

# The Palestinian Strategic Report

## 2009/10



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# Chapter Seven

## *The Palestinian Demographic Indicators*

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# The Palestinian Demographic Indicators

## *Introduction*

Another year has ended, and one of the greatest tragedies that have befallen a people in modern human history remains unresolved, as the international community and its institutions remain unable to treat one of the most just causes in the world: the cause of a people whose first half lives under occupation while its second half is part of a Diaspora living in exile.

This chapter deals with the main Palestinian demographic indicators for 2009, including the number of Palestinians inside Palestine and in the Diaspora, their demographic characteristics, age groups, demographic growth trends, and Israel pressures to displace them.

## *First: The Palestinian Population Worldwide*

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) revised estimates show that the number of Palestinians in the world, at the end of 2009, was around 10.87 million Palestinians; more than half of them (around 51.8%) live in the Diaspora, while the rest lives in historical Palestine which includes the territories occupied in 1948 and 1967.

The Palestinian residents living in historical Palestine are distributed by approximately 1.25 million living in Palestinian territories occupied in 1948, i.e., Israel, and approximately 3.99 million living in Palestinian territories occupied in 1967. The latter are distributed by 1.51 million people in GS, i.e., 37.9% and 2.48 million people in the WB, i.e., 62.1% (including Jerusalem).

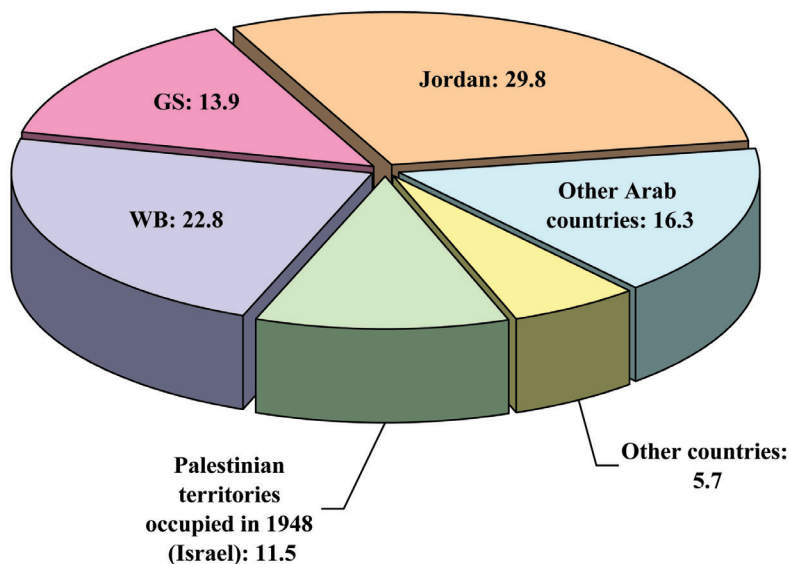
Table 1/7 presents the estimates of the worldwide Palestinian population according to their place of residence, at the end of 2009.



**Table 1/7: Palestinian Population Worldwide Estimate According to Their Place of Residence at the End of 2009<sup>1</sup>**

Place of residence		Population estimate (thousands)	Percentage (%)
Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel)		1,247	11.5
Palestinian territories occupied in 1967	WB	2,481	22.8
	GS	1,511	13.9
Jordan		3,240	29.8
Other Arab countries		1,776	16.3
Other countries		618	5.7
Total		10,873	100

**Percentage of Palestinian Population Worldwide According to their Place of Residence at the End of 2009 (%)**



Palestinians in the Diaspora are concentrated in the neighboring Arab countries, especially in Jordan where the Palestinian population was estimated at approximately 3.24 million at the end of 2009, i.e., approximately 29.8% of the total worldwide Palestinian population. As for the remaining Palestinians living in other Arab countries, they are estimated at 1.78 million, i.e., 16.3% of the total Palestinian population, who are mainly concentrated in the neighboring Arab countries; Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and the Gulf Countries. As for the remaining

Palestinians living in foreign countries, their number was estimated to be around 618 thousands, i.e., 5.7% of the total Palestinian population, most of whom are concentrated in the USA, Latin America, Canada, UK, and other EU countries.

## ***Second: The Demographic Characteristics of Palestinians***

### **1. The WB and GS**

The population in the WB and GS was estimated at around 3.99 million, at the end of 2009, of which around 2.48 million people in the WB, i.e., 62.1%, and 1.51 million people in GS, i.e., 37.9%. As for the distribution of the Palestinian population in the governorates, data indicate that Hebron is the governorate with the largest population, which reached 591 thousand people, i.e., 14.8% of the total population in the WB and GS. The next largest governorate is Gaza where the population reached 527 thousand people, i.e., 13.2% of the total population in the WB and GS, whereas the population in Jerusalem governorate reached 379 thousand people, i.e., 9.5% of the total population in the WB and GS. Data indicate also that Jericho and al-Aghwar governorates registered the smallest population, at the end of 2009, where the number was approximately 45 thousand people, i.e., 1.1%.

Estimates from 2009 statistics indicate that 45% of the WB and GS population are refugees from the Palestinian territories occupied in 1948, with an estimate of 1.795 million refugees at the end of 2009. They reached approximately 749 thousand in the WB, i.e., 30.2% of the total WB population, and 1.046 million refugees in GS, i.e., 69.2% of the total GS population.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 2/7: Comparing the Palestinian Total and Refugee Population in the WB and GS 2009**

Place of residence	Total population		Refugee population	
	Estimate (thousands)	Percentage (%)	Estimate (thousands)	Percentage (%)
<b>WB</b>	2,481	62.1	749	30.2
<b>GS</b>	1,511	37.9	1,046	69.2
<b>WB and GS</b>	<b>3,992</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,795</b>	<b>45</b>



The Palestinian population in the WB and GS is young, where the percentage of individuals under 15 years of age, at the end of 2009, was estimated at 41.5% with a significant difference between the WB and GS, as the percentage in the WB was 39.7% compared to 44.6% in GS. The percentage of individuals above 65 years of age was estimated at 3%, with a difference between the WB and GS; it reached 3.4% in the WB and 2.4% in GS.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, the age distribution within the population reveals a wide-based population pyramid with a pointed narrow tip, meaning that, in the upcoming years, the Palestinians will remain influenced by the relatively high natural population growth despite the decrease in the natural population growth rate and the fertility rate in the past years.

The estimated number of males at the end of 2009 was around 2.026 million in the WB and GS, compared to 1.965 million females for an estimated sex ratio of 103.1 males per 100 females. As for the WB, the number of males was 1.259 million compared to 1.221 million females, while the number of males in GS was 767 thousand compared to 744 thousand females; meaning that both the WB and GS kept the same sex ratio of 103.1 males per 100 females.

Data indicate that the dependency ratio in the WB and GS has dropped from 101.3 in 1997 to 80.5 in 2009. On the regional level, a major difference is noticeable in the dependency ratio for both the WB and GS. In the WB it has dropped from 94.7 in 1997 to 75.6 in 2009, while in GS it dropped from 114.5 in 1997 to 89.1 in 2009.<sup>4</sup>

The WB and GS have witnessed a clear improvement in life expectancy rates during the last 15 years. They increased by approximately 5–6 years, from around 67 years for both males and females in 1992, to 70.5 years for males and 73.2 years for females in the mid 2009. This rate is expected to further increase in the coming years to reach almost 72 years for males and 75 for females in 2015. The increase in the life expectancy rate at birth has led to an increase in the elderly population in the WB and GS, which required the need to conduct research and study on the elderly situation in the WB and GS.

The elderly constitute a low percentage of the population. In mid 2009, the elderly (above 60 years of age) population has reached a percentage of 4.4% of the total population in the WB and GS, with 4.9% in the WB and 3.7% in GS. It is worth mentioning that in developed countries as a whole the proportion of elderly

in the general population was around 16%, whereas in developing countries as a whole the proportion of elderly in the general population was around 6%.

The percentage of males aged 60 years or above in the WB and GS in 2009 was around 3.8% compared to 5.1% of females, with a sex ratio estimated at 78.3 males per 100 females. The higher proportion of females as compared to males in the elderly population is basically due to biological and health reasons which increase the life expectancy for females compared to males in most countries of the world.

Statistics of the Population, Housing and Establishment Census 2007 (PHC-2007) also indicate that 90.6% of the elderly males in the WB are married as opposed to 42.6% of married females, while the percentage of elderly widows has reached 7.6% for males and 47.6% for females. The high percentage of married elderly males compared to females may be explained by the fact that males are more likely to remarry after the death of their wives, besides the higher life expectancy of females compared to that of males.<sup>5</sup>

Data also indicate a mild increase in the median age (the age which divides the population into two numerically, equal groups; i.e., half the people are younger than this age and half are older) in the WB and GS, during the years 1997–2009. The median age increased from 16.4 years in 1997 to 18.3 years in 2009. When comparing data between the WB and GS (each area separately), for the period of 1997–2009, a difference in the median age can be noticed. It increased in the WB from 17.4 years in 1997 to 19.1 years in 2009, whereas it increased in GS from 14.8 years in 1997 to 17 years in 2009.

The crude birth rate (CBR) in the WB and GS decreased from 42.7 births per one thousand inhabitants in 1997 to 32.7 births in 2009; this is due to the drop of fertility rate in the WB and GS. On the regional level, there is a difference in the CBR between the WB and GS, where the CBR rate in the WB has dropped from 41.2 births in 1997 to 30.1 in 2009, whereas in GS, the CBR dropped from 45.4 births in 1997 to 36.9 in 2009.<sup>6</sup> And the population projections indicate that the CBR in the WB and GS will drop from 32.7 births per one thousand inhabitants in 2009 to 31.9 births in 2015.

The available data indicate that the crude death rate (CDR) is relatively low and is expected to drop slightly in the WB and GS, where the CDR has dropped from 4.9 deaths per one thousand inhabitants in 1997 to 4.3 deaths per one thousand inhabitants in 2009, and it is expected to reach 3.6 deaths per one thousand inhabitants in 2015.



When considering each area separately, we notice that there is a slight difference in the CDR between the WB and GS. In the WB, the CDR has dropped from 5.1 deaths in 1997 to 4.4 deaths per one thousand inhabitants in 2009 and it is expected to reach 3.8 deaths per one thousand inhabitants in 2015. Whereas in GS, the CDR has dropped from 4.7 deaths in 1997 to 4.1 deaths in 2009, and it is expected to reach around 3.5 deaths per one thousand inhabitants in 2015.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the decrease in the total fertility rate, the natural population growth rate in the WB and GS is still high since it has reached 3% in 2007, and 2.9% in mid 2009, with 2.6% in the WB and 3.3% in GS. The growth rates are expected to remain unchanged for the next few years, as the low level of death rates and high level of fertility rates will result in an increase in the natural population growth rates, which will require appropriate economic and social policies to deal with such an increase.<sup>8</sup>

Data indicate that the total fertility rate in the WB and GS was 4.6 births in 2007, compared with 4.9 births in 1999 as opposed to 6 births in 1997. Fertility in the WB and GS is considered to be high compared to the levels currently prevailing in other countries. High fertility rates are mainly due to early marriage especially among females, and the desire to procreate as well as customs and traditions prevailing in the Palestinian society, but there are indications which confirm that fertility has started to decline during the last decade of the last century.

When considering each area separately, one can notice that the total fertility rate in GS was higher than in the WB during the period 1997–2007, reaching 4.1 births in the WB in 2007 compared to 5.6 births in 1997, whereas in GS, it was 5.3 births in 2007 compared to 6.9 births in 1997. Also, the average number of children born to married women in the WB and GS in 2006 was about 4.7 children; where in the WB it was 4.6 children and in the GS it was 5 children.

A high total fertility rate can be noticed in the WB and GS as compared to the Arab countries, where it was estimated in 2009 at 3.5 births in Jordan, 3.1 births in Egypt and 1.7 births in Tunisia. Therefore, the WB and GS are considered to be among areas having a high fertility rate.<sup>9</sup>

As a result of low death rates in the WB and GS, the life expectancy of individuals has increased as it reached 71.8 years in 2009 with 70.5 years for males and 73.2 years for females. As for the WB, life expectancy in 2009 was 72.3 years with 70.9 for males and 73.7 years for females, whereas in GS, it reached 71.2 years with 69.9 years for

males and 72.5 for females. Another reason for the increase in the life expectancy of individuals is health level improvement and gradual decrease in mortality rates of infants and children.<sup>10</sup>

Results of the PHC-2007 indicate that 8.8% of households is headed by females in the WB and GS; 9.7% and 7.1% in the WB and GS respectively. The size of female headed households is relatively small, with an average size of 3.5 persons in the WB and GS as compared to 6.5 persons for male headed households. Female-headed families in the WB and GS often rise as a consequence of husband's death or immigration.<sup>11</sup>

In terms of household size, data point out that there was a decline in the average household size in the WB and GS, where the average household size declined from 6.4 persons according to 1997 population census to 5.8 persons according to 2007 population census. The average declined in the WB from 6.1 persons in 1997 to 5.5 in 2007, while it declined in GS from 6.9 persons to 6.5 for the same period. In mid 2009, the estimated number of households in the WB and GS has reached 675,524 families, of which 445,684 households in the WB and 229,840 in GS.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the fact that the pattern of extended families is declining and nuclear families prevailing, the family in the WB and GS remains conservative of family bonds, and respect and care for the elderly, despite major transformations on the lifestyle of Palestinian families over the past years; the results of PHC-2007 has indicated that the percentage of extended families has dropped to 15.3% in 2007, with 12.2% in the WB and 24.5% in GS. The elderly head 15.4% of households. The households headed by elderly people are relatively small, they were comprised of 3.9 persons compared to 5.8 for households headed by other than elderly.<sup>13</sup>

The final results of the census also showed that the percentage of nuclear family in the WB in 2007 reached 83.2% compared to 74% in 1997. On the other hand, the number of nuclear Palestinian families in GS is estimated at 160,111 families accounting for 73% of the total Palestinian families in GS, while in 1997 this percentage was at 71.8% in GS. This confirms the trend towards an increase in nuclear families at the expense of extended families.

With regard to the prevalence of illiteracy, results show that illiteracy rates among adults in the WB and GS are among the lowest rates in the world, where the illiteracy rate among individuals aged 15 years or above, was 5.9% with 2.9% males and 9.1% females in 2008, noting that an illiterate person is defined as a person who cannot read or write a simple sentence about his daily life.



Results also indicate a significant drop in the illiteracy rates since 1997, among individuals 15 years and above the rate was 5.9% in 2008 while it was 13.9% in 1997; this means that there are 6 illiterate individuals per 100 individuals aged 15 years and above and this declining trend applies to both genders where it dropped from 7.8% in 1997 to 2.9% in 2008 among males, and from 20.3% to 9.1% among females for the same period. The drop was highest among males reaching 62.8% compared to 55.2% among females.

As for type of locality, the illiteracy rate in urban localities decreased from 12.4% in 1997 to 5.2% in 2008, while it dropped from 16.9% to 7.5% in the rural localities and from 13.5% to 5.9% in the refugee camps, for the same period. Data indicate that illiteracy rate among the elderly (65 years and over) was the highest compared to other age groups, reaching 59.2% in 2008, while it was 0.8% among youth (15–24 years) for the same year.

Despite the low illiteracy rates, there were still about 126 thousand illiterate individuals in the WB and GS aged 15 years and over in 2008. There are approximately 84 thousands in the WB and 42 thousands in GS. According to their sex, there are around 31 thousand illiterate males and 95 thousand illiterate females.<sup>14</sup>

Time series indicate that the number of marriage contracts in 1997–2008 has increased steadily with the exception of the years 2000 and 2002, knowing that in 2002, the country—the WB in particular—went through very difficult economic and political conditions, the most important of which was the invasion of the WB and its reoccupation by the Israeli occupation. Data indicate that the number of registered marriage contracts in 2008 in the WB and GS has increased compared to 2007, as it reached 33,774 contracts in 2008 compared to 32,685 contracts in 2007, an increment of approximately 1,089 contracts. In the WB, the number of marriage contracts registered in 2008 was 19,006, a proportion of 56.3% of the marriage contracts registered in the WB and GS, which represents 430 more contracts than in the year 2007. Whereas in GS, the number of marriage contracts registered in 2008 was 14,768 contracts, a proportion of 43.7% of the number of contracts registered in the WB and GS, and it represents 659 more contracts than in the year 2007.<sup>15</sup>

The crude marriage rate was 8.8 marriages per one thousand of the population in 2008, in the WB and GS, with 8 in the WB and 10.3 in GS. Whereas the crude marriage rate in 2007 was 8.8 marriages per one thousand of the population, in the WB and GS, with 8 in the WB and 10.1 in GS.<sup>16</sup>

Early marriage is a phenomenon that is still prevailing in the WB and GS despite the marked rise in the median age for males at first marriage in 2008 as compared to 1997, which was 24.8 years for males compared to 23 years in 1997, while for females it was 19.5 years in 2008 compared to 18 years in 1997. In the WB, the median age at first marriage was 25.4 years for males and 19.8 years for females, whereas in GS, it was 24 years for males and 19 years for females in 2008.<sup>17</sup>

The number of registered divorces tends to rise in general, as the number of divorces registered at the Shari'a courts and churches in the WB and GS was 4,399 in 2008 compared to 4,043 divorces in 2007, i.e., an estimated rise of 356 divorces. On the other hand, the number of registered divorces at the Shari'a courts and churches in 2008 in the WB was 2,803 divorces, constituting 63.7% of the registered divorces in the WB and GS, thus, an increase of approximately 405 incidences compared to 2007. As for GS, the number of registered divorces was 1,596, constituting 36.3% of the registered divorces in the WB and GS in 2008, and an estimated drop of 49 divorces compared to 2007.<sup>18</sup>

The crude divorce rate in the WB and GS has reached 1.1 divorces per one thousand of the population in 2008, with 1.2 divorces per one thousand of the population in the WB and 1.1 divorces per one thousand of the population in GS. While in 2007 the crude divorce rate in the WB and GS was 1.1 divorces per one thousand of the population, with one divorce per one thousand of the population in the WB and 1.1 divorces per one thousand of the population in GS.<sup>19</sup>

The final results of the PHC-2007 indicate that 107,785 people in the WB have at least one disability—for a proportion of 5.3% of the total population of the WB—55,557 of whom are males and 52,228 are females.

Concerning the prevalence of disability in the governorates of the WB, the proportion of individuals showing at least one disability in the governorates of Tulkarm, Qalqilya and Salfit was approximately 6.7% of the total population of each governorate, whereas, the proportion was 5.9% in the governorate of Jenin versus 5.6% in the governorate of Nablus. On the other hand, the proportion of the prevalence of disability was 5.2% in the governorate of Bethlehem and 4.9% in the governorate of Tubas, whereas the proportion registered in the governorate of Jericho and al-Aghwar was 4.6%, while for both governorates of Ramallah-al-Bireh and Hebron the proportion was 4.5% of the total population in each governorate.

Census data showed that difficulty (disability) in vision represented the highest number of disabilities in the WB with 60,041 persons, 29,562 males and 30,479 females. On the other hand, difficulty (disability) in communication had the lowest number in the WB, totaling 14,781 persons, 7,899 males and 6,882 females.<sup>20</sup>

The results of the PHC-2007 show that the number of occupied housing units in the WB and GS was 629,185 units, distributed by 414,493 in the WB and 214,692 in GS.

The average housing density in the WB and the GS in general was 1.7 persons per room in 2008; the average for the WB was 1.6 persons per room whereas the average for GS was 1.9 persons per room. Data also indicate that in the WB and GS 12.7% was the percentage of high density households with a housing density reaching three or more individuals per room. The average number of rooms in a housing unit is 3.6 rooms, in the WB and GS. Data show that 15.9% of the households in the WB and GS lived in housing units with 1–2 rooms, 16.9% in the WB versus 13.9% in GS.

The Figures of 2008 indicate that 51% of households, in the WB and GS, live in traditional house (*Dar*), while 47.2% live in apartments. Data also show that the proportion of families living in traditional houses in the WB is greater than in GS with 51.8% and 49.2% respectively, while those living in apartments are in a proportion of 45.8% in the WB and 50% in GS. With regard to household ownership, data indicate that 86.3% of families in the WB and GS live in housing units owned by a member of the family, while 9.2% live in rented housing units.<sup>21</sup>

The results of the Household Environmental Survey in the WB and GS for 2009 showed that 88.4% of households live in houses receiving water from the public water network, with 95.8% in GS and 84.5% in the WB. It showed that approximately 47.2% of Palestinian households live in houses connected to tight or porous cesspits, where waste water is disposed through; with 63.5% in the WB and 16% in GS. While there are 52.1% of Palestinian households are living in houses connected by public sewage network; with 35.5% in the WB and 83.8% in GS.<sup>22</sup>

The results of the household energy survey 2009 indicate that the proportion of households in the WB and GS living in houses connected to the public electricity network maintained almost the same average of 2008 reaching 99.9% in 2009 compared to 99.8% in 2008.<sup>23</sup>

Following is the distribution of population according to PCBS estimates, noting that the average household size remained unchanged according to the

census results of 1997 and 2007, knowing that those estimates assume that the sex ratio remained fixed in 2009 based on the 2007 census.

The following table summarizes the most important indicators by governorate in the WB and GS with some comparisons between censuses of 1997 and 2009.

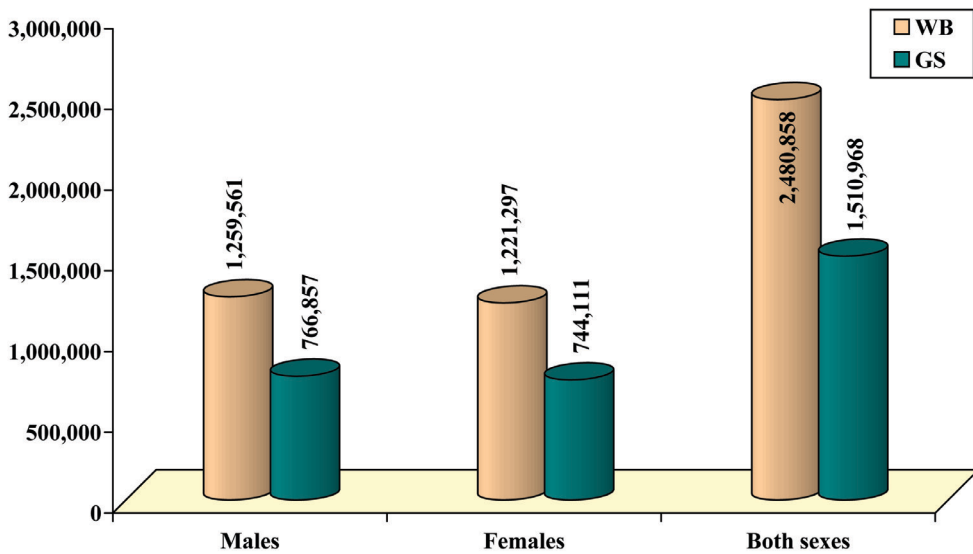
**Table 3/7: Estimated Population Count According to the Governorate, Region and Sex at the End of 2009<sup>24</sup>**

Governorate	Population count*			Average household size		Sex ratio	
	Males	Females	Both	1997	2007	1997	2009
<b>WB</b>	<b>1,259,561</b>	<b>1,221,297</b>	<b>2,480,858</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>103.2</b>	<b>103.1</b>
Jenin	137,405	133,109	270,514	5.9	5.4	103.8	103.2
Tubas	27,358	26,500	53,858	6.1	5.6	103.1	103.3
Tulkarm	82,970	81,260	164,230	5.8	5.3	102.2	102.1
Nablus	170,064	166,189	336,253	5.9	5.4	103.3	102.3
Qalqilya	49,323	46,874	96,197	6.1	5.5	105.7	105.2
Salfit	31,734	30,697	62,431	6	5.4	103.6	103.3
Ramallah & al-Bireh	149,523	147,439	296,962	5.9	5.3	100.4	101.4
Jericho & al-Aghwar	22,435	22,373	44,808	6	5.6	101.7	100.3
Jerusalem	192,604	186,000	378,604	5.4	5.2	102.1	103.5
Bethlehem	94,903	91,439	186,342	5.8	5.4	104.8	103.8
Hebron	301,242	289,417	590,659	6.7	6.1	104.9	104.1
<b>GS</b>	<b>766,857</b>	<b>744,111</b>	<b>1,510,968</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>103.1</b>	<b>103.1</b>
North district of Gaza	148,595	143,163	291,758	7.2	6.7	103.7	103.7
Gaza	267,999	258,793	526,792	6.9	6.5	103.6	103.5
Dayr al-Balah	110,600	108,737	219,337	6.9	6.4	102.4	101.6
Khan Yunis	146,016	141,496	287,512	6.9	6.3	102.5	103.1
Rafah	93,647	91,922	185,569	6.9	6.5	102	101.8
<b>Total (WB &amp; GS)</b>	<b>2,026,418</b>	<b>1,965,408</b>	<b>3,991,826</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>103.2</b>	<b>103.1</b>

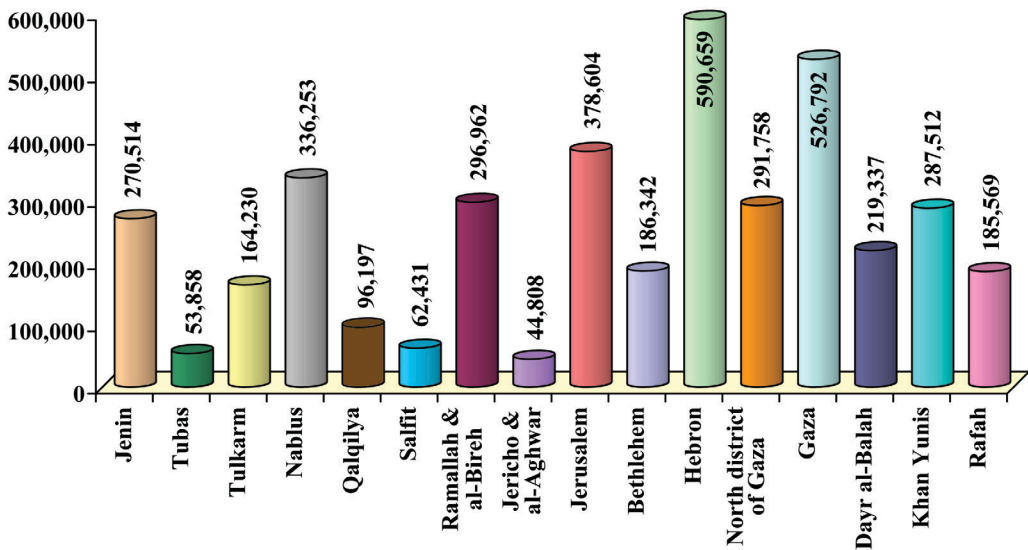
\* The number of males and females in the governorates are based on the researcher's estimates based on PCBS data of mid 2009 and 2010, assuming a fixed sex ratio in each governorate according to the 2007 census results.



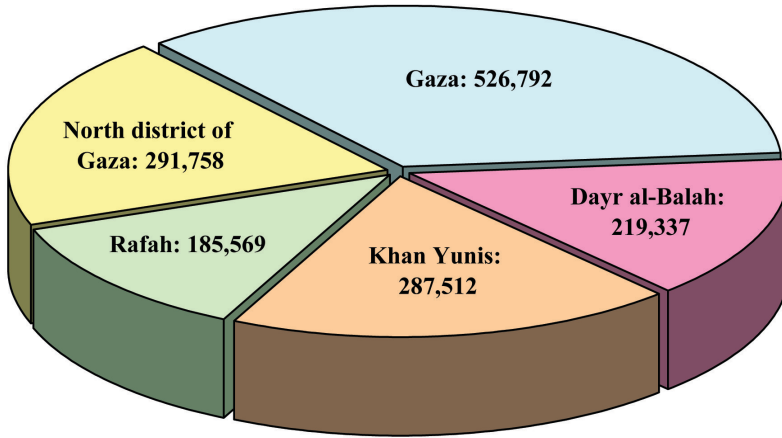
### Population Count in the WB and GS at the End of 2009



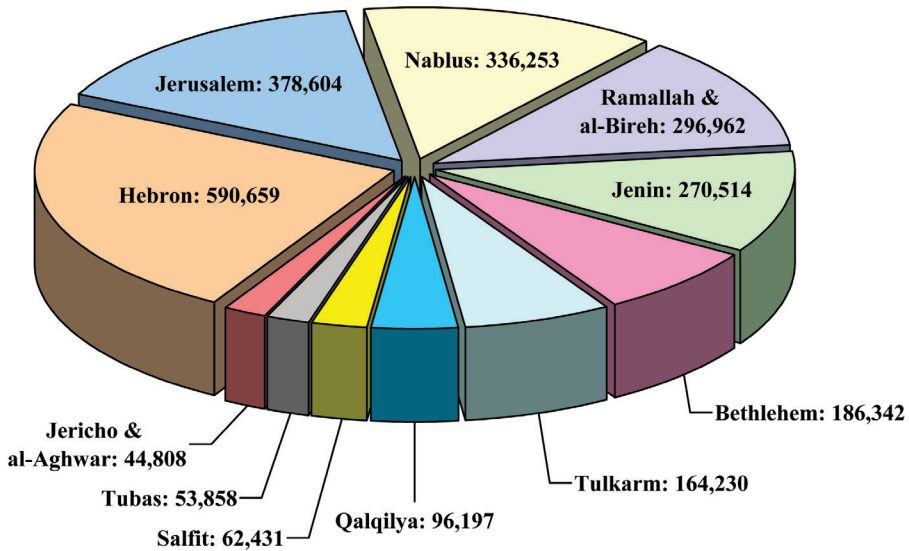
### Population Count by Governorate at the End of 2009



### Population Count in GS Governorates at the End of 2009



### Population Count in the WB Governorates at the End of 2009





The population is distributed on 16 governorates, 5 of which are in GS and 11 in the WB, where Hebron is the largest governorate in terms of population, with an estimated population of approximately 591 thousand inhabitants, at the end of 2009, followed by Gaza governorate, with an estimated population of approximately 527 thousands. The third is Jerusalem with an estimated population of 379 thousands, for the same year. The governorates with the smallest population are Jericho, Tubas, Salfit and Qalqilya with estimated populations of approximately 45 thousands, 54 thousands, 62 thousands and 96 thousands respectively.

According to the population census results, the average household size has dropped from 6.4 in 1997 to 5.8 in 2007. It can also be noted that the average household size has dropped significantly in all Palestinian governorates during the period of 1997–2007, and assuming that this trend will persist, the average household size will drop by an estimate of one person about every 17 years in the WB and GS.

## **2. Palestinian Territories Occupied in 1948 (Israel)**

The estimated number of Palestinians living in Israel by the end of 2009 was approximately 1.25 million Palestinians. Available data for the year 2008 on Palestinians living in Israel revealed that their society is a young one, as 40% of the population are aged under 15 years and 3.1% are aged 65 years and over.<sup>25</sup>

The total fertility rate for Palestinians living in Israel has reached 3.62 births per woman for the year 2007; this rate is considered to be relatively high when compared to the Israeli fertility rates. Data also indicate that the average Palestinian household size has reached five members in 2007. And the CBR for the year 2007 was approximately 27.3 births per one thousand of population, whereas the neonatal mortality rate for the same year was 7.2 deaths per one thousand live births, knowing that the sex ratio for the year 2007 has reached 103.6 males per 100 females. With regard to the illiteracy rate among Palestinians aged 15 years and over, it has reached 6.1%. There are 26.2% of the Palestinian families in Israel live in housing units with a housing density ranging between two individuals and more. These data do not include the Arab population in the Syrian Golan Heights nor does it include the population in J1 of Jerusalem as well as the Lebanese who have moved for a temporary residence in Israel. While Israel takes into consideration all of these groups within its population and within Arab population as a whole.<sup>26</sup>

### 3. Jordan

At the end of 2009, the Palestinian population in Jordan was estimated to be around 3.24 million, according to the PCBS estimates. Available data indicate also that Palestinians living in Jordan in 2007 constitute a relatively young community where 35.9% are aged below 15 years. The total fertility rate among Palestinians in Jordan was 3.3 births per woman and the Palestinian average household size has reached 5.1 members in 2007.

In 2000, Palestinians living in Jordan aged 15 years and over were distributed according to their marital status with a proportion of 50.2% males classified as never married as opposed to 37.4% females. It can be noticed that the highest percentage of those who never married is in the age group (15–19 years) with 99.2% males and 87.9% females. A high proportion of Palestinian female widows can be noticed in Jordan as it has reached 2.6% for females compared to 0.6% male widowers.

The total fertility rate among Palestinian women in Jordan was approximately 3.3 births per woman in 2007 with women in the age group (25–29 years) contributing mostly in this rate which reached 173.6 births per one thousand women. And the total fertility rate among women in the age group (30–34 years) was 149.2 births per one thousand women in 2007. The average Palestinian household size has reached 5.1 members in 2007. The neonatal mortality rate in the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan was 22.5 deaths per one thousand live births in 2004, while the under five mortality rate of children (U5MR) was 25.1 deaths per one thousand live births for the same year.<sup>27</sup>

According to the statistics of the UNRWA, as of 31/12/2009 there were about 1.98 million registered Palestinian refugees compared to around 1.95 million Palestinian refugees registered at the UNRWA and residing in Jordan at the same date of the year 2008. This means that the population growth rate for registered Palestinian refugees is estimated at around 1.6% per year, and account for 405,666 families, 17.2% of whom live in refugee camps (see table 5/7).<sup>28</sup>

### 4. Syria

The number of UNRWA registered Palestinian refugees in Syria, as of 31/12/2009, was about 472,109 people, for an estimated sex ratio of 100.4 males per 100 females. The Palestinian population is mostly concentrated in Damascus,

where registered Palestinians account for 67% of the total Palestinian refugees registered in Syria. When comparing the Palestinian population registered at the UNRWA as refugees in Syria on 31/12/2009 with the number of refugees on the 31/12/2008 which was 461,897 people, we find that the average annual population growth rate can be estimated at 2.2%. Palestinian refugees in Syria constitute around 117,806 families of whom around 27.1% live in refugee camps; noting that the aforementioned refugee number does not include the Palestinians who were displaced to Syria in 1967 and 1970, since the majority of them are not registered at UNRWA (see table 5/7).<sup>29</sup>

The available data on the Palestinians residing in Syria in 2007 indicate that 33.1% of the population was aged below 15 years, and that the average Palestinian household size was 4.9 members. On the other hand, the total fertility rate in 2007 among Palestinians in Syria was 3.64 births per woman with women in the age group (25–29 years) contributing mostly in this rate which reached 216.1 births per one thousand women in the same age group. The total fertility rate for women in the age group (30–34 years) was 184 births per one thousand women. As for the CBR, it has reached 29.3 births per one thousand of the population. The neonatal mortality rate in 2006 among Palestinians in Syria was 25 deaths per one thousand live births, whereas the average mortality rate among children below 5 years of age was 30 deaths per one thousand live births for the same period.

Palestinians aged 15 years and over residing in Syria in 2007 were distributed according to their marital status with a proportion of 48.3% males classified as never married and 40.8% females. It can be noticed that the highest percentage of those who never married is in the age group (15–19 years) with 100% males and 92.7% females, a high proportion of Palestinian female widows can be noticed in Syria as it has reached 4.2% females compared to 0.5% male widowers.<sup>30</sup>

## 5. Lebanon

The number of Palestinian residents registered at the UNRWA as refugees as of 31/12/2009 and residing in Lebanon was 425,640 people, compared to 422,188 people on the same date of the year 2008, hence an average annual population growth rate estimated at only 0.8%. The refugees in Lebanon constitute 113,594 families, 53.2% of which live in refugee camps. The average Palestinian household size in Lebanon is 3.73 members for the year 2009, compared to 3.8 members in 2008 (see table 5/7).<sup>31</sup>

The available data on the Palestinians residing in Lebanon in 2007 indicate that 32.9% of the population was aged below 15 years, whereas the percentage aged 65 years and over was 5.4%. The sex ratio was 98.4 males per 100 females. Data also indicate that 0.5% of household size ranges between 6–7 members. On the other hand, the total fertility rate was 3 births per woman in 2007 and the neonatal mortality rate in 2004 among Palestinian living in Lebanon was 19.2 deaths per one thousand live births. The mortality rate of children below 5 years of age was 20.2 deaths per one thousand live births in 2004, and the CBR was 21.8 births per one thousand of the population in 2007.

The proportion of Palestinian population in Lebanon who are above 15 years of age and who have never married was 44.1% with 47.9% males and 40.5% females. The proportion of those who have been married was 48.7% with 49.6% males and 47.9% females. The proportion of divorced was 1.5% with 0.8% males and 2% females and the proportion of widows among Palestinians residing in Lebanon was around 5.7% with 1.7% male widowers and 9.6% female widows, those figures being for the year 2006.

With regard to the classification of women (15–49 years) based on their level of education for the year 2007, less than 4.5% were uneducated, while 76.5% have completed elementary or preparatory school and 19.1% have high school diplomas or higher.<sup>32</sup>

## 6. Iraq

The situation of the Palestinians in Iraq doesn't match with the situation of Palestinians in any other country. The Palestinians have endured in Iraq after the American occupation killings, kidnappings and forcible displacement by some militias, which forced the majority of the population to be displaced from one place to another, whether inside or outside Iraq, or in temporary refugee camps set up on the borders shared by Iraq and its neighboring countries.

It is also worth mentioning that the number of Palestinian refugees in Iraq has been reduced from 34 thousand refugees, officially registered before the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, to an estimated 10 thousand to 15 thousand Palestinians in 2008, after the militias had killed, injured and displaced thousands of them.<sup>33</sup> In addition, in March 2008, the PLO Department of Refugee Affairs also estimated the number of Palestinian refugees who were still in Iraq at 15 thousand refugees.<sup>34</sup>

Since 2003, Palestinians are living the horrors of forcible displacement and hardship inside the refugee camps on the borders in much deteriorated social, economical and security conditions resulting from a bad environmental situation. In addition the camps suffer deterioration of the health situation and lack adequate treatments and have urgent need for treatments in hospitals. A number of deaths have been reported in the refugee camps of al-Tanf, al-Waleed and al-Hol because of the deterioration of their health condition.<sup>35</sup>

In 2009, Majed al-Zeer, the Director General of the London based Palestinian Return Centre (PRC) said that two thousand Palestinian refugees displaced from Iraq to Cyprus are facing many difficulties in their new life, and announced that the “PRC is trying to help as much as possible all the Palestinian refugees across the world. We are to launch a legal unit in support of their cause which has been founded 61 years ago. This unit aims at solving their problems legally and address their concerns.” This came during an inspection visit by al-Zeer to the Palestinian refugees who fled their houses from Iraq to Cyprus. Majed al-Zeer confirmed the PRC’s support for the refugees and what haunts them, as they now face many problems after their arrival to Cyprus. The most important of these problems is the different language and education, the challenges to engage in a European culture far from their Arabic and Islamic values and customs, aside from the identity and cultural issues.<sup>36</sup>

The PRC expressed its deepest regrets for the marginalization and dereliction of the Palestinian refugees in Iraq from the Arab community. A statement published by the PRC said that despite blood, religion and brotherhood bonds between Palestinians and their Arab brothers, refugees are being settled in Sweden, Iceland, Brazil, India, Cyprus, Malaysia, and finally the USA, while the Arab regimes did not bat an eyelid to help in their cause. The American Newspaper *The Wall Street Journal* had reported that the US administration agreed to resettle 1,350 Palestinian Refugees that had been displaced from Iraq after the US invasion in one of the American states. According to the newspaper, this approval came after a request from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The PRC added that since 2003 and before, Arab governments along with the PLO have ignored those refugees’ rights and those governments have not provided them with any political or financial support, but they were slaughtered and killed on sectarian bases by sectarian militias in Iraq. The current Iraqi government is neglecting to do its duty towards the refugees, as it does not recognize them because they hold

identities issued during the regime of former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein, nor does it give them new identities, and above all, those refugees are not registered on the lists of the UNRWA.<sup>37</sup>

PRC's statement also said that at the end of 2007, the UNHCR has closed the al-Ruwayshid refugee camp after it had resettled the refugees in Brazil and other European countries, while the UNHCR continues to work in al-Waleed and al-Tanf camps to resettle Palestinian refugees in European countries. The affairs of the refugees are being followed-up by the UNHCR office in Syria, their number in the al-Waleed refugee camp is around 1,700 refugees belonging to 322 families<sup>38</sup> while the number of refugees in al-Tanf has reached around 880 refugees in 2009.<sup>39</sup>

On 17/4/2009, the spokesperson of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Jemini Pandya, has declared that 59 Palestinians have been transferred from al-Waleed camp to a center in Romania and she added that they will be later transferred to other countries in the framework of a resettlement program of the UNHCR. It has been decided that 1,200 Palestinians will be transferred from al-Waleed camp to the transit center in Romania, on their way to a resettlement in the USA and Britain. Pandya said that the center has been inaugurated in March 2009 as a result of a tripartite agreement between the Romanian government, the UNHCR and the IOM. It should also be noted that more than 30 countries had received Palestinian refugees on its territory, including Australia, Finland, the Czech Republic, Turkey, USA, UK, France, New Zealand and others.<sup>40</sup>

On the political side, Palestinian President Mahmud 'Abbas and Iraqi President Jalal Talabani held a press conference in Baghdad on 5/4/2009, during which Talabani stated that the Iraqi people had always been... with the Palestinian People in heart and in mind... and they hope to play a true and historical role in contributing to achieving the goal for which the Palestinian people are fighting today, namely the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the land of stand regarding this issue. For his part, President 'Abbas expressed his thanks to the Iraqi government for its interest in the situation of the Palestinians living in Iraq, as it "considers them as part of the Iraqi people and part of the government's concern and a part of Iraqi security," he said. "We are sure they are in safe hands."<sup>41</sup>

According to *al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper many Palestinian sources confirmed on 21/4/2009 that President 'Abbas has formed a commission to supervise the transfer of Palestinian refugees on the Iraqi-Syrian borders to the Kurdistan Region and to Sudan. This happened after having an agreement with the president

of the Kurdistan Region, Massoud Barzani, and the Prime minister of the Region Najirfan Barzani to facilitate matters for the Palestinian refugees and provide them with job opportunities. Thus, their sufferings would be alleviated, according to understandings concluded by President 'Abbas during his visit to Kurdistan Region on 13/4/2009. However, sources denied news reporting the idea of naturalization of Palestinian refugees in Kurdistan, pointing out that what was agreed upon with the Kurdistan Region authorities was to provide refugees with job opportunities and to facilitate their children's education. In a press statement published by the Fatah Movement website and Sama News Agency, the spokesman of Fatah clarified that the task of the commission formed by 'Abbas is to study the Palestinian refugees' situation on the Iraqi-Syrian borders, to solve their problems, evacuate them from this area and house them elsewhere. According to Sama News Agency, sources stated that an agreement was settled between the delegation and Sudanese leaders to provide Palestinian refugees from al-Waleed camp with all facilities, to transfer them to Sudan, to provide them with facilities and to grant them the right of residency and the right to education. The sources pointed out that it has been agreed to transfer nine thousand Palestinian refugees from the Iraqi-Syrian borders to Sudan after fulfilling all formalities.<sup>42</sup>

On the other hand, Arab diplomatic sources revealed to the Jordanian newspaper *Addustour* a resolution draft that was to be submitted to the Arab leaders during the Arab summit, pertaining to the deportation of Palestinians from Iraqi borders to Sudan. The project welcomes the agreement that has been signed between the Sudan, the Palestinian side and the UNHCR and which sets to deport the Palestinians to Sudan for temporary residency, and to try to give them full rights and privileges. The project welcomes the steps undertaken so far especially the visit of a refugee delegation to Sudan, it requests from Arab countries to provide assistance in the refugees' transfer from the borders to Sudan and mandates the Secretary-General to follow-up on this matter. Arab diplomatic sources stated that the reason for withdrawing the resolution draft was the objection of Sudan and other Arab countries for several considerations; as they preferred to conduct this operation normally in coordination with international organizations without legislating it as a decree in an Arab summit. Those sources said that an idea was proposed to settle for what was stated in Damascus Summit concerning the deportation of refugees from their camp at the borders. The sources also stated that there were fears of consecrating what could be understood that in this way, the right of return would be lost.<sup>43</sup>



For its part, Syria called for the need to put pressure on Israel for the return of Palestinian refugees displaced from Iraq to their lands,<sup>44</sup> but it has allowed the establishment of refugee camps within its territory, and after a while, it has also allowed some of them to enter its cities.

## 7. General Comparisons Among Palestinians

The following comparative table represents a summary of the most important comparisons of some demographic indicators among Palestinians for 2007 and 2009 (unless otherwise indicated between parentheses).

**Table 4/7: Selected Demographic Indicators for Palestinians According to Their Place of Residence<sup>45</sup>**

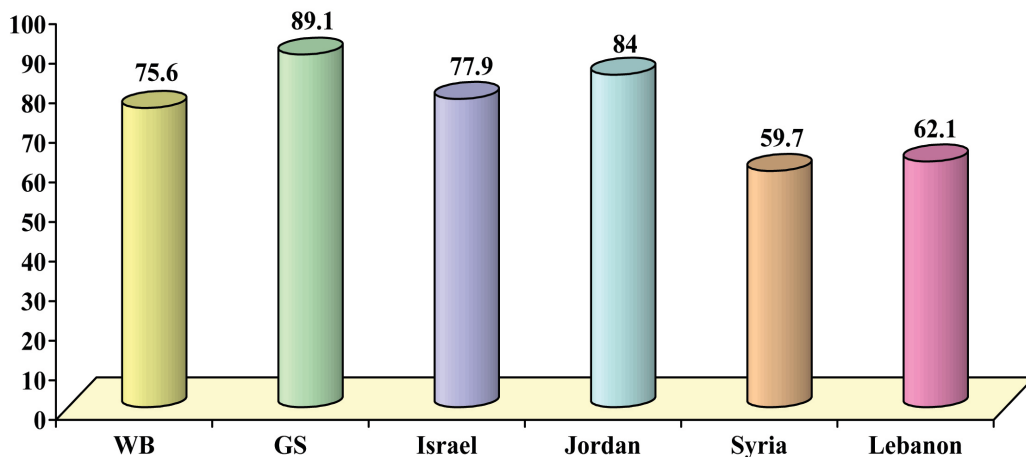
Indicator	WB 2009	GS 2009	WB & GS 2009	Israel 2007	Jordan 2007	Syria 2007	Lebanon 2007
% of individuals 15 years or less	39.7	44.6	41.5	40 (2008)	35.9	33.1	32.9
% of individuals 65 years or over	3.4	2.4	3	3.1 (2008)	5.2	4.3	5.4
Dependency rate (per 100 individuals 15–64 years)	75.6	89.1	80.5	77.9	84	59.7	62.1
Sex ratio (males per 100 females)	103.1	103.1	103.1	103.6 (2008)	-	100.4	98.4
Crude birth rate (births per 1,000 inhabitants)	30.1	36.9	32.7	27.3	-	29.3	21.8
Crude death rate (deaths per 1,000 inhabitants)	4.4	4.1	4.3	2.8 (2006)	-	2.8 (2006)	-
Total fertility rate (births per woman)	4.1 (2007)	5.3 (2007)	4.6 (2007)	3.62	3.3	3.64	3
Natural population growth	2.6	3.3	2.9	2.51	-	2.65	-
Average household size (individuals per house)	5.5 (2007)	6.5 (2007)	5.8 (2007)	5	5.1	4.9	3.73 (2009)

Note: (-) means data is not available.



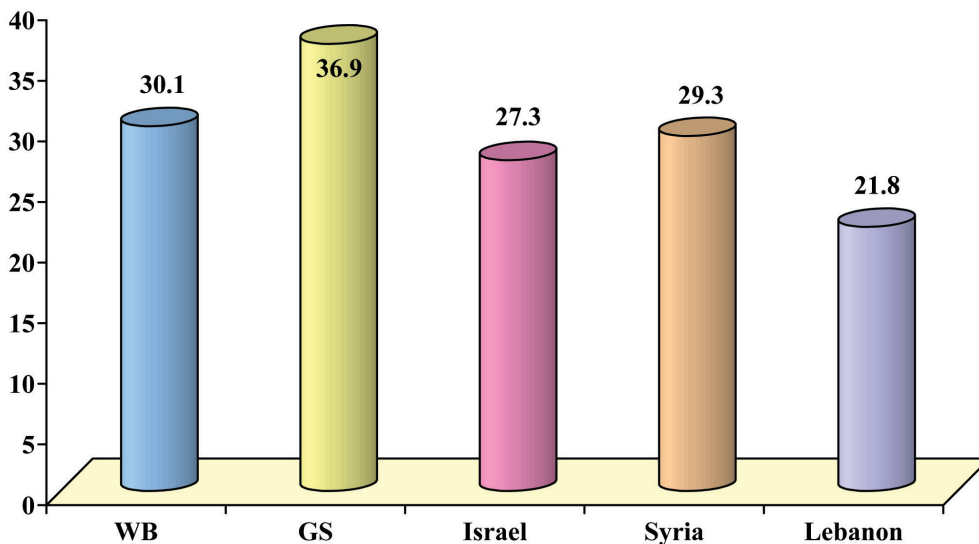


### Dependency Rates of Palestinians According to Their Place of Residence (%)



Note: The dependency rate in the WB and GS is for 2009, while it is for 2007 in Israel, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

### Crude Birth Rate of Palestinians According to Their Place of Residence



Note: The crude birth rate in the WB and GS is for 2009, while it is for 2007 in Israel, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

According to table 4/7, we note the following:

- In general, there is an increase in the number of the elderly and a decrease in the number of children, and this is mainly due to the decrease in the birth rate and other fertility rates.
- The crude birth rates are the highest in the GS and WB, and the lowest in Lebanon and Israel, and this causes demographic pressures on the GS specifically.
- Not only did the crude death rates remain high in the WB and GS, but they also increased compared with 2006, where it reached 3.9. This is mainly due to the Israeli occupation, procedures and racist policies since decades—particularly its killing operations.
- The natural population growth rates (the difference between the birth and death rates) has dropped in the WB and GS. Yet they are still considered high especially in GS.
- The dependency rate in the GS is the highest, followed by the dependency rate of the Palestinians in Jordan, then those in the 1948 occupied territories, whereas Syria and Lebanon represent the lowest dependency rate. Moreover, the highest percentage of those aged 65 and above is in Lebanon, followed by Jordan, and the lowest percentage is in the GS.
- There is a constant decrease of the average household size in the WB and GS compared with the previous years, but this average remains the highest in the GS, with 6.5 members per house compared to only 5.5 in the WB. The lowest average household size is in Lebanon and Syria.

### ***Third: The Palestinian Refugees***

The concept of being a refugee and the measurement of this concept constitute a dilemma for researchers on the subject (refer to the *Palestinian Strategic Report 2006*), and this is mainly due to many factors, among which: the great number of wars and conflicts in the region during the 20th century, especially the 1948 war and the 1967 war, which were followed by the occupation of all Palestine, the first Palestinian *Intifadah* (1987–1990), the second Palestinian *Intifadah* (2000–2006), the multiplicity of the sides controlling the Palestinian regions since British mandate, and the Jordanian annexation of the WB during 1948–1967.

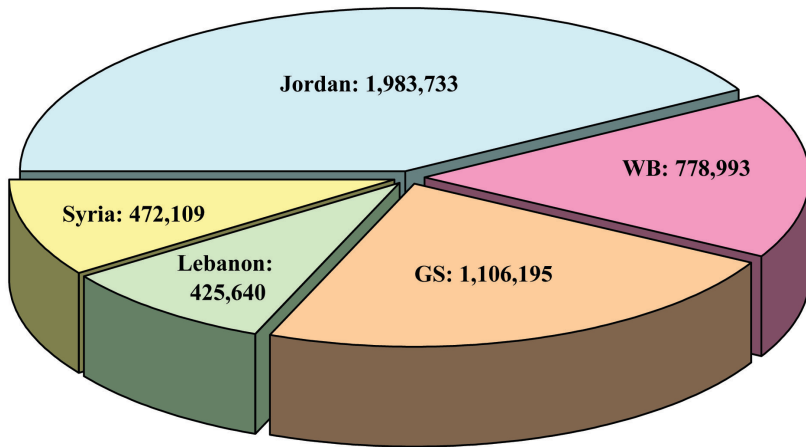


If we were to assume that the number of refugees is really the one that is registered with UNRWA, then the number of refugees registered until 31/12/2009 is as depicted in the table below, with a note from UNRWA: “UNRWA records are based on voluntary reporting by the refugees themselves and, accordingly, are indicative rather than conclusive in respect of the number of Palestine refugees.”

**Table 5/7: Number of Individuals, Births and Families of the Palestinian Refugees Registered with UNRWA in Its Areas of Operations<sup>46</sup>**

Indicator	WB	GS	Lebanon	Syria	Jordan	Total
<b>Individuals (31/12/2009)</b>	778,993	1,106,195	425,640	472,109	1,983,733	<b>4,766,670</b>
<b>Births (30/9/2009)</b>	7,309	23,710	3,539	7,892	18,744	<b>61,149</b>
<b>Average family size 2006</b>	4	4.6	3.9	4.2	5.1	<b>4.6</b>
<b>Average family size (30/9/2009)</b>	3.79	4.43	3.73	3.99	4.87	<b>4.35</b>
<b>Families (30/9/2009)</b>	204,674	248,057	113,594	117,806	405,666	<b>1,089,797</b>
<b>Camps (31/12/2009)</b>	19	8	12	9	10	<b>58</b>
<b>Individuals living in camps (31/12/2009)</b>	197,763	502,747	226,533	127,831	341,494	<b>1,396,368</b>
<b>% of individuals living in camps 2006</b>	25.8	47	52.9	26.6	17.7	<b>29.8</b>
<b>% of individuals living in camps (31/12/2009)</b>	25.4	45.4	53.2	27.1	17.2	<b>29.3</b>

**Number of Palestinian Refugees Registered with UNRWA in Its Areas of Operation as of 31/12/2009**



**Number of Individuals in Camps Registered with UNRWA in Its Areas of Operation as of 31/12/2009**

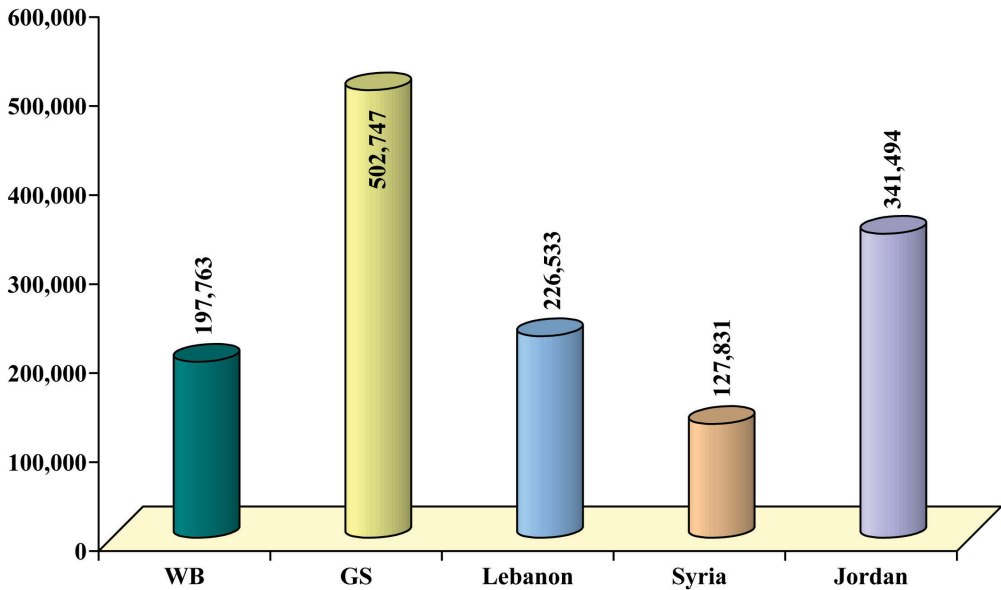


Table 5/7 shows that the number of Palestinian refugees registered in the five regions where UNRWA operates is estimated until 31/12/2009 at around 4.77 million, of which around 41.6% live in Jordan, 39.5% in the 1967 occupied Palestinian territories (23.2% in the GS and 16.3% in the WB), and the rest 18.8% are registered in Syria and Lebanon.

It is noted that the percentage of the inhabitants of Palestinian refugee camps reached 29.3% in 2009, while it was 29.4% in 2008, and 29.8% in 2006. It is also noted that the percentage of camp inhabitants in Lebanon and the GS is the highest compared to the other regions.

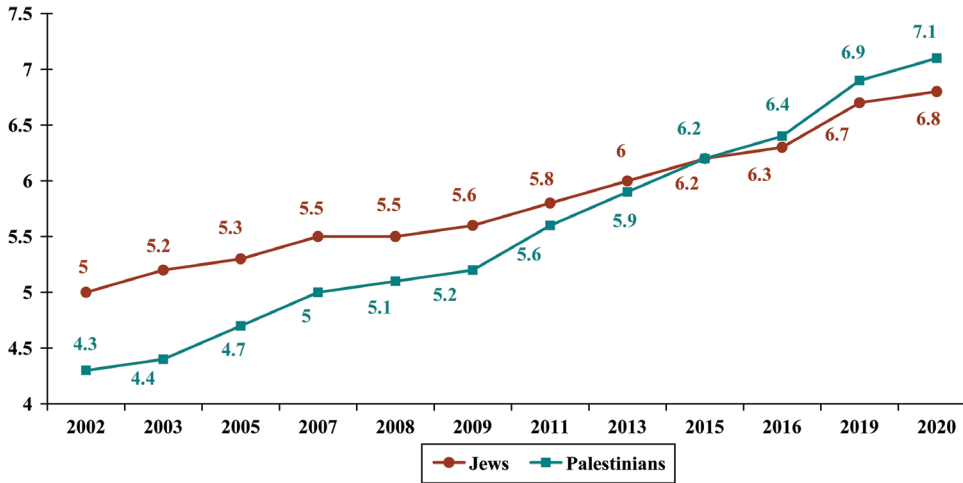
Table 5/7 also shows that the average family size here does not actually represent extended families that live together in the same place, but rather the nuclear family, which has an independent family card assigned to it. Hence, it is not unusual for the average nuclear family size to be less than the average extended family size. This average decreases with time, as we note that in all the regions where refugees are found where the average family size slightly decreases, as the general average decreased from 4.6 members for each family in 2006 to 4.35 members in 2009.

If we look at the number of refugees registered during the 39 years 1970–2009, we find that their registered number in the middle of 1970 was 1,425,219 refugees, then 4,718,899 refugees the middle of 2009. The average annual demographic growth for the refugees registered during the aforementioned period is calculated at 3.1%. Based on this rate, and assuming it is stable in the future as it is calculated over a long period, the number of registered refugees will double throughout 22.7 years approximately. Since the annual growth rate is constant, the annual average of 3.1% for the growth in the number of Palestinian refugees in the world is trustworthy.

### ***Fourth: Demographic Growth Trends***

The estimations of the PCBS indicate that the number of Palestinians in historical Palestine reached around 5.2 million at the end of 2009, while the number of Jews was around 5.6 million based on the estimations of the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). The number of Palestinians and Jews will become on par by the end of 2015, as it will reach approximately 6.2 million, if the current growth rates remain the same. By the end of 2020, only 48.9% of the population will be Jews, as their number will reach 6.8 million as opposed to 7.1 million Palestinians.

### Estimated Number of Palestinians and Jews in Historical Palestine in Selected Years (millions)<sup>47</sup>



Fertility, death, and emigration are considered the main elements and factors in demographic change and growth in any state or region. Emigration does not affect the estimations of the total number of Palestinians in the world, but rather their geographical distribution and place of residence. Thus, the factors that affect the true trends of demographical growth are restricted to the fertility and death rates and trends of Palestinian societies around the world.

On the level of the WB and the GS, there are noticeable differences in their fertility rates, as the aforementioned sources point out that the total fertility rate in the WB decreased from 5.6 births in 1997 to 4.1 births in 2007, while it decreased in the GS from 6.9 births to 5.3 births during the same period. As for the annual natural growth rates for Palestinians in the WB and the GS, they decreased from 3.8% to 2.9% in 1997 and 2007 respectively, and this was accompanied by a decrease in the CBR from 42.7 births per one thousand inhabitants to 32.7 births per one thousand inhabitants during the same period.

Regarding the Palestinians in the world, their number at the end of 2009 was estimated at around 10.87 million as opposed to 10.6 million in 2008, with an average annual growth rate 2.6%. This is an average rate that can be used to estimate the number of Palestinians in the world.



Hence, there is a constant demographic increase despite the decrease in the expected demographic growth rates for Palestinians in historical Palestine, especially in the WB and GS. It must be noted that this increase is greater in the GS than in the WB.

### ***Fifth: Israeli Measures to Influence the Palestinian Demographics***

The year 2009 witnessed an unprecedented frenzied campaign in the demographic struggle on the Palestinian land, especially in Jerusalem and its suburbs. The number of Palestinian inhabitants represents what is known as the demographic threat, and is used in two trends: the first trend confirms that Palestinians represent the minority, and thus they have to either accept the majority or face exile (transfer) or genocide; the second trend states that Palestinians represent a demographic bomb whose explosion cannot be awaited. Hence, all the means are used to displace, imprison, and kill the Palestinians and tighten economic and social life conditions for them and their children. Therefore, both trends have the same objective.

Jerusalem and the Triangle region in Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 represent a real and serious demographic struggle. Specialists expect a continued increase in the number of Palestinians for the coming years, and therefore the occupation will continue taking measures to overcome this by expelling Palestinians and bringing in more Jews.

There is an outcry in Israel and the world regarding what is known as “the Jewishness of Israel.” It has become familiar to discuss final status issues and the role of the Arab minority in Israel, and it has become familiar that some Israeli leaders speak of expelling the Palestinians to PA territories. There are continued attempts to evict them and confiscate their lands or to attempt to prevent them from building on their lands and follow the policy of demolishing houses under the pretext of absence of permit. This is not to mention marginalizing and detaching them from their people and their Arab and Islamic nation. In addition, all types of pressures and measures are used to influence the Palestinian demographics through the Green Line.

Influencing the demographics through the Green Line and in the WB and GS takes many forms, and Israeli governments and parties are extremely innovative

in this matter. Among these innovations is the internal closure policy, whereby a report issued by OCHA-oPt revealed that occupation increases limitations on the movements of Palestinians in the WB, whereby tens of Palestinians were arrested within two weeks. Also, the Israeli army conducted more than 100 searches of houses and civil institutions.<sup>48</sup>

A report by Mossawa Center, the Advocacy Center for Arab Citizens in Israel, that was issued on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination confirms the increase of Israeli assaults on the Palestinians of the 1948 areas. The report, which monitored racism according to the recognized local and international standards, indicated a rise in racial discrimination incidents.<sup>49</sup>

For the seventh time, Israel is extending the racial Citizenship Law, which tears apart thousands of Palestinian families in the 1948 areas, if one of the spouses is from the WB and GS, despite the condemnation of this law by legal sides, among which is the Israeli Supreme Court even. This law gives the “right” to the Minister of Interior to refrain from giving a residency permit to one of the Palestinian spouses if they are from the WB or GS for security purposes. The new formulation even completely prohibits issuing any residency permit to GS inhabitants.

Deputy Mohammad Barakeh, the head of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, said that this is one example—albeit a particularly harsh one—of the Israeli racist policy that wants to control Palestinian individuals. The Israeli government is aware of the problem this law poses regarding human rights. It is why it ratifies it according to a formulation of an emergency law, in order to avoid any international legal objection—that is, if it listens to the international criticism regarding its racist policy in the first place.<sup>50</sup>

The Knesset also passed Israel Lands Administration Law (Amendment No. 7). This land privatization law consecrates the pillage of Palestinian land and properties and stipulates the privatization of confiscated Palestinian land as well as the properties of the Palestinian refugees who were obliged to leave their homeland since *al-Nakbah* in 1948.

The head of the National Democratic Assembly at the Knesset, Jamal Zahalka, considered that the new law is a consecration of the pillage of Palestinian land and properties, which started in 1948 and is still ongoing. He said that the law is discriminatory, as it allows lands, in the agrarian and small towns, to be allocated in accordance with “admissions committee” mechanisms and only to candidates



approved by Jewish and Zionist organizations, such as the Jewish Agency and Jewish National Fund (JNF), that was created by the Fifth Zionist Congress, thus completely excluding Arabs from buying land or housing in these towns. Consequently, this law led to a deal between the Hebrew state and the Jewish National Fund, whereby 70 thousand donums are transferred to the Fund, which prohibits the sale or lease of the land it controls to Arabs. Zahalka added, “This law will bar Arabs from residing in dozens of communities. The Arab public does not recognize the legitimacy of this law and anything that derives from it.”<sup>51</sup>

A report issued by OCHA-oPt stated Palestinian construction is effectively prohibited in 44% of the WB, in areas that have been largely designated for the use of Israeli settlements or the Israeli military. The report also stated that Israel’s planning regime in Area C directly contributes to the poor living conditions confronting many Palestinian residents of the WB, as it is hard for them to obtain building permits from Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) for vital infrastructure projects, schools and clinics.

In addition, the report revealed that as a result of this restrictive planning regime, tens of thousands of Palestinians wishing to build in most parts of Area C are left with no choice other than to carry-out “unauthorized” construction on their land to meet their housing needs and risk demolition of their structures and subsequent displacement. In 2009, Israel demolished 180 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C.<sup>52</sup>

### ***Sixth: The Palestinian Emigration and Brain Drain***

A Palestinian public survey conducted by Near East Consulting (NEC) revealed that 23% of Palestinians prefer to move to another country if they had the chance to do so. Of those who wish to leave, 30% in the GS and 17% in the WB. It is also highest among young people, especially males.

The survey also showed that 8% of the respondents said that a member of their household has migrated internally. That internal migration was primarily targeting the Ramallah governorate, followed by the governorates of Khan Younis, Gaza, Jericho and Nablus.

According to the survey, the crushing majority of the respondents, i.e., 86% are concerned over the future: 91% in the GS and 82% in the WB. The results show

that the main source of concern in the WB is the economic hardship, where it is 38% in the WB compared with 16% in the GS. The main source of concern in the GS is the Israeli occupation (34%) and the internal struggle of forces (29%).<sup>53</sup>

The results of this survey must be taken with caution, as the Israeli occupation remains the main reason behind most of the problems of Palestinians who endure it, whether these problems are political, economic or security-related.

### ***Seventh: The Palestinians Outside Palestine and the Right of Return***

The bet that the Palestinian people will accept to waive the right of return and will forget Palestine in two or more generations, or will accept another alternative that does not include the right of return, is a losing bet. All the Palestinian sides and parties adhere to this right, and the related surveys reveal that the successive generations will not waive the right of return, but rather that the Palestinian people have become more adamant about its presence on its land than ever before.

Beirut Center for Research and Information conducted a poll on the right of return, as commissioned by the Thabit Organization for the Right of Return. This poll adopted a statistical methodology that takes into account the demographic distribution in the various Palestinian camps, in addition to the various age groups of both genders. The results pointed out that 89% believe that the return will happen, 94% want a unified political reference, 43.2% give the priority to social and civil rights, and only 9.6% consider that the international community (negotiations and peace settlement) can achieve the return.<sup>54</sup>

In the seventh Palestinians in Europe Conference, Palestinian leaders and officials stressed on the fact that the right of return to the Palestinian lands which they were coerced to leave in 1948 does not have a statute of limitation. They added that the Palestinian generations will not stop working towards the return to the land of their fathers and forefathers. This was said during the speeches of Palestinian officials at the closing of the Palestinians in Europe Conference, under the theme “Return is a right, no Consent and no Concession,” which was held on 2/5/2009 in Milano, Italy, in presence of more than ten thousand Palestinians. The conference’s secretary-general, ‘Adil ‘Abdullah, stressed on the inevitability of the



return of Palestinian refugees to their land and homes, pointing to the inability of the Israeli occupation to achieve its objectives through war and siege. Sheikh Ra'id Salah addressed the crowds in Milano, saying: "Dear brothers and sisters, through your gracious assembly, I call upon the whole world and say: today Gaza's victory and tomorrow the victory of the honorable Jerusalem. Today Gaza's mosques victory, and tomorrow the victory of *al-Aqsa* Mosque."<sup>55</sup>

On 28/5/2009, and in the framework of the activities to commemorate *al-Nakbah* 61st anniversary, the Higher Commemoration Committee in the GS organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice of the dismissed government a popular conference entitled "Witnesses of *al-Nakbah*." During the conference, the minister of Justice Muhammad Faraj al-Ghul stressed on the importance of demanding the right of return for the Palestinian refugees, considering anyone who thinks of waiving it to be "a criminal with respect to the cause" who must be tried before the Palestinian justice. The president of the Higher Commemoration Committee, Husam Ahmad, accused the UN and the great colonialist countries of providing the adequate conditions and cover for Israel in order "to plant it [Israel] in the Arab region," displace the Palestinian people and confiscate their land. He assured also the Palestinian people's adherence to their land.<sup>56</sup>

In the WB, the *al-Nakbah* Commemoration Committee organized public processions to affirm the adherence of the Palestinian people to the right of return. It also gave the names of abandoned Palestinian cities and towns to the streets and squares of the WB.<sup>57</sup>

The Union of Palestinian Communities and Associations in Diaspora organized its first conference in Vienna on 30–31/5/2009, with the participation of representatives of 37 Palestinian communities and 12 organizations. The conference's closing statement affirmed the necessity to end divisions and restore internal unity, reunite institutions on national foundations, and fortify the political system in its two parts: the PLO and the PA. The persons present at the conference asked the PA to refrain from going back to the table of negotiations with Israel unless guarantees are received regarding the ceasing of settlement building, land confiscation and wall building, in addition to removing checkpoints and barriers. They stressed on the adherence to the right of return that was guaranteed by international legitimacy resolutions, the most important of which is resolution 194. They also considered that no security, stability, calm, or peace can be achieved except by the return [of Palestinians to their land].<sup>58</sup>

In the framework of the adherence of the Palestinian refugees to the right of return, nine Palestinian committees that are active in this field issued a statement in Damascus on 27/6/2009 about the establishment of the Palestinian Council for the Right of Return (Mithaq), which is an institutional framework that preserves the right of the Palestinian people to return to the lands from which they were displaced. The charter endorsed by the council members affirmed that historical Palestine was not for partitioning and was the homeland of none other but the Palestinian people. It stressed that the Palestinian refugees are entitled to return to their cities, villages and homes of their fathers and forefathers from where they were expelled in 1948, adding that the Right of Return was not for bargaining, negotiations or referendum considering the surrendering of that right as “high treason.” It said also that there is no legitimacy for any party trying to give up the Right of Return. It added that the state of Palestinian division and the absence of a political leadership for the Palestinian people in light of that rift were threatening the Right of Return.<sup>59</sup>

## *Conclusion*

Approximately 62 years after the 1948 catastrophe, and despite the huge sufferings that ensued from the Israeli occupation, and as a result of displacement and the state of refugees, the Palestinian people are still clinging to their land, strongly aspiring to freedom, return and independence.

Nearly 48.2% of the Palestinian people live inside historical Palestine, and this proportion is increasing in a manner that will lead to a greater number of Palestinians than Jews within five years. This means that after more than 110 years of diligent efforts and international support, the Zionist project has failed to impose its identity on the land or to remove the Palestinian people from it. More than two-thirds of the Palestinian people in the Diaspora still live in Palestine’s neighboring countries, awaiting their return. Their persistence and suffering in the refugee camps offer on a daily basis evidence of their attachment to their land and holy sites.



The Palestinian people are one of the most vivacious and prolific people, as their annual growth rate of 2.9% is considered to be one of the highest rates in the world. Around 42% of the WB and GS inhabitants are aged 15 and below, and this means that the Palestinian people are young.

The Israelis observe the Palestinian demographic growth with more and more concern and caution, and do their utmost in order to set limitations on the Palestinian people and push them to emigrate. They are also busy with their attempts to gain international approval on “the Jewishness of the state of Israel.” Hence, the Palestinian people must persist in their steadfastness and perseverance in their land, and their political leaders, factions, and national forces must refuse to negotiate its blessed land’s identity, regardless of the sacrifices.

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## This Report

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009/10 is the fifth in a series of annual resourceful scientific studies. It discusses the developments of the Palestinian issue in this period, in an objective and comprehensive manner. The meticulous analytical reading of events tries also to foresee the future. This Report has become a basic reference in Palestinian studies, it is a must to all those concerned.

An outstanding team of 14 academics and experts contributed to this Report in eight chapters. They covered the internal Palestinian situation, the Israeli scene and the Israeli-Palestinian relations, the Arab, Muslim and international stances toward the Palestinian issue. This Report focuses also on the issue of Jerusalem and the holy sites, whereas, the demographic and economic indicators are studied and analyzed in two separate chapters.

Undoubtedly, this Report is a serious addition to the field of Palestinian studies.

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ISBN 978-9953-500-69-0



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