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Residents wait to receive food aid distributed by the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) at the besieged al-Yarmouk camp, south of Damascus on January 31, 2014. Reuters

## Abbas wants UN, EU to urge Israel to let Palestinians fleeing Syria into West Bank

Palestinian envoy to UN instructed to coordinate measures to allow refugees from Syria into PA, officials in Palestinian president's office say.

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The Palestinian Authority is in contact with the United Nations and the European Union to urge them to pressure Israel to allow Palestinian refugees from Syria into the West Bank, officials in Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' office said Saturday.

According to the officials, Abbas has instructed the Palestinian representative to the United Nations, Riyad Mansour, to coordinate measures for the refugees' entry into the Palestinian Authority with the UN institutions and Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

"This is not only a humanitarian issue but a right for every Palestinian living in exile in refugee camps," a statement issued by Abbas' office said.

In April, the Palestinian leadership made a similar call when the Palestinian refugee camp Yarmouk near Damascus [was under siege](#) by ISIS and the Nusra Front.

According to the UN, more than 525,000 Palestinian refugees who have been displaced by the Syrian civil war are currently residing in UN camps in Syria.

Meanwhile, Israeli Opposition Leader Isaac Herzog [called on the government](#) to allow Syrian refugees into Israel, saying that "Jews cannot be indifferent while hundreds of thousands of refugees are looking for safe haven."

Herzog's call was backed by Meretz Chairwoman Zahava Galon and Yesh Atid lawmaker Elazar Stern. But the proposal was criticized by Yesh Atid Chairman Yair Lapid, who said that it would open a "back door for a discussion of the Palestinian right of return."

"Israel, unfortunately, cannot allow itself into the refugee crisis issue. It's a European issue and there's no reason we should be part of it," Lapid said at a cultural event in Be'er Sheva.

"There are refugees in Israel already. Out of 50,000 infiltrators there are several thousands who came from Darfur, people who fled something I don't want to term as a Holocaust, but is like the Holocaust, and it's them that the State of Israel should assimilate," Lapid said.

International calls for efforts to aid Syrians fleeing the civil war have intensified after the publication of a photo showing the body of a Syrian toddler who drowned as his family tried to cross from Turkey to the Greek island of Kos this week. The body of [Aylan Kurdi](#) washed up on the beach near the Turkish resort town of Bodrum after the boat carrying him and his family capsized. His brother, 5, his mother and nine others also died in the incident. [His father survived.](#)