



October 2015

## Urge Congress to work for lasting peace and aid Palestinian refugees from Syria

“The sole park in Aida — where Abdo and his friends often played — is called *Laji* (Arabic for refugee), as if to remind children of their roots.”

~ Budour Youssef Hassan, [Electronic Intifada](#)

The past several weeks have seen a wave of overt violence carried out by both Palestinians and Israelis. On October 3 [two Israelis](#)—Nehemia Lavi and Aharon Bennett—were stabbed to death in the Old City in East Jerusalem by a young Palestinian who was then killed by Israeli security forces. In the West Bank 13 year old Abdel-Rahman Shadi Obeidallah (known as Abdo) from the Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem was shot and killed by Israeli forces. According to [witnesses](#), he stood about 70 meters away from clashes that were taking place between Israeli forces and Palestinians. In [Gaza](#) six Palestinians were killed and dozens injured by Israeli forces during a demonstration on October 9. Numerous other incidents have occurred throughout the region.

While rising tensions at the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount have sparked much of the recent violence, it is essential to remember that this violence is set in the context of Israel’s nearly 50-year occupation of Palestinian land which continues to lead to the destruction of Palestinian homes, property, and livelihoods while Israeli settlements expand throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Furthermore, the lack of resolution to the Israeli/Palestinian situation means that millions of Palestinians remain as refugees, both in the occupied territories and in surrounding countries. In Gaza, where 1.2 million of the total population of 1.8 million (two-thirds) are refugees, residents face the devastating effects of the blockade on employment, health, education, restricted mobility, and access to resources, including Israeli restrictions on “dual use” materials necessary for reconstruction.

The family of Abdo, the boy who was killed from the Aida refugee camp, was displaced from the village of al-Qabo in 1948. The thousands of refugees who have been uprooted are heavily affected by the violence, while the reality of living as a refugee in a continually unresolved situation creates an environment ripe with tension.

The Syrian crisis has a profound impact on Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS), as many of them are now twice displaced. According to [UNRWA](#) reports, approximately 80,000 of Syria’s 560,000 Palestine refugees have fled the country, while an estimated 95 percent of the remaining 480,000 are in need of humanitarian assistance. Of those still in Syria, 280,000 are internally displaced. UNRWA cannot keep up with increased needs and released a 2015 [emergency appeal](#) for \$415.4 to continue humanitarian efforts for PRS. To date, 49% of the requested funds have been [pledged](#), including \$97.5 million from the U.S.

Both the current violence and the ongoing humanitarian situation for Palestinian refugees are inextricably linked to a long history of tension and oppression. A lasting and comprehensive peace is essential to addressing both.

Write to your [senators](#) and [representative](#) today. For the sake of a better future for both Israelis and Palestinians, urge them to:

- Call for a halt to violence by all parties
- Call for an end to Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land and a lifting of the Gaza blockade
- Help fund UNRWA’s emergency appeal for Palestinian refugees from Syria

**Sample Letter:**

Dear Senator/Representative,

I write to you as a person of faith who is deeply concerned about the continued violence in Israel/Palestine and the plight of Palestinian refugees in the region.

As you are well aware, the past several weeks have seen a wave of overt violence carried out by both Palestinians and Israelis.

While rising tensions at the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount have sparked much of the recent violence, it is essential to remember that this violence is set in the context of Israel's nearly 50-year occupation of Palestinian land.

Furthermore, the lack of resolution to the Israeli/Palestinian situation means that millions of Palestinians remain as refugees, both in the occupied territories and in surrounding countries. In Gaza, where 1.2 million of a total population of 1.8 million (two-thirds) are refugees, residents face the devastating effects of the blockade.

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Both the current violence and the ongoing humanitarian situation for Palestinian refugees are inextricably linked to a long history of tension and oppression. A lasting and comprehensive peace is essential to addressing both.

.For the sake of a better future for both Israelis and Palestinians, I urge you to:

- Call for a halt to violence by all parties
- Speak out for an end to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land and a lifting of the Gaza blockade
- Support US funding for UNRWA's emergency appeal for Palestinian refugees from Syria

Thank you for your service and your attention to these concerns.

Sincerely,