

## Schnellrecherche der SFH-Länderanalyse vom 15. Oktober 2015 zu Syrien: Yarmouk

Fragen an die SFH-Länderanalyse:

- Chronologie seit 2011
- Bewegungsfreiheit aus Yarmouk

Die Informationen beruhen auf einer zeitlich begrenzten Recherche (Schnellrecherche) in öffentlich zugänglichen Dokumenten, die uns derzeit zur Verfügung stehen.

### 1 Yarmouk: Chronologie

Bevor der syrische Bürgerkrieg 2011 ausbrach, lebten in Yarmouk 150'000 palästinensische Flüchtlinge und 650'000 Syrerinnen und Syrer. Yarmouk wird immer noch als Flüchtlingslager bezeichnet, auch wenn die Zelte seit der Gründung des Lagers 1957 für palästinensische Flüchtlinge längst durch Häuser ersetzt worden sind und Yarmouk zu einem Vorort von Damaskus geworden ist. Heute leben noch etwa 18'000 Personen in Yarmouk, darunter zwischen 1000 und 4000 syrische Staatsangehörige.

Im Dezember 2012 eroberten die *Freie Syrische Armee* (FSA) und die *Al-Nusra Front* grosse Teile von Yarmouk und das syrische Regime bombardierte Yarmouk zum ersten Mal. Tausende flohen aus dem Quartier. Auch wenn es der FSA und der *Al-Nusra Front* nicht gelang, weitere Teile von Damaskus zu erobern, behielten sie die Kontrolle in Yarmouk und das syrische Regime begann den Zugang zum Quartier zu blockieren.

Innerhalb von Yarmouk haben sich verschiedene Milizen etabliert. Auf der Seite des syrischen Regimes kämpfen die *Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command* (PFLP-GC), welche innerhalb von Yarmouk die Checkpoints der Regierung kontrollieren. Ebenfalls auf der Seite des Regimes steht die *Fatah al-Intifada*. Die *Al Nusra-Front* ist die stärkste Kraft innerhalb des Lagers, die gegen das Regime kämpft. Daneben haben sich auch die *Freie Syrische Armee*, die palästinensischen Unterstützer der Muslimbrüder *Aknaf Bait al-Maqdis*, die islamistische *Ahrar al-Sham* und die *Al-Uhda al-Umariya* sowie Unterstützer der *Hamas* und der *Fatha*, die offiziell keine der beiden Seiten unterstützen, etabliert.

Aufgrund der Belagerung durch das syrische Regime wurde ab Ende 2012 die Versorgungslage in Yarmouk immer prekärer; ab Juni 2013 wurde der Zugang vollständig blockiert. Seither galt gemäss der Definition von UNOCHA Yarmouk als «belagertes Gebiet». Das syrische Regime verbietet die Einfuhr von Lebensmitteln und Gütern zur medizinischen Versorgung, die zivile Bevölkerung wird daran gehindert, das Lager zu verlassen. Das Regime will die Zivilbevölkerung aushungern, damit sich diese gegen die bewaffneten Gruppen, welche das Gebiet besetzen, zur Wehr setzen und diese zur Aufgabe bewegen, während die bewaffneten Gruppen die Zivilisten im Gebiet behalten wollen, in der Annahme dass sich die belagernde Armee bei Angriffen zurückhält. Das Aushungern der Zivilbevölkerung dient als Kriegswaffe und zur kollektiven

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Bestrafung. 200 Menschen verhungerten und viele waren gezwungen, Katzen und Hunde oder Gras zu essen. Ein Imam in Yarmouk erliess explizit eine Fatwa, dass in dieser Notsituation Katzen und Hunde gegessen werden dürfen.

Von März 2014 an erhielt das *United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East* (UNRWA) teilweise die Erlaubnis, Hilfe ins besetzte Quartier zu bringen. Ende des Jahres 2014 wurden jedoch erneut keine Bewilligungen erteilt. Seit März 2015 konnte UNRWA erneut keine Hilfsgüter ins Lager bringen.

Im April 2015 eroberte die Terrororganisation IS – gemäss Gerüchten mit der Hilfe der *Al Nusra Front* – bis zu 90 Prozent von Yarmouk. Palästinensische Milizen und regimetreue Loyalisten drängten die IS wieder aus dem Quartier. Die IS zog sich daraufhin in die südlich gelegenen Gebiete zurück und kontrolliert seither den Zugang zu Yarmouk im Süden. Das Regime reagierte mit erneuten Bombardierungen mit Fassbomben.

Die UN kategorisiert Yarmouk seit Juni 2015 nicht mehr als besetztes Gebiet. Dies wird von allen Seiten scharf kritisiert, da UNRWA seit März 2015 keine Hilfe mehr ins Quartier bringen konnte und die zivile Bevölkerung immer noch keine Möglichkeiten hat, das Lager gefahrlos zu verlassen.

IRIN, ohne Datum (Zugriff am 8. Oktober 2015):

*«June 6, 2011: Upheaval spreads to Yarmouk: In June 2011, more than a dozen Palestinians were killed on the Israeli border after they were encouraged to protest by Syrian authorities and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Council (PFLP-GC), which ran Yarmouk. The families of those killed complained that the PFLP-GC had encouraged residents to protest on the Israeli border without support - leading to their deaths. Protesters attacked the headquarters of the PFLP-GC in Yarmouk. 13 were killed by PFLP-GC security forces.*

*December 16, 2012: Camp 'liberated': The Free Syrian Army (FSA) rebel group formed a battalion to liberate Yarmouk from the pro-Assad PFLP-GC. Following days of clashes, government airplanes struck the camp for the first time in December 2012. Despite the bombings, the PFLP-GC were forced to retreat and on December 15 the group's leader, Ahmed Jibril, fled Damascus, leaving the camp in rebel hands.*

*July 10, 2013: Under siege: After the Syrian regime lost control of the camp, the intensity of the bombardment increased. Access into Yarmouk had been partially closed off since the beginning of 2013, but on July 10 - two days into Ramadan - pro-Assad forces barred all food and medicine from entering. Residents, including women and children, were prevented from leaving while shelling continued.*

*December 8, 2013: Desperation worsens: The lengthening siege drove the residents to ever more desperate means. Reports emerged of Palestinians dying due to the lack of basic medical goods, while others were said to be eating cats and dogs to survive.*

**March 11, 2014: Some aid allowed in:** After months of pressure from the United Nations, the siege was lifted to allow some aid in. However the opening was not to last long and by the end of 2014, UNRWA - the UN's agency for Palestinians - was again unable to deliver humanitarian aid to the camp.

**April 3, 2015: ISIS takes the camp:** After days of fighting, militants from so-called Islamic State (formerly known as ISIS) entered the camp from the south. The extent of their control remains unclear but the majority of Yarmouk is allegedly in their hands, with reports of at least two captives publicly beheaded. While ISIS has been fighting the Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra in much of Syria, in Yarmouk the two appear to be working together.» Quelle: IRIN, Yarmouk camp: a timeline of suffering, ohne Datum (Zugriff am 8. Oktober 2015): <http://newirin.irinnews.org/yarmouk-timeline-syria/>.

The Guardian, 5. März 2015:

«Before the Syrian civil war began, Yarmouk was home to 150,000 Palestinians. Though people still refer to it as a “camp”, tents were replaced with solid housing soon after its founding in 1957. In time it became just another district of Damascus. As well as being home to Syria’s largest community of Palestinian refugees, it also housed some 650,000 Syrians. (...) **In December 2012 the FSA and the al-Qaida affiliate, Jabhat al Nusra were ready for a concerted attack to capture Damascus and topple Assad. Yarmouk was the gateway to the capital, closer to the centre than any of the other suburbs where the regime was losing control. The crisis came to a head on 16 December, when a Syrian air force plane bombed Yarmouk in what the government later claimed was a mistake. Dozens of civilians were killed. Brigades from the FSA and Jabhat al Nusra seized the opportunity to enter the camp – and in response, the government launched a hail of artillery shells, turning most buildings on the edge of the district to rubble. Within a few days most of the PFLP-GC, the main Palestinian faction supporting the Assad regime, had fled Yarmouk; some defected to the rebels who went on to gain full control. Hundreds of thousands of civilians left. The Syrians of Yarmouk mainly went to relatives and friends in central Damascus or other cities, or moved to Lebanon and Jordan. Palestinians fled to what they hoped would be safer areas inside Syria. Although rebel efforts to capture the rest of Damascus failed, Yarmouk remains in rebel hands today. Some 18,000 civilians still live there, including anywhere between 1,000 and 4,000 Syrians. Still, it is clear that Yarmouk has reverted to being a largely Palestinian enclave.**

**Assad’s government responded to its defeat in Yarmouk by putting the area under siege. For a few months food could still be brought in from the rural areas to the south, though profiteering was intense. In July 2013 the government tightened its grip and the siege became almost total. Inside Yarmouk fighting erupted between the FSA and Jabhat al Nusra, the latter of which had set up sharia courts. Spasmodic attempts were made to relieve the suffering of Yarmouk’s civilians. (...) The barbaric nature of sieges has remained unchanged for thousands of years. The aim is to starve the trapped civilians into submission, in the hope they will turn against whatever armed faction controls the territory and persuade them to surrender. The armed faction, in turn, wants to keep the civilians inside so as to make it less likely the besieging army will bring destruction upon the captives.**

Now, in the 21st century, the very same tactics are being deployed not only in Yarmouk but in several other parts of Syria.» Quelle: The Guardian, How Yarmouk refugee camp became the worst place in Syria, 5. März 2015:

[www.theguardian.com/news/2015/mar/05/how-yarmouk-refugee-camp-became-worst-place-syria](http://www.theguardian.com/news/2015/mar/05/how-yarmouk-refugee-camp-became-worst-place-syria).

Amnesty International, März 2014:

«Government forces besieged Yarmouk in December 2012. **In July 2013 they began to prevent all access to Yarmouk. Since then, with the exception of some intermittent distribution since 18 January 2014, the Syrian army has prevented the entry of all people, and all food and goods, including medical supplies, into Yarmouk. The civilians who remain, reportedly numbering some 17,000 to 20,000 people, include many who are elderly and sick and families with young children. (...) In the weeks surrounding the beginning of the siege at least 140,000 Palestinian refugees as well as tens of thousands of Syrians reportedly fled Yarmouk. Others, however, remained: according to Amnesty International's sources they included many of the poorest residents and those who had least possibilities to seek alternative shelter, including many Palestinian refugees, for whom it is more difficult to find shelter in other parts of Syria and who face greater obstacles than Syrians in obtaining refuge in neighbouring countries.**

**From December 2012 to February 2013, the Syrian armed forces at Yarmouk's checkpoints permitted fewer and fewer individuals to bring in even the smallest amounts of food, such as vegetables, that had occasionally been allowed. Those who tried to bring in food and medicine also put their lives at risk. (...)**

**Since 18 January 2014, conditions have been alleviated somewhat by the government's agreement that many seriously ill residents could leave the besieged area. On 14 February, a PRCS health worker told Amnesty International that "most of those suffering from serious illnesses have left, approximately 450 individuals." Many were accompanied by family members and were expected to receive treatment at Damascus hospitals. However, not all survived the exodus. "One young woman died yesterday at the checkpoint after having been referred to hospital outside the camp," according to the PRCS worker. A PRCS-S volunteer also told Amnesty International the same day that the medical assessments for those being evacuated from the camp are made at the Palestine Hospital, but must then be approved by the PFLP-GC and the Syrian government security forces managing the crossing point. On 13 February, they finally agreed to the exit of a pregnant woman whose passage they had denied for four days. In another case concerning a young girl who had been shot in the forehead with a bullet, the health worker said "it took 10 days to get approval for her to leave," although it was obvious that she was critically wounded. (...) They include people who went to collect food parcels that the Syrian authorities had allowed into the besieged area, **students who had received official permission to exit Yarmouk in order to resume their studies in other places**, and humanitarian aid and health workers. Uncertainty» Quelle: Amnesty International, Squeezing the life out of Yarmouk, War Crimes Against Besieged Civilians, März 2014:**

[www.amnestyusa.org/research/reports/syria-squeezing-the-life-out-of-yarmouk-war-crimes-against-besieged-civilians](http://www.amnestyusa.org/research/reports/syria-squeezing-the-life-out-of-yarmouk-war-crimes-against-besieged-civilians).

Amnesty International, 8. April 2015:

**«Thousands more are at risk as Syrian government forces have intensified the shelling and aerial bombardment of the camp in response to the IS takeover of the area, including by dropping barrel bombs. Civilians have also come under sniper fire and been caught up in clashes between armed groups, notably IS and the mostly Palestinian Aknaf Beit al-Maqdis. "For civilians still trapped in Yarmouk life is an agonizing struggle for survival. After enduring a crippling two-year-long government-imposed siege, now they are pinned down by sniper fire fearing for their lives as shelling and aerial attacks escalate," said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Amnesty International's Deputy Middle East and North Africa Director.**

**Despite the escalation in fighting, both Syrian government forces and IS fighters have refused to allow any medical or humanitarian aid into the camp, leaving dozens of injured people without access to crucial medical and other life-saving assistance. One of Yarmouk's two surviving medical facilities, the Palestine Hospital, was struck by a missile injuring six volunteers on 1 April.**

**There are no relief organizations left working in the camp. "Immediate and unfettered access to Yarmouk by independent humanitarian agencies is desperately needed to alleviate this relentless suffering," said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui. According to local activists, Zeinab Daghestani a 12-year-old girl, was shot dead by a sniper on 7 April while trying to flee to the calmer southern part of Yarmouk. Other civilians killed include Majed al-Omari, a humanitarian worker for Jafra Foundation, a relief organization, who is believed to have been shot dead in cross-fire on 3 April. Jamal Khalefe, a 27-year-old media activist, was killed during heavy shelling on the same day. Another young Palestinian refugee, Hussein Taha, was killed on 6 April when his home was struck by a barrel bomb. Residents told Amnesty International that some 25 barrel bombs were dropped on Yarmouk over the past week, mostly at night.**

**Civilians in Yarmouk have found themselves caught between the prospect of IS abuses and the imminent danger posed by government bombardments. The neighbourhoods of Palestine Street, Mansoureh Street and the Martyrs' Cemetery, still predominantly civilian areas although some IS fighters had taken up positions there, were targeted in government attacks.**

**"The use of barrel bombs against a besieged and starving civilian population is yet another demonstration of the Syrian government flouting international humanitarian law and its callousness towards civilians. Sparing civilian life does not appear to come into the equation when they decide to bomb an area," said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui. "Shelling and dropping barrel bombs on a populated civilian area is a war crime. All such attacks must end immediately. All sides should also take all feasible precautions to minimise harm to civilians." "For the civilians the situation is increasingly worse," one resident said. "No water, no food, no medicine."**

**Some 18,000 civilians remain besieged in Yarmouk. Nearly two years of a brutal government siege imposed in July 2013, has led to a devastating humanitarian**

**crisis. By March 2014, at least 194 people in the camp had died, mostly as a result of starvation and a lack of medical care.** One civilian activist in Yarmouk told Amnesty International that two more residents died of starvation this week.

"The scale of humanitarian suffering and desperation in Yarmouk is overwhelming. All warring parties must grant immediate access to humanitarian agencies so that they can urgently meet the needs of the civilian population and assist in the evacuation of those who wish to flee to safer areas," said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui.

**IS fighters' entry to Yarmouk on 1 April 2015 was reportedly facilitated by Jabhat al-Nusra, an armed group whose fighters were already present in the camp.** They are fighting armed groups including Aknaf Beit al-Maqdis, said to be close to the Palestinian Hamas organization, and Jaish al-Islam. Residents say that three captured Palestinian fighters were beheaded by IS. Prior to 2011 Yarmouk hosted the country's largest Palestinian refugee population as well as many thousands of Syrian nationals. »  
Quelle: Amnesty International, Syria: Barrel bombs and sniper attacks compound misery of civilians besieged in Yarmouk, 8 April 2015:  
[www.refworld.org/docid/552783394.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/552783394.html).

Syria Deeply, 27. Juli 2015:

**«Caught in the crossfire between Syrian government forces and rebel groups, Palestinian refugees in the Yarmouk camp are struggling to survive.** Yarmouk, the largest Palestinian camp in Syria, **first came under attack in December 2012 when Assad's forces began shelling the camp, dropping barrel bombs and arresting prominent activists and outspoken critics.** For two and a half years, a government-imposed siege severely limited the residents' access to food, medicine and other necessities. Although the United Nations reclassified Yarmouk as no longer under siege on Friday, residents tell Syria Deeply that conditions on the ground have not improved. Nidal, 21, maintains that the camp is still besieged. "I never imagined living under a siege," he told Syria Deeply. "We still suffer from a lack of everything – we have no food, no water and no medicine." In April, ISIS launched an offensive in Yarmouk and captured up to an estimated 90 percent of the camp. After fighting against Palestinian armed factions, opposing rebel groups and Assad loyalists, ISIS reportedly pulled most of its fighters from the camp. For now, Jabhat al-Nusra, al-Qaida's Syrian affiliate, remains the main group in the camp. **Life in Yarmouk is "like a very slow death," Nidal says.** "We are always waiting for death from hunger, explosive barrel bombs or being beheaded. Death's coming and we cannot stop it. If we don't get food, we'll all die of hunger." **Hungry and desperate, many residents have already resorted to eating anything they could find, including grass and stray animals. Worse still, the U.N. has not been able to deliver humanitarian aid to Yarmouk since ISIS's attacks in April, the U.N. agency for Palestine refugees' (UNRWA), Chris Gunness told Syria Deeply last month.**

"What we're finding is that around one-third of the children we see have severe malnutrition, and about half of the children are malnourished in one form or another," Gunness said. "It is beyond unimaginable, which is why we say that the time for humanitarian action alone has long since passed. We need concerted political action to deal with the consequences of what is a profound political crisis." **Nidal says that**

**even going to retrieve grass to eat is dangerous. “If we get too close to the edges of the camp to get some grass, we can be shot by the regime’s snipers,” he explained, “and when any faction tries to enter the camp, explosive barrels and bombs are rained down on us.”**

**Since December 2012, the camp’s population has shrunk from nearly 200,000 people to fewer than 18,000, with many searching for ways to flee the camp. But Umm Ahmad, Nidal’s 28-year-old sister, says that they have nowhere else to go. “It’s our destiny as Palestinians to constantly suffer death and displacement,” she told Syria Deeply. “I don’t understand why death follows us everywhere we go. Everyone wants to get rid of us.”**

**Umm Ahmad used to support the Syrian government, but she says that President Bashar al-Assad has “completely besieged” Yarmouk. “Even picking a few blades of grass isn’t allowed,” she explained. “The snipers shoot anyone who gets close.”**

**Although ISIS withdrew many of its fighters, the group has maintained a heavy presence in the surrounding areas. “If we try to run away from the camp, ISIS will behead us for ‘running away from jihad,’ as they say.” One of ISIS’s main rivals inside the camp is Aknaf Bayt al-Maqdis, a militia with ties to the Palestinian political group Hamas. As Palestinian fighters attempt to evict groups such as ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra from the camp, Palestinian leaders in the camp have been targeted in attacks. Local Hamas leader Mustafa al-Sharaan was killed when ISIS fighters shot him in the head earlier this month as he left a local mosque, according to at Shasha News. In early July, as fighting intensified, ISIS defaced and destroyed images of Palestinian political leaders, including the late Yasser Arafat, in neighborhoods across the camp. Meanwhile, Jabhat al-Nusra told Arabic-language media outlets that it had “made progress” in the Yarmouk camp and expanded its presence as a result of intense fighting with pro-government forces recently.**

**Explaining that few ISIS fighters remain inside the camp, Umm Ahmad says the group controls several of the camp’s southern exits and main throughways. “But ISIS isn’t the only group that prevents people from leaving the camp,” she said. Two armed Palestinian groups, Fatah al-Intifada and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command (PFLP-GC), are both supported by the Assad government. “[They] are worse than ISIS. We can’t even get close to the areas under their control,” Umm Ahmad remarked. “We would be killed right away.” (...) “The camp’s residents – both the kids and the adults – look like ghosts,” Omar continued. “When you look at their faces and bodies you see death. People are dying here while others in regime-controlled areas have everything they need. Even if we wanted to leave, there is no place that would take us in. Death is our destiny.”» Quelle: Syria Deeply, Palestinians in Yarmouk: ‘Death Is Coming and We Cannot Stop It’, 27. Juli 2015:**

**[www.syriadeeply.org/articles/2015/07/7783/palestinians-yarmouk-death-coming-stop-it/](http://www.syriadeeply.org/articles/2015/07/7783/palestinians-yarmouk-death-coming-stop-it/).**

Middle East Eye, 29. Januar 2015:

**«Palestinian and Syrian residents inside the Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus, which has been under siege for over two years by forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad, are complaining that their rapidly deteriorating humanitarian conditions are being met with international indifference. (...)**

**The camp, under siege since December 2012, is now home to some 18,000 people who have nowhere else to go. But prior to that, an estimated 160,000 people lived there, before forces loyal to Assad began shelling the camp, destroying much of its infrastructure, making it another casualty of Syria's civil war.**

Like all other areas under Assad's control, the smallest hint of dissent would not be tolerated, but what compounded the problem in Yarmouk was that different armed groups inside the camp – which hosts Syrians as well as Palestinians - had different loyalties.

**Main groups inside the Yarmouk camp:** Sources from inside the camp have identified the key armed groups operating in and around the camp. On one side you have:

- \*The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command (PFLP-GC), who are viewed as Assad's enforcers inside the camp.
- \*Fatah al-Intifada, made up of pro-Assad Palestinian refugees who were previously in Lebanon. They are reportedly coordinating militarily Lebanon's Hezbollah militants, and Syria's "Shebbiha" militia.

**On the other side there is:**

- \*Aknaf Bait al-Maqdis, made up of Palestinians who hold pro-Muslim Brotherhood views.
- \*Al-Uhda al-Umariya, made of Palestinians who defected from PFLP-GC, but their numbers are not high.
- \*Supporters of Hamas and Fatah, but who do not represent the two groups in any official capacity.
- \*Al-Nusra Front, which made up of Palestinians and Syrians, and are inspired by al-Qaeda.
- \*Ahrar al-Sham, which includes mainly Islamist Syrians, who are viewed as "moderate" and distant from al-Qaeda or Islamic State.
- \*Free Syrian Army, secular Syrians, many of whom defected from the pro-Assad regular army.

(...) **Last year, Amnesty International accused the Syrian government of "using starvation of civilians as a weapon of war", adding that the "siege of Yarmouk amounts to collective punishment of the civilian population."** UNRWA spokesman Chris Gunness on Monday requested again the "relevant authorities to facilitate the distribution of humanitarian assistance to the civilian population," adding that the international body "remains deeply concerned that no successful humanitarian distributions have taken place since 6 December." (...) "We are cooking on coal and burning our furniture for heat," said al-Sayed. "But this can't go on forever. **Those who were able to leave have fled the country, but the rest of us have to deal with regime**

**snipers, shortage of medicine or sky-high food prices sold by the regime's black market merchants."**

*Tough conditions for refugees outside the camp*

**Living conditions have also been very hard for the Palestinian refugees who had fled the camp and are currently living in Damascus.**» Quelle: Middle East Eye, 'Breaking the silence' on Syria's besieged Yarmouk camp, 29. Januar 2015:  
[www.middleeasteye.net/news/breaking-silence-syrias-besieged-yarmouk-camp-299647981](http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/breaking-silence-syrias-besieged-yarmouk-camp-299647981).

Middle East Institute, 14. September 2015:

**«This past June, the United Nations removed Yarmouk refugee camp from a list of what it terms "besieged areas" in Syria. The reason for this shift, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), is due to the availability of humanitarian aid via drop-offs at government checkpoints in nearby suburbs. The recategorization means that the Syrian regime is released from blame, at least by the UN, for the conditions in Yarmouk, and it also likely means a decrease in what is already only a trickle of aid going into the camp.** Yarmouk used to house 150,000 Palestinians in addition to more than 600,000 Syrians. Despite its nomenclature, Yarmouk wasn't really a camp; it was an urban district that had developed since its establishment in 1957. It had one of the largest markets in Syria and a number of established civil society organizations and Palestinian political movements. A significant percentage of its population consisted of people with university degrees.

When the Syrian crisis started, Palestinians in Yarmouk tried to stay neutral. This policy succeeded until December 2012, when the Syrian government bombed the camp, causing tens of casualties and giving the Syrian opposition the excuse to enter Yarmouk. **By June 2013, the camp was under siege by the regime and its allied Palestinian faction, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC). The constant fighting prevented goods from entering the camp, and with residents reduced to eating dogs and cats, almost 200 people, including children, died of starvation between June 2013 and January 2015.**

**While almost all of the neighborhoods around Yarmouk hold truces with the regime, attempts to establish a truce for Yarmouk have failed.** By April 2015, ISIS, facilitated by Jabhat al-Nusra, had invaded the camp, and only one Palestinian armed group that opposes them now remains: Aknaf Beit al-Maqdis, which is affiliated with Hamas.

**Out of the 150,000 Palestinians in Yarmouk, only approximately 8,500 are still living in the camp.** These residents continue to suffer from both the regime's siege as well as that of the armed groups fighting each other. As recently as April 9, after the seizure of the camp by ISIS, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon stated: "In the horror that is Syria, the Yarmouk refugee camp is the deepest circle of hell. After more than two years of a merciless siege, 18,000 Palestine refugees and Syrians are now being held hostage by [ISIS] and other extremist militants. A refugee camp is beginning to resemble a death camp."

**UNOCHA defines a besieged area as one “surrounded by armed actors with the sustained effect that humanitarian assistance cannot regularly enter and civilians, the sick, and wounded cannot regularly exit the area.” Based on this definition, Yarmouk remains besieged.** Civilians inside the camp are unable to move in or out with any regularity, with multiple armed factions controlling checkpoints in the area. Since April 2015, no emergency medical case has received permission to be evacuated. **Only a small number of students were allowed to exit the camp to sit for school exams in Damascus in May. In this exceptional case, those leaving required permission from parties to the conflict on both sides of the checkpoint.**

*Under these conditions, injured or wounded persons suffer greatly from a complete absence of medical care. Many of those who could have been treated if allowed to leave have become amputees due to the lack of even basic medical supplies or training. Inside the camp, freedom of movement is also highly restricted due to the presence of armed militias, the threat of sniper fire, and indiscriminate shelling.*

**Regardless of delivery of humanitarian aid to government checkpoints in nearby areas—the reason UNOCHA gave for reclassification—the thousands remaining in Yarmouk are essentially trapped, and distribution is not taking place inside the camp. Further, the armed groups put conditions on the aid. For example, those from Yarmouk who obtain their aid at a government checkpoint must traverse armed groups’ checkpoints on the way; the armed groups only allow them to take 1 kg of sugar and 1 kg of rice back to the camp at a time. As such, they must leave the rest of their packages of food with IDPs from Yarmouk in the area around the government checkpoint and then make the treacherous journey back to fetch another small amount at a later time.**

*In addition, all humanitarian organizations inside Yarmouk, including Jafra Foundation, a Palestinian aid organization that had been based in Yarmouk since 2005, have evacuated. No relief foundation has been allowed to directly enter the camp to distribute food or non-food items since the start of the complete siege in July 2013. This includes the United Nations branch responsible for aiding Palestinian refugees, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which has not been in the camp since December 2012. (Instead, UNRWA distributes relief at nearby government checkpoints.)*

*According to Wesam Sabaaneh, Director of Jafra Foundation, “The [UN] reclassification is not consistent with the reality on the ground...We are concerned [that this] will have severe humanitarian implications for a population that is already in extreme and dire need and is worn down by almost three years of siege.” Despite the explanation of aid availability, it is unclear why UNOCHA made the reclassification; indeed, UNOCHA spokesperson Amanda Pitt had no comment on why the UN had reclassified the camp, saying that “for the time being, Yarmouk is not considered besieged but it remains an area of highest concern.” The reclassification calls into question the accuracy and efficiency of UN agencies and other INGOs working on the Syrian conflict.*

**Further, in early September, armed groups in the area announced that they will be closing their checkpoints again; this means that residents of Yarmouk will not even be able to procure their small share of assistance.** » Quelle: Middle East Institute, Syria's Yarmouk Camp is Still Besieged, 14. September 2015:  
[www.mei.edu/content/at/syrias-yarmouk-camp-still-besieged](http://www.mei.edu/content/at/syrias-yarmouk-camp-still-besieged).

*The Guardian*, 5. März 2015:

**«In October 2013, in a sign of how bad things had become, the imam of Yarmouk's largest mosque issued a fatwa that permitted people to eat cats, dogs and donkeys.»** IN: *The Guardian*, How Yarmouk refugee camp became the worst place in Syria, 5. März 2015:  
[www.theguardian.com/news/2015/mar/05/how-yarmouk-refugee-camp-became-worst-place-syria](http://www.theguardian.com/news/2015/mar/05/how-yarmouk-refugee-camp-became-worst-place-syria)

## 2 Bewegungsfreiheit

Bei Beginn der Belagerung von Yarmouk verliessen 140'000 palästinensische Flüchtlinge und zehntausende syrische Einwohner das Quartier. Seit der vollständigen Blockade des syrischen Regimes und dessen Verbündete, ist es für Zivilisten kaum mehr möglich, das Lager zu verlassen. Der Zugang wird mit Strassensperren, Checkpoints und durch Scharfschützen blockiert. Nur wer eine Spezialbewilligung hat, darf das Lager verlassen. Vereinzelt erhielten Zivilisten die Bewilligung das Quartier zu verlassen (zum Beispiel für medizinische Behandlung und für Studenten). Neben dem Regime behindern auch palästinensische Milizen, *Fatah al-Intifada and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command* (PFLP-GC), die innerhalb von Yarmouk auf der Seite des syrischen Regimes kämpfen, die zivile Bevölkerung in ihrer Bewegungsfreiheit. Um das Lager offiziell verlassen zu können, braucht es die Bewilligung von den beiden Parteien, welche jeweils eine Seite des Checkpoints kontrollieren. Auch innerhalb von Yarmouk ist die Bewegungsfreiheit aufgrund der bewaffneten Milizen und der Bedrohung durch Heckenschützen und Bombardierungen eingeschränkt.

Im Januar 2014 willigte das syrische Regime ein, dass Personen, die schwer krank sind, das Lager verlassen dürfen. Bis am 14. Februar 2015 sollen 450 Personen Yarmouk verlassen haben.

Im Zusammenhang mit den neuen Kämpfen gegen die IS in Yarmouk erhielten im April 2015 94 Personen die Bewilligung, das Quartier durch die Checkpoints der syrischen Armee im Norden der Stadt zu verlassen. Zwischen 2000 und 4000 Personen flohen nach der Eroberung durch die IS in Richtung Süden durch Gebiete, die von der IS und der *Al-Nusra Front* besetzt sind. Auch im Juli 2015 konnten Zivilisten aus Angst vor den Gefahren an den Checkpoints das Lager nicht verlassen.

UNRWA, 17. November 2013:

**«Between December 2012 and June 2013, civilians could still access UNRWA assistance at the Zahera entrance to Yarmouk. However, from mid-July 2013, Palestine refugees have been trapped in the area, with little or no access or freedom of movement.»** Quelle: UNRWA, UNRWA demands humanitarian access to Yarmouk, 17. November 2013:

[www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/unrwa-demands-humanitarian-access-yarmouk](http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/unrwa-demands-humanitarian-access-yarmouk).

Amnesty International, März 2014:

**«Government forces besieged Yarmouk in December 2012. In July 2013 they began to prevent all access to Yarmouk. Since then, with the exception of some intermittent distribution since 18 January 2014, the Syrian army has prevented the entry of all people, and all food and goods, including medical supplies, into Yarmouk. The civilians who remain, reportedly numbering some 17,000 to 20,000 people, include many who are elderly and sick and families with young children. (...)**

**«In the weeks surrounding the beginning of the siege at least 140,000 Palestinian refugees as well as tens of thousands of Syrians reportedly fled Yarmouk. Others, however, remained: according to Amnesty International's sources they included many of the poorest residents and those who had least possibilities to seek alternative shelter, including many Palestinian refugees, for whom it is more difficult to find shelter in other parts of Syria and who face greater obstacles than Syrians in obtaining refuge in neighbouring countries.»**

**From December 2012 to February 2013, the Syrian armed forces at Yarmouk's checkpoints permitted fewer and fewer individuals to bring in even the smallest amounts of food, such as vegetables, that had occasionally been allowed. Those who tried to bring in food and medicine also put their lives at risk. On 12 January 2013, Ghassan Shihabi sought to drive into Yarmouk with his children and with bread to give to other families. However, when he arrived at a Syrian army checkpoint outside Yarmouk, Air Force Intelligence officers at first prevented him from proceeding before he was cleared to do so by members of the PFLP-GC. His widow told Amnesty International that when he then drove forward, he was shot dead by a government sniper. From July 2013, Syrian government forces prevented all food, medicines and other supplies from entering Yarmouk, exposing the area's remaining inhabitants to untold hardship and serious risk. Since the area was sealed, the inhabitants have faced an increasingly difficult struggle to survive. Rampant malnutrition has led to scores of reported deaths from starvation as well as widespread illness, with the sick, the elderly, young children and pregnant women at highest risk.**

**With the Syrian army and its armed allies blocking the entry of all food supplies, Yarmouk's markets and shops have run out of stocks. All that could be obtained in the market, one resident told Amnesty International in February 2014, were "spices**

and a kind of green starch that can be fried and eaten". **At least three medical volunteers were arrested in the vicinity of the checkpoint at the main northern entrance to Yarmouk on or around 2 February 2014.** Ahmed al-Solh, Ahmed al-Qudemi and Ahmed Taha all had permission to leave the camp: Ahmed al-Qudemi had been granted permission to accompany his injured brother to a hospital while both Ahmed al-Solh and Ahmed Taha had been given permission to leave to register for university. Ahmed al-Qudemi, a law student, also worked as a member of the group of volunteer medical scouts (al-Kashafa al-Tibbiya) of the PLO. (...)

**Since 18 January 2014, conditions have been alleviated somewhat by the government's agreement that many seriously ill residents could leave the besieged area. On 14 February, a PRCS health worker told Amnesty International that "most of those suffering from serious illnesses have left, approximately 450 individuals."** Many were accompanied by family members and were expected to receive treatment at Damascus hospitals. However, not all survived the exodus. "One young woman died yesterday at the checkpoint after having been referred to hospital outside the camp," according to the PRCS worker. **A PRCS-S volunteer also told Amnesty International the same day that the medical assessments for those being evacuated from the camp are made at the Palestine Hospital, but must then be approved by the PFLP-GC and the Syrian government security forces managing the crossing point. On 13 February, they finally agreed to the exit of a pregnant woman whose passage they had denied for four days. In another case concerning a young girl who had been shot in the forehead with a bullet, the health worker said "it took 10 days to get approval for her to leave," although it was obvious that she was critically wounded.** (...)

They include people who went to collect food parcels that the Syrian authorities had allowed into the besieged area, **students who had received official permission to exit Yarmouk in order to resume their studies in other places**, and humanitarian aid and health workers. *Uncertainty*» Quelle: Amnesty International, Squeezing the life out of Yarmouk, War Crimes Against Besieged Civilians, März 2014:  
[www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=531ec81e4&skip=0&query=yarmouk&coi=SYR](http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=531ec81e4&skip=0&query=yarmouk&coi=SYR).

Carnegie Endowment, 15. April 2015:

**«But since the beginning of the siege, the Syrian regime has allowed only a trickle of aid to reach the remaining civilians, and only 94 people were permitted to evacuate last week through the camp's northern corridor, which the regime controls. Since the Islamic State began raiding the camp, between 2,000 and 4,000 have instead risked fleeing through the southern end of Yarmouk, held primarily by IS and Jabhat al-Nusra.»** Quelle: Carnegie Endowment, Photo Essay: Yarmouk on the Front Lines, 15. April 2015:  
<http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/?fa=59791>.

Integrated Regional Information Network, 24. Juli 2015:

**«The United Nations has quietly removed a major Palestinian camp from its list of besieged areas in Syria, despite not being able to deliver aid there for four**

**months, and to the shock of residents.** The Yarmouk camp, a sprawling residential area on the outskirts of the Syrian capital Damascus, was home to over 200,000 Palestinians before the country's civil war began in 2011. The vast majority of the population has since fled, but around 18,000 people have remained trapped inside by a government siege for more than two years. Earlier this year, militants from the self-declared Islamic State (ISIS) briefly infiltrated Yarmouk and seized a large part of it. **Control of the camp is still disputed but government forces maintain checkpoints around the area preventing people from coming and going.**

The UN continues to have no direct access, but has been able, with partners, to deliver aid to three nearby suburbs. Consequently, in his latest report to the UN Security Council, Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon reclassified the camp. **Ahmed\*, a Yarmouk resident, said that people were still denied entry and exit and that no support had been received for more than a month.** When told that the UN no longer considered the camp besieged, he called the organisation "liars." "The UN stopped its support more than 50 days ago," he told IRIN.

(...) The UN defines a besieged area as one that is, "surrounded by armed actors with the sustained effect that humanitarian assistance cannot regularly enter, and civilians, the sick and wounded cannot regularly exit the area." **Ahmed told IRIN civilians were unable to leave Yarmouk for fear of arrest at Syrian government checkpoints.**»

Quelle: Integrated Regional Information Network, Yarmouk camp no longer besieged, UN rules, 24. Juli 2015: [www.ecoi.net/local\\_link/308716/446555\\_de.html](http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/308716/446555_de.html).

Karte:

Karte:

[http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNOSAT\\_A3\\_Landscape\\_OCHA\\_YarmoukCamp\\_20151001.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNOSAT_A3_Landscape_OCHA_YarmoukCamp_20151001.pdf).