



Photo by Dominiek Benoot

profile: deir 'ammar camp

ramallah and al-bireh governorate

Overview

Deir 'Ammar camp is located 20 kilometres northwest of Ramallah. It is situated in a predominately rural area in close proximity to the Deir 'Ammar village. The accessibility of Israeli and local job markets has brought relative economic stability to the camp.

The camp is located in Area B, under joint Israeli and Palestinian control. Although there are several Israeli settlements in the area, all of which are illegal under international law, these are situated away from the camp and are accessed by separate roads. As a result, clashes between settlers and camp residents are uncommon.

Deir 'Ammar camp is more spacious than most of the West Bank refugee camps, with residents enjoying access to public spaces such as parks and a sports field. Challenges nevertheless exist in relation to sewerage and street quality, while its relative geographical isolation poses transportation difficulties for some residents.

UNRWA in Deir 'Ammar camp

General information

- **Established:** 1949
- **Size:** .162 sq km
- **Population before 1967 (OCHA):** 2,048
- **Estimated population (PCBS):** 2,200
- **Registered persons (UNRWA):** 2,500
- **Estimated density:** 15,432 per sq km
- **Places of origin:** Jaffa, Lydd, and Ramleh areas

UNRWA in Deir 'Ammar camp

Main UNRWA installations:

- Two schools
 - One health centre
 - One distribution centre
- UNRWA employees working in Deir 'Ammar camp** 65
- Education: 46
 - Health: 9
 - Relief and Social Services: 3
 - Sanitation services: 4
 - Administration: 3

Education

Deir 'Ammar camp has two UNRWA schools that serve over 800 students. The UNRWA Deir 'Ammar Girls' School was built in 2006, while the UNRWA Deir 'Ammar Boys' School was renovated in 2004 and expanded in 2011. Both schools are in good condition and have libraries and computer and science laboratories. UNRWA psychosocial counselors are present in both schools, while remedial classes in Arabic and mathematics are offered on Saturdays. However, there is a lack of after-school activities which might otherwise benefit the children.

Student to teacher ratios are among the lowest in the West Bank refugee camps. The availability of recreational space, including football fields and playgrounds, also contributes to the camp's positive environment.

Health

The health centre in Deir 'Ammar camp was expanded in 2006 and provides primary health care. This includes reproductive health, infant and child care, immunizations, screening and medical check-ups, and treatment of communicable and non-communicable diseases. A dentist is available twice per week. The centre lacks an x-ray machine as well as access to psychosocial counselling, services that are accessible in Ramallah. Physiotherapy is not available in the health centre but is provided in the Community-Based Rehabilitation Centre.

The centre recently implemented the Family Health Team approach. This new approach focuses on the family with the aim of providing comprehensive, continuous care. The Family health team has improved patient flow and reduced the number of consultations that doctors perform, though this number remains high.



Photo by Dominiek Benoot

Relief, Social Services and Emergency Response

UNRWA social workers conduct regular home visits in the camp to identify families requiring special assistance. Through the Social Safety Net Programme, UNRWA provides food parcels to approximately 190 impoverished refugees in the camp (approximately 7.5 per cent of registered persons in the camp). In addition, the Emergency Cash for Work programme assists food insecure families by providing three month work opportunities inside the camp. The family receives a cash subsidy in return for their work, helping them to meet their basic food needs. The projects are designed to benefit the camp community as a whole, such as the construction of sidewalks and the rehabilitation of public spaces.

In addition to direct assistance, UNRWA works with community-based organizations in the camp to support development programmes for women, children, youth and persons with disabilities. In 2015, it launched a community-driven project to support isolated children and adults with disabilities.

Environmental Health

The sanitation foreman conducts daily water examinations and manages a team of sanitation workers. Three UNRWA sanitation workers are responsible for gathering solid waste. In 2013, sanitation workers distributed 80 large trash bins to be used by camp residents, a project that has improved the collection of solid waste. A new water system was installed in 2012 that connects camp residents to potable water.

However, the camp continues to lack a sewerage network. Residents instead use percolation pits, which are drained once every two weeks by a private company. Because residents are generally not constrained by space, the majority of percolation pits are well maintained and installed an adequate distance from shelters.

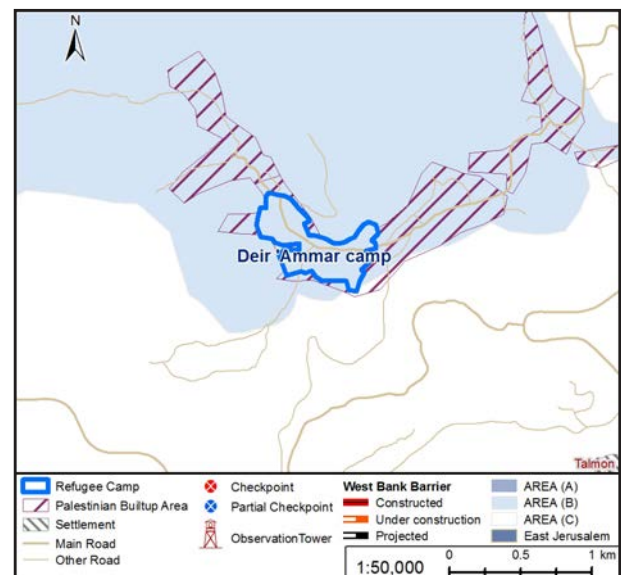
Main Challenges

Location

The location of the camp in a predominately rural area is both a negative and positive factor. While its isolation from surrounding Israeli settlements decreases the frequency of clashes and other security-related incidents, it also makes the camp difficult to access. For instance, residents must travel a considerable distance should they require hospitalization or after-hours emergency medical care. Similarly, children attending secondary school following Grade 9 at either of the UNRWA schools must travel to a neighbouring village

Sewerage and stormwater networks

Although the current use of percolation pits does not present a serious health hazard to residents, population growth in the future may require the installation of a sewerage network. Although Deir 'Ammar camp is situated on high ground and is not susceptible to flooding, heavy rains can at times overburden the storm water network.



Infrastructure

While the main streets of the camp are wide and well-maintained, many of the camp's minor paths are less than two metres wide, leaving limited space for pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The main entrance to the camp also requires renovation due to its poor condition. Despite the camp's relatively low population density, residents seeking to expand their shelters must often build upon existing structures, many of which were not structurally designed to support additional flooring. In recent years, UNRWA has rehabilitated 13 shelters in the camp.

Many of the UNRWA installations in the camp are also aging and need renovation. The health centre, the camp services office and the environmental health stores have all been prioritized for reconstruction, while the girls' school is prioritized for rehabilitation works.

Spotlight: Deir 'Ammar Summer Camp

The Deir 'Ammar Summer Camp has been a summer tradition for over forty years. In 1969, five students were chosen from each West Bank refugee camp to attend the Deir 'Ammar Summer Camp. At the time of its establishment, the camp served children from camps throughout the West Bank, though this changed after the second intifada in 2000, and now only children from Deir 'Ammar camp are able to attend.

Today, hundreds of children between the ages of 9 and 15 attend the camp each summer. The camp runs in two-week sessions during the summer, with each session hosting an average of fifty children. Funded by several private companies, the camp is held at the UNRWA Deir 'Ammar Boys' School, equipped with large recreational area as well as a swimming pool. Participants also have the opportunity to take day trips to nearby areas in order to hike and learn about their environment. The camp has academic components as well, and students at the camp are offered courses in art, the sciences, as well as in English. The teachers and volunteers that administer the camp are UNRWA staff members.



Photo by Dominiek Benoot

“The school parliament is a great leadership experience.”



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Ahmad Mohammad Zaid and Mohammad Kamal Safi are both in ninth grade at the UNRWA Deir Ammar Boys' School. Both born in Deir Ammar camp, these two 15-year-old boys are energetic, charismatic and possess futures full of possibility.

Ahmad is one of eight children, and he wakes up each morning at 5 a.m. to help his family members prepare for work and school. “I always make my uncle lunch before he leaves for work,” he tells us. Academically, Ahmad is a strong student. He dedicates significant time to his studies, and though he is adamant that he “hates memorization,” his hard work has made him first in his class. “I like Arabic class the best,” he tells us. Ahmad hopes to attend university in Canada, where his older brother, Zahir, is currently studying.

Ahmad suffers from an issue with his eyesight, and twice a year he must travel to Jerusalem to see his doctor and have his eyes evaluated. His younger brother suffers from a similar problem, though his is more severe. “My brother has had several eye surgeries, and my family wouldn't be able to afford the procedures without the help of UNRWA,” Ahmad tells us. Inspired by his own medical issues, as well as by those of his younger brother, Ahmad dreams of one day becoming an ophthalmologist. When we ask Ahmad if he would like to remain in Canada after his studies, he respectfully declines. “It would be unacceptable for me not to return to Palestine,” he tells us. “This is my country and I will return.”

Mohammad is also one of eight children, and though he is equally as charming as his fellow classmate, his dreams vary significantly. “With me you can talk about sports,” he smiles. Mohammad arrives at school early each morning to ensure that he has time to play a game of soccer with his friends. He enjoys school, but he does not wish to attend university. “I want to be a professional soccer player,” he tells us. He dreams of traveling to Spain to train with Real Madrid and FC Barcelona, but when we ask him if he'd like to play professionally in Spain, he says no. Like Ahmad, Mohammad wishes to return home. “I want to play for Palestine,” he says.

Despite their differences, Ahmad and Mohammad share a unique similarity: they have each served as president of the Deir Ammar Boys' School Parliament. Composed of nine members, the school parliament serves as a liaison between students and the school administration. The boys are representatives of nearly 400 students, and they help to solve issues that their fellow classmates feel passionately about. “Communication is much easier student to student than it is student to teacher,” says Ahmad. When we ask the boys what the best part of serving on the school parliament is, they both agree: “The school parliament is a great leadership experience,” they say. Intelligent and personable, the future holds many opportunities for Ahmad and Mohammad. For now, their school is lucky to have them.

General Overview West Bank Refugee Camps

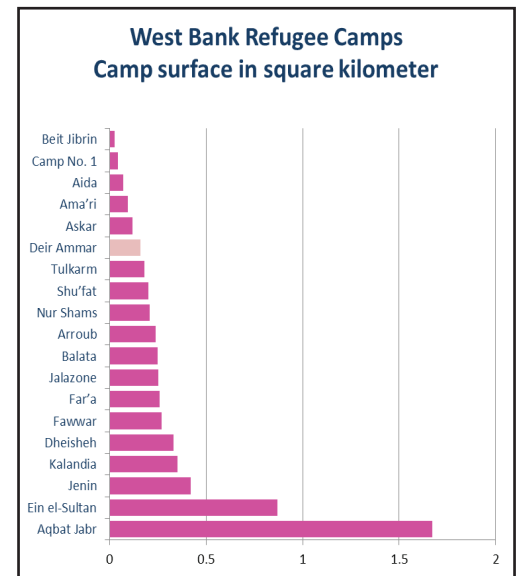
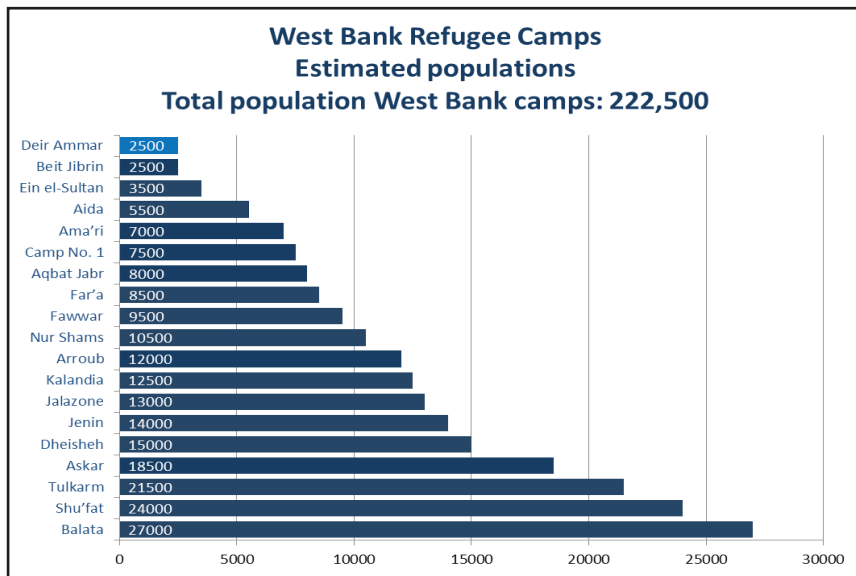
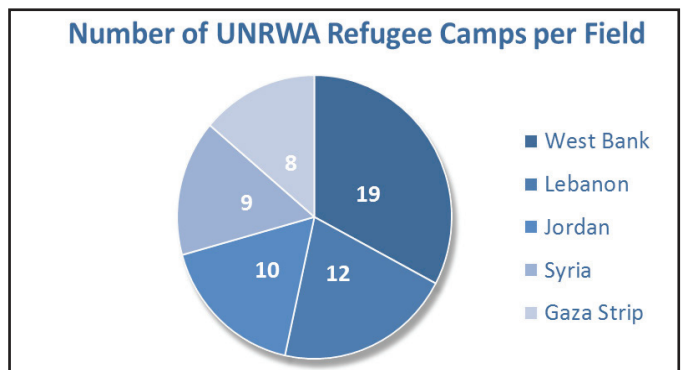
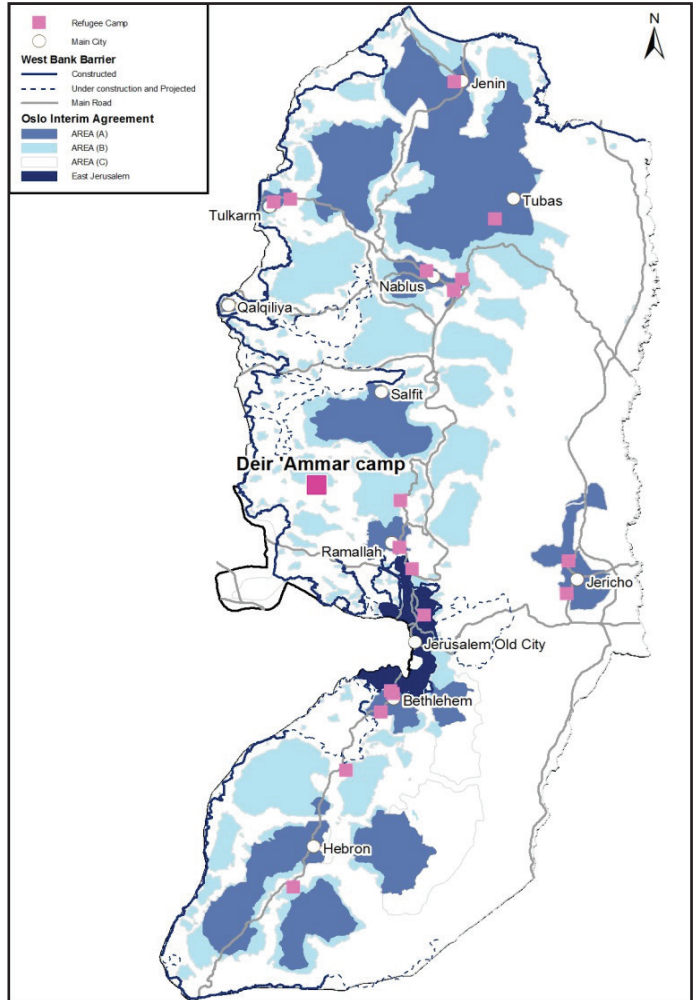
Who is a Palestine Refugee?

A Palestine refugee is defined as any person whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period from 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict. The descendants of Palestine refugee males, as well as legally adopted children, are also eligible to register as refugees.

Palestine Refugee Camps

There are 58 Palestine refugee camps located in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Gaza and the West Bank. The camps were first established as temporary tented cities for Palestine refugees who fled their homes during the 1948 conflict. For more than 60 years, this unresolved situation has challenged the camps and its residents.

The 19 Palestine refugee camps throughout the West Bank have since developed into urban areas home to more than 200,000 people (almost a quarter of the total registered persons with UNRWA), with the population in each camp varying from 2,500 to 27,000. The camps face challenges related to overcrowding, poor infrastructure, high levels of unemployment, food insecurity, and protection issues.



united nations relief and works agency
for palestine refugees in the near east

www.unrwa.org

UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and is mandated to provide assistance and protection to a population of registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip to achieve their full potential in human development, pending a just solution to their plight. UNRWA's services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.