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What is happening in Ain al-Hilweh camp?

Ain al-Hilweh camp, located in the city of Sidon in southern Lebanon, was established in 1948 following the massacres and crimes committed by Zionist gangs against the Palestinian people, which became known as the Palestinian Nakba. Its area is 1.5 square kilometers. It is the largest Palestinian camp in Lebanon and the most densely populated, with a population of 75 thousand Palestinian refugees, and the reason for its overcrowding is due to its reception of Palestinian refugees who lived in Palestinian camps that were destroyed in the Lebanese civil war in 1975, such as the Tal al-Zaatar camp, and the Nabatieh camp, which was destroyed by Israeli aircraft in 1974. Today, Palestinian refugees coming from Syria live there due to the Syrian civil war, and there are some Lebanese and Syrian families, in addition to multiple nationalities.

Ain al-Hilweh camp was made up of tents established by the United Nations Agency UNRWA. Then the tents turned into random residential apartments built of stones and zinc. The houses began to suffer from humidity and poor ventilation, and the sunlight did not enter them due to the limited space, and because the Palestinian refugee was deprived of his right to own property outside the camps. Residential apartments rose vertically despite the strict restrictions imposed by the Lebanese security services on bringing reconstruction materials into the Palestinian camps, and dealing with the Palestinian refugees on security rather than humanitarian grounds. As the Lebanese army controls all entrances to the Ain al-Hilweh camp, they erected a separation wall around the camp, which the Palestinian refugees considered a form of siege, but it has become a reality.

Due to the deprivation of Palestinian refugees from working in Lebanon under Lebanese law, poverty rates inside the Ain al-Hilweh camp rose to 90%, and after the decline of UNRWA's services due to the lack of international funding for it, the rate of illegal immigration increased, and the Palestinian refugees began to think only of getting rid of their tragic reality. The smuggling networks that Palestinians resort to in search of a better life outside Lebanon became active, especially after the economic crisis that Lebanon is suffering from, as the people of Ain al-Hilweh sold their homes to immigrate to European countries that respect their human rights, but some of these countries did not receive them, so they became homeless and without work, and some of their families lost news of them and they drowned in the seas.

Despite all this tragedy, the Ain al-Hilweh camp was subjected to destruction during the Israeli occupation forces' invasion of Lebanon in 1982 to eliminate the Palestinian refugees, as happened in the Sabra and Shatila massacre in September of the same year, as the battle with the Israeli occupation army in the Ain al-Hilweh camp continued for two consecutive weeks. At that time, the Palestinians decided not to surrender and took the decision to confront, as the Israeli army was unable to enter the Ain al-Hilweh camp after the camp turned into complete destruction, as they were confronted by adults and children aged 14 years, who were later known as "RPG" children. Since that time, Ain al-Hilweh camp has become a refuge for people who have no shelter, as the home of every Palestinian refugee has turned into a village that mimics the reality of his village from which he was displaced in 1948. Inside it you will find pictures of Jerusalem, national slogans, and the keys to the homes in Palestine to which they still hope to return.

As the suffering continued, the Israeli occupation state was not satisfied with stopping its aggression against all Palestinian camps, whether in Lebanon, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Syria, Jordan..., as it considered that dismantling the camps is the only solution to eliminating the right of return of Palestinian

refugees, and it does not tire. By planning to implement this project, which was confirmed in the Netanyahu-Trump deal known as the Deal of the Century in 2020, which stipulated the dispersion of Palestinian refugees in various Islamic countries, and from here the plan facing the Palestinians emerges.

Today, the Israeli occupation forces are attacking the camps in the West Bank, such as: Balata, Shuafat, Jenin, and Ain Shams camps... which are located on the outskirts of the cities, with the aim of eliminating the right of return of refugees and expanding illegal settlements, by demolishing Palestinian homes, Judaizing the place, and forced displacement. For the Palestinians, the same applies to the Gaza Strip, where immigration projects have opened today, and the number of immigrants ranges between 800 and 1,000 Palestinians in search of a living due to their suffering from the unjust Israeli siege. Some Palestinian refugee camps in Syria were destroyed after some armed Islamic groups took control of them.

As for the Lebanese camps, after the destruction of the Nabatieh camp and Tal al-Zaatar, and the destruction of the Nahr al-Bared camp in 2007 after some armed Islamic groups took control of it as well, and it has not been reconstructed yet, its people were displaced, and this is the scenario that is drawn for the Ain al-Hilweh camp today, after... Some armed Islamic groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda tried to impose their control on the Ain al-Hilweh camp, and killed the Palestinian National Security Commander, "Al-Armushi," in order to disrupt both Palestinian and Lebanese security, and then go on to destroy the Ain al-Hilweh camp, and what is evidence of this is the erection of tents outside the camp for refugees. The Palestinians begin to put pressure on the international community to displace them and implement the plan of the Israeli occupying state to eliminate the Palestinian camps.

The people of Ain al-Hilweh camp are experiencing unparalleled tragedy and suffering, as families have been displaced and no longer have a safe haven to shelter themselves from the ongoing battles with armed Islamic groups. They now carry two blocks of fire, the first to preserve their right to return and the second to maintain a decent living.

It can be summarized that the battles taking place today in the Ain al-Hilweh camp have dimensions related to the internal Lebanese crisis in order to pressure the election of a president of the republic after 9 months of vacuum and the resignation of the Lebanese government, and some have regional dimensions related to the international policy to limit the escalation of resistance in the West Bank.

Therefore, the Palestinian people refuse to be a mailbox carrying regional and foreign policy messages, and demand an immediate ceasefire, in order to avoid the destruction of the Ain al-Hilweh camp and the implementation of the plan of the Israeli occupying state at the hands of the Palestinians.

We call the international community and human rights and relief institutions to donate to help the Palestinian refugees who left Ain al-Hilweh camp with their families, and are suffering from a real, great tragedy, to provide them with food, housing, medicine, treatment, education... until the end of the battles with the armed Islamic groups that it has goals that do not serve the Palestinian national project, which includes the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital and the return of Palestinian refugees to their homes in accordance with international legitimacy resolutions.