

## First Group of Palestinian Refugees Arrive in Brazil

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Brazil received today the first group of Palestinian refugees who have been living in a refugee camp in the Jordanian desert, in Ruweished, for four years. In total, the government of Brazil is going to receive 117 Palestinians who will be sent to the states of São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul.

In the first group, 40 refugees, including elderly people, men, women and children, will arrive in the country.

The decision of bringing the Palestinians was taken by the National Committee for Refugees (Conare), an organization connected to the Ministry of Justice, which is going to grant the refugees all necessary support together with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and non-governmental organizations.

"This gesture shows the Brazilian humanitarian character," stated the ambassador of Palestine to Brasília, Mayada Bamie.

According to her, this is not the solution to the Palestinian problem, but it is help. "The solution would be the return of the refugees to their home in Palestine, as forecasted in Resolution 194 of the UN," added Bamie.

According to her, the government of Brazil and the UNHCR are going to give the refugees assistance in the area of health, education and habitation. "Brazil will make all the necessary effort to help these Palestinians," stated Bamie.

According to the president of the Brazil-Arab Countries Parliamentary League, Nelson Mourão, Brazil takes a stance that is favorable to Palestine. "This action is an important step for Brazilian solidarity to the Palestinian people," he said, adding that he plans to take a group of Arab representatives to talk to the refugees.

Before arriving in Ruweished, the group had sought asylum in Iraq, but they abandoned the country after the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime, in 2003.

Many Palestinians managed to escape to Jordan and Syria, where they were placed in camps on the frontier with Iraq. According to the UNHCR, it is estimated that there are still around 15,000 Palestinians in Iraq.

Conditions in Ruweished, which is 70 kilometers away from the frontier with Iraq, are very precarious. According to information disclosed by the UNHCR, the camp is infested with scorpions, sand storms are constant and climate

variations make the region inhospitable.

"We want to call the Palestinian and Arab community in general to help collaborate so that the life of the Palestinian refugees in Brazil may be as normal as possible," stated the secretary general at the Palestinian Arab Federation in Brazil (Fepal), Emir Mourad.

Currently, Brazil has around 3,400 recognized refugees, from 69 different nationalities. According to Conare figures, 78.1% of the refugees come from Africa, 8.94% from Europe, 6.85% from the Americas and 6.1% from Asia. Of this total, 74% are male and 26% are female.

Since 2004, Brazil has had a Solidary Resettling Program that has benefited around 200 refugees, mostly Colombian. According to information disclosed by the UNHCR, resettling is a protection measure that offers a safer environment to refugees who still face threats, persecution and integration problems in the country that grants them asylum.

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