

# Palestinians from Syria

## Syria Needs Analysis Project – March 2014

*This thematic report outlines the situation of the Palestinian Refugee within official and unofficial camps and settlements in Syria. The Syria Needs Analysis Project welcomes all information that could complement this report.*

*For additional information, comments or questions please email [SNAP@ACAPS.org](mailto:SNAP@ACAPS.org)*

### Overview

Palestinians have been no less affected by the conflict than Syrians, with more than 50% of Palestinians in Syria displaced and almost the entire population of 540,000 people in need of assistance. Yarmouk camp in central Damascus, once the commercial and political heart of the Palestinian community, has come to symbolise the destruction of the community by the conflict. The camp population has reduced from 150,000 to an estimated 18,000 people who continue to live under heavy siege by the Syrian Armed Forces (SAF) and various armed groups. According to Amnesty International, 128 people have died from starvation and the lack of medical assistance and basic commodities. Palestinians are also caught up in contested areas of Aleppo, Dar'a and Rural Damascus where camps and settlements have been heavily damaged causing high displacement.

The vulnerability of Palestinians from Syria is exacerbated due to major obstacles they face in fleeing to Egypt and Jordan, and increasing restrictions the experience trying to enter Lebanon, and thus remain trapped within the country facing dire conditions unless they possess the financial resources to flee further afield to European or Southeast Asian countries. Over 70,000 Palestinians have managed to enter Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon yet continue to face serious protection issues, including harassment, arrest, detention, a lack of legal status and refoulement. Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS)

### Contents

[Overview](#)

[Pre-crisis situation](#)

[Current situation – Syria](#)

[Current situation – Lebanon](#)

[Current Situation – Jordan](#)

[Current situation – other areas](#)

[Annex A – key documents](#)

who reach Southeast Asia face long waits to access registration and assistance through UNHCR and lack local support networks.

With the majority of Palestinian communities engulfed by the conflict, some in besieged areas, and very limited options to leave Syria, PRS are one of the most vulnerable groups in Syria. Although there have been no indications that the Government of Syria's (GoS) long standing policy of hosting Palestinian refugees has changed due to the conflict, the situation requires close monitoring, particularly given the hostile reception to Palestinians which has spread throughout the Arab world.

**Information gaps:** The available pre-crisis numbers of Palestinians residing in Syria do not capture all Palestinians in the country because it is the responsibility of the individual to register themselves and their dependents with either UNRWA or the General Administration for Palestine Arab Refugees (GAPAR), the GoS focal point for Palestinian issues, hence there are no official estimates of the total number of unregistered Palestinians present in Syria. In addition, GAPAR does not publicly share its figures of registered Palestinians and there were no updated GAPAR figures available since the beginning of the crisis. The current crisis has revealed a significant number of Palestinians not registered with either agency.

There is no accurate information on the current locations of Palestinians displaced within Syria. UNRWA's estimates of IDPs are based on its registration and distribution systems and pick-up points used by beneficiaries, which, due to the dynamic situation, do not capture their current area of residence.

Little information is available on the number of PRS who have sought refuge in countries outside of UNRWA's area of operations, such as Egypt, Iraq and Turkey and/or the exact number of those registered with UNHCR or their humanitarian situation.

There is little information available on areas re-taken by the GoS from opposition groups, such as Sbeineh. The number of people remaining in Yarmouk camp is disputed, with estimates ranging from 18,000 to over 30,000.

## Key issues: Palestinians from Syria

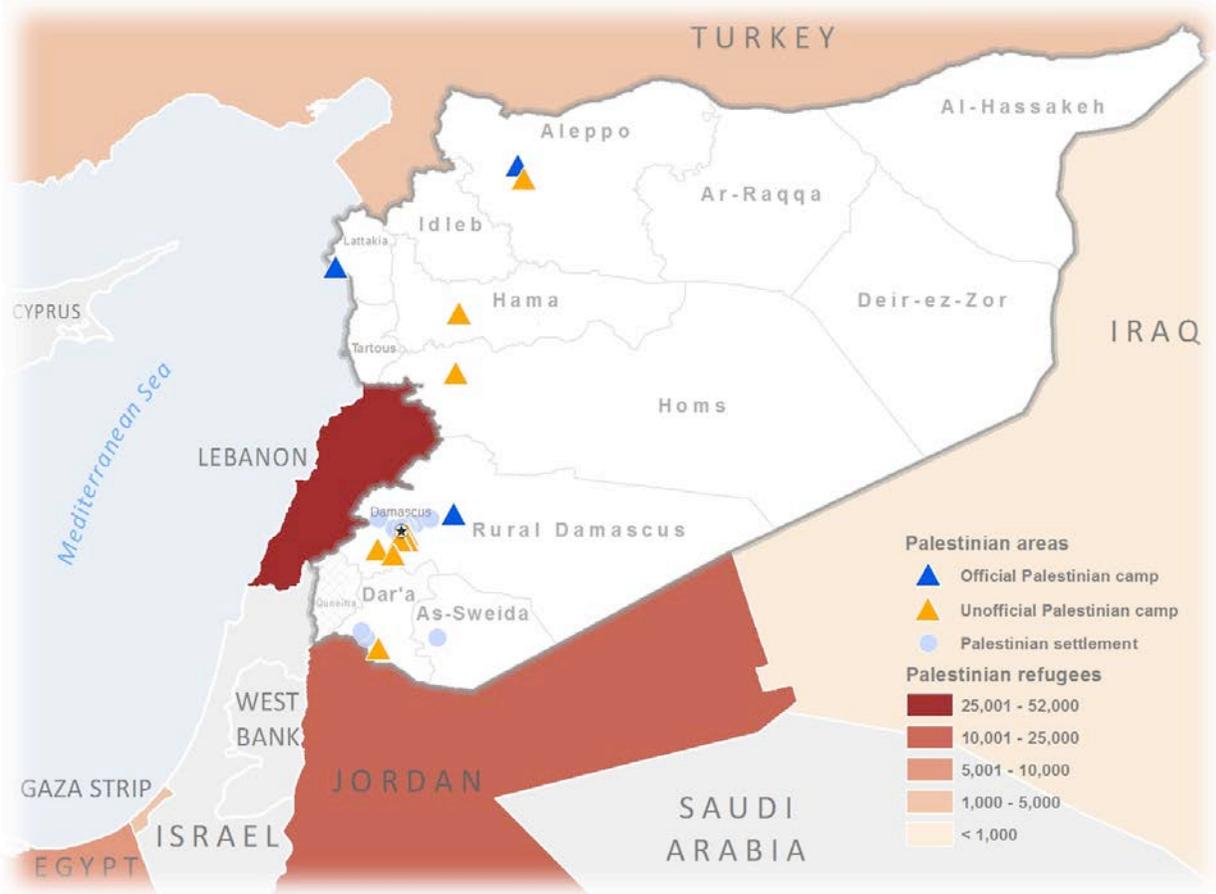
**Yarmouk, Syria:** At least 18,000 people have been besieged by pro-government groups in the Palestinian camp since December 2012. Dozens of people have reportedly died due to starvation and the lack of medicine and medical supplies. In January, a ceasefire was brokered locally, allowing in limited aid. In March, the ceasefire collapsed as armed groups returned to the camp and fighting intensified.

**Lebanon:** The influx of 53,000 PRS to the Palestinian camps and settlements in Lebanon have exacerbated the already poor and overcrowded living conditions of Palestinian host communities, which were already deeply marginalised by Lebanese society. The increasing spillover of the Syrian conflict into Lebanon has negatively affected the local economy, leading to heightened tensions and limited opportunities for self-sufficiency.

**Turkey:** There are an estimated 1,600 PRS registered with UNHCR in Turkey and an unknown number, primarily males, are reportedly transiting through the country with the aim of reaching European countries.

**Egypt:** Egyptian authorities have barred UNHCR from registering the estimated 6,000-10,000 PRS in Egypt, leaving them with no protection and subject to harassment, detention and refoulement. Hundreds of Syrians and PRS have taken to dangerous sea routes towards Europe where they faced the risk of capsizing and violence and detention from the GoE for exiting illegally.

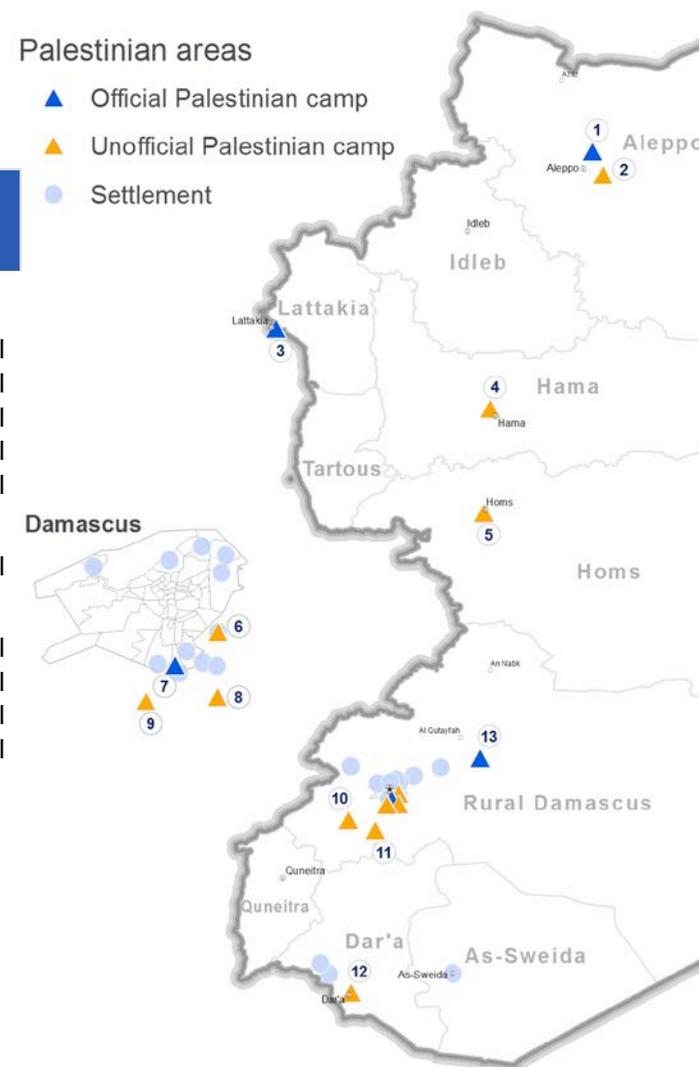
**Jordan:** Since late 2012, Jordanian authorities have restricted entry to Palestinians from Syria. Those who hold Jordanian citizenship risk having their documents confiscated and/or being de-nationalised while those without Jordanian or Syrian documents are at risk of refoulement by the Jordanian authorities.



## Palestinian camps and settlements in Syria

No.	Name	Governorate	Pre-crisis population	Conflict intensity*	Access*	UNRWA facilities
1	Ein Al-Tal (Handarat)	Aleppo	6,000	High	None	Closed
2	Neirab	Aleppo	20,500	High	Limited	Operational
3	Latakia	Latakia	10,000	Low	Open	Operational
4	Hama	Hama	8,000	Low	Open	Operational
5	Homs	Homs	22,000	Low	Limited	Operational
6	Jaramana	Rural Damascus	18,700	Sporadic	Limited	Operational
7	Yarmouk	Damascus	148,500	High	None	Closed
8	Qabr Essit (Sit Zaynab)	Rural Damascus	23,700	Sporadic	Limited	Operational
9	Sbeineh	Rural Damascus	22,600	Sporadic	None	Closed
10	Khan Eshieh	Rural Damascus	20,000	Sporadic	Limited	Operational
11	Khan Dunoun	Rural Damascus	10,000	Sporadic	Limited	Operational
12	Dar'a	Dar'a	10,000	High	Limited	Operational
13	Ramadani	Rural Damascus	1,000	Sporadic	Limited	Operational

\* General situation from January to March 2014



## Pre-crisis situation

**Population:** Prior to the crisis, about 500,000 Palestinians were registered with UNRWA in Syria, the majority of whom originated from northern Palestine. The population growth rate among Palestinians was estimated at 2.2% in 2011; the same rate found among the Syrian population in 2010. (UNRWA 2011/03)

**Locations:** There were 13 Palestinian camps in Syria, of which 9 are formally recognised by UNRWA, which is responsible for all services and infrastructure within the camps. The remaining 4 camps were established without the endorsement of UNRWA, although the agency continues to provide basic services in the unofficial camps. Up to 30% of the 570,000 Palestinians in Syria live in official camps with a similar proportion living in unofficial camps. The unofficial Yarmouk camp, located in Damascus city, hosted more than 25% of all Palestinians in Syria and was considered the Palestinians' cultural and economic heart in Syria. (UNRWA 2011/03, FAFO 2007)

The vast majority of Palestinians in Syria reside in Damascus and its suburbs. There are also significant populations located in Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Latakia and Dar'a governorates. Outside Damascus, most Palestinians reside in camps, both official and unofficial.

**Legal framework:** In 1949, an administrative body, which would later become GAPAR, was created under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to register Palestinian refugees and liaise with UNRWA to provide assistance. A 1963 decree provides 6-year travel documents to refugees registered with GAPAR and who hold a Syrian identity card, allowing Palestinians the right to re-enter Syria without a visa. The legal status of Palestinians in Syria generally falls into two main categories:

1) **Palestinians who fled to Syria in or before 1956 and their descendants.** Palestinians who fall into this group, which make up the vast majority of the Palestinian population in Syria, are subject to Law 260 (passed in July 1956) which grants them the same rights as Syrian citizens in terms of residence, freedom of movement, work, trade and access to civil service positions and public services while preserving their Palestinian nationality. However, those who fled to Syria in 1956 can only work in the public sector on short term contracts. In addition, only those who fled in 1948 are required to perform compulsory military service in the Palestine's Liberation Army (PLA), a Palestinian unit within the SAF. Under this law, no Palestinians cannot vote or hold public office. They are prohibited from owning agricultural land and are restricted to owning 1 house per person. The vast majority of

Palestinians in Syria, or 85%, fall under this category and are registered with UNRWA. UNRWA registration is not mandatory and prior to the crisis, tens of thousands of Palestinians who fell under UNRWA's mandate were not registered. Only refugees within this group can register with GAPAR. (PCR 2012, MPC 2013/06, BADIL 1999) Netherlands MFA 2002

## Palestinians' rights in Syria

Influx	Registered by:	Right to travel documents	Right to work	Military service
1948	UNRWA, GAPAR	✓	✓	✓
1956	GAPAR	✓	✓	
1967	Mol		✓	
1970-1971	Mol		✓	
1982	Mol		✓	
2006-2008	UNHCR			

2) **Palestinians refugees who fled to Syria after 1956 and their descendants.** This group includes:

- Palestinians who fled to Syria during the 1967 war with Israel. This group does not include Palestinian refugees who had been residing in the Golan Heights and fled Israeli occupation to Syria since this was Syrian territory and they were already registered with UNRWA.
- Those who fled from Jordan due to links to militants who attempted to overthrow the Jordanian monarch in the events known as Black September from 1970-1971. While these Palestinians may hold expired Jordanian citizenship, they are unable to renew their documents due to security restrictions.
- 2,000-3,000 Palestinians who fled from Lebanon following the 1982 Israeli invasion.

Palestinians within this second group were registered with UNRWA in other countries or the occupied Palestinian Territories and are treated as Arab foreigners. They can access and renew 10 year resident

permits through the Ministry of Interior, but they have to apply for work permits and cannot work in the public sector. They can access public health and education services for free, with the exception of university education for which they must pay fees. (UNRWA 2006, [ICG 2012/12](#), PCR 2012, [FMO](#), [Netherlands MFA 2002/03](#))

3) **3,000-5,000 Palestinians from Iraq** who fled retaliatory violence following the fall of Saddam Hussein between 2006 and 2008. In 2011, about 2,600 Palestinians from Iraq were living in Al Hol refugee camp located in Al Hasakeh governorate and the remainder resided in the Damascus area. Palestinians from Iraq fall under UNHCR's mandate and some have been resettled to third countries. SARC provides health services and UNRWA provides food and cash for rent to this group. UNRWA plans to handover most of this caseload to UNHCR in 2014. Palestinians in this group are prohibited from working in Syria. (UNRWA 2011/03, PCR 2012, UNHCR 2014/03)

Only Palestinian refugees from 1948 their descendants are eligible to register with UNRWA, however, all Palestinians in Syria, regardless of their legal status can record their details UNRWA to access basic services. (PCR 2012, [Netherlands MFA 2002/03](#))

**Socio-economic conditions:** According to a 2003 FAFO study, Palestinians were better integrated into Syrian society compared to those living in Jordan and Lebanon. Due to their high level of socio-economic integration, Palestinians in Syria also faced the lowest poverty and unemployment rates compared to those in Jordan and Lebanon. The average income among Palestinians in Syria was similar to those living in Jordan and Lebanon when adjusted for purchasing power. Within Syria, Palestinians in Yarmouk had the highest average per capita income (USD 512) while those in camps and settlements in Rural Damascus had the lowest (USD 376). Generally, Palestinians in non-camp settlements had significantly higher incomes than those living in camps, excluding Yarmouk. However, the main factors influencing high incomes are education levels attained and the number of employed households members. ([FAFO 2007](#))

**Shelter:** In 2006, the vast majority (92%) of Palestinian households owned their own homes and lived in apartment buildings or houses, with a very small minority (0.5%) living in squatter-like conditions, primarily in Neirab camp in Aleppo. ([FAFO 2006](#))

**Health:** Access to health facilities was very high in Syria, with over 95% of the Palestinian population in close proximity to a local doctor, pharmacy and health clinic. Palestinians can access both UNRWA and GoS facilities, as the

latter provides free medical services regardless of legal status. Almost all Palestinian women accessed prenatal care during their pregnancy. About 12% of Palestinians live with a chronic illness, half of whom were dependent on others for assistance. ([FAFO 2007](#), [GoN 2002/03](#))

**Education:** While UNRWA's education services were generally viewed positively, classes were overcrowded, school facilities were poor and almost all 118 schools operated double-shifts. The deteriorating education standards were attributed to budget austerity measures imposed over the last 20 years. Despite these conditions, the pass rate in UNRWA schools was over 90% compared to 60% in GoS schools. In 2001, the Ministry of Education reported that 80% of Palestinian children attended UNRWA schools while 17% are enrolled in government schools. 9% of Palestinians are estimated to be illiterate. ([FAFO 2006](#))

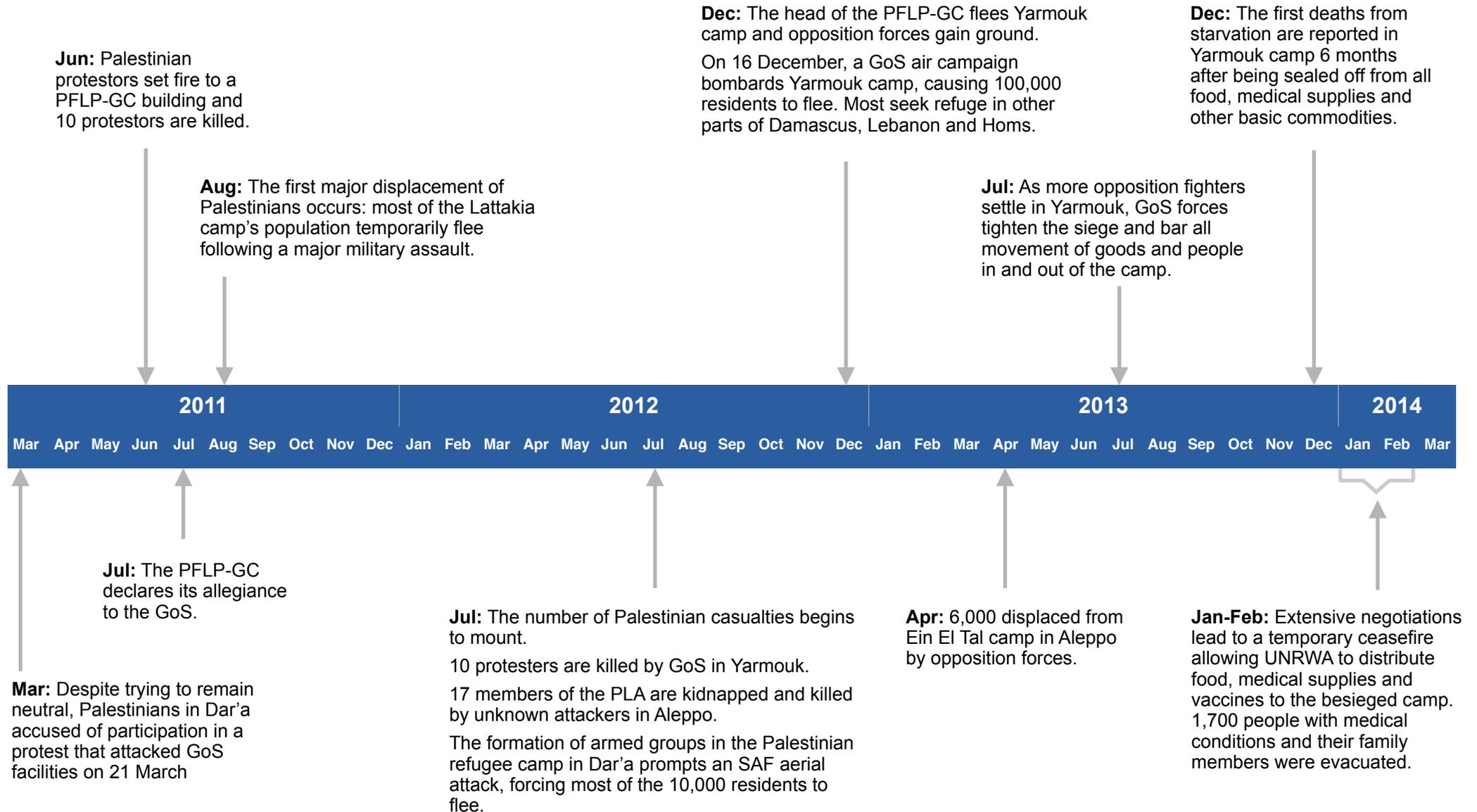
## Current situation - Syria

**Political developments and armed conflict:** When the uprising against the GoS began, Palestinians attempted to remain neutral in the conflict, though this standpoint was not unanimously accepted among the Palestinian population, particularly among some youth who were born and raised in Syria and sympathised with Syrian protestors. Not long into the uprising, Palestinians in Dar'a were accused of participation in a protest in which GoS facilities were attacked on 21 March 2011. Palestinians in Dar'a initially became involved in providing medical assistance and other relief to Syrians affected by the unrest. Palestinians were blamed by GoS authorities for fuelling unrest and violence when protests erupted in other parts of the country, such as Damascus and Lattakia, despite Palestinian leaders stating neutrality amid the growing tensions. This blame dissipated when the protests continued to spread to areas where Palestinians were not present. (PCR 2012)

In January 2012, the Palestinian group Hamas broke its alliance with the GoS and endorsed the uprising, following its unsuccessful attempts to mediate between the GoS and opposition. Hamas' leadership, including Khaled Meshaal, who had been hosted by the GoS for the previous decade, left Syria in protest. On the other hand, the Palestine Liberation Organization, the official representative of the Palestinian people, condemned the GoS attack on Yarmouk but insisted that the Palestinians would not interfere in the Syrian conflict. ([Guardian 2014/01/09](#), [IRIN 2012/08/14](#))

As unrest intensified in mid-2012 and conflict began in earnest in major Syrian population centres, armed groups were formed in the Palestinian

## Timeline: 2011 - 2014



refugee camp in Dar'a. This led to a bombardment campaign by GoS forces, displacing thousands from the camp. After the bombardment, the camp was stormed by GoS forces in July 2012. The deaths of Palestinians in the non-discriminate attacks on the camp led to some members of the PLA defecting and joining the ranks of the FSA. The opposing parties to the conflict continued to attempt to recruit the support of the Palestinians in order to win over Arab and international support for their respective positions, ([Al Akhbar 2012/11/09](#))

**Population and locations:** Palestinians in Syria faced massive displacement beginning in 2011, as conflict engulfed various camps. The first major displacement occurred in Lattakia camp in August 2011, when the majority of the camp's population temporarily fled following a military assault. In December 2012, airstrikes and clashes in Yarmouk caused more than 2/3 of the population, or 100,000 people, to flee over a 4-day period. In April 2013, 6,000 Palestinians were forced out of Ein El Tal camp in Aleppo by opposition forces. The growing crisis caused an increased demand for assistance and consequently, at least 40,000 previously unregistered Palestinians approached UNRWA for the first time for assistance. ([IRIN 2011/08/17](#), [Guardian 2011/08/](#), [OCHA 2012/12/20](#), [UNRWA 2013/12/16](#))

**Access:** Since the beginning of the crisis, several Palestinian areas, such as Ein El Tal camp (Aleppo) and Sbeineh camp, Hajr Al Aswad and parts of Tadamon in Damascus city and its suburbs as well as the Al Hol camp in Al-Hasakeh, housing Palestinians from Iraq, have come under the control of parties to the conflict and have been virtually emptied of civilians. Other areas, such as Yarmouk and Dar'a camps have become frontlines of the conflict, resulting in a significant number of casualties among Palestinians. As a result of armed conflict and besiegement, the number of Palestinian IDPs has generally been decreasing in the camps (both official and unofficial) and increasing in Palestinian settlements. ([UNRWA 2013/10](#), [AWG-SS 2014/02](#))

**Displacement:** According to an UNRWA needs assessment undertaken in October 2013, Damascus city and suburbs host the largest number of displaced Palestinians and has experienced disproportionate levels of destruction of Palestinian homes. Palestinians displaced within Syria traditionally stay in or near pre-existing Palestinian communities. Hence, the vast majority remain concentrated in Damascus city and suburbs (200,000 IDPs), followed by smaller pockets in Aleppo (6,600), Dar'a (13,100), Homs (6,500), Hama (3,100) and Lattakia (4,500). Non-camp areas of Aleppo and Dar'a host disproportionately high levels of IDPs compared to the pre-crisis Palestinian population. ([UNRWA 2014/03/09](#))

In most regions, Palestinian IDPs have been displaced at least twice, although those in Aleppo faced the most frequent displacement with a significant number displaced more than 3 times. The vast majority of Palestinian IDPs are living with host families or in rented accommodations while in Dar'a city and surrounding villages, most Palestinian IDPs are sheltering in schools and public facilities. ([UNRWA 2014/02/25](#), [UNRWA 2013/10](#))

**Protection:** As of October 2013, an estimated 3,000 Palestinians had been killed in the conflict and 1,400 were missing or kidnapped. 12 UNRWA staff, all Palestinian, have been killed and 25 are detained or missing as of February 2014. Over 20 staff working with Palestinian NGOs have also been killed and more than 50 are held in detention by GoS authorities, as of March. ([UNRWA 2014/02/25](#), [UNRWA 2013/10](#), [Jafra Foundation 2014/03/03](#))

Schools, health facilities and community centres for Palestinians have been attacked, damaged and destroyed in camp and non-camp areas in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Aleppo and Dar'a, prohibiting access. In addition, it was reported that children have been unable to attend school due to occupation by armed groups in Dar'a and Aleppo. In February, an explosion near an UNRWA school in Dar'a killed 18 people, including 5 Palestinian children and an UNRWA staff member and in the same area, a GoS airstrike injured 40 children and 4 staff at another school. In the camps that remain relatively safe from active hostilities, such as in Hama, Homs and Lattakia, arrests and detention by the GoS remain a regular occurrence. ([OCHA 2014/02](#), [UNRWA 2014/02/11](#), [UNRWA 2013/10](#), [Jafra Foundation 2013/12](#))

The vast majority of displaced Palestinians and those in need of assistance are concentrated in Damascus and Rural Damascus. Palestinians in Rural Damascus are particularly vulnerable as many live in besieged areas, which are largely located in and around the capital, and face shelling, snipers and clashes, and limited availability of food and basic goods. As of late February, 128 people reportedly died due to starvation and 51 sick and injured died due to the lack of adequate medical treatment in Yarmouk. Negotiations started in December 2013 have resulted in agreements to permit aid into areas where Palestinians are residing, including Yarmouk, Barzeh and Ghouta. In Yarmouk camp, opposition groups left the besieged neighbourhood and turned checkpoints over to pro-regime groups as part of the ceasefire in January. The temporary ceasefire in Yarmouk allowed 7,700 food parcels and 10,000 polio vaccines to be allowed in and 1,700 people were evacuated. In March, armed groups returned to Yarmouk, leading to violent clashes and a halt to the aid distributions. ([OCHA 2014/02/26](#), [UNRWA 2014/02/24](#), [BBC 2014/02/24](#), [Amnesty 2014/03/10](#))

**Food security:** Similar to the humanitarian priorities of Syrians, food is a top priority among Palestinians in Syria. Outside besieged areas, food commodities are generally available although quantities are limited, and the main obstacle to accessing food is the lack of income. Recent assessments found that in several areas, people are selling some food aid for cash, while traders are hoarding food commodities to drive up prices. Recent food distributions in Yarmouk, although very limited, reportedly led to a 30% decrease in food prices following 9 months of siege, however, humanitarian needs remain massive and people still lack purchasing power. Among areas where Palestinian communities are now residing, the price of bread is highest in Aleppo and Yarmouk, followed by other areas of Damascus and Dar'a. Bread prices in Hama, Homs and Lattakia camps remain relatively low. (AWG-SS 2014/02, UNRWA 2013/10, [Amnesty 2014/03/10](#))

**Health:** Since the beginning of the crisis, there have been no major outbreaks of contagious diseases among Palestinian communities detected through UNRWA's health system. While there is no specific disease surveillance system among Palestinian camps and communities, major outbreaks could be detected through the existing national system, such as the Early Warning Alert and Response System, or through reports from UNRWA's 22 primary health centres or health points. Since the beginning of the crisis, 9 out of 23 existing UNRWA health facilities have been closed due to destruction or insecurity. UNRWA health points were set up in response to the crisis in order to provide ad hoc basic health services in temporary facilities, such as schools or community centres. Psycho-social trauma, jaundice and skin diseases have been frequently reported by UNRWA health facilities. ([UNRWA 2014/03/09](#))

**Shelter:** Housing is extremely overcrowded in Palestinian communities due to the high levels of displacement, destruction of homes and general insecurity. Over 6,000 Palestinian homes have been certified by the GoS as uninhabitable and more than 2,000 have been demolished. In Jaramana camp in Damascus, it was reported that 10-20 people are living in single rooms due to the lack of income to afford rental costs. In addition, several areas such as Yarmouk and Sbeineh, which contain a significant proportion of Palestinian residences, are not accessible. (AWG-SS 2014/02, UNRWA 2013/10)

**Education:** As of March, 41,500 Palestinian refugees were enrolled in the 38 UNRWA schools that remain operational and in 39 GoS schools the Ministry of Education has allowed UNRWA to use. This makes for an enrolment rate of 40% of school age Palestinian children, although actual attendance is likely lower due to insecurity and checkpoints. Over half of UNRWA's 118 schools have been closed due to damage or insecurity and 16 have been converted

into collective shelters. Despite the siege, 4,500 children are attending schools supported by a Palestinian NGO in Yarmouk camp. (Jafra Foundation 2014/03/03, [SHARP 2014/12/16](#), [UNRWA 2014/03/09](#))

**WASH:** The piped water and sewage networks in Palestinian camps and settlements are reported to be functioning or partially functioning, however, there are major concerns with the water quality and quantities available in Yarmouk camp, Dar'a and Aleppo. While trucked water supplies are available, many Palestinians lack the purchasing power and must wait in long queues at distribution points. Garbage collection is also a major issue in areas where services have stopped or been disrupted. In Yarmouk, garbage has reportedly been piling up in the streets and near a school and playground, posing health risks. The lack of clean water supplies and sanitation is likely contributing to the increased reports of skin infections and jaundice reported by UNRWA health centres. (UNRWA 2013/10, Jafra Foundation 2014/03/03)

## Current situation: Lebanon and Jordan

Since the beginning of the crisis, over 70,000 Palestinians have fled from Syria, with the majority fleeing to neighbouring Lebanon and Jordan, while others have fled to Egypt, Turkey, Iraq, Europe and Southeast Asia. In 2013, PRS faced increasingly targeted restrictions in seeking entry and asylum, as well as escalating hostility in host countries and communities, particularly in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. This has caused many PRS to take greater risks in reaching Europe via land and sea routes with smugglers.

### Lebanon

**Population and locations:** As of March, there were approximately 53,000 PRS in Lebanon recorded by UNRWA with the vast majority originating from the Damascus area. About half of PRS in Lebanon reside in the existing refugee camps, which were already overcrowded and in need of major infrastructure overhauls prior to the Syrian crisis. Almost half of PRS are residing in the southern cities of Saida and Tyre, with the remaining population spread across north and central Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley. Until August 2013, there were significant cross-border movements among PRS to access medical assistance, unite with family members and check on property. This caused UNRWA to require that PRS are present in Lebanon for at least 2 weeks before cash assistance is provided to ensure that humanitarian aid is not being accessed by the same individuals in both Syria and Lebanon. ([ANERA 2013/03](#), [UNRWA 2014/03](#), [UNRWA 2014/02/10](#), [Daily Star 2013/09/06](#), [UNRWA 2014/03/09](#))

**Entry and legal status:** While Lebanon has kept the most open border policy

among Syria's neighbours, since mid-2013, Lebanese authorities have required undamaged documentation for those trying to cross the border from Syria. A significant number of PRS has been denied entry since August 2013, although the GoL has stated that there are no official restrictions in place. Some categories of PRS have been allowed in, including the following:

- 1) PRS who are UN staff
- 2) PRS married to Lebanese citizens or Palestinian refugees from Lebanon
- 3) PRS with a Lebanese mother
- 4) PRS transiting through Lebanon with proof of travel and visa for the destination country
- 5) PRS with official appointments with an embassy or for medical treatment

PRS entering Lebanon are legally entitled to a 7-day visa valid for 15 days and this visa has generally been renewed free-of-charge for 3 months. Afterwards, a visa renewal is required, at a fee of USD 200. UNRWA has received reports from PRS who have been unable to renew their visa in Lebanon, despite payment of the required USD 200 fee to the General Security Office (GSO). ([PWG 2013/12/09](#), [UNRWA 2013/12/16](#))

PRS who fail to renew their visas, or have entered the country irregularly, face difficulties in accessing civil documentation processes and are at risk of detention. In addition, the lack of valid documentation can hamper their movements at checkpoints and entry and exit to some Palestinian camps which require valid residency permits to enter. ([UNRWA 2012/12/19](#), [RRP 2013/06](#))

**Humanitarian situation:** The influx of PRS to the Palestinian camps and settlements in Lebanon have exacerbated the already poor and overcrowded living conditions of host communities. According to UNRWA, an average of 12.8 people live in each PRS residence and 24% of households are female-headed. Food costs remain the greatest expense among PRS, followed by rent. PRS do not have the same right to work in Lebanon as Syrian refugees and must apply for work permits as other foreigners, which are cost prohibitive. Unemployment is extremely high among PRS due to increased competition caused by the refugee influx and limited opportunities as the economy has been severely affected by the Syrian crisis. Palestinians in Lebanon have traditionally been the most socio-economically marginalised compared to those residing in Jordan and Syria, and the influx of refugees and provision of assistance targeting PRS has exacerbated tensions between both the pre-existing Palestinian population in Lebanon as well as other host communities. ([ANERA 2013/03](#), [UNRWA 2013/12/16](#))

## Jordan

**Population and locations:** Since the beginning of the conflict, 13,500 PRS and their non-Palestinian spouses and children have been recorded by UNRWA in Jordan. However, this figure only includes those who have approached and been recorded by UNRWA. There are no estimates of the total number of PRS who are present in Jordan, as a significant number are believed to be living in hiding due to their lack of legal status. The vast majority of PRS in Jordan originate from Damascus city and suburbs and Dar'a governorate. PRS are concentrated in urban areas of Amman, Irbid and Zarqa, where Jordanian Palestinians traditionally reside. About 10% of PRS live in one of the 10 existing UNRWA camps in Jordan. Since 2012, about 190 PRS have been held in Cyber City facility where they lack freedom of movement. ([UNRWA 2014/03](#), [UNRWA 2013/12/16](#), [UNRWA 2014/03/09](#))

**Entry and legal status:** In October 2012 the Jordanian Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour announced that Jordan would not allow Palestinians to cross the border, causing many PRS to use forged documents to enter the country. About 2/3 of PRS hold Jordanian or Syrian documents and have some legal basis for residing in Jordan. PRS holding Jordanian documentation, who make up about half of recorded PRS in Jordan, have the right to work and access all public services as a Jordanian citizen, as well as UNRWA services. However, PRS with Jordanian documents continue to face the risk of GoJ authorities confiscating their documents and/or denationalisation, particularly when trying to access civil documentation, including birth registration and renewal of documents. Several hundred PRS who hold expired Jordanian documents are assumed to have links to Black September events and may not be able to avail themselves of protection as Jordanian citizens. About 36% of PRS hold other types of documents, including Palestinian documents, or lack any form of identity documents, and are at high risk of detention and refoulement by the Jordanian authorities. Human rights groups have documented cases of refoulement involving women, children and the injured, as well as cases where PRS have been killed upon their return to Syria. Over Since 2013, over 100 PRS have been forcibly returned by GoJ authorities with a notable increase occurring in early 2014. ([UNRWA 2013/11/25](#), [HRW 2013/03/21](#), [Amnesty 2013/10/31](#))

**Humanitarian situation:** Since 2012, many PRS generally approach UNRWA several months after their arrival when they have exhausted their coping mechanisms and require assistance. The vast majority of PRS in Jordan have been assessed to live below the poverty line and are highly dependent on external assistance. In addition, 30% of Palestinian households are headed by women. Similar to Syrian refugees, the priority need among PRS is for cash

assistance to pay for rental costs, food and non-food items. PRS generally have better access to basic services compared to Syrian refugees. 85% of children (88% of girls and 82% of boys) are attending school and 95% of PRS are able to access health services. However, due to protection issues PRS face increased challenges in accessing courts and addressing issues related to civil status, as some PRS have had their documents confiscated by GoJ during the process. Due to the difficulties of coping in Jordan, at least 115 PRS were reported to have returned to Syria in 2013. ([UNRWA 2013/12/16](#), [UNRWA 2014/03](#))

## Current situation – other areas

**Egypt:** An estimated 6,000-10,000 PRS are believed to have fled to Egypt, where UNRWA maintains a liaison office but is not permitted to provide direct assistance to Palestinians. The Government of Egypt (GoE) has barred UNHCR from registering PRS and they cannot access public services. Since the military's ousting of President Morsi in July 2013, both GoE policy and public sentiment have turned against refugees from Syria, leading to harassment, detention and refoulement. Visas to enter Egypt, which were previously provided to Syrians upon arrival, must now be pre-approved. Hundreds of Syrians and PRS have taken to dangerous sea routes towards Europe where they faced the risk of capsizing and violence and detention from the GoE for exiting illegally. ([RRP6 2013/12/16](#), [Reuters 2013/11/28](#), [Ahram Online 2013/05/03](#))

**Iraq:** There are no figures of PRS who have entered Iraq, however the numbers are estimated to be in the dozens. There are likely more Palestinians who had sought refuge Syria between 2006 and 2008 who have now returned to Iraq due to the escalation of the Syrian conflict. Those in the latter group most likely left Iraq without official travel documents and/or via unofficial crossing points, which puts them in conflict with Iraqi law upon return. As a result, many Palestinian refugees returning to Iraq from Syria are at risk of up to 15 years imprisonment and the confiscation of their property. The Government of Iraq has yet to clarify whether PRS without prior ties to Iraq can register for residency directly with the authorities. Without legal residency permits, PRS in Iraq have no access to basic services. Since April 2013, the security situation in Iraq has significantly deteriorated resulting in a concurrent rise in protection incidents for Palestinians in Iraq, including discrimination, kidnappings and 1 killing, some of which have been targeted towards Palestinians. (PI 2014/03)

**Turkey:** There are an estimated 1,600 PRS registered with UNHCR in Turkey. An unknown number of PRS, primarily males, are reportedly transiting through the country with the aim of reaching European countries and plan to send for their families in Syria once they obtain legal status. In February, the Palestinian ambassador to Turkey stated that the Government of Turkey would provide residency and work permits to PRS. ([UNHCR 2013/10/30](#), [Al Akhbar 2014/02/09](#))

**Gaza Strip:** About 1,000 PRS who originated from Gaza Strip returned via Egypt. This group falls under UNRWA's mandate and can access basic services. However, the agency's limited budget means that very little humanitarian assistance is available. Services, such as higher education, which were free in Syria now come at a cost and job opportunities are extremely scarce as Gaza Strip is the most impoverished and deprived Palestinian area. ([UNRWA 2013/06/20](#), [IRIN 2013/02/14](#))

**Southeast Asia:** Hundreds of PRS have sought asylum in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand and registered with UNHCR. There is very little information available on their numbers and humanitarian conditions.

## Annex A: Key documents

2002 – Forced Migration Online, Palestinian Refugees in Syria

<http://www.forcedmigration.org/research-resources/expert-guides/palestinian-refugees-in-syria/fmo017.pdf>

2007 – FAFO, Keeping Up: A Brief on the Living Conditions of Palestinians in Syria

<http://fafo.no/pub/rapp/20013/index.htm>

2011 – UNRWA, Needs Assessment: Syria Field Office

2012 – Palestinian Return Centre, Palestinian Refugees of Syria in Light of the Syrian Revolution

<http://english.dohainstitute.org/release/14e232ac-6d57-4de7-b38e-79c1f3287231>

2012-present – UNRWA, Syria Crisis Response Update (bi-weekly)

<http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/emergency-reports?id=12>

2013 – Migration Policy Centre, Syria Migration Profile

[http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/docs/migration\\_profiles/Syria.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/docs/migration_profiles/Syria.pdf)

2013 - UNRWA, Syria Regional Crisis Response 2013-2014

[https://syria.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/unrwa-Syria-regional-crisis-response-131217\\_0.pdf](https://syria.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/unrwa-Syria-regional-crisis-response-131217_0.pdf)

2014 – Assessment Working Group – Southern Syria (AWG-SS), Multi-Sector Needs Assessment