 Palestinian MPs under expulsion order

Members of the European Parliament and three Palestinian Legislators under an Israeli expulsion order will be joined via videoconference on Tuesday 25 January from 18:15 to 19:00. The European side of the link will be established at the Voxbox facilities, on the 3rd floor of the Spinelli Building at the European Parliament.

INFORM strongly believes that there is no reason for these MPs to be served with expulsion orders for simply being democratically elected to government; and therefore invites journalists to be present at the discussion, they will be able to participate and ask questions to Parliamentarians on both sides of the video link.

Read More:

<http://www.eutopic.lautre.net/coordination/spip.php?article6478>

1.3 Israel uses arcane laws to Expel Palestinians

JERUSALEM – Israel is invoking an arcane military law to try to temporarily expel a Palestinian protest leader from his native east Jerusalem and if successful, Palestinians warn the measure could further hobble efforts to salvage moribund peace process

Read more:

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2010/12/23/israel-uses-arcane-law-try-expel-palestinian/>

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 | 26 Jan – 1st Feb 2011

Israeli settlers kill two Palestinians and injure five others in the West Bank. Israeli forces injure at least 27 Palestinians throughout the oPt. UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator condemns demolitions. In Gaza, events in Egypt affect movement of goods and people to and from Gaza: Tunnel activity declined significantly; Rafah Crossing closed. Wheat reserves increase at the expense of gravel. Power outages last up to six hours daily and cooking gas shortages continue..

Read More:

http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_protection_of_civilians_2011_02_04_english.pdf

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 Turkey helps bring mobility to disabled Palestinian refugees in Syria

Thanks to a donation worth more than US\$ 25,000, 100 Palestinian refugee families and disabled refugees will today receive prosthetic equipment and financial assistance for home modifications. An agreement signed today by the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) consolidated the cooperation between the two organisations.

Read More:

<http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=898>

3.2 Kuwait Joins UNRWAs advisory group.

Kuwait has been invited by the General Assembly of the United Nations to join the Advisory Commission of the United Nations Agency for Relief and Works of Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). The invitation was delivered to HE Dr Hamad Al Duajj, Ambassador of Kuwait in Jordan, by Mr Peter Ford, Representative of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA.

Read More:

<http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=897>

3.3 GCC through the Islamic Development Bank joins UNRWA in Gaza housing project.

The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) in its capacity as Coordinator for the Programme of the Gulf Cooperation Council for the Reconstruction of Gaza and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) have signed an agreement worth US\$ 6.1 million supporting major emergency shelter repairs and reconstruction in the Gaza Strip. A delegation from the IDB led by Mr El Mansour Feten, Director of Trust Funds Department, visited Jordan recently to sign the agreement with Mr Peter Ford, Representative of the UNRWA Commissioner-General.

Read More:

<http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=894>

3 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 Socio Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon

Survey of living conditions and welfare status of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, conducted by UNRWA in collaboration with the American University of Beirut..

Read More:

<http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2011012074253.pdf>

4.2 Palestinian plight in northern Lebanon refugee camps

It is sometimes controversially said that Palestinian refugees in Lebanon live in worse conditions than those during the Israeli occupation in Gaza.

There is no better place to witness and document the plight of Lebanon's refugees than Nahr al-Bared.

Read More:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12138075>

4.3 2011: The year Lebanon Allows Palestinians Some Elementary Civil Rights?

In Lebanon this past summer, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), conducted a socio-economicsurvey of 2,600 Palestinian refugee households.

The depressing survey results are not encouraging. As bad, if not worse than in Gaza, the data reveals a ticking social, moral, political and perhaps literal time bomb.

The data graphically illustrate the urgent need for immediate Lebanese and global governmental and civil society support, advocacy, and political pressure to encourage Lebanon's parliament to enact internationally mandated elementary human rights for Palestinian refugees.

Both the international community and Lebanon have created and perpetuated the quicksand death pit tragedy unfolding in Lebanon's camps. The good news is that either can fairly quickly end the nightmare if they can be motivated to develop the political will.

Read More:

<http://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2011/01/10/2011-the-year-lebanon-allows-palestinians-some-elementary-civil-rights/>

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

5.1 Condoleezza Rice: send Palestinian refugees to South America

Palestine papers show US secretary of state told negotiators that Chile and Argentina could be asked to give land to displaced.

The United States proposed giving Palestinian refugees land in South America as a radical solution to a problem that has haunted Middle East peace talks for decades.

Condoleezza Rice, the Bush administration's secretary of state, wanted to settle displaced Palestinians in Argentina and Chile as an alternative to letting them return to former homes in Israel and the occupied territories.

Read More:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/24/condoleezza-rice-palestinian-refugees-south-america>

5.2 Livni: A lawyer 'against law'?

In 2007, Israel's then-foreign minister proclaimed herself "against law, international law in particular".

Given the imbalance of power between the occupied and the occupier, international law and concepts of justice are the last refuges for Palestinians. However, in that November 2007 meeting Livni made clear she values neither.

Read more:

<http://english.aljazeera.net/palestinepapers/2011/01/2011124165334291715.html>

5.3 Peru recognises Palestinian State

Nation is seventh South American country to do so, bolstering Palestinian hopes of momentum towards global recognition

The declaration came on the eve of a Latin American-Arab summit to be hosted in the Peruvian capital, Lima, reflecting growing political and economic ties between the two regions.

"Palestine is recognised as a free and sovereign state," Peru's foreign minister, José Antonio García Belaúnde, told RPP radio. "There was no pressure from any side. We have acted with freedom and independence." He expressed Peru's continued support for peace talks.

Read More:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/25/peru-recognises-palestinian-state>

5.4 Secret Papers reveal slow death of Middle East Peace Process

The biggest leak of confidential documents in the history of the Middle East conflict has revealed that Palestinian negotiators secretly agreed to accept Israel's annexation of all but one of the settlements built illegally in occupied East Jerusalem. This unprecedented proposal was one of a string of concessions that will cause shockwaves among Palestinians and in the wider Arab world.

Read More:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/23/palestine-papers-expose-peace-concession>

5.5 Palestinian refugees rule out compromise on return to homeland

Disclosure in Palestine papers that negotiators gave up fight over refugees is greeted with disgust in Bethlehem camp

The collective memory of the Palestinian homeland, before the State of Israel was born amid anguish and bloodshed in 1948, is bequeathed like a treasured heirloom through generations. The disclosure that Palestinian negotiators were prepared to make big concessions on this, the most visceral of issues, was greeted with disgust among the refugee population.

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Read More:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/25/palestinian-refugees-no-compromise>

5.6 Palestinian Refugees in Brazil Live in Miserable Conditions.

Hundreds of Palestinian refugees forced out of their homes in war-torn Iraq and settled eventually in Brazil have complained of the miserable conditions they and their families are experiencing because no one is taking care of them

Read More:

<http://abna.ir/data.asp?lang=3&id=220204>

5.7 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.

Read More:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=43396>

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 Only Palestinian Refugees can give up their right to return

The right of Palestinian return is enshrined in international law and historical precedent, and affirmed repeatedly by the UN. Resolution 194 was passed by the UN general assembly in December 1948 and called on Israel to repatriate those “displaced by the recent conflict” with compensation for their losses. The 1948 universal declaration of human rights states that those who leave their homes for whatever reason have the absolute right to return to them. This worthy precept has been applied often, most recently to the displaced Kosovans

Read more:

<http://australiansforpalestine.com/37314>

6.2 Open Letter to Bon Jovi: This One Should Go out to the Palestinian

It is with great disappointment that the undersigned organizations learned of your scheduled performance in Israel set for 2011 as part of your 'Circle Tour'. Given that Israel is involved in grave violations of international law and human rights, particularly as indicated in the UN Goldstone Report, we urge you to cancel this gig until the time comes when Israel is in compliance with its obligations under international law and fully respects Palestinian rights.

As part of its ongoing dispossession of the Palestinian people, Israel continues to demolish Palestinian homes and entire villages, including the Bedouin village of Al-Araqib, which was destroyed seven times this year. Indeed, the entire modern history of the Palestinian people is based on dispossession and homelessness as more than 750,000 people were made refugees to enable the creation of the state of Israel,

Read More:

http://www.palestinechronicle.com/view_article_details.php?id=16533