

## [Lost Palestinian Refugee Camps on UN-Google Earth Map](#)

Written by [Haitham](#) on 10. April 2008, 1701hrs // Part of [Haitham's](#) adventure in [\(Mis\) Use of Technology](#), [Action](#), [Breaking News](#), [Failures](#), [Palestine](#) // Other posts by [Haitham](#)

It was a happy moment when I heard the news that [UN High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#) launched in coordination with [Google Earth](#), a new layer that focus on refugee camps around the world. This should be a great tool to follow the crisis of Palestinian refugees under occupation and expose it to the world through one of the most used Web 2.0 applications (Google Earth claims to have more than [350 million downloads](#) and counting).



In their [press release](#), UNHCR said:

Google Earth's new mapping programme takes you on a virtual reality tour with the UN refugee agency of some of the world's major displacement crises and the humanitarian efforts aimed at helping the victims.

The first use of this geospatial tool focuses on refugees and displaced people located in remote areas of Chad, Iraq, Colombia and Sudan's volatile Darfur region. Sit in front of your computer and, with a few clicks, see, hear and develop an emotional understanding of what it is like to be a refugee.

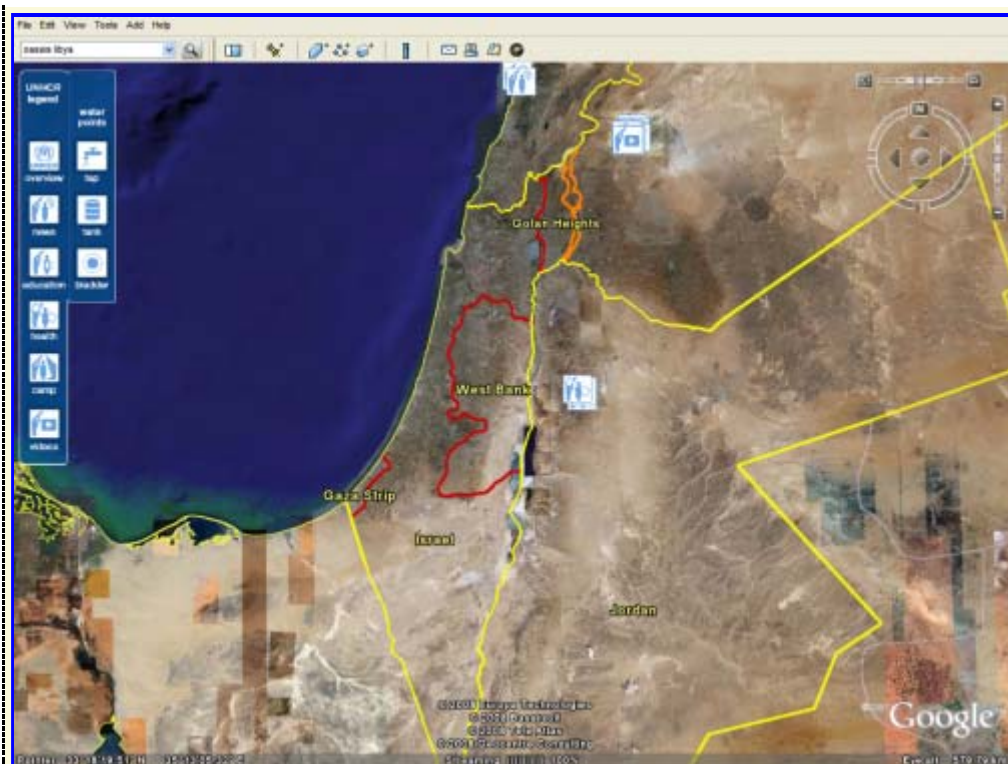
Highlighted are not only the physical area of the camp and surrounding country, but key parts of daily life such as education and health in photo, text and video format. Within seconds, Google Earth brings the daily life of a refugee camp into your home thousands of kilometres away.

To start your journey, click [here](#).

However, my happiness did not last for long when I discovered that **NONE** of the Palestinian refugee camps within the Occupied Palestinian Territories are published there (see map below). So, even if you "*Sit in front of your computer*", with a few clicks you can "*see, hear and develop an emotional understanding of what it is like to be a refugee*", **but not the Palestinian refugees' experience. They don't exist!**

(Click image to enlarge)

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Note: Blue icons are original bookmarks by UNHCR of Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, but nothing in West Bank and Gaza.

This misfortune seems to be a result of one of two things:

1. Either the issue of the Palestinian refugees under Israeli occupation got solved and nobody told me (*in this case I only blame myself for missing last night's news*), or;
2. The UNHCR does not recognize the Palestinian refugee camps in the Occupied Palestinian Territories all together as “*refugee camps who needs emotional understanding*“, so they are not one of the “*major displacement crises*,” thus do not require “*the humanitarian efforts aimed at helping the victims*“! We understand that UNHCR mandate is to take care of refugees all around the world, but not those inside Occupied Palestinian Territories, UNRWA does that. However, one of UNHCR’s mandates is to offer refugees to return to their home country, an act that is rejected by Israel. Hence, this does not justify the UNHCR to wash its hands of Palestinian refugees under occupation and not mention them altogether. They are still refugees no matter if they have been able to make the best of a horrible situation, and they all should be represented.

It is disturbing to see such a horrible mistake (*intentional or unintentional, we need to know*) spread by a UN agency which claims to be taking care of refugees all around the world. The UNRWA lists the name of all the refugees camps in [West Bank \(19 camp\)](#) and [Gaza \(8 camps\)](#) and their population (West Bank 486,479, Gaza 478,272, total 964,751). Not only that, but they also have location maps for these refugees camps on their website:

(Click image to enlarge)



The question is, **how can UNHCR ignored a total of 27 Palestinian refugee camps in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, populated with almost one million inhabitants?**

Understanding that in general, refugee camps almost by definition have limited visibility, and the Palestinian refugee camps in Palestine are located in a war zone, such camps go unseen by most of the world except when the occasional crimes conducted by Israel are fortunately picked up by some reporters who might write a small segment for the evening news about that “*incident*”.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) claims and hopes to give more visibility to the work that it does in refugee camps around the world by bringing the reality of refugee life into the laptops and living rooms of web surfers, **but not the Palestinian refugee camps under occupation!!! This is not acceptable.**

### **Action Alert:**

1. Use UNHCR contact form here <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/contact> and ask them to correct this mistake immediately. Sample letter can be as follows:

Dear UNHCR,

We are pleased to know that UNHCR launched it's 'Google Earth Refugee World' layer to take Google Earth users on a virtual reality tour with the UN refugee agency of some of the world's major displacement crises and the humanitarian efforts aimed at helping the victims.

Reference: <http://www.unhcr.org/events/47f48dc92.html>

However, we are disappointed to see that Palestinian refugee camps in Occupied Palestinian Territories were not shown anywhere.

Reference: <http://tinyurl.com/4jnpoy>

We are sure that this is an oversight on UNHCR part, but 27 Palestinian refugee camps that exist in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are not shown on your new Google Earth Refugee World layer. Over one million people live in these camps. Do you not believe that they are living under most non humanitarian conditions and should be mentioned on UNHCR's 'Google Earth Refugee World' like all other refugees?

Please correct your listings to include these camps. They DO EXIST and they MUST be known about.

Alternatively, you may write to Mr. Antonio Guterres (the UN high commissioner for refugees) and ask him to correct this mistake immediately (Headquarters contact form here: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/contact?hq=y>). Sample letter can be as follows:

Dear Mr. Guterres,

We are pleased to know that UNHCR launched it's 'Google Earth Refugee World' layer to take Google Earth users on a virtual reality tour with the UN refugee agency of some of the world's major displacement crises and the humanitarian efforts aimed at helping the victims.

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2. Sign [this petition](#) asking UNHCR to correct this mistake and add all Palestinian refugees camps within the Occupied Palestinian Territories to their “*Google Earth Refugee's World Layer*”.

Petition: <http://tinyurl.com/4re8du>

3. Republish, share and e-mail this post. Click following “ShareThis” link below.



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1. 1  
[YallaPalestine.com](#) Says:

[April 10th, 2008 at 7:20 pm](#)

### Lost Palestinian Refugee Camps on UN-Google Earth Map...

However, my happiness did not last for long when I discovered that NONE of the Palestinian refugee camps within the Occupied Palestinian Territories are published there (see map below). So, even if you “Sit in front of your computer”, with a few clic...

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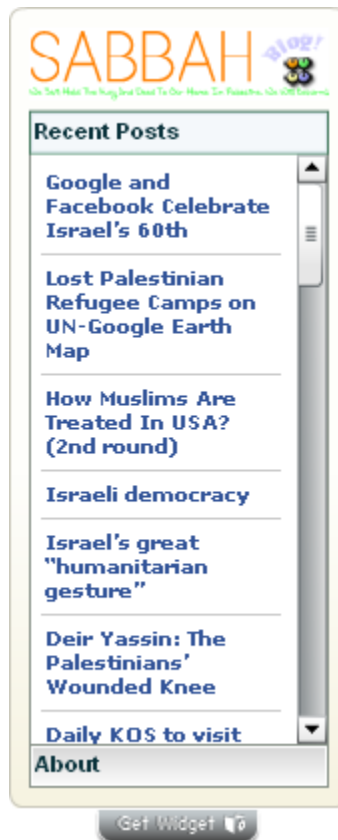
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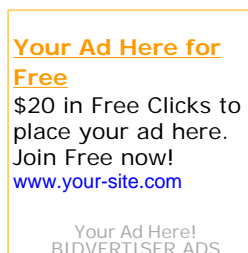


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Allowing two Gazans to train for Olympics in Jericho "In a rare move defined by Israeli authorities as a 'humanitarian gesture', officials decided to permit two members of the Palestinian Olympic team to cross the borders from Gaza and the West Bank in order to train in Jericho and Jerusalem, so ...

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### [UN expert: Israel like Nazi](#)

The next UN investigator into Israel conduct in the occupied territories has stood by comments comparing Israeli actions in Gaza to those of the Nazis. Speaking to the BBC, Professor Richard Falk said he believed that up to now Israel had been successful in avoiding the criticism that it was due. Professor ...

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### [Israel Founded On Terror](#)

By Rev Ted Pike Zionist-dominated mainstream media vividly portrays Israel as a tiny embattled nation seeking peace in a sea of Arab hostility.1 Arabs, we are told, commit acts of terror while Israel only resorts to violence out of self-protection. The facts of history paint a very different picture. Far from deploring ...

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