



Photo by Dominiek Benoot

profile: tulkarm camp

tulkarm governorate

Overview

Tulkarm camp, established in 1950, is located in Tulkarm City in the north-west of the West Bank. With a population of over 21,000 people in an area of 0.18 sq km, it is one of the most densely populated refugee camps in the West Bank.

The camp was severely affected during the second intifada by incursions, arrests, raids and curfews. Incursions still take place, though on a more irregular basis. The main challenges in the camp are overcrowding, unemployment and poor infrastructure. Specifically, the sewerage network is overburdened and experiences frequent blockages. The dropout rate in the schools in the camp is also relatively high.

UNRWA in Tulkarm camp

General information

- **Established:** 1950
- **Size:** .18 sq km
- **Population before 1967 (OCHA):** 8,450
- **Estimated population (PCBS):** 12,000
- **Registered persons (UNRWA):** 21,500
- **Estimated density:** 119,444 per sq km
- **Places of origin:** Various villages and cities in the Haifa, Jaffa, Kissaria areas

UNRWA in Tulkarm camp

Main UNRWA installations:

- Four schools
- One health centre

UNRWA employees working in Tulkarm camp : 141

- Education: 85
- Health: 30
- Relief and Social Services: 3
- Sanitation services: 17
- Administration: 5

Education

Tulkarm camp has four UNRWA schools that serve approximately 1,600 students. The two UNRWA girls' schools share a building built in 2000. The UNRWA boys' schools are divided between two buildings, one built in the 1950s and the other in 2009. UNRWA has prioritized the reconstruction of the older boys' school. The schools in Tulkarm include libraries and computer and science laboratories. Psychosocial support is available and remedial classes in Arabic and mathematics are offered on Saturdays. However, there is a lack of organized after-school activities, which would otherwise benefit the children of Tulkarm camp.

Health

The centre has 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 daily consultations that each doctor performs, though this number remains above 100.

Environmental Health

The camp sanitation foreman conducts daily water examinations and manages the team of sanitation workers. There are 16 sanitation workers in the camp who collect waste five days a week from shelters and streets and then distribute the waste to seven containers. To prevent waste from accumulating during weekends, sanitation workers take turns working on Fridays. Containers must be emptied several times a day, which adds to the strain on the limited number of sanitation workers. Because the sewerage network in the camp is overloaded, as most residents connect their storm-water drainage to the sewerage network, there are regular blockages that require continuous maintenance.



Photo by Dominiek Benoot

Relief, Social Services and Emergency Response

Three social workers in the camp conduct home visits, provide counselling, and refer residents to additional services when needed. The social workers also work closely with community-based organizations (CBOs) in the camp. The Community-Based Rehabilitation Centre (CBRC) has been particularly successful in assisting children through its Speech Therapy Unit. Through the Social Safety Net Programme, UNRWA provides food parcels to some 2,600 impoverished refugees, which is the equivalent to 12 per cent of registered persons in the camp. Food distribution takes place in the street as there is no food distribution centre.

The Emergency Cash for Work Programme assists food insecure families by offering them two to 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. Cash for Work labourers have undertaken sanitation work, strengthened women's income-generating projects, and completed the construction of the camp's Disability Centre.

Main Challenges

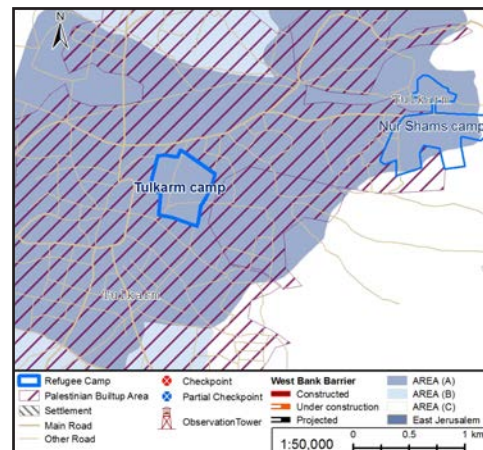
Overcrowding

Tulkarm camp has one of the highest population densities of the 19 camps in the West Bank. Because the camp cannot expand beyond its original boundaries, residents have built upwards to accommodate the growing population. Cramped, unventilated and humid shelters negatively impact residents' physical and mental health. The lack of open areas and playgrounds leaves no space for children to play safely or for women to socialize.

In recent years, UNRWA has rehabilitated 60 shelters and reconstructed 19 shelters for the poorest of the camp residents. However, many more residents are in need of shelter support.

Unemployment

Unemployment increased dramatically after the West Bank Barrier was constructed and particularly affects youth and female-headed households that are vulnerable to poverty and food insecurity. The growing concern of drug abuse and domestic violence in the camp has been linked to the high levels of unemployment and poverty.



Infrastructure

Overcrowding, poor living conditions and inadequate infrastructure are characteristic of Tulkarm camp. Sewage from the Nablus area flows openly through a nearby valley. An ongoing project aims to address this by building a sewerage pipe leading to a treatment plant in Israel. The storm-water network is also in need of rehabilitation, as residents use the sewerage network now to dispose of rainwater. This overburdens the sewerage network, resulting in frequent blockages which in turn cause flooding of streets and homes. Although the camp has a constant supply of water, the water network is old and needs to be rehabilitated.

Spotlight: Health Centre Reconstruction

Three years ago, the Tulkarm health centre had only two consultation rooms to serve a population of nearly 20,000 people. The health centre, located next to the solid waste collection point, was rundown and overcrowded. Patient privacy was also affected, with the clinic's two doctors having to consult their patients in the same room.

In 2013, the health centre was reconstructed with project funds amounting to US\$ 1.7 million. The new centre has four floors with six consultation rooms, multiple spacious waiting halls, a modern laboratory, an x-ray machine, a room dedicated to the provision of dental care, a physiotherapy room and a meeting room. The quality of service has improved significantly, ensuring privacy and confidentiality to patients of both genders.

The original health centre was rehabilitated and now serves as the office of the Camp Service Officer (CSO).



Photo by Dominiek Benoot

“I want to do my best for the people in my camp.”



Photo by Dominiek Benoot

Twenty-six-year-old Nour Saleh Salim Bilial is dressed head to toe in a blue and yellow Adidas tracksuit. Tall and toned, Nour's athleticism is evident. Born in Tulkarm refugee camp in 1988, soft-spoken Nour always had a passion for sports. It comes as no surprise, then, that he is now a member of Tulkarm's professional soccer team.

Nour comes from a family of five children and as a result always had a friend to play with. The lack of open public space such as parks, however, forced Nour and his siblings to play in the streets of Tulkarm camp. “We would use two stones as the goal posts and would play with whatever ball we could find, even if it was very small,” he says. When Nour was in the fourth grade, his older brother registered him at the Youth Centre of Tulkarm, where children from the camp gathered to play sports. Coaches would identify young players that they believed to have potential and would move them up to play with the older groups. Nour was quickly identified as a talented player, and he was moved up one level to play with boys a year older than himself.

“I was very happy to be moved up a level because I finally began to believe in myself,” says Nour. Playing with the older boys inspired Nour, and he began to train harder and harder to continue moving up the ranks. “It became my dream to be a professional player,” says Nour. When Nour was 16 years old, he was moved to the top team. “I was conflicted,” says Nour, “because I still had one year of school to finish and I knew I couldn't make all the practices and continue at school.” Determined to complete his education, Nour worked out a deal with the coaches: he would decrease his practice schedule until he was able to finish his final year of school.

When he concluded his studies, Nour began playing soccer full time. “I was scared at first because many of the players were much older than myself,” says Nour, who at the time was playing with team members twice his age. The team quickly became like family to Nour, however, and his life revolved around the team's schedule. “We practice four or five times a week for two hours,” he says, “and we usually have one game a week.” There are twelve teams in the league, and the team travels to the surrounding areas for away games. Nour has also had the opportunity to travel to countries such as Jordan and Syria. “In Syria, we had the opportunity to work with a children's summer camp,” he says, smiling. Home games, however, are his favorite. When the team plays at the municipality field, residents from Tulkarm camp often come to watch. “I want to do my best for the people in my camp,” he says. “I feel high when they call my name.”

Nour is newly married, and when we inquire about children he says that it is still early in his marriage, but that he and his wife want children. “Maybe they will be soccer players like me,” he says, “but I can only hope that they will have open areas to play in.”

General Overview West Bank Refugee Camps

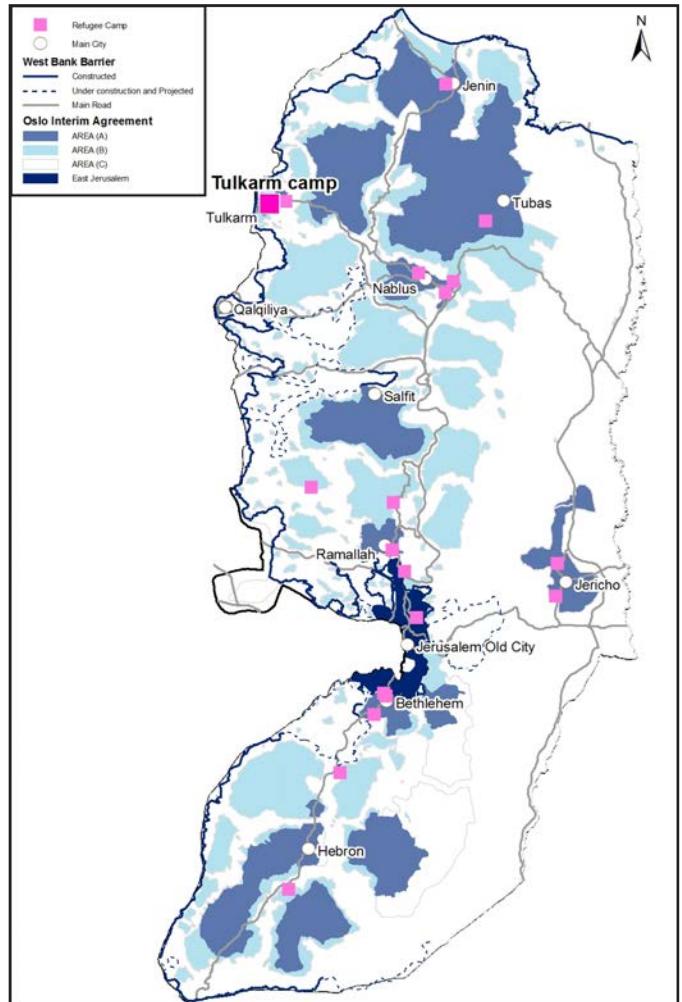
Who is a Palestine Refugee?

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.

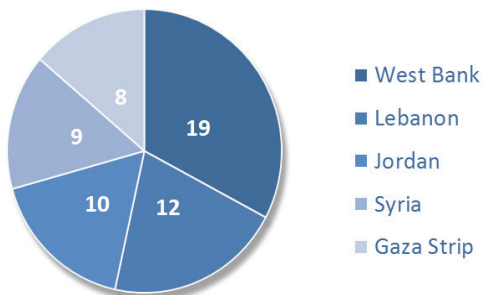
Palestine Refugee Camps

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.

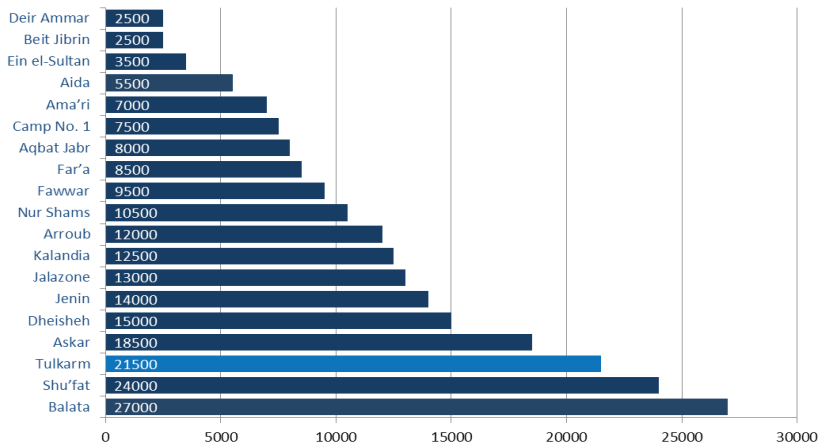


Number of UNRWA Refugee Camps per Field



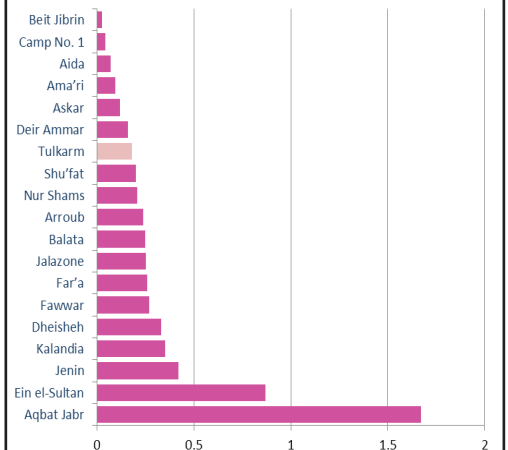
West Bank Refugee Camps

Estimated populations
Total population West Bank camps: 222,500



West Bank Refugee Camps

Camp surface in square kilometer



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.