

PALESTINIANS IN YARMOUK UNDER THREAT IN “BEYOND INHUMANE” YARMOUK REFUGEE CAMP

ISRAEL MUST ALLOW PALESTINIAN REFUGEES THEIR RIGHT OF RETURN TO THEIR ORIGINAL HOMES

The Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign condemns in the strongest possible terms the barbaric and coldblooded takeover of the Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp in Syrian capital Damascus by extremist Islamist militants ISIS (known in Arabic as Daesh). Already 100 people have been killed – with reports of an unspecified number having been beheaded. Meanwhile, the camp’s 18,000 civilians (including 3,500 children) slowly starve with reports that they are living on 400 calories a day, as the extremists block the entry of humanitarian aid.

The shocking nature of life for the 18,000 Palestinian civilians caught in the camp has been described as “beyond inhumane” by a UN official. Food, water and medicines are not reaching the camp, and people there are desperate and starving but unable to leave. It is a harsh prison for these innocent captives of ISIS, whose already difficult lives have been reduced to horror. Last night’s BBC News report from inside the camp showed the extent of the humanitarian crisis, with children and elderly people reduced to tears on screen, as they begged for their lives and for International aid. People will remember the earlier tragic photograph from Yarmouk last year, in which thousands of people crowded a street anxiously waiting at a food distribution centre.

The situation in Yarmouk is the latest consequence of the cruel abandonment of the Palestinian people by the international community. Forcibly driven from their homes and land during the Nakba which saw the creation of the state of Israel, the people in this camp have nowhere to go. They are caught between the Syrian government (which has in the past used barrel bombs in the camp) and the onslaught of ISIS whose particular barbarity we have seen elsewhere. Only a just peace for Palestine, with the right of dispossessed refugees to return, can bring a long-term solution for the region. The injustice perpetrated on the Palestinian people must end. As former US President Jimmy Carter has recently said, it is time to stop the theft of Palestinian land, and the illegal construction and expansion of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.