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## At Least 5.6 Million Palestinians Live in Refugee Camps

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On the World Refugee Day (June 20), human rights defenders recalled that 5.6 million Palestinians survive as refugees in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, and the West Bank.

They represent more than a fifth of all people with this legal status worldwide, according to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

The origin of the diaspora of this Arab people began in 1948 when the creation of the State of Israel expelled hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes. The descendants of those first displaced people continue today fighting for the right to return to their homeland.

"My family and I feel that our life in the refugee camp is temporary. We firmly believe that one day we will return to our village," the 51-year-old man Subi al Mughrabi said and recalled that his family has lived for over 70 years in refugee camps.

Before 1948, they lived in the village of Brier, which is today known as Ashkelon, one of the cities most impacted by Israeli military actions against the Hamas movement.

"The right of return is the identity and mission of all Palestinians living on the planet," said Mohamad Abu Halawa, who lives with his six children in the Al Mughhazi refugee camp.

In addition to surviving under the harsh conditions experienced by displaced persons, Palestinians are currently facing serious health risks.

UNRWA warned of several factors that make Palestinian refugees one of the most vulnerable populations to COVID-19.

For instance, in Gaza, where 97 percent of the water is polluted, hospitals have only 60 beds in the Intensive Care Unit and 62 respirators. This infrastructure is insufficient to serve two million people who live in overcrowding and with limited access to essential medicines.

In the refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon, physical distancing measures are also unfeasible, the UNRWA warned.

Besides describing the situation of the Palestinian people, the United Nations recalled that there are 26 million refugees in the world, 6 million of whom are Syrians who left their homeland as a result of the war. About 91 percent of them are mired in absolute poverty.

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