

Syrian refugee camps in Lebanon

Urgent Appeal

January 9, 2019

Hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees living in Lebanon face the coldest snow storm this winter without the necessary and effective humanitarian response to their crisis.

- Most of the camps in Lebanon are located on agricultural lands, which turn into pools of mud when the rain starts. There are about 250 unofficial camps just in the Bekaa area. According to the United Nations, 25 of these 250 camps are very vulnerable to flooding and excess water leakage.
- Most of the Syrian refugees live in tents. Some of these tents are erected with wooden supports and covered with tarpaulin, though many of them are only covered with plastic bags.
- After the arrival of the storm (Norma) to the region on Saturday January 5, 2019, floods swept through about 18 camps for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The Syrian refugees in the camps are facing a real crisis where temperatures are below zero. They lack basic equipment such as shelter and heating materials, particularly in the mountains around Aarsal.

Abu Ahmad from Qalamoun district in the countryside of Damascus says, "I have no doubt that everyone wants us to leave here. This is not the first-time winter has come to Lebanon, and the tents have not been renovated for seven years. All our cries cannot be heard. We blame no one for the situation we are in, but we can only hope for some help," he said, pointing to several holes in his tent that allow the harsh air to enter at night.

- In terms of the humanitarian response, there is a lack of effective action to respond to the urgent needs of refugees facing the storm. In particular, the response has failed to provide sufficient alternative housing, heating materials, and food. According to local communities, they have tried to respond with some initiatives but with limited effect.

Aziza, a 33-years-old mother of five children who came with her family from Homs province says "We are terrified of winter and storms, but the other choice is to return to Syria where we may face arrest and death which is much worse; both are bad."

The Syrian civil platform appeals to the United Nations and the UNHCR in Lebanon to intensify efforts to respond quickly to the crisis, especially with regard to securing alternative housing for refugees, and providing heating requirements such as fuel and blankets.

The Syrian civil platform appeals to foreign governments supporting international organizations, and Syrian and Lebanese organizations to coordinate and intensify efforts to respond to this crisis and to provide relief to refugees suffering from cold weather.