

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2012 – 2013



Edited By

Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh



Al-Zaytouna Centre For Studies & Consultations

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2012 – 2013



**Al-Zaytouna Centre
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List of Abbreviations

ADL	Anti-Defamation League
AIPAC	American Israel Public Affairs Committee
AKP	<i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i> (Justice and Development Party)
AOI	Arab Opinion Index
ARIJ	The Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CBR	Crude Birth Rate
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CDR	Crude Death Rate
CEC	Central Elections Commission
CEIRPP	Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EU	European Union
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GS	Gaza Strip
HRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IAF	Israel Air Force
IAI	Israel Aerospace Industries
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICHR	The Independent Commission for Human Rights
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISA	Israel Security Agency (<i>Shabak</i>)
IUMS	International Union for Muslim Scholars
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MB	Muslim Brothers



MCM	Million Cubic Meters
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OCHA-oPt	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-occupied Palestinian territory
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
PA	Palestinian Authority
PACC	Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PCOM	Palestinian Cultural Organization Malaysia
PEGASE	Palestino-Européen de Gestion et d'Aide Socio-Economique
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PFLP-GC	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command
PIJ	Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PMA	Palestine Monetary Authority
PNC	Palestinian National Council
PSS	Preventive Security Service
RC	Refugee Camp
RP	Registered Person
RPC	Registered Person in Refugee Camp
RR	Registered Refugee
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SNC	Syrian National Council
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UK	United Kingdom
UMNO	United Malays National Organization
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
US	United States of America
WB	West Bank

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Introduction

The Palestinian issue has continued its course through 2012–2013 in an environment marked by entanglements and complications, waves of optimism and frustration, and a clash of wills with regional and international dimensions. During 2012, there were high hopes that the Arab strategic environment that surrounds occupied Palestine would improve, and free democratic regimes would express the will of their peoples and the pride and dignity of their nation, and thus will bolster and support the Palestinian issue. However, developments, especially during the following year, placed the revolutions and the waves of change in a state of great attrition, weakening them or making them fail. These developments kept people preoccupied, distracted away from the Palestinian issue. While Israeli observers were seeing in the waves of change an existential threat to them, they did not hide their pleasure and gratification at the negative turn of events, escalation in sectarian and ethnic sentiments, and attempts to suppress change and the free will of the people.

Whatever the case may be, the region is still experiencing a state of high “fluidity,” its political map has not yet taken its final form, and the clash of wills is continuing. As the Palestinian track is strongly affected by its Arab surroundings, it was characterized by confusion throughout the years 2012–2013. Both sides of the Palestinian divide (Fatah and Hamas) were in no rush to decide their options, especially with regard to getting the Palestinian house in order. However, the second half of 2013 witnessed the re-launch of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, which coincided with the Egyptian army extending its control over the political system in Egypt and with the tightening of the Gaza siege. While the government of Gaza was suffering tremendously as a result of the blockade and declining support, the leadership in Ramallah was facing successive frustrations on the negotiations track; this prompted the two sides to re-activate the path of reconciliation in the first half of 2014. However, it is premature to judge the potential success of this path, as it requires much effort and initiative to build trust, confront external interventions and transform it from a mere tactical concurrence in to a deep and firmly established strategic path.

For seven years, *The Palestinian Strategic Report* was issued on an annual basis; however, this time, Volume 8 of the Report will cover the years 2012–2013. The decision to issue it in this manner was difficult, but we were inclined to make it based on the experience of previous years, after having consulted a group of experts and specialists, and after we found that other centers have preceded us in issuing their reports biennially, such as the “Arab Strategic Report.” We hope that issuing the Report in this way will provide a better opportunity to focus on the tracks and changes that are of a strategic nature.

The Palestinian Strategic Report currently occupies a distinguished status among Palestinian studies, and has become an indispensable book for researchers and specialists, as well as for all those that have an interest in this field. It is not only full of extensive, precise and documented information, it seeks to present scientific material in an objective and analytical framework, controlled by the standards and methodology of scientific research, while seeking to foresee future developments. *The Palestinian Strategic Report* is marked by its comprehensiveness, as it covers the internal Palestinian situation, the Israeli scene, the tracks of resistance and the peace process, and the Arab, Islamic and international dimensions of the Palestinian issue. It gives ample space for Palestinian land and holy sites, and to the Palestinian demographic, economic, and educational situation.

Sincere thanks are due to our specialist colleagues, to the 13 experts who participated in the writing of this Report, and to the advisers who reviewed its texts. Also many thanks are due to our al-Zaytouna staff; assistants and archive staff, who were instrumental in providing the academic material, reviewing and scrutinizing the texts, and producing the Report in its proper format.

Finally, we thank *Allah* (SWT) for the growing success of this Report, and we thank all those who supported it and encouraged us to keep issuing it. We also welcome all constructive criticism, advice and guidance.

The Editor,

Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh

Chapter One

The Internal Palestinian Scene

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Introduction

There were no serious developments in the internal Palestinian situation during 2012 and 2013. Despite consensus on the choice of prime minister being made in February 2012, he was not able to form a consensus government for the subsequent two years. Issues related to reconciliation remained in limbo overall, and serious interest declined in the efforts to put the Palestinian political house in order. Meanwhile, the efforts for a peaceful settlement continued at the expense of reconciliation and reform, and Palestinian division between the West Bank (WB) and Gaza Strip (GS) grew deeper and more entrenched.

This chapter attempts to analyze the internal Palestinian situation during 2012 and 2013, and the performance of the governments in Ramallah and GS, as well as Palestinian reconciliation issues, relations among Palestinian factions, and the problem of security forces and their conduct at home.

First: The Emergency Government in the West Bank (WB)

Between 2012 and 2013, the emergency government in the WB headed by Salam Fayyad, and then Rami Hamdallah who succeeded him in 2013, continue to operate, while perpetuating the situation that emerged following the internal Palestinian division.

Palestinian resistance forces continued to accuse the emergency government of lack of constitutional legitimacy, since it did not seek to obtain a vote of confidence in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). Meanwhile, the government suffered from a crippling financial crisis amid tough economic conditions, and lower receipts from foreign donors.

The past two years saw a limited crackdown on corruption in the Palestinian Authority (PA), which then held local elections in the WB in isolation from GS. The relationship between the two Palestinian administrations saw a lot of tension and mutual accusations.

Although the PA was able to obtain recognition as a non-member state of the United Nations (UN), increased Israeli Judaization and settlement activities, combined with the ongoing withdrawal of powers of PA sovereignty over the WB areas, made it increasingly weak and politically impotent.

The most important issues related to the emergency government can be addressed under the following themes:

1. The Worsening Financial Crisis and Economic Conditions

The financial crisis was the most important issue facing the emergency government in 2012 and 2013. In early 2012, Prime Minister Salam Fayyad called for urgent action to reduce the budget deficit, which stood at \$800 million* in 2011, and was expected to hit \$1.1 billion in the budget of 2012.¹

The fall in foreign financial support, as some donor countries reneged on their financial obligations, caused a severe financial and economic crisis for the PA, forcing it to take unpopular measures such as spending cuts and tax increases,² while calling on banks to loan the PA up to \$300 million.³ Despite these conditions, in mid-February 2012 Fayyad's government had to reduce the highest income tax bracket to 20%, after protests by civil society groups.⁴

Before the end of March 2012, Fayyad's government passed the 2012 budget, which contained a deficit of over \$1 billion.⁵

With the aggravation of the financial crisis in the summer of 2012, Fayyad conducted secret negotiations with Israeli Finance Minister Yuval Steinitz, and signed an agreement with him on revenues and the transfer of goods between the PA and Israel.⁶ Fayyad also sought advice from the governor of the Bank of Israel Stanley Fischer on how to overcome the financial crisis plaguing the PA.⁷ However, this was not translated into a breakthrough, in light of the difficult economic conditions, high unemployment, and the dire financial situation of the PA at the end of the year.⁸

With the beginning of 2013, the Fayyad government published data showing that the public debt of the PA was close to nine billion shekels (about \$2.4 billion), which went to show the depth of the financial crisis under which the PA in Ramallah was reeling.⁹

* The symbol \$ used throughout this book is the US\$.

Before the end of March, Fayyad's government approved a \$3.8 billion budget for 2013, with a deficit that exceeded \$1 billion.¹⁰ This was inconsistent with Fayyad's plans to achieve economic prosperity. Ultimately, the heart of the problem is the occupation itself, not just the conduct of the PA and individuals in government.

Despite some emergency aid provided by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), the United States of America (US), and some European Union (EU) countries to the tune of \$500 million in July and August,¹¹ the budget, according to Rami Hamdallah, the new head of the emergency government, still had a \$550 million deficit by the end of 2013.¹²

The financial crisis is expected to continue for the time being, in light of the PA's dependence on foreign aid, and the financial and economic agreements signed with Israel. This crisis reflects in various ways the injustice and inequality brought about by the Oslo Accords and other agreements related to them, which have imposed dependency on Israel and made the PA hostage to its policies.

2. Opening Corruption Cases

With the beginning of 2012, the Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC) continued to pursue corruption cases involving a number of ministers in the emergency government. The Minister of Economy Hassan Abu Lebda was referred to court on 10/2/2012,¹³ in addition to the Minister of Agriculture Ismail Daiq. The Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki was also referred to the PACC on 27/4/2012.¹⁴

Despite assurances by the head of the PACC Rafiq Natsheh, who said he was in contact with competent authorities abroad in order to extradite a number of individuals suspected of embezzlement and fraud to the tune of millions of dollars,¹⁵ the PACC was delayed, and in the end, it only took limited measures, confiscating funds and assets held by Muhammad Rashid and Walid Najjab.¹⁶

Aware of the extent of the PACC's shortcomings, Fatah lawmaker Najat Abu Bakr accused the Ministry of Finance in Ramallah of corruption through side deals with major companies, demanding President Mahmud 'Abbas open an investigation into these abuses.¹⁷

It was clear that the effort to deal with corruption remained inadequate and limited, and did not meet the expectations pinned on them. It is not expected that any serious change will take place during the next phase.

3. Cabinet Reshuffles

Despite repeated calls by Fatah to President ‘Abbas to sack and replace Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, ‘Abbas repeatedly reappointed Fayyad to head a cabinet with an amended lineup. ‘Abbas ordered a cabinet reshuffle under Fayyad, and the new government swore oath before ‘Abbas on 16/5/2012.¹⁸ Yet, with rising objections and criticisms by the Fatah leadership over Fayyad’s tenure, ‘Abbas accepted the latter’s resignation on 14/4/2013, and appointed Rami Hamdallah as his successor.¹⁹

But Hamdallah resigned 18 days after he was sworn in, on 7/6/2013, because of a sharp dispute with his two deputies (appointed by ‘Abbas) over powers. His resignation was accepted, but he continued to serve in a caretaker capacity, until the dispute was resolved. Hamdallah was re-appointed as prime minister, and was sworn in before ‘Abbas on 19/9/2013.²⁰

One of the reasons that led to Fayyad’s resignation was the undeclared conflict between him and ‘Abbas. Salam Fayyad tried to take advantage of his position, and his financial and administrative influence, to form a bloc of supporters. Fayyad benefited from US support or reassurance by his policies. ‘Abbas ultimately accepted his resignation after becoming increasingly concerned about him, taking advantage of calls from Fatah for Fayyad’s dismissal.

4. The Elections

On 11/7/2012, Fayyad’s government approved the holding of local council elections in 93 localities, which were conducted on 20/10/2012. The Central Elections Commission (CEC) approved the results, and the voter turnout was 55%.²¹

The results of the local elections seemed lackluster and half-hearted, after the resistance factions, led by Hamas, declared a boycott. This invalidated any true competition in the elections, as they were limited to electoral lists affiliated to Fatah, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and independents, which included Fatah members ostensibly expelled from the movement.

Hanna Nasir, chairman of CEC that oversaw the municipal elections, acknowledged there were violations following the closure of the polls, but stressed that this was of moderate scope, and pledged to address all violations.

Later, the CEC confirmed in a press conference that the complaints it received from monitoring groups did not affect the election results. The CEC therefore endorsed the results, noting that it had received a number of complaints that were dealt with first hand on election day.

The municipal elections highlighted the internal split within Fatah in many areas of the WB. Indeed, figures dismissed from Fatah ran on independent lists in some districts, defeating official Fatah candidates and lists. The most prominent example of this took place in the city of Nablus, where the Fatah electoral list was headed by Amin Maqboul, Secretary of the Fatah Revolutionary Council. Maqboul failed to defeat Ghassan al-Shak'a, who had been dismissed from Fatah. Al-Shak'a was then a member of the Executive Committee of the PLO.

Although Fatah declared that its lists had won by a landslide in the local elections, claiming that this represented a referendum over its political platform, observers said that the low turnout, Hamas's boycott, and the victory achieved by Fatah defectors against Fatah lists, were a blow to Fatah's leadership in the WB and were no reason to celebrate.

At the same time, Palestinian sources indicated that the elections in the WB reflected the hidden conflict between President Mahmud 'Abbas, leader of Fatah, and the former Fatah leader Muhammad Dahlan, who was expelled from the movement on 11/6/2011. Dahlan, despite being outside the Palestinian territories, backed electoral lists that competed with official lists from Fatah led by 'Abbas, especially in the major cities in the WB, such as Ramallah, the seat of the PA.²²

On the other hand, Amin Maqboul acknowledged there were many mistakes made, and also recognized the presence of internal disputes during the electoral process, especially in Nablus, and with regard to Fatah's activities in the municipal elections in the WB. In remarks he made to the press, Maqboul acknowledged to a large extent responsibility for the loss, and expressed regret for accepting to run under the prevailing circumstances. Maqboul cited a number of reasons for Fatah's loss in Nablus, and the position of organizational frameworks before and during the electoral process. Maqboul admitted that what happened during the municipal elections confirmed that the Fatah movement had not learned from the lessons of the PLC elections in 2006, requiring a comprehensive review of the events. Maqboul also made references to the influence of Muhammad Dahlan over the lists in Nablus and elsewhere.²³

For its part, Hamas judged that these elections represented a furtherance of the division, and had nothing to do with national consensus. Hamas stressed that holding elections without the participation of the GS, and in the absence of national consensus, rendered them worthless and illegitimate. Hamas called on the PA in Ramallah to seek the reconciliation that the people wanted, unite the interior, and give priority to democracy in accordance with the interests of the people.²⁴

With the improvement of relations between Fatah and Hamas in late 2013 and early 2014, officials in Hamas and its government declared their willingness to hold local, trade union, and student elections in the GS, as a gesture of goodwill in the efforts for reconciliation. This meant that the issue of local elections would be strongly present on the agenda of national Palestinian work during the next phase.

With regards to legislative and presidential election, which are related to developments concerning internal Palestinian reconciliation, Hanna Nasir, chairman of CEC, announced on 11/4/2013 the end of the process of updating the voters' register in the WB and GS, declaring readiness for the implementation of any presidential decree to hold elections.²⁵

5. The Strained Relationship with GS

The relationship between the emergency government in the WB and Hamas-controlled GS was marred by tension over issues like electricity, fuel, all the way to conflict over attitudes and political agendas.

Fayyad linked the solution to the worsening electricity crisis in GS to the distribution company in GS covering costs and paying for the fuel.²⁶ As a result, the crisis was aggravated and economic and living conditions deteriorated in GS.

With the stoppage of Egyptian fuel supplies as a result of the demolition and closure of border tunnels between Egypt and GS, especially in the second half of 2013, the emergency government restated the same conditions, and even demanded a 50% tax on fuel as a condition for supplying GS with fuel in early November 2013. The caretaker government in GS, because of the severe impact of the financial crisis it was facing, rejected this.²⁷ GS was plunged into darkness as a result. The crisis was not resolved until Qatar paid the tax to the PA in Ramallah in early 2014.²⁸

In parallel, sharp political crises erupted at some junctures between the emergency government and the GS caretaker government run by Hamas. On

24/4/2012, Mahmud Habbash, minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs in the Fayyad government, launched a verbal attack on Hamas, accusing it of working to establish a state in GS, with the support of the Muslim Brothers (MB) movement.²⁹ On 26/8/2012, the PA Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki launched another attack on Hamas, refusing to participate in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit in Tehran if attended by Hamas Prime Minister Isma‘il Haniyyah.³⁰ In the meantime, Fayyad made an appeal to Haniyyah to decline an invitation by Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad to attend the summit and overcome their differences.³¹

When the president of the International Union for Muslim Scholars (IUMS), Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, visited GS on 7/5/2013, Habbash criticized him, declaring that his visit was not welcomed and claiming that it only cemented internal divisions.³²

Nevertheless, the emergency government reiterated on more than one occasion its pledge to not suspend its financial obligations to the GS, in a reference to the salaries of employees, especially those affiliated to it and who had abstained from going to work.

The relationship between the emergency government and GS is expected to follow the same trend in the coming phase, and the chapter of tension will not be closed until division is ended and the Palestinian political system is reunited under the banner of a single administration in the WB and GS. However, it is important to point out the big difference between the reality of the WB and that of the GS. The former is under the control of the Israeli occupation, where it continues to build settlements and Judaize Jerusalem, as the PA in Ramallah continues down the path of negotiations. In the meantime, the GS has been turned into a fortress for military resistance, one that has fought two successful conflicts against Israel. This makes the task of replicating the WB political and security regime in GS something that carries strategic, security, and political risks to the continuation of armed resistance.

6. Statehood, Refugees, Prisoners and Settlements

At the beginning of 2012, it seemed clear that the efforts to build state institutions spearheaded by Fayyad had suffered a major setback. For the PA refrained from signing up for international organizations after being recognized as a non-member observer state at the UN, and also because of accelerated Israeli

settlement activities in Jerusalem and the WB to the rhythm of the deadlock in the negotiations with the occupation.

A statement made by Palestinian Civil Affairs Minister Hussein al-Sheikh in Fayyad's government, stressed the foregoing, accusing Israel of undercutting all the sovereign powers of the PA in the Palestinian territories.³³

This situation continued in 2013, evident in a statement made by Riyad al-Maliki on 1/5/2013. Al-Maliki pointed out that the PA had promised US Secretary of State John Kerry to suspend its efforts to join UN agencies.³⁴ This made the Fayyad-led administration frustrated, as the latter blamed the whole thing on the failure of the PA leadership from the beginning.³⁵

Accordingly, it is possible to say that the state-building project touted heavily in the political discourse of the PA throughout recent years ended up with a major setback and failure, and that the Palestinian situation was left in great need of rebuilding within its political system in order to formulate a new project for liberation.

With the frequent criticisms leveled at the PA, the government in Ramallah tried to show sympathy with the refugees, especially in the refugee camps (RCs) in Syria (notably the Yarmouk RC which was subjected to a crippling siege), in light of the huge suffering and extensive bloodshed of the Palestinians in Syria. On 6/3/2013, the Palestinian government announced it would be offering \$1 million each month to help Palestinian refugees in Syria.³⁶

With the end of November 2013, the head of the emergency government Rami Hamdallah visited Beirut to take part in the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, and met with Lebanese leaders, stressing that the Palestinian RCs were under Lebanon's sovereignty.³⁷

Ongoing events indicate that the Palestinian RCs will continue to be hostage to the volatile situation in Syria and Lebanon, and part of the polarization there in the coming period.

The government in Ramallah appeared completely helpless in confronting the settlements spreading in Palestinian territories like wildfire. Hamdallah could do nothing more than make gestures, for example declaring 750 thousand olive trees would be planted to protect against settlement building at the end of October 2013.³⁸

It was not be difficult to anticipate further escalation of the crimes of the settlers during the next phase, in the absence of any kind of response to these crimes, and in light of Palestinian division and the failure of uniting around national resistance against the occupation, settlement building, and the Judaization of Jerusalem.

7. The Issue of ‘Arafat’s Death

The extent of the failure of the emergency government and the PA in addressing the issue surrounding the late leader Yasir ‘Arafat’s death was clear. Despite the forensic investigations revealed by Al Jazeera in July 2012, in a report that included the results of tests on ‘Arafat’s belongings and blood, hair, and urine samples by Swiss experts. This was in addition to the analysis of ‘Arafat’s remains and other belongings carried out again by Swiss experts, whose results were announced in November 2013. The tests clearly showed the presence of a high level of the radioactive element polonium, but the PA did not take any steps to reveal the truth and share it with the public.³⁹

On this basis, it was not surprising that some Palestinian figures and factions launched accusations against the PA of deliberately failing to uncover the mystery of the death of President ‘Arafat, including Hassan Khreisheh, second deputy speaker of the PLC, who accused influential leaders in the PA of involvement in the murder of ‘Arafat, in collusion with Israel.⁴⁰ Mahmud ‘Abbas and Muhammad Dahlan also exchanged accusations over responsibility for the killing of ‘Arafat.⁴¹ Therefore, many doubts remain as to whether the PA would accomplish anything regarding this issue during the next phase.

8. Foreign Relations

In the context of its foreign relations, it was interesting that official relations were fully restored between the PA and Kuwait. In September 2012, President ‘Abbas nominated Ambassador Rami Tahboub as ambassador of Palestine to Kuwait, after an estrangement that had endured for 22 years, following the historical rupture that occurred between the two parties.⁴²

Second: The Caretaker Government in the GS

The caretaker government in GS led by Isma‘il Haniyyah continued to function over the past two years, under a crippling blockade that has had harsh effects on all aspects of life in GS.

Economically, the government faced financial hardship that evolved into a crisis in the second half of 2013, amid tough economic conditions due to the siege and the destruction of the tunnels on the border with Egypt.

Politically, the government renewed its commitment to national principles and support for the resistance, and rejected negotiations and Kerry’s plan. The Hamas-led government made concerted efforts to lift the siege and rebuild GS, leading Haniyyah on a successful foreign tour that included several Arab and Islamic countries, and brought the Emir of Qatar to GS to inaugurate some major projects. However, relations with Egypt and Syria soured after Hamas left Syria, and the coup that deposed President Muhammad Morsi in Egypt.

At the Palestinian level, the relationship between Haniyyah’s government and the PA in Ramallah had many episodes of tension and mudslinging in the media, followed by gestures of goodwill to improve relations and preparation of the national climate for internal reconciliation.

Administratively, the government made one cabinet reshuffle in an attempt to improve the administrative performance of services provided to citizens.

At the security level, the government was able to overcome sensitive security challenges arising from the overthrow of President Morsi in neighboring Egypt.

The most important issues related to the caretaker government in GS can be outlined as follows:

1. The Financial Crisis and the Worsening Economic Situation

The financial crisis was an important part of the tenure of the GS caretaker government in 2012 and 2013. The 2012 budget passed by the PLC in GS at the end of March 2012, was worth a total of \$869 million, and had a deficit of 80%.⁴³ The 2013 budget, passed by the PLC at the end of December 2012 with a total of \$897 million, had a deficit of 73%.⁴⁴ Before 2013 ended, the PLC passed the 2014 budget, with total expenditures of \$784 million with a deficit of \$589 million, indicating the depth of the financial crisis affecting Haniyyah’s government.⁴⁵

To underscore the economic deterioration that faced Haniyyah's government, one may point to statements made by the Minister of National Economy 'Alaa al-Rafati in early 2011, when he confirmed that 1,400 tunnels on the border with Egypt did not meet the needs of Gazans for goods, prompting Haniyyah to propose establishing a free trade zone between GS and Egypt.⁴⁶

Despite paying to employees on time to the tune of 149 million shekels (around \$38.6 million) monthly, offering assistance to needy families, and cutting some taxes,⁴⁷ Haniyyah's government suffered throughout 2012 from clear difficulties in reviving the economic situation in GS as a result of the continuation of the blockade.

With the beginning of 2013, the economic situation became even worse, as the Egyptian army conducted a systematic campaign to close down border tunnels between Egypt and GS. The deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in Haniyyah's government estimated GS's monthly losses as a result of the blockade at \$250 million.⁴⁸ In early October 2013, Minister of National Economy 'Alaa al-Rafati confirmed that the losses resulting from the destruction of the tunnels by the Egyptian army, notably since July 2013, amounted to approximately \$460 million.⁴⁹ To make matters worse, GS was struck by a blizzard in mid-December 2013, causing losses of up to \$64 million according to preliminary estimates by the Ministry of Public Works and Housing in Haniyyah's government.⁵⁰

Thus, all indications point out that the financial crisis facing Haniyyah's government would continue, and economic conditions would continue to deteriorate over the next phase.

2. Rejecting Negotiations, and the Strategy of Resistance Against Occupation

The caretaker government maintained its political positions rejecting continued negotiations with the occupation, calling them "absurd" and asserting that they squander Palestinian rights and core principles. Haniyyah's position emerged clearly following the Arab initiative for land swaps with Israel, flatly rejecting the bid.⁵¹ In addition, Haniyyah rejected the resumption of negotiations following the efforts by US Secretary of State John Kerry at the end of July 2013, and all the outcomes and commitments resulting therefrom. It does not appear that Haniyyah's government intends to tone down its sharp criticisms of the negotiations in the coming period.

Haniyyah's government did not hesitate to show its support for Palestinian resistance, stressing that resistance never stopped and that it was in a stage of studying and planning, and that resistance and jihad remained the most prudent choice to liberate the land and restore rights.⁵² This was embodied in providing political, national, and legal cover for Palestinian resistance forces in their fight against the occupation, despite the inclination of Haniyyah's government toward de-escalation on the ground.

When Israel assassinated Ahmad Ja'bari, deputy commander of the Ezzedein al-Qassam Brigades, Haniyyah declared that his blood would not shed in vain.⁵³ Hamas and the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine (PIJ) decided to initiate a full-scale response over the following seven days after the assassination of Ja'bari. This was known as the eight-day war in November 2012. The first day was the Israeli assault, while the following seven days were a counter-attack by Hamas and the PIJ, firing rockets that reached as far as Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Israel stepped up its threats and mobilized its reservists for a full-scale attack on GS, while responding with heavy bombardment. However, Israel was in a weaker defensive position, and called for an unconditional ceasefire throughout the conflict, while Hamas and the PIJ insisted on their conditions in return for a ceasefire. Ultimately, the Netanyahu government and the US Department of State accepted those conditions for a ceasefire, led by lifting the blockade of GS. This was declared by both Khalid Mish'al, head of Hamas's Political Bureau, and Ramadan 'Abdullah, secretary-general of the PIJ, at a joint press conference on 21/11/2012. Haniyyah emphasized that this development was a major victory for the Palestinian people and their cause.⁵⁴

As part of its strategy to confront the occupation, the Ministry of Interior in Haniyyah's government launched on 12/3/2013 a campaign to combat collaboration with Israel, and opened the door for collaborators to receive amnesty for a period of two months, after which the campaign was declared a success.⁵⁵

On the anniversary of the "Devotion of the Free" prisoner exchange deal, Haniyyah declared that thousands of resistance fighters were training above and below ground to meet the enemy in combat.⁵⁶ This indicates the extent of the wager made by the Haniyyah's government on resistance during the next stage, in order to confront Israel and defend the Palestinian people and their national cause.

3. The Blockade Issue and Reconstruction

The hopes of Haniyyah's government in breaking the political and economic siege were revived in 2012, especially in light of the success of Haniyyah's foreign tour, which included major Arab states. Haniyyah seemed confident on 28/2/2012 when he declared "The blockade is now behind us."⁵⁷ However, his enthusiasm was soon dampened as the blockade was sustained. On 2/4/2012, he proclaimed that the Arab countries were not innocent of the slow murder of the people of GS.⁵⁸ With the continuation of the blockade, despite the victory of Muhammad Morsi, the MB movement presidential candidate in Egypt's 2012 elections, Haniyyah declared on 29/8/2012 without equivocation that the PA was responsible for incitement toward sustaining the siege on GS.⁵⁹

The hurdles faced by the Palestinians in passing through the Rafah border crossing, with limited number of operating hours and long lists of people banned from travelling, were one of the leading manifestations of the blockade on GS. This prompted Haniyyah to put pressure on Egypt to repudiate the agreements relating to the Rafah crossing signed in 2005, arguing that these had legally expired, and called for opening the terminal to goods and people without restrictions.⁶⁰ Although President Morsi asked competent authorities repeatedly to ease the procedures at the Rafah crossing, the commitment was selective and partial, given the presence of many state agencies that were hostile to Morsi and the MB movement.

The year 2013 was the hardest at the level of the impact of the blockade on the people of GS. The campaign led by the Egyptian army against border tunnels, to close them down or demolish them, had deeply damaging economic effects on the living conditions of citizens in GS. This much was expressed in statements by 'Abdul Salam Siyam, secretary general of Haniyyah's government on 10/11/2013, who said that the GS was experiencing the most severe episode of the blockade.⁶¹

The crisis of fuel and electricity was one of the worst aspects of the blockade in 2012 and 2013. The Palestinian Energy and National Resources Authority in GS declared several times that the main power plant would close down due to lack of fuel, putting immense pressure on Haniyyah's government, which sought to find radical solutions for the crisis regionally.

Despite the agreement Haniyyah reached on 23/2/2012 with Egypt and the Islamic Development Bank to end the crisis, he returned on 2/3/2012 to accusing parties and forces of obstructing the resolution of the crisis for extortion purposes.⁶²

With Qatar's willingness to supply the GS with fuel to resolve the crisis, Haniyyah's government enjoyed a renewed sense of optimism.⁶³ However, the Hamas government soon accused the Egyptian authorities again of blocking the entry of the fuel supplies, and thus the crisis continued.

The electricity crisis continued with ups and downs, until it reached a peak when the power plant was shut down completely on 1/9/2013, due to fuel shortages resulting from the demolition of border tunnels, and taxes imposed by the government in Ramallah. Efforts were again made to find a solution, but they collided with the position of the PA, which refused to supply fuel to GS unless it paid tax on the fuel. Qatar intervened and paid the tax, easing the crisis to a certain degree.⁶⁴

All indications suggest that the blockade is going to get worse unless the conduct of the Egyptian government changes, and Palestinian reconciliation materializes.

Qatar sponsored several projects for the reconstruction of GS. Haniyyah declared that Qatar had allocated \$250 million for that purpose during his landmark visit to Doha in early 2012.⁶⁵ On 23/10/2012, the Emir of Qatar conducted a historical visit to GS, announcing massive projects worth more than \$400 million, which Haniyyah saw as a challenge to the political and economic blockade of GS.⁶⁶

On 13/12/2012, Haniyyah announced the start of the Qatari project for the reconstruction of GS.⁶⁷ However, the coup that took place in Egypt on 3/7/2013 prevented the entry of construction materials and other supplies needed for the project, which had to proceed partially and not fully according to the plans in place.

Accordingly, implementation of GS's reconstruction will remain partial unless coupled with an end to the blockade of GS.

4. The Relationship with the PA and Fatah

The years 2012 and 2013 saw many twists and turns in the relationship between Haniyyah's government on the one hand, and the PA and Fatah on the other. In addition to the usual factional bickering and the political disputes with responses and counter responses, this relationship saw some marked tension, especially when the Hamas Ministry of Interior announced at the end of February 2012 its intention to execute some collaborators affiliated with Fatah. This forced the ministry to deny its intention to carry out any executions on political or factional grounds.⁶⁸

The relation between the two sides entered a critical stage when Haniyyah's government accused Fatah and PA media outlets and figures, as well as the prominent but sacked Fatah figure Muhammad Dahlan, of incitement against GS. Hamas took legal action against them following the coup in Egypt, stressing that it had phone records proving the charges.⁶⁹

Despite the reactivation of reconciliation efforts at the end of 2013, the relationship between Fatah and Hamas remained hostage to differences and incitements from time to time. This will keep the future of the relationship subject to developments related to the progress of the reconciliation and national consensus.

In 2012 and 2013, Haniyyah's government constantly sought to encourage the formation of a Palestinian national unity government, declaring its backing for the Doha Declaration and its willingness to step down immediately upon the formation of this government. The reconciliation issue was an essential part of Haniyyah's political efforts, especially with Egyptian President Muhammad Morsi, after he took office, and Egyptian intelligence officials who were in charge of the Palestinian reconciliation issue.⁷⁰

Over the two years, Haniyyah's government made several goodwill gestures in this direction, including agreeing to let 80 people from Fatah return to GS, and pardoning detainees arrested during the clashes with Fatah in 2007.⁷¹ However, the last quarter of 2013 saw significant action, when Haniyyah called on the factions to participate in ruling the GS, called for forming a national committee to implement reconciliation, and reached out to President 'Abbas repeatedly, creating a fertile ground for achieving reconciliation.

5. Foreign Relations

In early 2012, Haniyyah continued his foreign tour, which had started with Egypt and Sudan. Haniyyah travelled to Turkey and Tunisia, and then Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, and Iran. He met with the heads of states of these countries and senior officials, to discuss ways to support the Palestinian issue, to lift the blockade and reconstruct GS.

Haniyyah's tour yielded notable successes. For instance, Turkey agreed to prepare a comprehensive development plan for GS. Qatar also agreed to provide generous financial support through major development projects. There were other

important achievements from the tour.⁷² Interestingly, Haniyyah accused President ‘Abbas of pressuring certain Arab countries to refuse to receive him during his overseas trip.⁷³

Despite the good relationship Haniyyah’s government had with the Egyptian administration in 2012 and until the army overthrew President Morsi in early July 2013, Haniyyah’s government remained on the defensive most of the time, amid sharp attacks waged by Egyptian media outlets against the Palestinian group.

In response to accusations by the Egyptian media that Hamas was intervening militarily in Egypt and fabricating the fuel crisis in GS in the first half of 2012, Haniyyah announced that Hamas never intervened in Egypt’s internal affairs, either before or after the revolution, and expressed his government’s readiness to cooperate with Egypt to protect common security interests.⁷⁴

There was a marked improvement in the relationship between the two sides following a meeting between Haniyyah and President Morsi, after the latter was sworn in. This culminated in Egyptian promises to provide facilitations to GS regarding the Rafah crossing and the electricity and fuel crisis.⁷⁵

Haniyyah soon called for the formation of a joint security committee with Egypt following the killing of Egyptian soldiers in Sinai in early August 2012, denying that GS had any part in the attack, and stressing that the scenario of the crime confirmed Israel’s involvement.⁷⁶

In 2013, Haniyyah’s government had to deal with an even fiercer campaign in the Egyptian media. Many accusations were leveled at Hamas, which was even accused of staging bombings in Sinai and the Egyptian interior, especially after the military coup.

In response, Haniyyah’s government denied categorically any interference in Egyptian affairs, but also rejected the demonization of the Palestinian resistance, and emphasized that Hamas would not slide into side battles with Egypt under any circumstances.⁷⁷

Although Haniyyah’s government stressed that full rupture is not on the table when it came to the relationship with Egypt, it did not stop demanding that Egypt reopen the Rafah crossing to both goods and passengers, as an alternative to the tunnels that the Egyptian army proceeded to demolish.⁷⁸

There is nothing on the horizon to suggest that relations between the Hamas government and the Egyptian government will improve, at least as long as Egypt maintains its policy of sustaining the blockade of GS, and its hostility to the Hamas-led government.

Haniyyah's government maintained its consistent position towards the Syrian crisis, meanwhile, based on calling to an end to the injustice, murder, and bloodshed there in the framework of a political solution away from security solutions. Haniyyah's government also repeatedly denied the presence of any Hamas-affiliated combatants in Syria.⁷⁹

6. The Administrative Situation

Haniyyah's government tried to perform better in 2012 and 2013, in light of the blockade. In September 2012, the government passed a three-year plan to improve government performance.⁸⁰ There were traditional questions addressed to ministers and officials in the Haniyyah government in 2012 and 2013, but the most prominent of these were addressed by the PLC in GS to the Interior Minister Fathi Hammad, Hamas's strongman, who was reprimanded for his repeated flouting of the law.⁸¹

Haniyyah made one ministerial amendment in 2012 and 2013, and the PLC in GS granted the reshuffled government a vote of confidence on 2/9/2012.⁸² At the first meeting of the new government, where broad powers were given to deputy Prime Minister Ziad al-Zaza, Haniyyah pledged to substantially improve the quality of his government's work within 100 days.⁸³

7. The Security Challenge

In 2012 and 2013, Haniyyah's government did not face any substantial security challenges internally, with the exception of a call by online and social media activists, calling themselves the Tamarrud (Rebellion) movement, to depose Haniyyah's government on 11/11/2013.

In this context, Haniyyah asserted that "toppling Gaza" was delusional,⁸⁴ as the GS Ministry of Interior uncovered a scheme involving the PA, Israel, and the intelligence services of an Arab country to destabilize the Strip, and confirmed the existence of flagrant roles and financing by Arab parties for plans to sabotage the security of the GS.⁸⁵ The security forces affiliated to the Haniyyah government were able to impose order and stability, and prevent any attempts to inject chaos or recreate the lawlessness that prevailed before Hamas's takeover of GS.

8. Prisoners, Jerusalem and Refugees

Haniyyah's government focused on affirming and enshrining Palestinian core principles, especially in relation to Jerusalem, refugees, and the detainees held by Israel. On 27/2/2012, during a meeting with Maher al-Taher of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) during his visit to the GS, Haniyyah stressed the commitment to the right of return.⁸⁶ He also warned against compromising the right of return,⁸⁷ calling on Palestinian leaders abroad to visit GS.⁸⁸

In the midst of the Yarmouk RC crisis, Haniyyah stressed that his government was making great efforts to end the siege on the camp and affirm the neutrality of the Palestinians in the Syrian conflict. During a ceremony, Haniyyah announced each Palestinian family fleeing from Syria would receive an apartment and a job, refusing naturalizing them.⁸⁹

Regarding Jerusalem, Haniyyah made repeated calls to the Arabs and Muslims to protect the city from strangulation and Judaization.⁹⁰ And concerning the issue of the detainees, Haniyyah announced his government was shouldering its responsibilities toward them, calling for a third *Intifadah* (uprising) to secure their release. Haniyyah also called on Egypt to put pressure on Israel to fulfill its commitments and agreements regarding improving the conditions of their detention.⁹¹

Third: Reconciliation and National Dialogue

The issue of Palestinian reconciliation in 2012 and 2013 saw many developments on the theoretical level. However, the two sides of the Palestinian divide did not succeed in translating these into concrete steps on the ground. The Doha Declaration, which was concluded in early 2012, remained ink on paper. Bilateral talks that took place with Egyptian sponsorship until the coup in Egypt did not succeed in putting the Declaration into practice, with mutual accusations over disrupting reconciliation. However, the end of the year 2013 saw some positive developments and initiatives to support reconciliation, especially by Haniyyah's government. The Doha Declaration was one of the most important milestones in the Palestinian reconciliation process and national dialogue. No sooner had the first month of 2012 ended than an important development took place in the dialogue

of Fatah and Hamas, when Khalid Mish'al and President 'Abbas signed the Doha Declaration, which was sponsored directly by the Emir of Qatar on 6/2/2012.

The Declaration called for the formation of a Palestinian National Reconciliation Government of independent technocrats headed by President 'Abbas; the continuation of the steps of activating and developing the PLO through the reformation of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) simultaneously with the presidential and legislative elections; continuation of the works of the committees that were formed, namely the General Freedoms Committee and the Community Reconciliation Committee. After that, the Declaration calls for the implementation of what was agreed upon in Cairo to begin the work of the CEC, paving the way for President 'Abbas to set a date for presidential and PLC elections, as well as PNC elections.⁹² The Doha Declaration ended months of debating between the two movements over the name of the consensus prime minister who would lead the government entrusted with implementing reconciliation and holding elections.

The ink on the Declaration had barely dried when disputes emerged between Mish'al and 'Abbas over Hamas's position on the agreement. Some Hamas leaders sprung to express their opposition to charging 'Abbas with heading the national reconciliation government, including member of the Political Bureau Mahmud al-Zahhar, who publicly rejected the agreement, and Khalil al-Hayyeh, who presented his opposition from a legal standpoint.⁹³

The opposition of the Hamas Change and Reform parliamentary bloc in the PLC was another obstacle to the agreement. Isma'il al-Ashqar, deputy head of the bloc, said that the Doha Declaration was against the law and that it bypassed the PLC.⁹⁴ Ahmad Bahr, acting speaker of the PLC, joined the internal opposition within Hamas. Bahr said that the appointment of 'Abbas as per the Doha Declaration violated the Palestinian Basic Law, declaring his rejection of the concentration of powers in the hands of one man.⁹⁵

Based on the objections made by Hamas leaders in GS, who were upset for not having been consulted before the agreement was signed, Mish'al had an urgent meeting with Haniyyah on 15/2/2012 in Doha to address the situation. The two men agreed and ended differences within Hamas over the implementation of the Doha Declaration.⁹⁶

Nevertheless, the Doha Declaration was not put into practice because Fatah and Hamas differed over how it should be implemented, each party according to its

own rationale. This prompted the gathering of independent personalities headed by businessman Yasir al-Wadiah to propose an urgent initiative on 28/4/2012 to implement reconciliation between the two parties.⁹⁷

With the failure of the implementation in its first phase, Fatah and Hamas entered into a new stage from May 2012 until the end of the year. On 20/5/2012, two delegations representing Fatah and Hamas chaired by ‘Azzam al-Ahmad and Musa Abu Marzuq met in Cairo under Egyptian auspices, and agreed to establish CEC in GS and begin consultations to form a government.⁹⁸ In another meeting, on 28–29/5/2012, the two sides resolved the outstanding issues related to forming a national reconciliation government,⁹⁹ paving the way for a third meeting on 5/6/2012. In this meeting, the two movements agreed to expedite the process of naming the members of the reconciliation government and announced it officially on 20/6/2012, in the presence of Mish‘al and ‘Abbas.¹⁰⁰

But none of this materialized. On 25/6/2012, Musa Abu Marzuq said an American veto was disrupting the process of Palestinian reconciliation,¹⁰¹ but ‘Azzam al-Ahmad denied there was any American veto on reconciliation.¹⁰²

Accordingly, tension between the two sides returned. On 2/7/2012, Hamas suspended voter registration in GS, because of security crackdowns in the WB.¹⁰³ Hamas also rejected a decision by the Fayyad government on 10/7/2012 to hold local elections in the WB, something that Hamas said undermined reconciliation efforts.¹⁰⁴

For its part, al-Ahmad stressed on behalf of Fatah that there would be no return to reconciliation talks with Hamas except after the CEC resumed its work in GS.¹⁰⁵ This was denied by Hamas through Haniyyah, who pointed out that the US had asked the PA to suspend reconciliation talks.¹⁰⁶

In an interview with the press on 20/9/2012, al-Ahmad reiterated Fatah’s unwillingness to start any new dialogue with Hamas, saying what was required was to begin implementing the reconciliation agreement immediately, and allow the CEC in GS to resume its work.¹⁰⁷

By the end of October 2012, Hamas leader Salah al-Bardawil said that his movement had presented Egyptian President Muhammad Morsi a new paper including mechanisms for implementing the stalled reconciliation with Fatah. Al-Ahmad’s response was to state that Egypt, after the MB movement took power

there, was no longer qualified to be a reference point and a sponsor for Palestinian dialogue and reconciliation, accusing the administration there of bias for Hamas.¹⁰⁸

On 7/12/2012, Mish'al made a historical visit to GS, his first in decades, where he promised to achieve reconciliation and end division.¹⁰⁹

On 17/1/2013, delegations from Fatah and Hamas, sponsored by Egypt, met in Cairo, and agreed to a timetable for the formation of a consensus government, headed by President 'Abbas, by the end of January 2013. An understanding was reached to accomplish reconciliation issues as one package. On 9/2/2013, a meeting of the PLO leadership framework convened. The framework would oversee and approve a new electoral law for the PNC, in addition to forming a CEC in the WB and GS to complete voter registration, providing that a consultation for forming a government begin at the end of February. After that, a presidential decree should be issued; setting the date for presidential, PLC, and PNC elections.¹¹⁰

The first fruits of this agreement begin to emerge with a meeting held between Hanna Nasir, chairman of CEC, and Isma'il Haniyyah, on 30/1/2013, followed by agreement on the start of the CEC's work in the GS.¹¹¹

But the march of reconciliation soon fell into disrepair, with no new developments after that save for the solitary meeting held by the PLO framework leadership on 9/2/2013, that produced no substantial results or procedures.

In a post on his Facebook page on 6/5/2013, Abu Marzuq attributed the delay in the implementation of reconciliation to six main reasons, including the absence of political issues on the dialogue agenda, the difference in political programs, Israeli and American vetoes, the Quartet conditions, Fatah's fear of Hamas dominating the PLO, and Abu Mazen's preference of negotiations with Israel over alternative approaches.¹¹²

In May 2013, reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas entered a phase of crisis management, in that it focused on formalities without any concrete results until the last month of 2013. In a new meeting held with Egyptian brokerage, Hamas and Fatah agreed on forming a reconciliation government within three months.¹¹³ On 30/5/2013, the General Freedoms Committee formed following the reconciliation agreement endorsed, at a meeting attended by Fatah and Hamas in Cairo, a pledge by all Palestinian factions to protect public freedoms and stop all forms of politically motivated detentions.¹¹⁴

In response to Haniyyah's call for the factions to participate in running GS, made on 26/8/2013, Fatah rejected the initiative, demanding to send a delegate to GS to check on Hamas's implementation of the Cairo Agreement and the Doha Declaration.

When Haniyyah delivered a key political speech on 19/10/2013, calling on Fatah to implement the reconciliation and end the division, Fatah responded through its spokesperson Ahmad 'Assaf, saying that Fatah was willing to implement the reconciliation, but that it was Hamas that was avoiding doing the same.¹¹⁵

The Fatah spokesperson in GS, Hassan Ahmad, stressed the serious intentions of his movement to end the division. Meanwhile, Sufian Abu Zaida, member of Fatah's Revolutionary Council, highlighted the positive aspects of Haniyyah's speech, and called on President 'Abbas to visit GS to turn the page on the division. In turn, Abu Marzuq denied (on 7/11/2013) Hamas's responsibility for disrupting the reconciliation, pointing at another occasion, on 23/11/2013, that the issue of reconciliation with Fatah was on hold until the expiration of what he called the "false pregnancy," in reference to the negotiations with Israel.¹¹⁶ On 28/11/2013, Haniyyah said in a meeting with political, community, and academic figures that his government and Hamas were committed to the Cairo and Doha Agreements, calling for the implementation of the reconciliation.¹¹⁷

As 2013 was nearing its end, positive developments related to Palestinian reconciliation took place. On 11/12/2013, Haniyyah contacted President 'Abbas, to discuss the humanitarian situation in GS and ways to achieve reconciliation between the two sides. 'Abbas also received a similar call from Mish'al on 14/12/2013 and discussed a number of issues with him, including ways to implement the reconciliation, and the steps required to activate it during the next phase.¹¹⁸

There was a climate of optimism when the Haniyyah government released a number of Fatah-affiliated detainees, and allowed members of parliament (MPs) and leaders who had fled during the clashes in 2007 to return to GS. Subsequently, there were accelerated movements in January 2014 involving the two sides. According to well-informed sources, the two parties discussed all issues related to the reconciliation away from the media, in order to form a national reconciliation government. However, the stalling of the reconciliation remains a strong possibility, despite the fact that all Palestinian sides have stressed its importance and necessity. The reconciliation agreement signed on 4/5/2011

did not address the real roots of the division, namely the political and strategic causes related to the two sides' disparate positions on the Palestinian national choice of armed resistance and its consequences, or the peace process and its consequences. These are diametrically opposed choices and secondary measures are insufficient to address them. Furthermore, the method of implementing the program of reconciliation puts the Israeli (anti-reconciliation) side in control of three out of five axes of the reconciliation: formation of the government, elections and the reform of security forces. These are all issues that Israel can disrupt, and it is impossible to implement related agreements without its consent or silence, especially in the WB.

Fourth: Internal Palestinian Relations

Internal Palestinian situations underwent many fluctuations and different stages over the past two years. At a time when Hamas overcame the crisis of internal disputes following the signing of the Doha Declaration, internal problems clearly left their mark on the organizational structure of Fatah.

Relations between Hamas on the one hand, and Fatah and the PA on the other, were often marked by tension and clashes in the media, while the relationship between Hamas and the PIJ improved significantly. The nature and path of internal Palestinian relations, at the level of the PA and the factions, can be detailed as follows:

1. Hamas's Internal Situation

The internal situation within Hamas in 2012 and 2013 witnessed many significant organizational developments. An organizational dispute took place between the leadership in GS and the leadership outside Palestine, following the Doha Declaration signed by Fatah and Hamas in February 2012. This much was clear through the statements opposed to the agreement made by a number of senior Hamas leaders, including Mahmud al-Zahhar, who said that handing things over to President 'Abbas as per the Doha Declaration was a misstep that no one had consulted him and his colleagues over.¹¹⁹ Similarly, Khalil al-Hayyeh rejected the idea of 'Abbas taking the post of prime minister unless the law was amended and he was sworn in before the PLC.¹²⁰

However, Hamas was able to overcome this juncture in a short time. On 15/2/2012, Salah al-Bardawil, Hamas leader in GS, made a statement stressing that the disparity in views of Hamas leaders had been resolved in favor of implementing the Doha Declaration.¹²¹

In 2012, there were internal elections within Hamas. According to Abu Marzuq, the elections expressed a marked change, with some Hamas cadres becoming members of its leading bodies and Political Bureau.¹²²

In early 2012, Mish'al announced that he would not be standing for the elections to be the head of Hamas Political Bureau, and added that he was leaving the official post but not his national role.¹²³

As a result of political, security, and technical conditions in the scene abroad, the election process was delayed there, as well as in the WB. On 2/4/2013, Hamas announced in an official statement that the Shura Council of the movement had renewed its vote of confidence in Mish'al as head of the Political Bureau for a new term, contradicting earlier expectations that he would not be in the race.¹²⁴ Mish'al, since he declared he would not be a candidate, had come under extensive pressure from many Hamas leaders and cadres to reconsider his position. The pressures continued when the Shura Council was convened, as Mish'al reiterated his desire not to run, but he was asked to leave it to the Shura Council to decide. When Mish'al deferred to this request, the Shura Council elected him head of the movement, and Haniyyah as his deputy.

Hamas witnessed a stable organizational atmosphere after the elections, allowing it to focus its efforts on the urgent national task at hand in the following stage.

2. Fatah's Internal Situation

The internal situation in Fatah in 2012 and 2013 was marked by internal disputes among wings and factions within the movement. The differences were mainly between President 'Abbas's faction and the faction of Muhammad Dahlan, the expelled Fatah leader. Dahlan's supporters launched scathing attacks on 'Abbas; on 9/1/2012, Samir al-Mashharawi said that ever since 'Abbas had become president of Fatah and the PA, a string of defeats had ensued.¹²⁵ In turn, on 11/1/2012, Member Parliament (MP) Majid Abu Shammaleh outlined 'Abbas's violations of the law since he became president.¹²⁶ On 29/1/2012, Fatah expelled

al-Mashharawi from the Revolutionary Council of the movement, because of his attack on ‘Abbas.¹²⁷ As a result, Dahlan lodged a complaint against ‘Abbas before the heads of blocs and lists of the PLC, on 31/1/2012.¹²⁸

Dahlan (backed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) benefiting from his close ties to the Egyptian regime following the coup against Morsi, and his broad influence within Fatah) continued his attacks on ‘Abbas at different times. On 7/11/2012, Dahlan asserted that ‘Abbas was finished, saying that his insistence on negotiations was a disaster, and accusing him of waiving the right of return in the second Camp David Summit.¹²⁹ On 7/10/2013, Fatah’s Central Committee expelled the former head of Palestinian National Security in Lebanon Brig. Gen. Mahmud ‘Issa, nicknamed “Lino,” who is affiliated to Dahlan, and stripped him of his military rank because of his excesses and repeated criticisms of the movement’s leadership.¹³⁰ In light of the failure of efforts made by regional parties to resolve the dispute between ‘Abbas and Dahlan, Fatah accused the latter on 29/10/2013 of assassinating Fatah cadres and surrendering GS to Hamas.¹³¹ Mutual accusations reached a peak between the two sides in early March 2014, as they blamed one another for the assassination of ‘Arafat.

Internal criticisms were not only made by the Dahlan faction. On 31/10/2012, ‘Abbas Zaki, member of Fatah Central Committee, accused the current Fatah leadership of being unqualified to represent the aspirations of the Palestinian people.¹³²

At Fatah’s internal level in GS, on 22/4/2012, the movement chose Yazid al-Huwayhi as head of its new leading body in GS.¹³³ This drew criticism at some levels within Fatah, including MP Ashraf Jum‘ah, who stressed that the organizational policy in place would lead to a split in the ranks of the organization.¹³⁴ However, it was not long before al-Huwayhi submitted his resignation as a result of internal disputes.¹³⁵ On 8/1/2013, ‘Abbas re-formed the leading body of Fatah in GS, appointing Ahmad Nasr as secretary.¹³⁶ On 5/3/2013, he formed a new leadership body for Fatah in GS.¹³⁷

On 6/11/2013, Mahmud al-‘Aloul, member of the Fatah Central Committee, announced that Fatah was trying to persuade Marwan Barghouti to accept the post of vice president of the PA.¹³⁸

3. Hamas and the PA

In addition to political disharmony, with the PA adopting and sponsoring the negotiations project, the relationship between Hamas and the PA in 2012 and 2013 was marked by tension and confrontation. In early 2012, Hamas published a report accusing the PA's security forces of detaining 805 of its supporters in 2011 alone.¹³⁹

On 23/3/2012, Khalil al-Hayyeh, Hamas leader, disclosed documents accusing the PA of involvement in a plot against GS and of causing the fuel and electricity crisis.¹⁴⁰ On 16/10/2012, PA security forces seized Hamas's military archives in the WB.¹⁴¹

When Hamas revealed documents showing the involvement of the PA and its embassy in Cairo in smearing the resistance and GS, the embassy responded by claiming Hamas's documents were forgeries¹⁴² before Ambassador Barakat al-Farra launched an attack on Hamas, claiming that 95% of the people of GS did not accept its rule, that they are powerless, and declared that the Rafah crossing would remain closed until the return of the presidential guard to their posts there.¹⁴³

In early 2013, Hamas published a statement in which it accused the PA security forces of assaulting 1,262 of its supporters in the WB during 2012.¹⁴⁴ It also accused, in a lengthy report, the PA security forces of attacking 1,613 of its members in the WB in 2013. Hamas put the number of detentions against its supporters at 782 and summons at 537, compared to 426 in 2012. Detention extensions in the prisons of the PA numbered 101 and assaults 188, including raids against homes, torture, physical assault, and assaults on private properties.¹⁴⁵ On 25/3/2013, Hamas accused members of the PA of relaying incorrect information regarding the massacre of Egyptian soldiers in Rafah,¹⁴⁶ and accused the PA on 13/6/2013 of waging a systematic campaign in the media against Hamas.¹⁴⁷

Over the second half of 2013, Hamas was busy denying accusations by President 'Abbas and the leaders in the PA of meddling in the internal affairs of Egypt, and sending cadres to Egypt to influence the course of events there.

Despite this, there were some exceptions that were able to buck the trend in the relationship between the two sides. On 30/11/2012, Hamas welcomed the decision of the UN General Assembly to recognize Palestine (here means the WB and GS) as a non-member observer state.¹⁴⁸ Another event of note was when the PA allowed Hamas on 13/12/2012 to commemorate its 25th anniversary in Nablus, for the first

time since 2007.¹⁴⁹ But it is difficult to imagine a major shift would take place in the relationship of the two sides without implementing the national reconciliation, which would have the effect of organizing and managing differences, and limit tensions to a minimum.

4. Hamas and Fatah

The trend governing the relationship between Fatah and Hamas fluctuated according to the progress of the dialogues taking place between the two sides. There was relative de-escalation between the two movements in the first quarter of 2012, before new tensions emerged pushing Hamas (on 1/4/2012) to launch an initiative for confidence building with Fatah.¹⁵⁰ Volatility in the relationship remained the norm leading up to the visit by the Emir of Qatar to GS, which was criticized by Fatah, as Fatah claimed it could be exploited to deepen the division.¹⁵¹

By the end of 2012, there was clear improvement in the relationship, when Hamas allowed Fatah to hold celebrations on the anniversary of its inception for the first time in six years.¹⁵²

Following the coup against President Muhammad Morsi in early July 2013, Hamas accused the leadership of Fatah of promoting lies in the Egyptian media about Hamas, and published 16 documents on 30/7/2013 highlighting the incitement against it by Fatah in the Egyptian media.¹⁵³ The relationship between the two sides entered a more heated stage when Hamas revealed other documents implicating Fatah in incitement against Hamas in Egypt.¹⁵⁴

On 15/8/2013, 'Azzam al-Ahmad announced that Fatah would not remain hostage to Hamas's whim over the failure to implement the reconciliation agreement, saying that Fatah was examining options and would soon make painful decisions without disclosing their nature.¹⁵⁵ On 25/8/2013, the Fatah Central Committee rejected Hamas's proposal to jointly rule GS.¹⁵⁶ A number of Fatah leaders launched verbal attacks on Hamas, including al-Ahmad, who threatened to return to GS on the back of an Egyptian tank,¹⁵⁷ while Dahlan suggested that he may seek the help of external actors against Hamas's rule.¹⁵⁸

At a time when Fatah asked Hamas leader Abu Marzuq to stop broadcasting incitements against Egypt through Hamas-affiliated satellite channels,¹⁵⁹ Fatah stressed not allowing Hamas to stir up the situation in the WB under the pretext of resistance.¹⁶⁰ When there were calls for rebellion against Hamas rule in GS,

Fatah denied on 3/10/2013 any ties to the Tamarrud movement in GS.¹⁶¹ However, Mahmud ‘Abbas, who visited Egypt on 11/11/2013, did not hesitate to accuse Hamas of disrupting the reconciliation, and to say that people did not know how dangerous Hamas was until after the fall of the MB movement in Egypt. A senior source in the delegation accompanying ‘Abbas even said that what had happened in Egypt was a “divine miracle,” claiming that the US and Israel had helped Hamas take over GS!¹⁶² Fatah media incitement intensified, to the extent that Musa Abu Marzuq said in comments posted on his Facebook page on 6/12/2013, that Hamas has become the central enemy for some Fatah spokespeople instead of Israel...¹⁶³

The above may be placed in the context of Fatah’s escalation in the media against Hamas. However, this could also be understood as a kind of tacit support for tightening the blockade on GS, to topple the Hamas government there. Still, relations began to gradually improve following phone calls between ‘Abbas, and Mish‘al and Haniyyah, paving the way for reconciliatory moves involving the two sides.

5. Hamas and the PIJ

The relationship between Hamas and PIJ was at its best in 2012 and 2013. Since the early days of 2012, Haniyyah had called on the PIJ, during a meeting with its delegation, to conduct an in-depth dialogue to achieve full integration with Hamas.¹⁶⁴ In the midst of their discussions, Muhammad al-Hindi, a PIJ leader, stressed on 18/3/2012 that integration talks with Hamas were progressing positively. Meanwhile, Nafez ‘Azzam, another PIJ leader, said the movement’s relationship with Hamas was in constant evolution, and that there were many milestones that needed to be reached before achieving the desired integration.¹⁶⁵ The relations reached a high level of coordination and partnership in the Israeli-dubbed Operation Pillar of Defense, and the Hamas-dubbed Operation Stones of Baked Clay, 8-day war in November 2012.

Despite the statements made by Hamas leader Mahmud al-Zahhar, on 16/9/2013, regarding forming a joint command with the PIJ, clarifications were later made by leaders in both organizations saying that they had agreed to form a high coordinating committee rather than a joint command.¹⁶⁶ It seems that the relationship between Hamas and the PIJ will continue to be one of coordination, rather than organizational integration, in the foreseeable future.

Fifth: Security Forces and Security Coordination

The PA maintained its coordination with Israeli security forces throughout 2012 and 2013, amid fierce accusations made by Palestinian resistance forces, of which many leaders, cadres, and members were assassinated and arrested, with their activities and infrastructure deeply affected due to meticulous security cooperation by the PA with the occupation. Security coordination appeared more evident every day, through the PA complementary roles with the Israeli security forces; PA security forces continued cracking down on resistance forces, especially Hamas and the PIJ, arrest and detention of their members and cadres, in addition to expulsion from their jobs and economic prosecution against anyone suspected of support for the resistance.

The question of security coordination between the PA and the Israeli occupation is one of the biggest issues of concern to Palestinian citizens. Large numbers of Palestinians oppose coordination, while the PA in Ramallah tries to downplay and justify it.¹⁶⁷ Palestinian resistance factions demand a halt to security coordination with Israel, because it cheapens of all the Palestinian sacrifices over the years, and disregards the suffering of the Palestinians at the hands of Israel, and puts Palestinians at odds with other Palestinians.¹⁶⁸

Security coordination has not only had negative impact on inter-factional relations, but also caused critical cracks in the psychological and communal Palestinian fabric. Security coordination, especially political arrests, has left deep wounds and scars in the hearts of the Palestinians, who have been burned by this phenomenon that began with the inception of the PA and continues to the present day.

The statements made by PA President Mahmud ‘Abbas on 10/10/2013, in which he said his Authority had succeeded 100% in security coordination with Israel on a Palestinian talk show, drew a wave of reactions denouncing and rejecting the principle of security coordination.¹⁶⁹

Political arrests targeting the cadres and supporters of the Palestinian resistance forces take place on a daily basis in the WB, as well as the continuation of raids and closure of institutions, in parallel with the continuation of security coordination with the occupation, all place national values in extreme danger, and promote a spirit of frustration and alienation from the homeland. It prevents the Palestinian

citizens from interacting and working hard for the victory of their people and their cause, and violates national dignity and the human and legal rights of the Palestinians.¹⁷⁰

The state of the security forces do not portend a breakthrough anytime soon, one that would affect their structure and strategy. The leadership of the PA in Ramallah continues to justify security coordination on the basis of security commitments arising from the Oslo Accords and the Road Map for Peace. Accordingly, the PA justifies all measures, and shows boundless openness to commitments and security agreements with the US administration and other stakeholders, including the supply of arms, equipment, training, rehabilitation of security officers, and monitoring of performance in accordance with the tasks set, and refuses to employ Palestinian national security in any attempt to repel incursions or aggression by Israel. While some found reason for optimism in the developments taking place on the national reconciliation issue, and the possibility of this having a positive effect on limiting security coordination with Israel, facts on the ground do not suggest there is a possibility of a concrete change taking place in the security policy of the PA in the WB.

Examining events in 2012 and 2013 may indicate that many aspects of security coordination are kept secret. In early 2012, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak praised security coordination with the PA, saying that stability in the WB was thanks to security cooperation with Israel.¹⁷¹

According to a statement by Central Command Chief Maj. Gen. Nitzan Alon in March 2012, the PA arrested 2,200 resistance members between 2009 and 2010, and a little less than 700 in 2011.¹⁷² Meanwhile, Palestinian information indicate that PA security forces handed over 25 soldiers and settlers who had snuck in to the WB, to Israel in April 2012.¹⁷³ Security coordination reached such a level that Fahmi Shabana, former officer in PA intelligence services said that security coordination was the cause of 25% of arrests of Palestinians who are now held in Israeli prisons.¹⁷⁴

Statistics documented by the Committee of Relatives of Political Detainees in the WB indicated a rise in the number of political detentions in 2013, with 951 arrests and more than 1,820 summons by the Palestinian security forces, an

increase of 121 in 2012, when political arrests numbered 830. The committee documented a marked increase in political arrests against university students and activists from Islamic groups, and the continuation of harassment against prisoners released from Israeli prisons, some of whom had spent more than 19 years locked up, in addition to arrests against many journalists, writers, and young activists.¹⁷⁵

A report of the Information Center at the Ministry of Planning affiliated to the government in Gaza stated that the PA security forces in the WB carried out 720 arrests against members of Hamas, PIJ and other factions during 2013. The report, which was issued on 20/1/2014, mentioned that there were 477 summons, and two deaths at the hands of the PA's Preventive Security Service (PSS) in the WB in 2014. The report also explained that more than 110 individuals were sacked from their jobs on suspicion of supporting Hamas.¹⁷⁶

The Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), which was established by the PA, indicated that in 2012 it received 789 complaints that included allegations of violations of the right to due process of law and unlawful detention, with 563 in the WB, and 226 in GS. In contrast, in 2011, ICHR received 1,026 complaints in this regard, comprising 755 in the WB, and 271 in the GS. The security agencies, which were involved in such violations in the WB are PSS, General Intelligence, and Military Intelligence. In GS, the Internal Security of the Ministry of Interior carried out the detentions.¹⁷⁷

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor reported in 2013 that the Palestinian security forces in the WB and GS carried out more than 800 cases of arbitrary arrests, and nearly 1,400 summons of Palestinian citizens, for matters related to expression of opinion and peaceful assembly. The Observatory mentioned that the security forces of the PA in the WB carried out 723 cases of arbitrary arrest, and 1,137 summons, without legal justification and without judicial authorization in most of those cases. The Observatory said it recorded 117 cases of torture in the WB. Regarding the violations by GS security forces, the Observatory recorded 84 cases of arbitrary arrest, 217 summons, and 22 cases of torture during detention.¹⁷⁸

Incursions by settlers into Joseph's Tomb in Nablus which took place under protection from the PA's security forces, the repeated meetings between PA officials

and ministers with Israeli officers in some areas of the WB, and the periodic meetings between Palestinian and Israeli officers; were nothing exceptional or out of the ordinary. For it is part of the PA security policy towards resistance forces or anyone who poses any kind of threat to Israeli security.¹⁷⁹

Despite statements made by Adnan al-Damiri, spokesperson for the security forces, on 12/6/2012, in which he claimed that security coordination with Israel was at its lowest level for two years (i.e., since 2010),¹⁸⁰ the Israeli media revealed on 2/7/2012 that PA security forces had detained Palestinian officers who rejected security coordination with Israel.¹⁸¹ On 18/12/2012, Israeli Chief of Staff Lieutenant General (Lt.-Gen.) Benny Gantz said that the Authority's security apparatus kept the Israeli army apprised as to the reality of security in all WB areas, allowing it to work against Palestinian "terrorism,"¹⁸² as he put it.

Despite threats by Saeb Erekat to halt security coordination and seek to change the rules of the relationship with Israel,¹⁸³ statistics published by the Israeli media, quoting Israeli security sources at the end of 2012, shows that the PA security forces went even further than the Israeli army in arresting Hamas supporters, which renders such statements devoid of real substance or practical value.¹⁸⁴ On 13/6/2013, Nabil Sha'ath, member of Fatah's Central Committee, stated that the PA spent more money on the security of settlements in the WB and Israel's borders than on education and healthcare, thus shedding light on the dangers and absurdity brought about by security coordination with Israel.¹⁸⁵

In the context of its security efforts, a Palestinian security source admitted that the PA foiled 10 commando operations in the territories occupied in 1948.¹⁸⁶ On 25/10/2013, Israeli media revealed that the PA security forces arrested a Hamas cell in Hebron that planned to launch explosive-laden Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) into Israel.¹⁸⁷ On 1/11/2013, Hamas accused PA security forces of providing security information to Israeli security forces, causing the arrest of three Hamas leaders in Ramallah and calling on the PA to review security coordination with the occupation.¹⁸⁸

Thus, it is clear how strongly committed the PA is to its security function and coordination with Israel, and how willing it is to continue this function and its requirements during the next phase.

Conclusion

The internal Palestinian situation during 2012 and 2013 was characteristically complex and rife with many overlapping issues. A number of factors pushed toward opposing directions that fluctuated up and down in their ability to influence the internal situation. The fundamental crisis arising from the Palestinian division continued to dominate the Palestinian agenda, with the failure to implement the reconciliation program and to reform Palestinian institutions. The Palestinian agenda also continued to be affected by the crisis over the inability to decide on specific directions and destinations for national action, whether on the path of the peace process or the path of armed resistance.

The Israeli occupation in the WB and the blockade of the GS, in addition to the presence of two diametrically opposed administrations in Ramallah and Gaza City, continued to adversely affect national action in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967. Furthermore, the failure of the PLO to accommodate all the components and forces of the Palestinian people; its inability to revive its institutions and the role of the Palestinians inside and outside Palestine; nay the decline of the PLO to become akin to a department of the PA, which is in turn remains subordinate to the occupation and its conditions; squandered the energy of the Palestinian people; at a time when Israel pressed ahead with its Judaization plans and settlement building, altering the facts on the ground.

The revolutions and changes that swept the Arab world had an impact on the internal situation in Palestine. Between 2012 and 2013 (especially the first 18 months), the pro-resistance forces, especially Islamists, wagered on the success of these uprisings and the rise of “political Islam.” However, the counter-revolution, peaking with the military coup in Egypt and the way the MB movement was dealt with as a “terrorist” group, the ban on Hamas in Egypt, and the crippling blockade of GS, cast a negative shadow (even if a short-term one) on the Palestinian Islamist movement. This reality was further entrenched with the expanding scope of attacks against Islamist movements in the countries that saw uprisings or regime change, or even in those countries that were anticipating such events without revolutions even taking place.

Some were prompted to wager on the peace process, with talks resuming following the coup in Egypt, and to not rush the process of Palestinian reconciliation,

except in line with conditions that would see Hamas contained as the weaker party. However, the path of the peace process, which could end only with failure or with historical concessions that the Palestinian people reject; rising extremism in Israeli society and government; the lack of an American and international desire to put pressure on Israel; and the structural, political, and economic crises of the PA; will compel the Palestinians to ultimately return to the path of reconciliation.

We are now operating in an Arab environment characterized by liquidity and still in the process of being formed, especially in the area around Palestine. It is difficult to predict a mending of the internal Palestinian situation (at this stage) on the unstable Arab situation that did not take its final form. Therefore, putting the internal political house in order must be on the basis of positive initiatives from both sides of the divide, as well as confidence-building programs that accommodate everyone in the national project, rather than on the basis of political opportunism or seeking help from external actors against opponents.

Overcoming the internal Palestinian crisis requires a serious stand to determine the course and priorities of national action, to agree on Palestinian red lines, and to settle questions related to the paths of the peace process and resistance, as well as the future and role of the PA; otherwise, reconciliation programs will continue to carry the seeds of crisis and its own failures within them.

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Chapter Two

The Israeli-Palestinian Scene

The Israeli-Palestinian Scene

Introduction

Israel had many reasons for concern in 2012 in the wake of the revolutions and changes in the Arab world and the resistance against its aggression on the GS, in addition to the stalled peace process. Nonetheless, it had more reasons to feel satisfaction in 2013 as a result of the frustration that accompanied Arab revolutions and the success of the coup in Egypt, in addition to the re-launching of the peace process according to Israeli conditions, faltering Palestinian reconciliation, and the escalation of the stifling siege on the GS. This was accompanied by the victory of the right in the Israeli elections, adding to the suffering and pressures on the Palestinian people and their leadership.

This chapter attempts to draw the political map of the Israeli interior, in addition to outlining demographic, economic and military data regarding Israel. It will discuss the issues of aggression, resistance and the peace process during 2012–2013.

First: The Internal Israeli Political Scene

The internal Israeli political scene in 2012 witnessed several key events that had an impact on the political process for both 2012 and 2013.

1. The Partisan Landscape in 2012

2012 was characterized by active partisanship in Israel outside the Knesset framework, as pundits predicted the collapse of the Kadima Party,¹ the party founded by Ariel Sharon with Ehud Olmert and other politicians of the Israeli political spectrum. They also predicted that the right-wing in the Likud Party would become more radicalized under the leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu, as the extreme right-wing pro-settlement trend led by Moshe Feiglin² became so powerful that Likud was considered to be an incubator for settlers.

In contrast, the religious parties with their various orientations pressurized the Netanyahu government during 2012, threatening to dismantle the governmental coalition if the exemption from military service was cancelled for religious students. This threat implied the loss of trust between Netanyahu and these parties that had been part of his governments and the Likud governments for a long time. On the other hand, any destabilization of the pillars of the government could have lead to the formation of a secular government with Kadima, which Netanyahu is averse to, preferring to move the date of the elections forward in order to establish a new government.

The internal conflict in the Likud Party in 2012 affected the Netanyahu government,³ as some party leaders alluded to a loss in their trust in him. They even threatened to separate Netanyahu from the ranks of the party and its institutions, if he did not follow the directives of the party to reject any compromise with the Palestinians and carry on with the settlement building. It is true that Netanyahu gave in to the demands and directives of his party, but he tried to strengthen his position by maintaining his government until the last possible moment.

In addition to this state of affairs within the Likud Party, a proposal for forcing religious students perform military service was put forth by the Yisrael Beitenu Party, led by Avigdor Lieberman, which is a radical far-right party mostly made up of Russian immigrants. Lieberman is known for his secular tendencies and his refusal to impose Jewish law or any of its components on the Israeli society.

Thus, the Netanyahu government was pressured by two opposing currents: The devout religious who rejected any change in the exemption of religious Jewish students from military service, as their study of the Torah is considered to be service; and the Yisrael Beitenu Party, which supported the enactment of the military service law and its imposition upon all Israeli youth.

To strike a balance between the two parties, prevent the fall of the government and avoid moving the Knesset elections forward, Netanyahu negotiated with the Kadima Party to enter into the coalition, thereby prolonging the life of his government, albeit temporarily. However, the entry of Kadima in the government

coalition on 8/5/2012 led to a series of internal rifts within Kadima and the withdrawal of a number of politicians from the membership of the party, some of them joining other parties.⁴ Because of the internal conflict in Kadima between Tzipi Livni and Shaul Mofaz, Livni withdrew from Kadima on 1/5/2012,⁵ and announced on 27/11/2012 her return to public political life and the formation of a new party called The Movement (*Hatnua*) under her leadership.⁶ Livni's move strongly contributed to the decline of the Kadima Party, which had to withdraw from the government coalition on 17/7/2012, less than three months after joining it, to the backdrop of the continuing debate on the mandatory military service law for religious radicals.⁷

After it became obvious to Netanyahu that his government's days were numbered, he submitted a draft to move the parliamentary elections forward, which would mean the dissolution of Knesset and the start of preparations for elections.

Following the announcement that the parliamentary elections were to be moved forward,⁸ public opinion polls in Israel pointed to the disintegration of Kadima and its potential disappearance from the partisan arena. The main factors that led to the breakdown and erosion of the Kadima Party consist of its founder's coma in early 2006, followed by his death in early 2014, in addition to the alleged financial corruption of his heir at the head of the party, Ehud Olmert, who was tried before a court (and was later acquitted), and Netanyahu's continued efforts to dismantle Kadima by encouraging the withdrawal of its members and their joining of the Likud. Some of them even received ministerial portfolios in his government.

The party received a severe blow when Tzipi Livni announced her withdrawal and the formation of a new party under her leadership, believing this would help her achieve a landslide victory and affect the partisan scene in Israel. Add to this that the current leader of Kadima, Shaul Mofaz, a former military man, proved that he was not capable enough to lead Kadima and lacked political experience. Hence, this party is expected to disappear from the political scene during the 20th Knesset elections.

Moreover, these polls revealed a reinforced right-wing and an increased stature and presence of the parties supporting the settlement project and the “Jewishness” of the state. The concept of an alliance between Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu also developed,⁹ aiming to gain the highest number of votes in order to facilitate the formation of a government without the need for coalitions with other parties, particularly the religious ones. Both parties approved the partnership and the formation of a single electoral list for Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu. Voices within the Likud warned Netanyahu against taking such a step because his party would lose its position in favor of Yisrael Beiteinu, but Netanyahu’s opinion tipped the balance decisively. Indeed, although this alliance has helped Netanyahu ensure that he will be the next prime minister, it weakens the Likud in terms of the number of seats it holds in the parliament.

Livni, who withdrew from the Kadima Party and formed a new party called The Movement¹⁰ to counter the policy of Netanyahu and prevent his arrival to the post of prime minister, raised in her electoral program the issue of the necessity to activate negotiations with the Palestinians in a more serious manner, in order to reach a settlement of the conflict. However, public opinion polls predicted that The Movement would secure only a limited number of seats.

During the preparations for the 19th Knesset elections, a new party headed by Yair Lapid was formed on 30/4/2012 among the middle classes and the bourgeoisie of Tel Aviv. It was called Yesh Atid (There is a Future),¹¹ and its leader is a known media figure in Israel. He is the son of a famous Israeli media and political figure, Yosef (Tommy) Lapid, leader of the defunct Shinui Party. As for Yesh Atid, it has a secular agenda, which seeks to improve social and economic conditions, taking advantage of the social protests that took place in the summer of 2011. Regarding the negotiations with the Palestinians, the party’s position is approximately the same as the rest of the Israeli parties. Hence, it can be classified as a center party with rightist tendencies.

2. The 19th Knesset Elections and Their Repercussions

The 19th Israeli Knesset elections were held on 22/1/2013, with the participation of more than 30 electoral lists, of which only 12 managed to succeed in entering the Knesset, including the Arab lists.¹²

Electoral propaganda did not put forward any new elements regarding domestic Israeli policy, and the slogans were those that are repeated from one election to another, such as improving the general economic situation, reducing unemployment, and increasing economic growth.

However, these elections carried several surprises: The joint Likud-Yisrael Beitenu list obtained only 31 out of 120 seats, while when the two parties had separate lists during the last elections, they obtained 42 seats in total. Likud's share went down from 27 seats in the previous elections to 20 seats, while its partner Yisrael Beitenu obtained 11 seats.¹³ Hence, Netanyahu was severely criticized and blamed by the members of his party. Nonetheless, the joint list retained the largest number of seats in the Knesset.

As for the second surprise, it consisted of the Yesh Atid Party¹⁴ obtaining 19 seats, despite pre-election forecasts to the contrary. This meant that any government formed by Netanyahu would be forced to include Lapid.

The third surprise was when The Jewish Home Party (*HaBayit HaYehudi*) headed by Naftali Bennett obtained 12 seats. As expected, the Kadima Party practically collapsed, as it had 28 members in the Knesset previously and this figure was reduced to just two members, headed by Shaul Mofaz. The religious parties, such as United Torah Judaism (*Yahadut Hatorah*) and Shas, retained their seats in the Knesset, despite the fact that some polls had pointed to a possibility decline in their position.

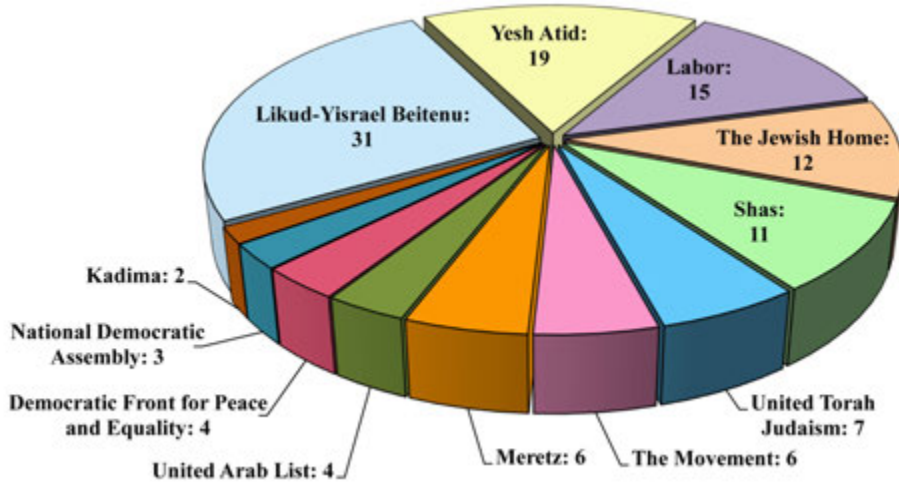
The 120 seats in the 19th Knesset were distributed as follows: 61 seats for right-wing and religious political parties and movements (Likud-Yisrael Beitenu: 31 seats, The Jewish Home: 12 seats, Shas: 11 seats, and United Torah Judaism: 7 seats); 48 seats for the parties of the center and left-wing camps (Yesh Atid: 19 seats, the Labor Party: 15 seats, The Movement: 6 seats, Meretz: 6 seats, Kadima: 2 seats).

As for the Arab parties, they obtained 11 seats (Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (*Hadash*), the National Democratic Assembly (*Balad*) and the United Arab List). The following table shows the results of the 18th and 19th Knesset elections:

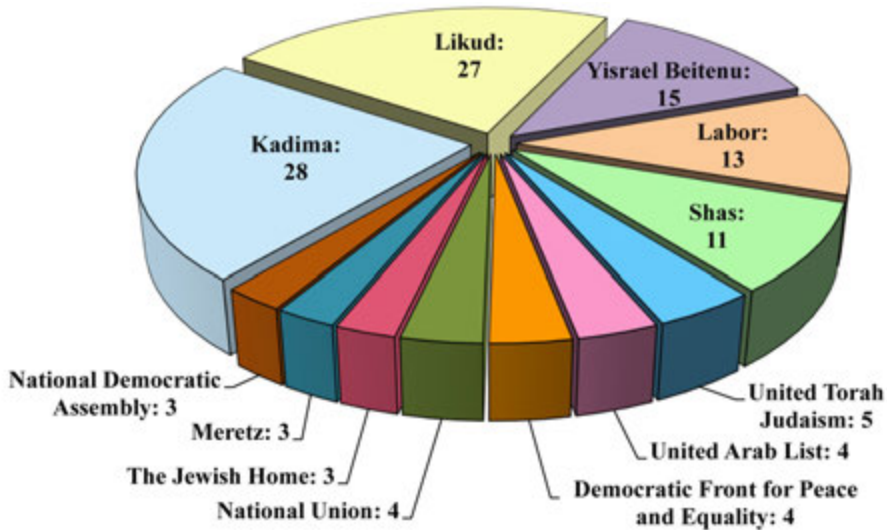
Table 1/2: Comparing the Results of the 19th and 18th Knesset Elections¹⁵

List name	19th Knesset 22/1/2013		18th Knesset 10/2/2009	
	Number of valid votes	Number of seats	Number of valid votes	Number of seats
Likud	885,163	31	729,054	27
Yisrael Beiteinu			394,577	15
Yesh Atid	543,458	19	–	–
Labor	432,118	15	334,900	13
The Jewish Home	345,985	12	96,765	3
Kadima	78,974	2	758,032	28
Shas	331,868	11	286,300	11
United Torah Judaism	195,892	7	147,954	5
The Movement	189,167	6	–	–
Meretz	172,403	6	99,611	3
United Arab List	138,450	4	113,954	4
Democratic Front for Peace and Equality	113,439	4	112,130	4
National Democratic Assembly	97,030	3	83,739	3
National Union	–	–	112,570	4
Number of eligible voters	5,656,705		5,278,985	
Total number of votes	3,833,646		3,416,587	
Total number of valid votes	3,792,742		3,373,490	

Results of the 19th Knesset Elections on 22/1/2013



Results of the 18th Knesset Elections on 10/2/2009



Netanyahu's options were limited regarding the formation of his government. Indeed, the Yesh Atid Party imposed preconditions on entering the government, particularly the endeavor to bridge the gap between the religious and the secular regarding the military service. This was also demanded by The Jewish Home Party, and so Netanyahu found himself chained to a question to which he had always tried to find a compromise when the ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) parties were allied with him. But this time he found his hands tied by the harsh conditions of two parties that represent 31 seats, which was exactly equal to the size of his list (Likud and Yisrael Beitenu).

As for Tzipi Livni, the head of The Movement Party, she expressed her willingness to take part in the governmental coalition and abandon her personal struggles with Netanyahu, in order to restart negotiations with the Palestinians.

Thus, Netanyahu found himself faced with limited options for the formation of a new government under his leadership. The first option: To form a government composed of members from his party and the religious parties with 48 seats in an attempt to convince the Labor Party to enter into a coalition, with the aim of reaching 63 Knesset members in the coalition. But this option implies conflicts, especially between Yisrael Beitenu and the religious parties. The second option: Likud-Yisrael Beitenu, Yesh Atid, The Jewish Home, and The Movement, with a total of 68 seats. Therefore, Netanyahu preferred to form a right-center government (if we consider that Yesh Atid and The Movement fall within this category). For the first time in decades, a government was formed without any of the ultra-Orthodox parties.

Netanyahu fell under the grip of The Jewish Home and Yesh Atid. In an attempt to ensure that the latter would not lose control of the government, it set the condition that the government must be comprised of 20 ministers, excluding the prime minister. However, the government was formed of 21 ministers, who were later joined by Lieberman as foreign minister after his acquittal. Hence, there were now 22 ministers, or a total of 23 members of the government with Prime Minister Netanyahu. The ministerial portfolios were distributed as follows: 8 for Likud (including the prime minister), 5 for Yisrael Beitenu, 5 for Yesh Atid, 3 for The Jewish Home and 2 for The Movement. This meant that Netanyahu maintained

the power and influence of both his party and his partner Yisrael Beitenu in the government, in exchange for concessions in the chairmanship and membership in the Knesset committees for the other coalition parties.¹⁶

Yesh Atid obtained the finance and education portfolios, based on Lapid's wish to improve the condition of the middle class, the majority of whom live in Tel Aviv, the city which witnessed social protests in the summer of 2011. As for education, the party planned to overhaul the education system, including high school exam guidelines, and university admissions.

It seems that Yesh Atid is a temporary phenomenon on the partisan scene in Israel, because it is not based on an existing and deeply-rooted ideology like The Jewish Home. Since this party was born as a result of the middle class protests, it was joined by those who did not find themselves in any other party, where many have personal interests or inclinations. On the other hand, the fact that the party's founder, Lapid, obtained the finance ministry in the Netanyahu government may cause him to have disagreements and conflicts with many parties in the Knesset, and with certain segments of the population of Israel, because financial affairs in Israel represent a very sensitive issue, especially for religious parties that are used to receiving large budget allocations for their independent institutions. However, Lapid sought to change this, thus leaving an impact on the overall political climate.

It is worthy of note here that Yesh Atid deals tensely with negotiations with the Palestinians, which could lead to splits within its ranks and thus to the formation of separate lists by its dissident members. Therefore, this party's situation will be similar to that of the Kadima Party. Yesh Atid will thus face serious challenges without any prior experience, and if it does not succeed in achieving all or part of them it will lose in the next elections.

On the other hand, The Jewish Home Party, formed as the successor party to Mafdal (the National Religious Party), has become stronger while it enjoys a wide popularity among the settlers and non-Haredi religious currents in Israel. The party was established as a continuity of the National Union (*HaIhud HaLeumi*)-Mafdal on the eve of the 17th Israeli Knesset elections in 2006, its central objective being to unite the ranks of the religious-traditional right-wing lists and parties, namely: Mafdal, Moledet, Tkuma, and Ahi. However, this move was unsuccessful,

as The Jewish Home Party remained the representative of Mafdal only. Another attempt was made during the 19th Knesset elections in 2013, and the party won 12 seats, joining the current government coalition in the wake of this achievement.

In fact, The Jewish Home Party is not a temporary phenomenon on the partisan scene in Israel. Rather, it represents a renewal process for the formation of right-wing religious parties in view of influencing fateful political decisions, of which first and foremost is the prevention of any concessions toward the Palestinians and the consolidation of the settlement project and the “Jewishness” of the state. It is noteworthy that a number of Israeli Knesset members who belong to this party are settlers who live in the Israeli settlements of the WB. The voters in favor of this party are either former Mafdal members or those who belong to small right-wing pro-settlement lists and parties, in addition to those who are displeased at the Likud-Yisrael Beiteinu union.

There is no doubt that The Jewish Home (as long as it is part of the government) will affect many decisions relating to the form of the state, especially the “Jewish state.” It is an issue that will continuously be used as leverage in international circles, and for which acceptance by the Palestinians, Arabs and the international community will be sought. This is in addition to the Haredim military service issue, while noting that the party’s stance toward this matter is in line with the decision of the Israeli government, though it calls for taking into account the Haredim’s specific wishes.

The 19th Knesset elections in 2013 carried no change in the division of seats among the Arab parties compared to the 2009 elections. Democratic Front for Peace and Equality and the United Arab List each obtained four seats, and the National Democratic Assembly obtained 3 seats.¹⁷ The 19th Knesset also comprised 18 deputies from the Palestinians of 1948 as follows: 10 from Arab parties¹⁸ and 8 from Jewish parties, including 6 Druze. 790 thousand Palestinians of 1948 are entitled to vote (14% of those eligible to vote in Israel),¹⁹ while the number of Palestinians of 1948 constitutes 16.6% of the population of Israel.

The Arab parties obtained 77% of the total valid Arab votes in the 2013 elections compared to 82% in 2009. The share of the Arab parties amounted to 84% of the votes of Palestinian Arabs living in Arab towns and villages, compared to 87% in 2009; 18% in Arab Druze towns and villages compared to 17% in 2009; and around 80% in the mixed towns and coastal cities.²⁰

Table 2/2: Voting Among Arab Parties During 2006–2013²¹

Year	Democratic Front for Peace and Equality		United Arab List		National Democratic Assembly	
	Number of votes	Percentage (%)	Number of votes	Percentage (%)	Number of votes	Percentage (%)
2006	86,092	24.3	94,786	27.4	72,066	20.2
2009	112,130	29.6	113,954	30.3	83,739	22.2
2013	113,439	24	138,450	31	97,030	22

2013 ended with a drastic change in the leadership of the Labor Party. Isaac Herzog, who is the son of Chaim Herzog (former Israeli president and renowned politician) and the grandson of the former Chief Rabbi Yitzhak HaLevi Herzog, defeated Shelly Yachimovich.²² This loss represented a blow to Yachimovich's socialist approach that refuses to participate in Netanyahu's government without compelling conditions for a peaceful settlement with the Palestinians.

Yachimovich's loss of the leadership of the Labor Party suggests that solid blocs of old members from the party are able to express their dissatisfaction with its approach and orientation that is focused on social issues. It is why they sought, along with their supporters, to achieve an inside coup. As for Herzog, he is broadly active in the party's various branches, especially as he promotes a political, economic and social agenda. There is no doubt that the Labor Party made some achievements in the 19th Knesset elections in terms of bringing back many supporters, thus increasing its strength in the Knesset, but Yachimovich's refusal to take part in the government coalition contributed to the weakening of her position and leadership, as many leaders in the Labor Party called for joining the Netanyahu government based on the claim that the party could then have the ability to influence political decisions.

3. Local and Municipal Elections

The domestic political scene in Israel witnessed a pivotal event as local and municipal elections were held at the end of October 2013. Contrary to previous occasions, these elections were met with indifference by the Israeli public, with only 35% participation. On the other hand, there was a massive 75% Palestinian participation, due to the fact that these elections are a strong indicator of the status of family and the clan in most Arab local and municipal authorities. In addition,

working at these authorities represents a major source of employment for Arab citizens, as the Israeli government practices discriminatory policies against them (see table 3/2).

Table 3/2: Voter Turnout in Local Elections in Palestinian Circles Compared to the General Average in Israel²³

Year	In Palestinian circles (%)	General average in Israel (%)
1993	88.7	56.3
1998	90.7	57.4
2003	75	49.3
2008	77	46
2013	75	50.9*

* This figure is based on data from the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI). It is worth mentioning that *Haaretz* newspaper noted that there was a general voting rate of 32.7%, which is different from the rate mentioned. Also, the voting rate for Jews only reached 35%.²⁴

These elections revealed a decline in the position and influence of Arab political parties in internal (local) Palestinian affairs. These parties thus had a remote impact on these elections. The most significant event in this context is the collapse of the status of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality in most of the authorities that participated in the elections. In particular, it lost the municipal elections in Nazareth city,²⁵ where candidate Ali Sallam, who ran on an independent list not affiliated with any political party, won. Ali Sallam was deputy mayor to engineer Ramiz Jaraysi for a long time but then had a dispute with him, and managed to defeat him and the Democratic Front in less than six months.

The results of the local authority elections, which took place in 2003, 2008 and 2013, attested to the control of the family in the elections, and a decline in the role of the parties. Indeed, most lists in the Arab towns and villages had a family base. There were 762 Arab members who won in the 2013 elections in the Arab local councils, and this implies that the proportion of local authority members belonging to political parties and movements does not exceed 9%.²⁶ Also, these elections featured 149 heads of local authorities out of 191 candidates who saw their mandate renewed for a second or third time, or even more. Moreover, three heads of municipalities who ran as candidates for the elections and who were

accused of financial and administrative corruption, achieved yet another victory. This is one of the issues that is being examined by the public prosecutor's office in Israel.

4. A More Radical Political System

A Settler Government: Netanyahu adheres to the Likud agenda that calls for the expansion of Israeli settlements in Jerusalem and its surroundings, and in existing settlements in the WB. On the other hand, Netanyahu is committed to his government's settlement policy and the development of this settlement in all its aspects.²⁷ It is obvious that the faltering path of negotiations with the Palestinians did not prevent Netanyahu's government from pursuing settlements, as Netanyahu's policies corresponded to the wishes of the settlers. The negotiations path remained stalled because of Netanyahu's intransigence and his disinclination to restart negotiations, as well as the fact that settlement activity was not halted. Netanyahu has stated on more than one occasion that the settlements should not hinder any Israeli-Palestinian meeting, knowing full well that the basic demands of the Palestinian side is the complete halting of settlements.

Nonetheless, settlement building and growth is still continuing as if it were not related to the essence of the conflict, to the extent that settlement expansion has reached private Palestinian land and property. The Netanyahu government has attempted to legitimize the move, but the Supreme Court rejected it and considered it to be illegal.

The Israeli government took another step toward strengthening settlement, when, along with the Council for Higher Education, it officially recognized the Faculty of Ariel (Ariel is one of the major Israeli settlements in the WB) as a university that is entitled to issue degrees.²⁸ This measure provoked the reactions of official bodies and institutions both in Israel and abroad, as they stressed that it would increase the obstacles to negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis. In spite of all the pressure and condemnation from various international sides, Ariel University continues to function and grow, supported by full overt government support.

In addition, the boycott campaigns against settlements continued locally and globally, especially the boycott of Israeli academic institutions and goods produced in the settlements. These anti-settlement activities did not deter the

Israeli government from continuing to expand the settlements by announcing the construction of new housing units in Jerusalem and elsewhere.

The formation of the Israeli government in 2013 provided a strong cover for settlement and Judaization programs, and supported conditions that thwarted the peace process. Despite calls from the UN, the American administration and the EU, Netanyahu headed a government of settlers par excellence. In general, the subject of settlement has found itself part of regular daily life in Israel, in the sense that it is no longer a debatable subject, or one that provokes demonstrations by the Israeli left in Tel Aviv and other Israeli cities.

The Praver Plan:²⁹ This plan, which was devised internally by Israel, aims to deport Palestinian Arabs who are Negev Bedouins and to seize hundreds of thousands of donums³⁰ of their land in order to establish Israeli settlements there, as part of the scheme for Judaizing the Negev. The case of the Bedouin Arabs was widely covered in the Israeli media, the Arab world, and the world at large, to the extent that loud demonstrations were organized by Palestinian Arabs in several cities in Israel against this plan, accompanied by demonstrations and sit-ins in many cities and capitals around the world. Shortly before the end of 2013, the Israeli government announced its retreat from this plan, claiming that it was not applicable under present circumstances. Moreover, voices began to resound amid the government and right-wing parties calling for the Judaization of Galilee in order to reduce the high proportions of Arabs there, as they constitute 56% of the total population in Galilee.

“The Jewishness of the State”: The Israeli government is committed to this matter and considers it to be a prerequisite for peace process negotiations. It sent a renewed call to the PA to recognize Israel as a “Jewish state,” but the PA has refused to do so.³¹

The issue did not stop at this point, as a number of government ministers and members of Knesset submitted laws or proposals to strengthen the “Jewishness” of the state, including the cancellation of Arabic as an official language in Israel, and the development of Jewish settlement in Israel, especially in Galilee, as mentioned above.³²

Law Preventing the Division of Jerusalem: The right-wing and religious parties supported this law, while left-wing parties in the Knesset opposed it. However, it failed to obtain an overwhelming parliamentary majority composed

of two-thirds of the Knesset members (i.e., 80 members). This confirmed the fact that the Israeli parliament rejects any real compromise with the Palestinians.³³ While Netanyahu, despite his extremism, has encountered a problem within his own party, as one of its members threatened to expel him from the party if he agreed to an Oslo-like settlement with the Palestinians. Not only did his opponents take this measure, but they also began operating within the party to amend its constitution and ensure the prevention of the establishment of a Palestinian state. This step reflects the presence of a trend within the Likud that rejects any peace settlement with the Palestinians and endorses the occupation in terms of liberating “Jewish land” and returning it to its rightful owners (from their perspective). But Netanyahu, who was thus shackled, continued to search for a way to restore his position and his leadership within the party by launching a project to integrate Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu in a single party list (and not a partnership, as is currently the case). However, Lieberman refused this for fear of witnessing the demise of his own party and power.

Restrictions on Freedoms: In an effort to crack down on opponents of Israel’s domestic policies,³⁴ Livni proposed a law to combat “terrorism” from an Israeli perspective: Anyone who shows solidarity and support to a “terrorist” organization or raises its slogans will be punished by imprisonment. She also called for the extension of the life sentence from 30 to 40 years.³⁵ This law aimed to put restrictions on the freedoms of Palestinian Arabs.

Among the laws limiting freedom and political action for minorities in Israel, the Israeli Knesset approved a law raising the electoral threshold in the parliamentary elections from 2% to 3.25% on 11/3/2014.³⁶ This was based on an attempt to get rid of small political parties and lists, and adversely affects the Arab parties represented in the Knesset, as they will be removed from the Israeli parliament so that it becomes “a Jewish parliament.” Of course, this was opposed by the opposition parties such as the Arab parties, Labor, Meretz and Shas (the latter among the ranks of the opposition during the parliament, and claiming to be the defender of the downtrodden classes, forced to represent themselves outside the framework of existing parties).³⁷

5. Internal Disputes

Military Service for Haredim: The polarization continued within Israeli society on the issue of burden and responsibility distribution among the various

social trends and political parties. There were increasing demands by leftist parties, the center, and the secular right, as well as various social movements, calling Israeli Haredim to bear the burden and responsibility by accepting the principle of enlisting in the Israeli army or of alternative service to the military service. It is axiomatic that extremist religious parties (Haredim) would reject this call, considering it a violation of the agreed “status quo,” i.e., that the faith of the religious is considered to be their work, and that this ought to be enough. On the other hand, advocates of military service for all the Israeli people called for equality in service so it does not remain the preserve of the secular and some religious groups. This issue widened the rift within the Israeli society and was one of the themes of the election campaign of several concerned parties.³⁸

The Israeli government approved the new military or civilian service law, which takes effect in 2016. This law is incompatible with the nature of the ultra-Orthodox parties, which immediately began looking for ways to circumvent this law.

Political and Financial Corruption:³⁹ According to international news agencies, the Corruption Perceptions Index places Israel in the 39th position in 2012 after it was ranked 36th in 2011.⁴⁰ Corruption is present in the public sector and among politicians. Among the most prominent issues related to political and financial corruption is the case of Ehud Olmert, former prime minister in the Israeli government. Referred to as Holyland, this case was exploited by political opponents to oust him from political life so he can never return as prime minister or challenge Netanyahu. However, he was acquitted of most of the corruption accusations against him, and was not prevented by the court from engaging in political action. Following this decision, Olmert became a potential future pressure on Netanyahu.

Another issue related to political and financial corruption was that of Avigdor Lieberman, the head of Yisrael Beiteinu and Israeli foreign minister in Netanyahu’s government, and his coalition ally. Lieberman took part in the Knesset elections but was not included in the government until the court issued its final decision. The verdict of his acquittal was actually issued on 6/11/2013, the day on which he resumed his work as foreign minister.⁴¹ The return of Lieberman is a complicating factor when it comes to negotiations because of his hardline views toward the Palestinians, and his acquittal will strengthen his party’s popularity in Israel and may give legitimacy to acts of embezzlement and financial and political

corruption.⁴² The strong blow received by the public prosecutor in Israel after Lieberman's acquittal could pave the way for the acquittal of other politicians from corruption charges against them.

There is also a third case that has preoccupied the Israelis, which is the indictment by the public prosecutor against a number of heads of local authorities in Israel, who are accused of receiving bribes or being deceitful, and favoring their private interest above the public interest. A violent debate took place in the corridors of the Knesset and the media about whether the accused may stand as a candidate for local elections as president or member, and this will be a hot topic during the 2013 local elections in Israel.

Public opinion in Israel has a distrust in the judiciary regarding such cases, as dozens of politicians and financially influential people have been cleared from political and financial corruption issues. Thus, some parties seek to combat this phenomenon through civil associations that look into the issues of bribery, corruption and money laundering, with the aim of improving the quality of governance in Israel.

Moreover, financial and political corruption was not confined to the ranks of politicians in Israel, but also reached the ranks of senior clerics, led by former Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel, Yona Metzger, who was charged with receiving bribes, money laundering and failure to declare his income to the tax department.⁴³

It is expected that 2014 and 2015 will witness conflicts within the government between Likud, Yisrael Beitenu, and Yesh Atid in particular with regard to the socio-economic situation. There will be a strong conflict between the Likud and Yisrael Beitenu on their partnership's fate, which will reflect negatively on the fate of the Netanyahu government.⁴⁴ Netanyahu and some members of his party will clash with the hardline Jewish Home Party on everything related to the development and future of the settlements, as The Jewish Home refuses any negotiations regarding the fate of the settlements. Add to this the fact that the social divide will widen in light of the continuing threat of burden application through the imposition of conscription on the Haredim.

Observers believe that the number of financial and political corruption files will increase, especially among politicians and heads of municipalities and local authorities, confirming the decline in the quality of governance and the preference for private interests above the public good.

The central question remained: Will Netanyahu's third government remain until the end of the 19th parliament, or will there be early elections? This is currently difficult to predict, but it is clear that the path of this government is strewn with thorns, and any political instability could lead to its dismantling.

Second: The Most Prominent Demographic, Economic and Military Indicators

1. Demographic Indicators

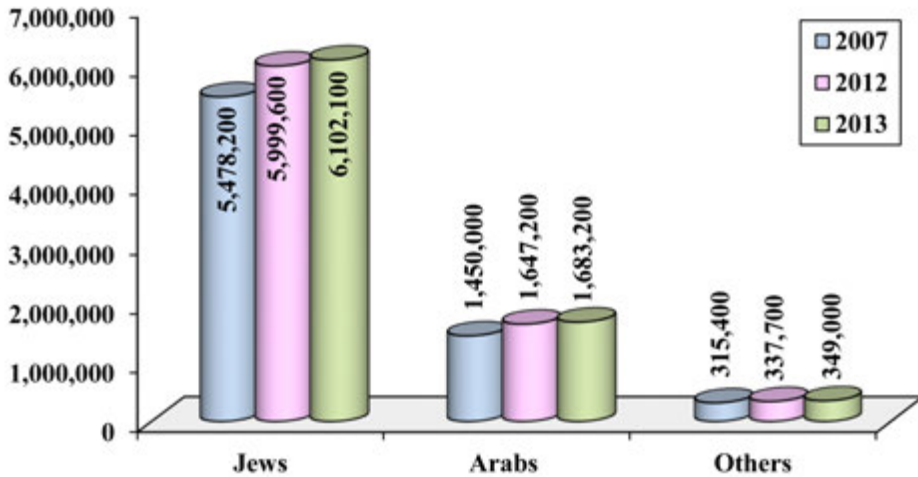
At the end of 2013, the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) estimated the Israeli population to be 8.134 million people, including 6.102 million Jews, 75% of the population. While at the end of 2012, it was 7.985 million people, including 6 million Jews, 75.1% of the population. As for the Arab population, including the inhabitants of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, the CBS estimated them in 2013 to be 1.683 million, 20.7% of the population, compared to 1.647 million in 2012, 20.6% of the population (see table 4/2). If we were to deduct the number of inhabitants of East Jerusalem (nearly 308 thousand)⁴⁵ and the Golan Heights (nearly 25 thousand), then the number of those who are known as the 1948 Palestinians (i.e., who are living in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1948) becomes 1.35 million in 2013, 16.6% of the population.

In 2013, the CBS classified about 349 thousand persons as "others," representing 4.3% of the population, compared to about 338 thousand in 2012, representing 4.2% of the population. These are mostly immigrants from Russia, the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, who are not recognized as Jews, or who tend to deal with Judaism as a nationality rather than a religious affiliation, or who are non-Jews, or non-Arab Christians.

According to the Judea, Samaria and Gaza (Yesha) Council, which is the largest settlement organization in the WB, the number of Jewish settlers in the WB was estimated at the end of 2013 as approximately 370 thousands, with the exception of East Jerusalem, where the number of Jewish settlers was estimated at around 200 thousands.⁴⁶ As for the data supplied by The Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem (ARIJ), it offers much larger estimates than Israeli statistics, stating that the number of Israeli settlers in the WB (including East Jerusalem) reached more than 656 thousands in 2012, and 693 thousands in 2013.⁴⁷

Table 4/2: Population of Israel 2007–2013⁴⁸

Year	Total population	Jews	Arabs (including the population of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights)	Others
2007	7,243,600	5,478,200	1,450,000	315,400
2008	7,419,100	5,608,900	1,499,900	310,300
2009	7,552,000	5,701,900	1,535,800	314,300
2010	7,695,100	5,802,400	1,573,100	319,600
2011	7,836,600	5,898,400	1,609,800	328,400
2012	7,984,500	5,999,600	1,647,200	337,700
2013	8,134,300	6,102,100	1,683,200	349,000

Population of Israel 2007 and 2012–2013

In 2012 and 2013, there was a 1.9% population growth rate in Israel, which has been roughly the same since 2003. 170,940 persons and 171,207 persons were born in Israel in 2012 and 2013, respectively.⁴⁹

According to CBS, 16,882 immigrants came to Israel in 2013, compared to 16,558 and 16,893 in 2012 and 2011, respectively (see table 5/2). These numbers are consistent with the decrease in Jewish immigration since 2000 after the



diminution of the number of Jews who were ready to migrate, and the restriction of most of the Jews from abroad to developed countries in North America and Europe, where Jews do not have an incentive to migrate on a large scale.

It should be noted that the decline in immigration to Israel was accompanied by continuous emigration. According to CBS, about 16,200 holders of Israeli passports exited Israel in the year 2011, including 800 Arabs; while 9,500 Israelis returned that same year, including 475 Arabs representing 5%. Hence, the migration balance of Israelis (excluding immigrants) who departed from the country and returned in 2011 was negative and stood at approximately 6,700 Israelis.⁵⁰ According to a study prepared by Gilad Nathan in November 2012 for the Knesset Research and Information Center (RIC), there are no official statistics on the number of Israelis living abroad permanently. In 2011, the Ministry of the Interior estimated their number at 227 thousands, but the National Insurance Institute of Israel (NII) and the CBS estimated this number at closer to half a million, while the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption estimated it at approximately 750 thousands.⁵¹ On the other hand, the growth in the number of Jews in the world, with the exception of Israel, has continued to stagnate as a result of the low rate of natural growth, in addition to mixed marriages and a trend of people abandoning of the Jewish religion.

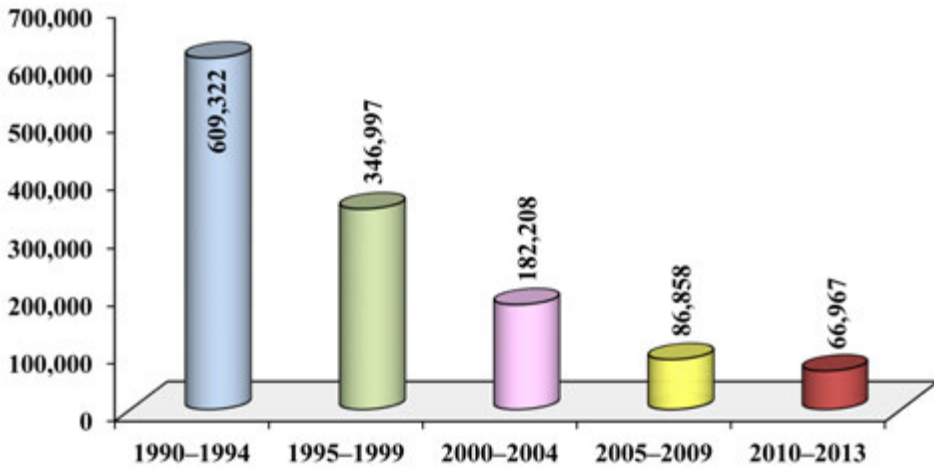
Table 5/2: Numbers of Jewish Immigrants to Israel 1990–2013⁵²

Year	1990–1994	1995–1999	2000–2004	2005–2009
No. of immigrants	609,322	346,997	182,208	86,858

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
No. of immigrants	16,634	16,893	16,558	16,882	1,292,352

The following chart shows the evolution of the number of Jewish immigrants to Israel for every five years during 1990–2013; please note that 2010–2013 covers only four years.

Numbers of Jewish Immigrants to Israel 1990–2013



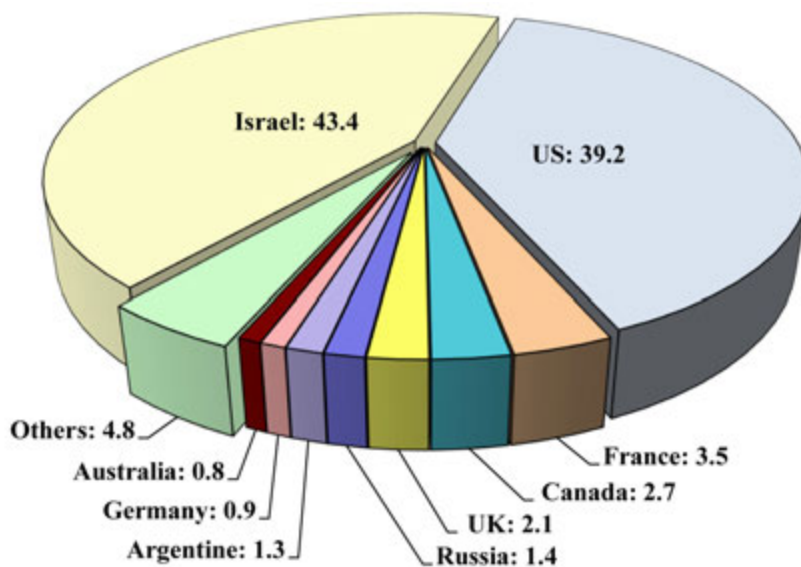
As for the world Jewish population, Sergio DellaPergola, the renowned demographer and statistician, indicated that it was estimated to be 13.855 million at the end of 2012, an increase of 108,700 from 2011 (a 0.79% increase). In the same context, there remain warnings against the “dissolving” of the followers of Judaism outside of Israel because of the high proportion of mixed marriages, which has an impact on the world Jewish population, especially in Western countries.⁵³

Table 6/2: World Jewish Population by Country 2012⁵⁴

Country	Estimates (thousands)	Percentage (%)
Israel	6,014.3	43.4
US	5,425	39.2
France	478	3.5
Canada	380	2.7
United Kingdom (UK)	290	2.1
Russia	190	1.4
Argentina	181.5	1.3
Germany	118	0.9
Australia	112.5	0.8
Others	665.5	4.8
Total	13,854.8	100



World Jewish Population by Country 2012 (%)



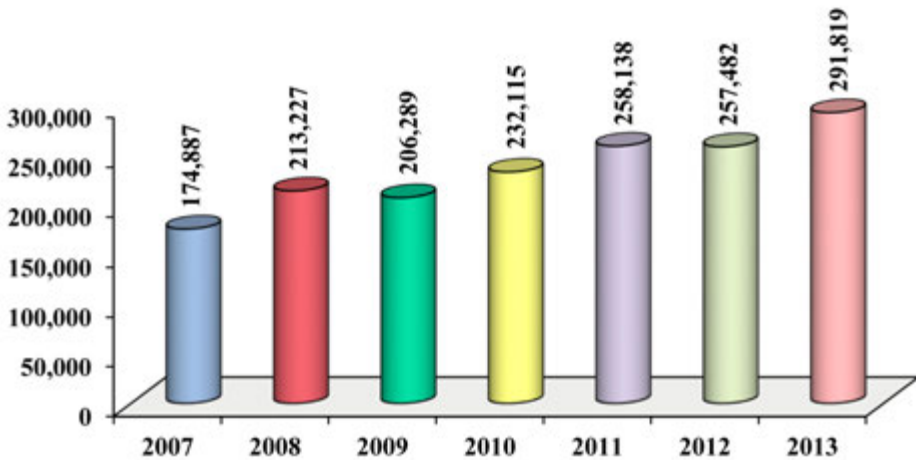
The 1948 Palestinians still suffer from Israeli racial discrimination policies, and a report on racism in Israel noted that the Israeli Knesset discussed 35 draft discriminatory laws during 2012.⁵⁵

2. Economic Indicators

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2013 was estimated at 1,053.3 billion shekels (\$291.8 billion), compared to 993.4 billion shekels (\$257.5 billion) in 2012 and 923.9 billion shekels (\$258.1 billion) in 2011. According to these estimates, the GDP registered a 6% and 7.5% growth in local currency for 2013 and 2012, respectively. But when calculating the growth rate in US dollars, and because of the shekel's fluctuating value against the dollar, we find that the growth rate increased by 13.3% in 2013, while it decreased by 0.2% in 2012 compared to the previous year (see table 7/2). It is worth noting that these results are contrary to the growth expectations of Bank of Israel, which were 3.3% in 2012⁵⁶ and 3.5% in 2013.⁵⁷ Note that the statistics we present are drawn from official sources, which update their data and make amendments to it from time to time.

Table 7/2: Israeli GDP 2007–2013 at Current Prices⁵⁸

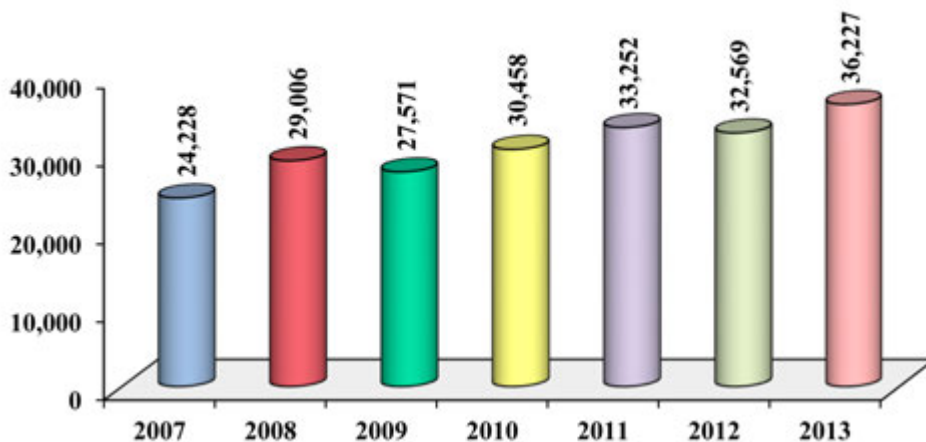
Year	GDP (million shekels)	GDP (\$ million)	Shekel exchange rate (according to Bank of Israel)
2007	718,786	174,887	4.11
2008	764,697	213,227	3.5863
2009	809,230	206,289	3.9228
2010	866,231	232,115	3.7319
2011	923,900	258,138	3.5791
2012	993,365	257,482	3.858
2013	1,053,291	291,819	3.6094

Israeli GDP 2007–2013 at Current Prices (\$ million)

According to CBS, Israeli GDP per capita in 2013 totaled 130,756 shekels (\$36,227), compared to 125,652 shekels (\$32,569) in 2012 and 119,012 shekels (\$33,252) in 2011. Based on these statistics, the GDP per capita grew in local currency by 4.1% and 5.6% for 2013 and 2012, respectively. But when calculating the growth rate in US dollars, and because of the shekel's fluctuating value against the dollar, we find that the growth rate increased by 11.2% in 2013, while it decreased by 2.1% in 2012 compared to the previous year. Therefore, it is better not to make hasty and possibly inaccurate conclusions if the difference in the exchange rate between the local currency and the dollar is not taken into account (see table 8/2).

Table 8/2: Israeli GDP per Capita 2007–2013 at Current Prices⁵⁹

Year	GDP per capita (shekels)	GDP per capita (\$)
2007	99,576	24,228
2008	104,025	29,006
2009	108,155	27,571
2010	113,667	30,458
2011	119,012	33,252
2012	125,652	32,569
2013	130,756	36,227

Israeli GDP per Capita 2007–2013 at Current Prices (\$)


The 2013 budget was approximately 388.3 billion shekels (\$106.7 billion), while the 2012 budget was about 365.9 billion shekels (\$94.8 billion) and in 2011 about 348.2 billion shekels (\$97.3 billion). As for the 2014 budget, it is estimated at nearly 408.1 billion shekels (\$112.2 billion).⁶⁰

The total public expenditure of the Israeli government for 2013 reached about 309.544 billion shekels (\$85.761 billion), while its total public revenues in 2013 were about 268.36 billion shekels (\$74.35 billion), with a 15.3% budget deficit, compared with 5% and 7.9% for 2012 and 2011 respectively (see table 9/2).

Table 9/2: Israeli Government Revenues and Expenditures 2011–2013⁶¹

	2011		2012		2013	
	Million shekels	\$ million	Million shekels	\$ million	Million shekels	\$ million
Revenues	251,314	70,217	271,152	70,283	268,360	74,350
Expenditures	271,191	75,771	284,657	73,784	309,544	85,761
Deficit (%)	-7.9		-5		-15.3	

Israeli exports for 2013 amounted to \$66.584 billion, compared to a total of \$63.145 billion in 2012, and \$67.802 billion in 2011. Thus, exports achieved a 5.4% increase in 2013 after they had fallen by 6.9% in 2012. As for imports for 2013, they totaled \$71.899 billion, compared with \$73.121 billion in 2012, and \$73.536 billion in 2011. Consequently, imports have decreased by 1.7% and 0.6% for the years 2013 and 2012, respectively (see table 10/2). It is noteworthy that these statistics do not include foreign trade exports and imports services. This performance reflects a significant expansion in Israeli economic activity, although Israel had not yet managed to overcome its trade deficit.

Table 10/2: Total Israeli Exports and Imports 2010–2013 at Current Prices (\$ million)⁶²

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013
Exports	58,415.9	67,802.2	63,145.3	66,583.8
Imports	59,199.4	73,536.2	73,121.4	71,898.9

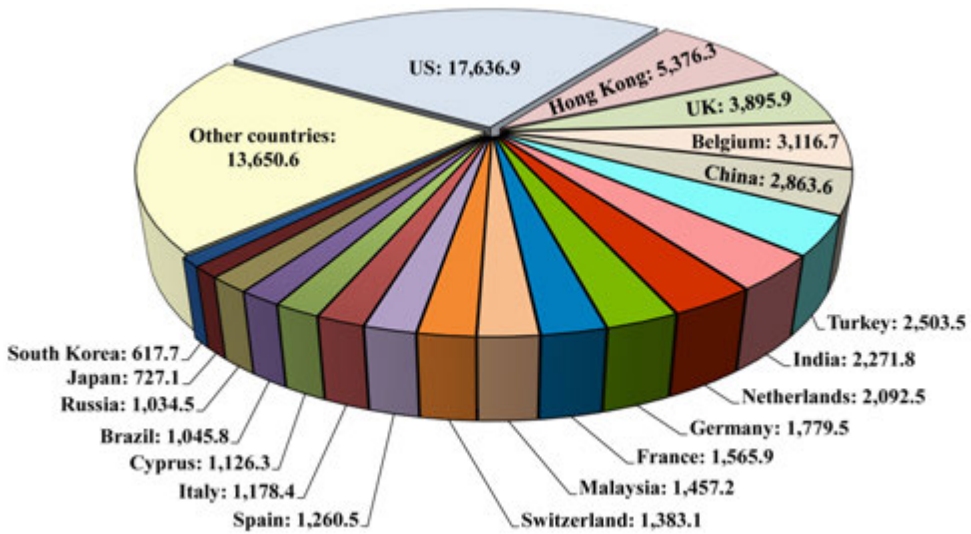
Total Israeli Exports and Imports 2010–2013 at Current Prices (\$ million)

The US continues to enjoy its status as Israel's primary trading partner; in 2013, Israeli exports to the US amounted to \$17.637 billion, representing 26.5% of total Israeli exports, compared to \$17.562 billion in 2012 (27.8% of the total Israeli exports). As for Israeli imports from the US in 2013, they amounted to about \$8.153 billion, representing 11.3% of total Israeli imports, compared to \$9.399 billion in 2012 (12.9% of the total Israeli imports). Israel offsets its trade deficit to a large extent with most of its trading partners, through the trade surplus, which was about \$9.484 billion in 2013 and \$8.163 billion in 2012, with the US, which represents a vital support to the Israeli economy (see table 11/2).

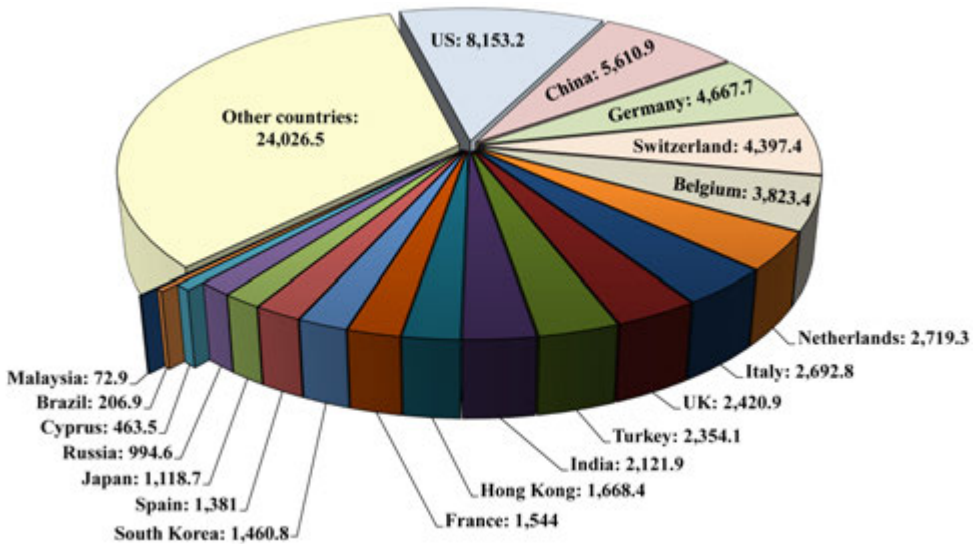
Table 11/2: Volume of Israeli Trade, Exports and Imports to/ from Selected Countries 2012–2013 at Current Prices (\$ million)⁶³

Country	Trade volume		Israeli exports to:		Israeli imports from:	
	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012
US	25,790.1	26,960.4	17,636.9	17,561.7	8,153.2	9,398.7
China	8,474.5	8,080.4	2,863.6	2,758.2	5,610.9	5,322.2
Hong Kong	7,044.7	6,446.7	5,376.3	4,882.8	1,668.4	1,563.9
Belgium	6,940.1	6,474.6	3,116.7	2,929.7	3,823.4	3,544.9
Germany	6,447.2	6,260.7	1,779.5	1,638.9	4,667.7	4,621.8
UK	6,316.8	6,186.8	3,895.9	3,588.7	2,420.9	2,598.1
Switzerland	5,780.5	5,188.4	1,383.1	1,133	4,397.4	4,055.4
Turkey	4,857.6	3,504.1	2,503.5	1,421.4	2,354.1	2,082.7
Netherlands	4,811.8	4,995.5	2,092.5	2,248.6	2,719.3	2,746.9
India	4,393.7	4,431.5	2,271.8	2,495.3	2,121.9	1,936.2
Italy	3,871.2	3,943.8	1,178.4	1,164.3	2,692.8	2,779.5
France	3,109.9	3,097.1	1,565.9	1,450.9	1,544	1,646.2
Spain	2,641.5	2,241	1,260.5	1,039.1	1,381	1,201.9
South Korea	2,078.5	2,367.8	617.7	704.8	1,460.8	1,663
Russia	2,029.1	1,872.5	1,034.5	1,053.1	994.6	819.4
Japan	1,845.8	2,559.1	727.1	831.8	1,118.7	1,727.3
Cyprus	1,589.8	1,869.8	1,126.3	905.1	463.5	964.7
Malaysia	1,530.1	837.3	1,457.2	763.3	72.9	74
Brazil	1,252.7	1,329.5	1,045.8	1,138.7	206.9	190.8
Other countries	37,677.1	37,619.7	13,650.6	13,435.9	24,026.5	24,183.8
Total	138,482.7	136,266.7	66,583.8	63,145.3	71,898.9	73,121.4

Israeli Exports to Selected Countries 2013 at Current Prices (\$ million)



Israeli Imports from Selected Countries 2013 at Current Prices (\$ million)



China ranked as Israel's second-largest trading partner, as Israeli exports to it reached \$2.864 billion in 2013 and \$2.758 billion in 2012, while Israeli imports from the country reached \$5.611 billion in 2013 and \$5.322 billion in 2012.



Moreover, Hong Kong ranked third in 2013, as the trade volume between the two countries reached \$7.045 billion in 2013, compared to \$6.447 billion in 2012. As for Belgium, it regressed to the fourth place in 2013, with a trade volume of \$6.94 billion compared to \$6.475 billion in 2012 (see table 11/2).

In addition to the above mentioned states, the most prominent countries that have received Israeli exports in 2013 are the UK (\$3.896 billion), Turkey (\$2.504 billion), India (\$2.272 billion), Netherlands, Germany, France, Malaysia and Switzerland. As for Israel's main sources of imports, they are Germany (\$4.668 billion), Switzerland (\$4.397 billion), Netherlands (\$2.719 billion), Italy, UK, Turkey and India (see table 11/2).

In 2012, the main countries that received Israel's exports were the UK (\$3.589 billion), India (\$2.495 billion), Netherlands (\$2.249 billion), France, Turkey, Italy, Brazil and Switzerland. As for Israel's main sources of imports, they were Germany (\$4.622 billion), Switzerland (\$4.055 billion), Italy (\$2.78 billion), Netherlands, UK, Turkey and India (see table 11/2).

Manufacturing, mining and quarrying excluding working diamonds, topped the list of Israeli exports for 2012 and 2013, which accounted for 82.1% and 81.3%, respectively. The ratio of net Israeli exports of diamonds was 15.5% in 2012 and 16.2% in 2013. As for exports related to agriculture, forestry and fishing, they reached 2.5% in 2012 and 2.6% in 2013 (see table 12/2). The breakdown of industrial exports by technological intensity shows that in 2013, high technology industries represented 44% of total industrial exports (excluding diamonds), medium technology industries 50%, and low technology industries 6%.⁶⁴

Table 12/2: Israeli Exports by Commodity Group 2011–2013 (\$ million)⁶⁵

Year	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Manufacturing, mining & quarrying excl. working diamonds	Diamonds		Others	Returned exports	Total
			Working of diamonds	Wholesale of diamonds			
2011	1,382.1	45,756.4	7,488.6	3,534.8	3.3	–36.5	58,128.7
2012	1,373.3	44,296	5,621.5	2,740.5	3.2	–62.7	53,971.8
2013	1,492.6	46,073.5	6,290.8	2,909.3	3.7	–103.6	56,666.3

With regard to imports, raw materials accounted for 38% of Israeli imports in 2012 and 2013, while fuel imports accounted for 22.3% and 20.5% respectively. The imports of consumer goods reached 14.6% and 16.2%, investment goods 13.8% and 12.5%, while imports of ships, aircraft and diamonds reached 11.1% and 12.4% in 2012 and 2013, respectively (see table 13/2).

It should be noted that imports of Israeli fuel for the year 2013 amounted to \$14.56 billion, which represented a 9.5% decrease from 2012, due to Israeli investments in the field of gas extraction in the eastern Mediterranean basin; where production began in the Tamar gas field in 2013, in quantities that will be sufficient for Israel over the next 15–20 years.

Table 13/2: Israeli Imports by Commodity Group 2011–2013 (\$ million)⁶⁶

Year	Consumer goods	Raw materials	Investment goods	Fuels	Diamond rough and polished	Others	Total
2011	11,160.2	27,050.7	10,564.7	13,649.7	10,156.6	165.2	72,747.1
2012	10,539.5	27,579.8	9,961.2	16,090.3	7,551.5	548.1	72,270.4
2013	11,506.8	27,202.9	8,879.6	14,560.2	8,269.9	581.2	71,000.6

Although Israel is considered to be a rich and developed country, it still receives US aid annually. In 2013, it reached a total of \$3.115 billion, including \$3.1 billion in the form of a military grant; and \$3.098 billion in 2012, including \$3.075 billion in the form of a military grant; compared with \$3.029 billion in 2011, including \$3 billion in the form of a military grant. US aid received by Israel during 1949–2013 amounts to \$118.244 billion, according to the report submitted by the Congressional Research Services (CRS).⁶⁷

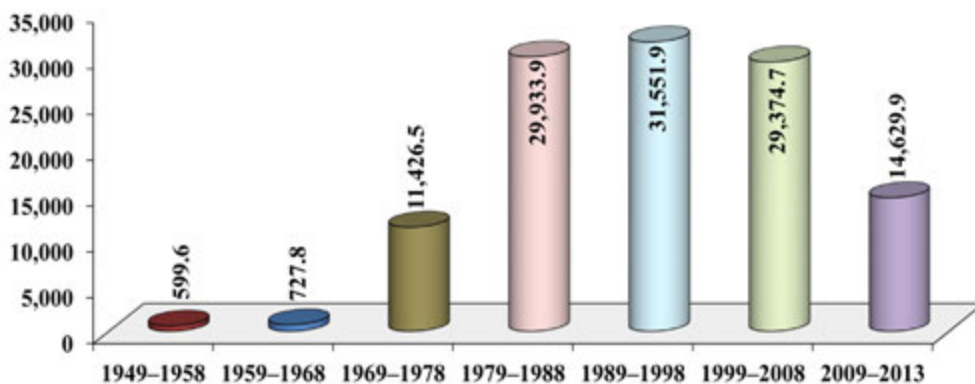
Table 14/2: US Bilateral Aid to Israel 1949–2013 (\$ million)⁶⁸

Period	1949–1958	1959–1968	1969–1978	1979–1988	1989–1998	1999–2008
Total	599.6	727.8	11,426.5	29,933.9	31,551.9	29,374.7

Period	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
Total	2,583.9	2,803.8	3,029.2	3,098	3,115	118,244.3

The following chart shows the US aid to Israel per decade covering the period 1949–2013; please note that the 2009–2013 period covers only five years.



US Bilateral Aid to Israel 1949–2013 (\$ million)

Based on international comparisons, Israel's economy is doing well. The projected average growth rate for countries belonging to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2013 is just 1.2%. Euro bloc economies are forecast to contract by 0.6% the same year. While in 2012 average growth rate for OECD countries was 1.4%, and the euro bloc contracted by 0.5%.⁶⁹

3. Military Indicators

There were increased security concerns for the future in Israel during 2012 and 2013 due to the “Arab Spring” developments, in parallel with the growing threat of “international jihadist organizations” and resistance organizations, which have distinct capabilities in terms of size, strength, quality and accuracy. This is in addition to the growing threat of cyber warfare against civilian and military computer systems, and those destined to hit the Israeli home front. However, “the removal of chemical weapons from Syria and the possibility of diplomatic talks that could bring about a deal with the Iranians are positive signals, if they are realized,” according to Israeli Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Benny Gantz during a speech at The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies (BESA).⁷⁰

Administrative and Structural Changes

In 2013, the Israeli army made amendments to the nature of the tasks of a number of military brigades, including reservists, and approved a plan to re-equip reservists and train them in how to respond to various anticipated combat scenarios toward the northern front, in light of the prevailing situation in Syria and Lebanon.⁷¹

With regard to the reserve forces, the Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon approved on 6/5/2013 the Lt.-Gen. Gantz plan to shorten compulsory army service by four months to 32 instead of 36 months. This came in the context of equalizing the burden of military service, a task the Perry Committee was commissioned to achieve. The plan to shorten army service, under certain conditions set by the Defense Ministry, will be brought before the political echelon for approval. The transition will be introduced gradually, with the length of service determined by soldiers' roles rather than by gender; change in special shortened service tracks; and supplemental budgets for the plan over and above the defense budget, which has been described as "a necessary condition for applying the model."⁷²

On the other hand, on 20/10/2013 the Israeli Ministerial Committee for Legislation approved an amendment letting the Israeli army call up reservists six times a year, not three. The bill says, "The limitation on call-ups for annual reserve duty does not suit the needs of the army" and does not allow the army to satisfy the needs of its training cycles and other capabilities.⁷³

In terms of appointments, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon decided on 12/9/2013 to extend the term of Lt.-Gen. Gantz for a fourth year. This decision was approved by the government on 17/9/2013.⁷⁴ In turn, Gantz announced on 24/10/2013 the appointment of Colonel Ghassan Alian a commander of the Golani Brigade, who thus became the first Arab Druze officer to hold this position in the history of the Israeli army.⁷⁵

Manpower

Regarding the size of the army, the annual Military Balance report issued by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in the UK estimated the number of Israeli regular service soldiers to be 172 thousand, with 107 thousand being conscripts, including first-year officers. It estimated the number of reserves at 425 thousand. However, the Personnel Directorate in the Israeli army stated that the exact number of the armed forces is secret, noting that there are other sources that estimate the number of Israeli regular service soldiers to be 450 thousand and their reserves 600 thousand; ground forces 210 thousand and their reserves 560 thousand; naval forces 13 thousand, including 300 Israeli naval commandos as well as 23 thousand reserves; in addition to 52 thousand in air force and 28 thousand as reserves.⁷⁶

On the other hand, former Head of the Personnel Directorate Gil Regev stated that 34% of young people who are of military service age do not enlist, or evade it for various reasons: 11.5% for psychological reasons, 9.5% for being religious students, 2.6% for health reasons, 1.4% for having a criminal record, 9% for non-psychological reasons, and 5% for being orphans. The directorate explained that the past years have seen the recruitment of one out of every five soldiers in the ranks of reservists, while former Head of the Israeli Army Planning Branch Uzi Dayan confirmed that there is an intention to drastically reduce the number of permanent soldiers, as well as the number of civilian personnel in the army.⁷⁷

According to statements by Israeli Public Radio and Channel 10 on 12/2/2013, more than 50% of the Ethiopian Jews who completed their military service find themselves at a certain point in military prisons for various reasons: half of them for evading service, and 25% for absenteeism.⁷⁸ *Haaretz* newspaper reported that 380 Ethiopian soldiers were imprisoned in 2013 compared to 433 in 2012.⁷⁹

Information issued by the Israeli army revealed that suicide is still a major cause of death in the ranks of the army in spite of its reduced incidence (seven cases in 2013 compared to 14 cases in 2012). In 2011 there were 21 cases of suicide, while there were 28 cases in 2010, 20 cases in 2009, and 23 cases in 2008. The data indicates that there were 278 cases of suicide during the period 2002–2012.⁸⁰

Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper reported that 561 sexual harassment cases were reported in the Israeli army in 2013 compared to 511 in 2012.⁸¹ According to a report issued by the Women's Affairs Advisor to the Chief of Staff of the Israeli Army, there was an increase in the number of rape and sexual harassment investigation cases in the army in 2012 (approximately 46).⁸²

A report prepared by the military police in the Israeli army revealed a great deal of neglect in protection and safety measures within Israeli military bases. An inspection by the military police that covered 15 military bases, found that in 50% of the bases weapons are left unattended; in 70% sensitive information is easily accessed; in 65% vehicles can be easily stolen; in 35% visitors are not asked for any identification; in 20% there is drug use; and in 15% there is alcohol consumption.⁸³ A European human rights report revealed the existence of hundreds of European mercenaries who “volunteer” for military service in the ranks of the Israeli army.⁸⁴

Military Plans and Orientations

In an interview with the weekly Defense News, Israel Air Force (IAF) Chief of Operations Brigadier General Amikam Norkin stated that Israel “aims to shorten the duration of future wars while reducing demand for maneuvering ground forces through massive, persistent and punishing use of precision air power.” He added that the Expanding Attack Capacity program (EAC) called for organizational changes by splitting training, doctrine and operational functions.⁸⁵

In a related development in early 2013, the Israeli army established a new special cyber war room, which will be manned 24 hours a day by some 20 soldiers. The special room is meant to protect its computer systems by detecting virtual attacks by hostile elements and launching counter attacks. This followed what Israel viewed as an unprecedented cyber attack in retaliation for the its Operation Pillar of Defense in GS.⁸⁶

The Israeli army has defined cyber warfare as the fifth realm of warfare, alongside land, sea, air and space. To strengthen its electronic defense, the Israeli army established a command dedicated to cyber warfare that brings together personnel from the Intelligence Branch and the Teleprocessing Branch to ward off cyber attacks.⁸⁷

Defense News stated that Unit 8200 plays a critical role in the field of cyber espionage, adding that the retired General Uri Sagi, former head of military intelligence, acknowledged the existence of such a unit, which he considered to be among the most important intelligence units in Israel. According to Sagi, the unit aims to offer a comprehensive intelligence vision with the information provided by agents. The unit relies on monitoring and eavesdropping, taking photos, and jamming.⁸⁸

In the same vein, the website of the Israeli army Radio Galei Tzahal revealed the presence of a unit within AMAN, subordinate to Unit 8200 and is called Hatzav. It is tasked with monitoring and collecting information from the media and the internet.⁸⁹

Maneuvers

In regard to maneuvers and military exercises, on 15/2/2013 the Israeli army completed exercises that simulated scenarios of an all-out war in the region,

within its annual training program. These exercises, which lasted a week, verified the readiness of the Chief of Staff to manage a war in coordination with the political leadership and field leaders. The government (including the prime minister and security officials) and heads of various army branches took part in these exercises, which also dealt with the coordination between the regular army and the reserve, in addition to examining several war scenarios on one or several fronts at once.⁹⁰

On 21/3/2013, the Israeli Navy completed a joint two-week exercise, Noble Dina, with the US and Greek navies in the Mediterranean Sea. “The exercise assessed the level of operational coordination between the three navies in procedures of search and rescue as well as the immediacy and efficiency in responding to maritime emergencies, evacuation, navigation and fire drills.”⁹¹

Haaretz newspaper announced on 1/7/2013 that the IAF would be training for three weeks in Bulgaria against S-300 rockets, of which Syria had bought 144 units. Moreover, Israel was attempting to persuade Moscow to either cancel or freeze the deal. Official military sources in Tel Aviv announced the IAF training in Bulgaria, but refused to acknowledge that Syria was the objective. The latest IAF fighter aircrafts, F-16, F-16C, and F-16D took part in this training, which also involved in some of its phases the Bulgarian Air Force that used its Russian-made fighter aircraft MiG-21, MiG-29, and Sukhoi Su-25, which the Syrian and Iranian armies either own or intend to purchase. At a later stage, the Bulgarian anti-aircraft weapons, namely the Russian S-300, were also used in the exercises.⁹²

Haaretz reported on 25/11/2013 that just 24 hours after the signing of the Geneva Agreement between Western countries and Iran over its nuclear program, IAF began international aerial maneuver drill with the participation of Greece, Italy and the US. These maneuvers simulated different scenarios of air battles and evading dangers in the air, such as the launching of anti-aircraft missiles. During the maneuvers, airspace was closed between Gush Dan (Tel Aviv area) and the city of Dimona south of Israel. The training was attended by 20 additional foreign observers from European countries, such as Cyprus and Bulgaria.⁹³

Missile Systems

The Israeli Defense Ministry announced on 25/2/2013 that a successful test of Arrow 3 (Hetz 3) missile defense interceptor had been carried out. The test

was led by technicians from the Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), together with a team from the US Department of Defense's Missile Defense Agency. The US is funding the majority of the system's related expenses. Arrow 3 missile defense system operates in space, traveling at twice the speed of a tank shell to leave the atmosphere. It is designed to seek and destroy Iranian Shihab 3 missiles, as well as other long-range projectiles. These missiles are developed by IAI and Boeing.⁹⁴

According to *Maariv* newspaper on 30/9/2013, the Israeli Defense Ministry decided to cut the budget for the Arrow 3 development, because of the reduction of the military budget. Moreover, the US had already announced the cutting of its contribution to the project by \$55 million.⁹⁵

On 3/9/2013, the Israeli Defense Ministry announced that it had held a successful missile drill with assistance of representatives from the US Missile Defense Agency and the Pentagon. It involved the firing and tracking of a Sparrow target missile, which is used to simulate Iranian long-range Shahab ballistic missiles, and the Arrow 3 anti-missile system successfully thwarted the missile.⁹⁶

Regarding the anti-missile Iron Dome system, an M75 medium-range rocket that fell on the city of Ashkelon on 26/2/2013 revealed failure in the rocket siren warning system and the Iron Dome air defense system.⁹⁷ On 3/4/2013, Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* announced that a fifth battery of the Iron Dome had been delivered to the IAF.⁹⁸

On 20/11/2013, the Israeli Defense Ministry announced that the "Israel Missile Defense Organization and the US Missile Defense Agency completed a successful intercept test of the Magic Wand Weapon System against a short-range ballistic missile."⁹⁹

Weapons Development, Weapons Programs and Arms Exports

With regard to the development of other weapons, Israel Military Industries Ltd. (IMI) completed the development of Mars, a missile with precise steering and faster than sound, which is fired from aerial platforms. It is a groundbreaking weapon suitable for use against buried and rigid targets and weighs 500 kg, with a length of 4.4 m and a diameter of 306 mm. It has a range of up to 100 km.¹⁰⁰

With regard to weapons programs, *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper reported on 7/2/2013 that the Israeli army requested advanced US V-22 Osprey aircraft, each

of which costs up to \$69 million. The newspaper stated that Israel was eyeing a deal for the supply of six to eight aircrafts.¹⁰¹

On 26/6/2013, the IAF received the first of three Super Hercules aircraft requested by the Israeli Defense Ministry from the US Lockheed Martin Company.¹⁰²

According to *Haaretz*, preliminary estimates for Israel's military equipment exports reached \$7 billion in 2012, a 20% increase compared with 2011. The volume of Israeli military exports has fluctuated widely in recent years, peaking at \$7 billion in 2009–2010. This placed Israel between the fourth and sixth in the world for weapons sales. Most Israeli military exports go to the US and European countries, followed Southeast Asia and South America. Export to African countries is marginal. One reason for the rise in Israeli exports “stems from a \$1 billion arms deal with Italy. Israel is buying new training jets from the Air Force in Italy, which has undertaken a mutual procurement contract—to purchase goods in like value from Israel.” Italy will purchase from Israel “two air control aircraft and an observation satellite, both products of Israel's Aviation Industry.”¹⁰³

The Home Front

The 2012 annual report issued by Home Front Defense Ministry revealed the preparedness of Israeli “government offices and authorities against unconventional weapons threat is medium-low,” while there is increased talk about Syrian chemical weapons, and the continued development of Iran's nuclear program. “Since the gas masks distribution project began in 2010, 4.6 million kits were handed out, which account for 58% of the population. Of these, 3 million kits were distributed in threatened areas.” The report also “warns about low levels of awareness among the Haredim and Arabs.”¹⁰⁴

A report issued by the Israeli State Comptroller estimated that around 700 thousand Israeli citizens do not have access to a public shelter. It adds that there are 9,600 public shelters and 20 thousand private shelters in Israel, while there are no shelters for the disabled and infirm. Officials have not built a single public shelter since the Second Lebanon War, however Tel Aviv municipality is improving and refurbishing shelters throughout the city, including underground parking lots, which can serve as large shelters in case of an emergency.¹⁰⁵

Military Budget

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu proposed, on 13/5/2013, 3 billion shekels (about \$840 million) worth of cuts to Israel's military budget as the cabinet

prepared to vote on a controversial austerity budget for 2013–2014. Finance Minister Yair Lapid demanded a cut of 4 billion shekels (about \$1,120 million), in the defense portfolio, but top military officials warned Netanyahu's government that a cut in the defense budget would damage Israeli military preparedness by draining funding from training, reducing inventory levels and diverting funding from the purchase of new weapons systems and acquisition of manpower. The Israeli government had moved to reduce the military budget against the backdrop of popular demonstrations and social protests against the economic plan approved by the Finance Minister Yair Lapid and Prime Minister Netanyahu; these included cuts that would dramatically affect the poor and middle classes.¹⁰⁶

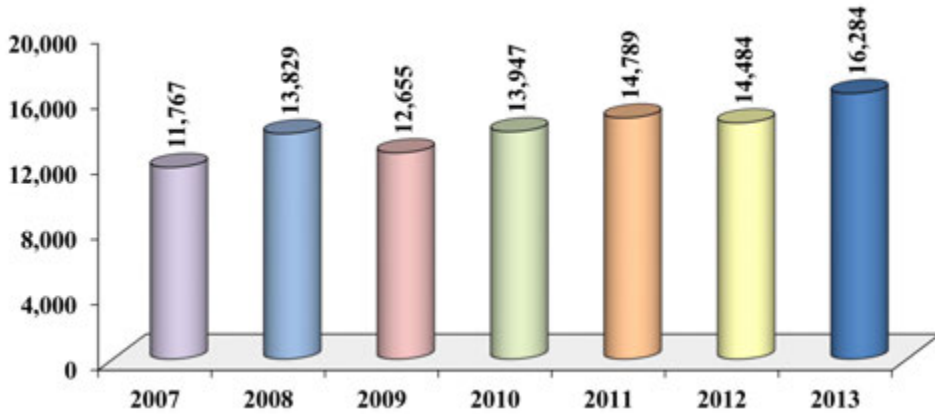
The security services and the army had begun a campaign to increase the budget each year since the end of the Second Lebanon War in 2006. These demands continued in light of the Arab Uprisings, and according to a report prepared by Bank of Israel, the army exceeded the set military budget by 6.3 billion shekels (\$1.414 billion) in 2006, by 1.8 billion shekels (\$438 million) in 2007, by 3.5 billion shekels (\$976 million) in 2008, by 4.8 billion shekels (\$1.224 billion) in 2009, by 5.5 billion shekels (\$1.474 billion) in 2010, and by 12 billion shekels (\$3.353 billion) in 2011.¹⁰⁷ The total military budget amounted to 58.777 billion shekels (\$16.284 billion) in 2013, compared with 55.88 billion shekels (\$14.484 billion) in 2012 (see table 15/2).

Israel's Security Cabinet approved, on 31/10/2013, a plan to increase the defense budget by 2.75 billion shekels (\$781.5 million) for 2014. The funds will be allocated from the Israeli state's budget surpluses in 2013.¹⁰⁸

Table 15/2: Israeli Military Consumption 2007–2013 at Current Prices¹⁰⁹

Year	Military consumption (million shekels)	Military consumption (\$ million)
2007	48,363	11,767
2008	49,594	13,829
2009	49,644	12,655
2010	52,047	13,947
2011	52,933	14,789
2012	55,880	14,484
2013	58,777	16,284

Israeli Military Consumption 2007–2013 at Current Prices
(\$ million)



Third: Aggression and Resistance

In 2012 and 2013 Israel continued its aggression against the Palestinian people, and at the end of 2012 launched the Israeli-dubbed Operation Pillar of Defense, which the Palestinians called Operation Stones of Baked Clay. This was followed by an Egyptian-brokered lull that continued throughout 2013, where there was a sharp drop in Palestinian rocket fire from GS toward Israeli towns and cities, in spite of numerous “limited” Israeli violations. The Israel Security Agency—ISA (*Shabak*) reported that in 2013, there were 55 attacks originating in GS compared to 1,130 in 2012.¹¹⁰ Israel also continued, in 2012 and 2013, its closure of the GS border crossings and tightened the blockade.

A similar calm prevailed in the WB, in light of the increasing security coordination between the PA security forces and the Israeli army. Moreover, the procedures regarding incursions and arrests were maintained in the WB. The Shabak registered 1,271 attacks in 2013 in the WB, including East Jerusalem, as opposed to 578 attacks in 2012. It should be noted that most of the attacks that were recorded during both years in the WB and Jerusalem involved shooting and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).¹¹¹

1. The Killed and Wounded

In 2013, a total of 49 Palestinians were shot dead by Israeli forces and settlers in both GS and WB, including Jerusalem, compared to 275 killed in 2012 (see table 16/2). The high number of people killed in 2012 is attributed to the Israeli war on GS, on 14–21/11/2012, which led to 191 dead and 1,526 wounded, most of whom were children, women and the elderly.¹¹² During this aggression the Israeli army attacked around 1,500 targets in GS, including government buildings, tunnels, rocket launchers, houses, prominent activists and weapons storehouses.¹¹³

According to Shabak, six Israelis, including two soldiers, were killed, and 232 were wounded in the Pillar of Defense Operation. 1,731 rockets were launched from the GS, targeting the surrounding southern settlements, as well as Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.¹¹⁴ According to the business information company BDI estimates, Operation Pillar of Defense cost the Israeli economy around 1.1 billion shekels (\$278.3 million) a week.¹¹⁵

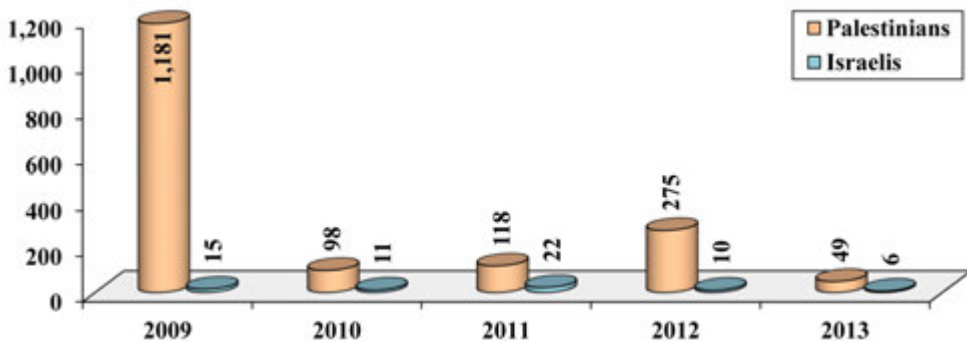
In 2013, 171 Palestinians were wounded, as opposed to 1,966 in 2012. On the other hand, the Shabak registered the death of six Israelis in 2013 as a result of operations carried out by Palestinians, compared to 10 Israelis in 2012. 44 Israelis were injured in 2013, compared to 309 in 2012 (see table 16/2).

Table 16/2: The Killed and Wounded Among Palestinians and Israelis in the WB and GS 2009–2013¹¹⁶

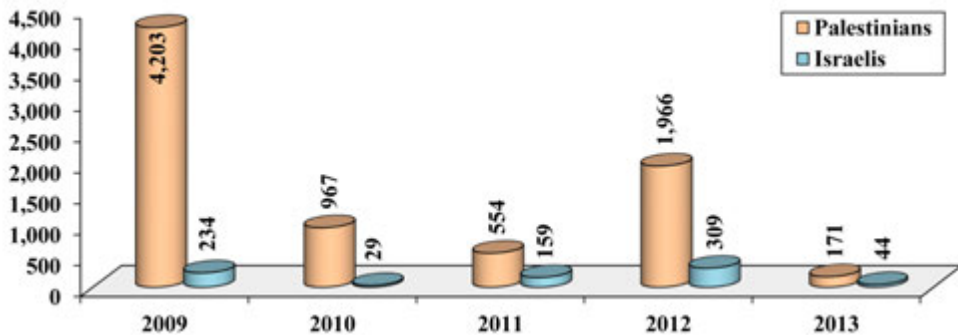
Year	Killed		Wounded	
	Palestinians	Israelis	Palestinians	Israelis
2009	1,181	15	4,203	234
2010	98	11	967*	29
2011	118	22	554*	159
2012	275	10	1,966	309
2013	49	6	171	44

* Including international supporters.

Palestinians and Israelis Killed in the WB and GS 2009–2013



Palestinians and Israelis Wounded in the WB and GS 2009–2013



2. The Prisoners and Detainees

The suffering of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails continued in 2012 and 2013. By the end of 2013, there were 5,023 prisoners, including 17 women and 154 children. There were 4,408 prisoners from the WB, amongst whom 163 were from Jerusalem; 389 from the GS; and 226 Arab citizens of Israel. This is in addition to dozens of Arab detainees of different nationalities. 155 prisoners were classified as either administrative detainees or being detained pending trial, or what Israel calls “unlawful combatants” (see table 17/2).

At the end of 2012, there were 4,743 prisoners in Israeli jails, including 10 women and 193 children. There were 4,115 prisoners from the WB, amongst whom 167 were from Jerusalem; 437 from the GS; and 191 Arab citizens of Israel. This

was in addition to dozens of Arab detainees of different nationalities. Moreover, 178 prisoners were classified as administrative detainees (see table 17/2).

According to the Department of Statistics at the Ministry of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs, Israel arrested 3,874 Palestinians in 2013, and no single day passed without arrests taking place. The momentum of the arrests fluctuated throughout the days and months of 2013, the average number being 323 arrests per month, or 11 arrests a day. Thus, there was a similar proportion of arrests during both 2013 and 2012, with a small increase of less than 1%, while in 2012, Israel arrested 3,848 detainees.¹¹⁷

The Department of Statistics at the Ministry of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs also indicated that in 2013, 3,799 detainees were from the WB and Jerusalem areas and make up the vast majority (98%), while 75 arrests were made in the GS. Moreover, it confirmed that, as in past years, the arrests during 2013 affected all segments of Palestinian society, without exception, including the sick, the disabled and the elderly, children, women, MPs and political leaders, as well as the media, journalists and academics. The department also pointed out that 100% of those who experienced detention, were subjected to one or more forms of physical or psychological torture, moral abuse, and humiliation in front of the public and family members.¹¹⁸

Table 17/2: Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Prisons 2011–2013¹¹⁹

Year	Total no. of detainees	WB*	GS	Serving life sentences	Women	Children
2011	4,417	3,856	459	525	6	132
2012	4,743	4,115	437	529	10	193
2013	5,023	4,408	389	476	17	154

* Approximate numbers according to the Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association—Addameer.

In the framework of the peaceful settlement negotiations between the PLO and Israel, which were resumed in late July 2013, Israel committed to release 104 prisoners who were arrested before the Oslo Accords in 1993. 78 of these prisoners were released in three stages on 14/8/2013, 30/10/2013 and 30/12/2013. However, Israel delayed the fourth release that was scheduled for 29/3/2014 as a bargaining chip to be used with the Palestinian side, and the release remains stalled at the

time of publishing this report. Most of the released prisoners belong to Fatah and were sentenced to life imprisonment at least once for the murder of Israelis.¹²⁰ The Solidarity Foundation for Human Rights—Tadamon reported that Israel informed 21 released prisoners living in WB that they are subjected to a decade-long complete travel ban that prevents them from leaving the Palestinian territories, in addition to being restricted from leaving their governorates for one year.¹²¹

There was no improvement in the situation of the prisoners in 2012 and 2013. On the contrary, Israel stepped up their repressive measures against the prisoners, including medical neglect and torture, and continued to deny prisoners the right to receive individual family visits, based on a “security prohibition” against them, or collective visits for the families of prisoners from GS. This is in addition to poor food, a lack of blankets and clothing, and the confiscation of prisoners’ funds, all practices that constitute a serious violation of international humanitarian law, and are often comparable to war crimes and crimes against humanity. In this context, these crimes must be scientifically documented and discussed at all levels.¹²²

The Palestinian Prisoners Center for Studies indicated that in 2013, the highest rate of intrusions, inspections, and repression were executed by the Israeli Prison Service and special forces, reaching 172 intrusions.¹²³

With the increasing number of hunger strikes in Israeli jails, the Israeli Ministry of Justice announced the introduction of a new draft law aiming to break the hunger strikes of Palestinian and Arab prisoners in Israeli jails. The law aims to give the Israeli courts “powers” for the prison authorities to feed a prisoner on hunger strike by force, claiming that this decision will be issued in the event a prisoner’s life being in danger.¹²⁴

3. Israeli Blockade on the Palestinian People

The Israeli occupation tightened the siege on GS in 2013, continuing to close crossings and upholding its maritime siege. On 21/3/2013, Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon restricted the fishing area to three miles—instead of six miles—from the GS coast and closed a cargo crossing point.¹²⁵ However, the Israeli government decided on 21/5/2013 to re-extend the fishing zone to six miles.¹²⁶

Nonetheless, the efforts to break the siege made a moral achievement with the apology of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the aggression on the Freedom Flotilla in 2010. Indeed, following the mediation of US President

Barack Obama, Israel formally apologized to Turkey on 22/3/2013 for the killing of a number of Turkish activists. A statement released by Netanyahu's Office said that both parties "agreed to restore normalization between Israel and Turkey" and cancel legal steps against Israeli soldiers. They agreed to complete the agreement on the compensation for the relatives of the activists killed in the raid.¹²⁷

Regarding the Turkish demand to lift the blockade on the GS, Netanyahu also pointed out that "Israel has already lifted some limitations including the passage of goods and people to the Palestinian territories, including Gaza, and that this will continue as long as quiet is preserved."¹²⁸

In an effort to break the political siege on the GS and Hamas, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced his intention to visit the GS, prompting Israel to request the intervention of the US administration to persuade Erdoğan to change his mind.¹²⁹ However, this visit was postponed indefinitely due to the military coup in Egypt and its regional repercussions.

In the aftermath of the coup against the democratically elected government in Egypt, Israel confirmed its continued security and military coordination with the Egyptian army, represented by Minister of Defense Colonel General 'Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, particularly with regard to the Sinai Peninsula and tunnels between Egypt and GS. On 7/7/2013, Israeli officers serving in the border area said that Security coordination with Egypt remained in good shape despite the political turmoil in Cairo. He added that "In most cases the Egyptians are doing good work," which include "halting the development of a Global Jihad network in Sinai."¹³⁰

Fourth: The Israeli Position Towards the Domestic Palestinian Situation

In 2012 and 2013, Israel maintained its policies, and overall strategy, in dealing with the domestic Palestinian scene. These policies are viable in light of the continuing political and geographical Palestinian division, faltering reconciliation efforts since 2007, and the absence of any active and influential Arab role in resolving Palestinian issue, with regard to Arab and regional developments.

With regard to the Palestinian reconciliation issue, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu criticized Palestinian President Mahmud 'Abbas for meeting

with the head of the Hamas Political Bureau, Khalid Mish'al, in the Egyptian capital Cairo on 9/1/2013. According to *The Jerusalem Post*, Netanyahu said he would not “cede any more land to the Palestinians,” adding, “We see the dangers clearly... Today Abu Mazen (Abbas) is in Cairo together with the head of Hamas. They are looking into a possible unity deal between Fatah and the terrorists who have been trying to annihilate the state of Israel, and who have fired rockets at our cities.”¹³¹

Moreover, Israeli Finance Minister Yuval Steinitz also threatened “to use financial muscle if the PA takes ‘unilateral’ steps, such as forming a Palestinian national government or joining the International Criminal Court.”¹³²

In its dealings with the PA in Ramallah, Israel continued its occupation of the WB and its settlement expansion and confiscation of lands in the WB, focusing on Jerusalem as the “eternal and united capital.” It also continued to “blackmail” the PA in Ramallah, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu criticized what he called the continuous incitement of the PA and President Mahmud ‘Abbas against Israel, even after the announcement of the resumption of direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

According to a letter sent by the Israeli Prime Minister to US Secretary of State John Kerry on 10/8/2013, there can be no congruence between incitement and peace, and the PA was encouraging its citizens to be hostile to Israel instead of steering them towards peaceful coexistence. The letter also highlighted the words of President ‘Abbas about the absence of Israelis in the Palestinian state after its establishment.¹³³ On 6/10/2013, at the weekly cabinet meeting, Netanyahu said that the PA was responsible for Palestinian resistance operations, when he said that “as long as the incitement continues in the official Palestinian media, the Palestinian Authority cannot avoid responsibility for these events.”¹³⁴

On the other hand, the central command in the Israeli army commended the role played by the security forces of the PA to rein in the demonstrations in the WB and reduce levels of confrontations with Israeli forces. Israeli army radio quoted the central command (on 17/3/2013) as saying that the Israeli security apparatuses estimate that there is a serious intention by their PA counterparts to prevent and control any confrontations.¹³⁵

As for GS, Israel maintained its economic blockade based on the policy of “no prosperity, no development, provided the situation does not develop into a

humanitarian crisis.” This coincided with the Operation Pillar of Defense military strike, and the perpetual threat to launch attacks on GS.

In an apparent attempt by Israel to blackmail the PA in Ramallah, Israeli President Shimon Peres said on 31/12/2012 that “People ask about Hamas, why aren’t we talking with Hamas? There is nothing wrong with that as long as we get an answer from them.” He added, “We are willing to talk to Hamas, but they aren’t. They must accept the Quartet conditions. These are not conditions set by us, but by the international community. They must decide if they want peace or fire.”¹³⁶

Former Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni expressed her belief that Operation Pillar of Defense was not able to restore Israel’s deterrent capacity. And she warned that easing the security cordon imposed on GS would lead to an escalation of security threats.¹³⁷

Israeli ministers and officials threatened to implement a military operation in GS that would constitute a severe blow to the infrastructure of the resistance organizations and the government there. Minister of Intelligence Yuval Steinitz warned against the repercussions of the repeated shelling of rockets toward southern towns in Israel, saying that if rocket fire from GS continued or escalated, then matters must be resolved there sooner or later. Steinitz said it was unlikely that understandings could be reached with GS through diplomatic channels and negotiations with the Palestinian side, stressing that the repeated rocket attacks against Israel would result in a heavy blow to GS.¹³⁸

Moreover, Israeli Foreign Minister and leader of the Yisrael Beiteinu right-wing party, Lieberman, said that “Yisrael Beiteinu will oppose any move in Gaza that does not include controlling the whole Strip,” pointing out that Israel is not “interested in launching an attack or ruling Gaza, but we can’t accept constant rocket fire and can’t do with only a limited operation.”¹³⁹

Fifth: The Peace Process

The peace process passed through two different tracks in 2012 and 2013: in the first year, the focus was on succeeding in obtaining “observer member” status in the UN for the Palestinian state through the UN General Assembly, after failing to obtain full membership through the UN Security Council due to not obtaining the

nine votes required to submit the draft resolution to a vote, and due to the American veto. Hence, 2011 was entirely wasted and was without any achievements at the UN due to miscalculations that the US administration will not use its veto, or that Palestinians will be able to get nine votes, and due to avoiding confrontation with the US administration as a result of the Palestinian request for full membership through the Security Council. Another approach could have been to head to the UN General Assembly from the beginning instead of wasting this year in a futile battle with such predictable results.

Palestinian-Israeli sessions were held with the participation of Jordan, in what were known as “exploratory” talks in Amman in January 2012. They took place in a vicious circle, because the Israeli delegation drowned them in a flood of questions, without specifying the final borders or map of the proposed state. The delegation also gave priority to security and raised impossible issues, such as the recognition of the “Jewishness of Israel,” the need to include in any agreement the end of the armed conflict, the cessation of Palestinian demands, and the closing of the refugee issue, including the right of return.

In 2013, American efforts focused on resuming negotiations, and the Palestinian leadership represented by President Mahmud ‘Abbas and the Israeli government headed by Benjamin Netanyahu responded to these efforts. Talks were resumed in Washington at the end of July 2013, and were expected to last from six to nine months.

Heading to the UN: A Tactic and a Means of Pressure

Abu Mazen’s resumption of negotiations reaffirmed his previous stances that heading to the UN for full membership, and then accepting the non-Member Observer State status, were not substitutes for the bilateral negotiations under the auspices of the US. Rather, they were simply tactics that were used, and perhaps will be used at a later stage, to push for the resumption of negotiations under improved conditions. This tactic would also help the president convince his colleagues in Fatah Central Committee, and his allies in the PLO, and would mitigate opposition from Hamas, the PIJ and others, to returning to negotiations.¹⁴⁰

The Palestinian state was internationally recognized by 138 countries, with the objection of 9 and the abstention of 41, including Germany, which is known for its support to Israel. Regardless of one’s stance on the peace process, it was technically

possible for the PLO, at that time, to declare that this international recognition reinforced previous recognitions in dozens of UN resolutions, in addition to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The legal and political reinforcement of the Palestinians' position at the UN was supposed to free them from the political, economic and security implications of the Oslo Accords, enabling them to demand that the international community assume its responsibilities. The PLO could have asked all states, including those that were opposed or abstained from voting, especially Israel, to deal with the newly-recognized Palestinian state on this basis. It also could have asked for the initiation of negotiations aimed primarily at achieving full Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967, under the framework of an international conference under UN auspices, and on the basis of international law and UN resolutions, including Resolution 181. This resolution was the basis upon which Israel was established, which also ensures the establishment of an Arab state of twice the area of the "promised" Palestinian state. The talks should have been focused on the Israeli withdrawal, in order to enable the recognized state to exercise its sovereignty.

Rather than take advantage of the political and legal benefits afforded by observer status, the Palestinian president acted as if the decision had never been issued, amid reports about a Palestinian pledge to the US administration and some European countries that non-member observer status would not change the Palestinian position about the willingness to resume negotiations.¹⁴¹ This explains the support of some European countries to the decision after they had indicated they were going to abstain from voting, and explains the position of Germany, which changed its stance from opposition to abstention. It also explains why the US did not execute all its threats to punish the Palestinian leadership for not responding to its recommendations that were made until the last minute by President Barack Obama himself, on the eve of the vote on the draft resolution. The US sanctions that included the cessation of aid were implemented, and the US position even included threats to close down the PLO's office in Washington for a few months to increase the willingness of Palestinians to resume negotiations, without any American commitment to the Palestinian conditions offered in return.

US and European Support Depends on Continuation of Negotiations

The above is also reaffirmed by the fact that the US administration did not implement its threats to boycott the PA and withdraw its recognition of the PLO from the UN, including the closure of its office in Washington. Moreover, it halted its decision to stop its aid to the PA, which was taken following the accession of Palestine to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which came after obtaining non-member observer status.

The same thing happened on the eve of the resumption of negotiations, when the EU decided to refrain from dealing with any Israeli institution dealing with settlements,¹⁴² as this decision was linked to a Palestinian pledge to agree to resume negotiations in response to the efforts undertaken by the Secretary of State John Kerry. Europe and, to a lesser extent, the US, recognize that there is no possibility of reaching a viable solution without any form of pressure on Israel that would reduce the serious disparity in the balance of power. They also both recognize that Israel has the sense of being in the comfort zone, as any threats to it have waned after the Arab world's changes and uprisings. These changes began with the war and occupation of Iraq, and have not yet ended, leaving the Iraqi and Syrian armies out of the balance of power equation for at least 10 years, while the Egyptian army is preoccupied with internal issues.

The important European decision was taken in response to European public opinion, which is appalled by Israel's occupation, policies, settlement building, and racist procedures.

The peace process resumed in late July 2013, under Israeli conditions, and without meeting any of the new old PLO Executive Committee conditions that were repeatedly demanded by Abu Mazen, Sa'ib 'Uraiqat and other leaders. This shows once again that bilateral negotiations, despite the dismal results achieved (and what can be expected to be achieved later) is the only option that the Palestinian leadership believes in. It also reveals that some of its statements and use of other options, for example: heading to the UN, popular resistance, boycotting Israeli settlement products; reconciliation (which should be considered an indispensable national necessity, and more than just an option), and the threat to dissolve the PA, or to hand it over or let it collapse; are all ways to ensure the continuation of the negotiations and improving conditions for negotiations. The PA wants to reach a final solution that achieves the minimum possible standard of Palestinian rights and interests.¹⁴³

President Mahmud ‘Abbas explained in private meetings that the end of the two-state solution calls for the end of the PA, which was formed after the Oslo Accords as an interim autonomous authority for five years; during which it would turn institutions into state institutions, and work on the transfer of the status of Palestinians from being under occupation to being totally independent. However, the PA ended up providing services to the Palestinians that should have been administered by the Occupying Power. Nabil Sha‘th quoted ‘Abbas as saying in his meetings with President Obama and other foreign leaders that the PA cannot continue to operate this way forever, and ordered the formation of a committee to study its dissolution. According to private information,¹⁴⁴ ‘Abbas sent minister of civil affairs and specialist in relations with Israel, Hussein al-Sheikh, in late 2011, with a message threatening the dissolution of the PA at the end of the year if there were no progress in efforts to resume negotiations.

‘Abbas repeated the threat to dissolve the PA in an interview with *Haaretz* in December 2012, when he said, “If diplomatic stagnation continues after the Israeli election and construction in the settlements doesn’t stop,” he would “dismantle the PA and return responsibility for the West Bank to the Israeli government.” He reiterated the same position again at the end of 2013, which explains why no one took these threats seriously.

The conviction that there are no alternatives always leads to a return to negotiations, in conditions that are worse than the previous ones. The opposition to negotiations usually register a historic stance and contents itself with tall hopes, without offering any viable theoretical or practical alternative. This ends up helping the supporters of negotiations, for their opponents appear unable to offer a coherent alternative that adheres to the objectives and rights of the Palestinians, and combines the various forms of struggle with the ability to act and influence, while employing all forms of political action and maneuvering until the achievement of objectives at each stage.

Negotiations Without Conditions

Negotiations were resumed without any agreement on the removal, freezing, or reduction of settlements, or even confining it to the so-called large “settlement blocs.” This allowed the Israeli prime minister to claim later that the continued expansion of settlement was approved by the Palestinians. Although this is not true, it is not entirely false either.

Moreover, negotiations were resumed without any agreement on a reference text stating the establishment of a state on the 1967 borders, even if it includes the principle of “land swaps,” nor any reference to international law and UN resolutions, and without the American guarantees that were promoted by the Palestinian side but were politely denied by the US administration so as not to embarrass Abu Mazen. This included the American declaration since the beginning of the negotiations that the nine-month period is not a definitive deadline, but rather a tentative date, and there is a big difference between the two.¹⁴⁵

The Israeli government rejected the Palestinian demand to begin new negotiations from the point where the previous negotiations ended, despite the fact that the outcome of the previous negotiations was very bad for the Palestinians, and detracted from Palestinian rights. The Palestinians approved the principle of “land swap,” the division of East Jerusalem and the WB between Israel and the Palestinian state, the inclusion of settlement blocs, security arrangements, the disarmament of the Palestinian state, and attaining “a just solution to the problem of Palestinian refugees to be agreed upon,” as stated in the Arab Peace Initiative. This transforms the issue of refugees, including its core the right of return, from an individual and national inalienable right to an agreed upon solution. In other words, this puts the power of approval and veto in the hands of Israel.¹⁴⁶

‘Abbas, in an interview on the Israeli Channel 2 with Udi Segal, said, “Palestine for me is the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as the capital, this is Palestine, I am a refugee, I live in Ramallah, the West Bank and Gaza is Palestine, everything else is Israel.” He added that “although he is a refugee from Safed, he does not intend to return to the city as a resident—if anything, he would visit as a tourist.”¹⁴⁷ ‘Abbas also said in a meeting with a delegation of Israel’s Meretz Party, “People say that after signing a peace agreement we will still demand Haifa, Acre and Safed,” so he explained that “That is not true. Signing the agreement will signal the end of the conflict.”¹⁴⁸ Then, he repeated the same position when a few hundred young Israelis visited him at the presidential residence, on 16/2/2014, in Ramallah. He said, “He does not want to ‘drown Israel with millions of [Palestinian] refugees to change its nature.’”¹⁴⁹

The issue was not restricted to the above, despite its wretchedness. Indeed, the Israeli government refused to focus negotiations initially on borders and security, and insisted on security first. Thus, General John Allen proposed a security

plan over which Israel expressed reservations, even though it encompassed the Israeli position and didn't contain what was put forth by his predecessor, General James Jones, whose plan included the deployment of North Atlantic Treaty Organization—NATO-based international force in WB.¹⁵⁰

Israel objected to the Palestinian request for American participation in most of the bilateral negotiations sessions, in order to ensure its full control of the Palestinian negotiator, and limit the US role as the mediating third-party. Consequently, the US party would not be able to apply pressure for some points that do not affect the core Israeli demands, but without which negotiations cannot be continued or an agreement reached.¹⁵¹

Features of the Current Negotiations

The negotiations ignored GS completely, and dwarfed the Egyptian role. Indeed, after the government of Ehud Olmert insisted on the futility of reaching an agreement as long as Abu Mazen does not represent all Palestinians, and as long as GS was under the control of Hamas, this made any agreement a “shelf agreement,” i.e., a non-viable one. This is while efforts are focused on using the current separation and division to put pressure on the Palestinian negotiator to accept a solution that is worse than the solution that can be reached in light of Palestinian unity.

Kerry strove to engage the Arab parties through the Arab Follow-up Committee, Jordan and the KSA, recognizing that the Arab situation has become different and more likely to deal with the American-Israeli solutions after the collapse of the “Refusal Front.” This is in addition to events in Syria and their repercussions, the fall of the Mu‘ammar Gaddafi regime, the emergence of the role of the Gulf states in Arab decisions, especially the KSA, and the implications of developments in the Iranian nuclear file, as well as internal conflicts in Egypt. This context can also include the Jordanian-Palestinian agreement on holy sites, the approval of the Arab Follow-up Committee on the principle of “land swaps,”¹⁵² and the provision of an Arab cover to resume negotiations, and then their continuation despite their being without any reference, allowing the Israeli side to pursue its settlement and Judaization programs.

The current negotiations continue without a legal Palestinian cover, as many Executive Committee members argue that the majority of members had opposed

the resumption of negotiations.¹⁵³ They demand their cessation and the adoption of new options, based on giving priority to ending the division, restoring unity on a national and democratic basis, and political partnership, completing the UN move, escalating the boycott and popular resistance, activating and reforming the PLO, while bringing in various components of the Palestinian movement. This is in addition to putting the PA in its normal place as a tool of the PLO, and reconsidering its form, functions and obligations, especially after the international recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer state at the UN.

One aspect of the current negotiations is waving the carrot of economic benefits through the “Kerry Plan” to support the Palestinian economy with \$4 billion, and freezing it to pressure the Palestinian side to be more flexible. Although it was provided initially as a mere “token” to continue the negotiations, it has now become the price that the Palestinian side will receive if it signs the Framework Agreement.

The only condition that was accomplished by the Palestinian negotiator was the release of three of the four batches of prisoners who were convicted before the Oslo Accords, with the release of the fourth batch scheduled for 29/3/2014. Although it is an important achievement, the release of the fourth batch has still not happened as of this publication, because Israel tried to use it as a tool of political pressure on the Palestinian side. This “achievement” took place at a great price, not restricted to stopping the move to the UN, but also including the resumption of negotiations in light of Israel’s continued attempts to complete its plans for expansion, settlement building and racism. This confirms the error in dealing with the release of prisoners not as a right, but as a matter of negotiation. This also includes the error of approving the staggering of their release into four stages, and the distinction between the prisoners of Jerusalem and the 1948 territories, on one hand, and the rest of the Palestinian territories, on the other. As their release became an extortion to ensure the continuation of negotiations and the display of flexibility.

A Shift in the US-Israel Relations

The new negotiations cannot be assessed accurately without taking into account developments in American politics.

Since President Barack Obama’s visit to the region in March 2013, it was clear that he would start his second term differently than his first, with regard to US-Israeli relations.

Obama began his first term by giving unprecedented attention to the issue, as he demanded a freeze of settlement building and vowed to seek a solution amid a different US approach in the region that manifested itself in his speech in Cairo. He said that the establishment of Israel came as a reaction to the Holocaust suffered by the Jews. This prompted severe criticism from Israel and its supporters in the US, which defended the Zionist claim that Israel was established according to a divine promise and that it has been present on this land for thousands of years, and that the US is undeniably and indefinitely committed to defend the security of Israel.¹⁵⁴

Such stances led to tensions in US-Israeli relations, specifically between Obama and Netanyahu, as Israel resorted to its partisans, especially the Congress, to put pressure on the US administration to change its position. Consequently, Obama had to yield and stop demanding a settlement freeze, adopting the Zionist version for the establishment of Israel.

Based on the above, the second presidential mandate and the overall US efforts to reach a solution were characterized by the following:

First: The avoidance of the US administration of having any conflict with Israel or even pressuring it, to the extent that, during his visit, Obama asked the Israeli public to pressure their government. He avoided taking positions that the Israeli government did not agree with, and only discussed what can be approved by Israel. It seems that Netanyahu is pretending to oppose the US Framework Agreement to deceive the Palestinian side and push it to accept it, even though it detracts from Palestinian rights in an unprecedented manner.

The above explains why John Kerry made 11 visits to the region, during which he met with the Palestinian president and the Israeli prime minister dozens of times in the capitals of the region and other cities, without discussing what he had promised from the beginning. Indeed, Kerry abandoned the goal of reaching a peace treaty, and was simply seeking a Framework Agreement or a framework for negotiations. This led to a drop in the level of reference of the negotiations, which was international law and UN resolutions, and instead became some issues and positions that are in the Framework Agreement.

Being able to guarantee the right of both parties to make reservations, doesn't undermine the danger of the Framework Agreement, because it is considered a cover to extend negotiations. As usual, the Palestinian reservations will not be applied, while Israeli reservations will be, because they are completely guaranteed

by Israeli force. This is similar to what happened after the adoption of the international Road Map, which was transformed, when 14 Israeli reservations were added. After that, only the Palestinian obligations were applied, while their reservations were ignored.

What is most serious in these negotiations is that the Obama administration abandoned once and for all the traditional positions taken by previous US administrations since the Israeli occupation in 1967. Now, it adopts Israel's positions, a negative development since they will be considered the reference for any subsequent negotiations.

Second: Since the resumption of negotiations, the Israeli government has launched a broad campaign to expand the occupation and settlement building, which increased by 123% in 2013 according to CBS as compared to 2012. The Israeli government issued tenders to build more than ten thousand settlement housing units, and pursued its Judaization and Israelization of Jerusalem. It also escalated attacks on *al-Aqsa*, calling for its division and destruction, the disintegration of the WB, and the continued siege of GS.

Third: The US administration, and particularly Secretary of State John Kerry, were determined to take advantage of the favorable historical moment to liquidate the Palestinian issue, in light of the changes, revolutions and Arab imbalance. This view is enhanced by the fact that any Arab or regional arrangement would be difficult without a peace settlement or closure of the Palestinian file, especially following the agreement on the Syrian chemical weapons and the Iranian nuclear file. Indeed, Kerry believes that he can achieve what his predecessors were unable to. Moreover, the US wants to exploit the PLO leadership's current readiness to make concessions, the growing fears Israelis have from the demographic threat and the establishment of a single state, the risk of failing to reach a peace settlement that would mitigate Israel's isolation and boycott, and the emergence of alternative options that could undermine the dream of the Zionist movement to establish a "Jewish state."

The Future of Negotiations

There are four scenarios for the peace process:

The First Scenario: To reach a final agreement. This is unlikely in the foreseeable future, due to the wide gap between the maximum that can be offered

by the Israeli extremist government, and what can be accepted by the moderate leadership of Abu Mazen. This is in light of the lack of readiness by the US, Europe and the international community to exert the necessary pressure on Israel for making an offer that can be accepted by the Palestinians.

The Second Scenario: The Framework Agreement on the general framework, the principles and the final solution, which is thus more of a “declaration of principles” and less of a “peace treaty.” It seems that this scenario is likely, especially after Kerry’s announcement that both parties may express reservations on the conflicting points, with a commitment to extend the negotiations, and to consider the Framework Agreement as a reference for subsequent negotiations.

Such a possibility is likely, because the current negotiations attempt to document the Palestinian concessions made since the Camp David Summit in 2000 and until now. This compounds the seriousness of the Framework Agreement even if it takes a modest form, because it would be a framework and reference for subsequent negotiations, far removed from international law and international legitimacy.

The passing of this agreement is not easy, especially as it will be too broad and not specific with regard to Palestinian rights, and clear with regard to Israeli demands. It needs Israel to pay some political price, so Abu Mazen would be able to justify and pass it, in light of a growing Palestinian opposition to bilateral negotiations and the “Kerry Plan,” whether inside or outside Fatah and the PLO. This can be done through stipulating the “establishment of a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders,” with “land swaps,” although the second statement, which will not determine the proportion of land swaps, cancels the first statement, especially if we add a third statement about “taking the demographic changes brought by the occupation since 1967 into account.” This is in addition to the release of the sick, the elderly, the children and the women who are in prison; the provision of economic aid; the granting of licenses for the establishment of projects Area C. This price can also include a partial and temporary freeze to settlement building outside Jerusalem and the settlement blocs, but does not include settlement projects that were already approved or issuing new tenders.

The Third Scenario: Includes different versions of the status quo, which mainly includes the continuation of the transitional period and the political, economic and security obligations of Oslo Accords, despite Israel’s violation of this agreement, and the fact that the Palestinian state acquired the non-member UN observer status.

This scenario sees the continuation of the situation as it is, with or without the negotiations. It includes having various forms of resistance and partial involvement in the UN. The negotiations may lead to a new interim deal that goes along with the Declaration of Principles or Framework Agreement along with timetables and an establishment of a state with temporary borders, as well as a returning to the 28/9/2000 conditions (i.e., before the start of *al-Aqsa Intifadah*), in addition to unilateral steps, whether coordinated or not, with the Palestinian side.

The Fourth Scenario: Failure and total collapse of the negotiations. Although this scenario is unlikely because all parties without exception are afraid of the consequences, we must not discard it completely, especially in light of the intransigence and extremism of the Netanyahu government, and its intensification of all forms of aggression, settlement building and racism.

In the event this scenario takes place, there will be new Palestinian alternatives and options, starting with the final exit from bilateral negotiations under American auspices, and the request to convene an international conference on the basis of international law and UN resolutions in light of the weakened possibility of reaching a peace settlement, on the basis of a “two-state solution.” This would not end by paving the way for the one-state solution.

The crucial factor is the fact that without any fundamental change to the balance of power, or any defeat to the apartheid occupation project, a sovereign Palestinian state cannot be established on the 1967 borders, the right of return cannot be fulfilled, nor can Israel be converted into a state for all its citizens, a bi-national state, or any other alternative form.

Conclusion

Israeli society is still showing more inclination toward right-wing and religious extremist trends. The Israeli elections reflected this trend in 2013, and it was also reflected in the racist practices and draft laws, and settlement activities in the WB. According to indicators, these trends will be enhanced, at least in the short term.

The Palestinian division, the state of Arab weakness, and counterattacks against movements for change and revolutions in the Arab region, especially the coup against the democratic process in Egypt, all gave many reasons for

Israeli decision-makers to feel relieved. This was reinforced by the marked improvement in the Israeli economy, with the GDP per capita reaching advanced levels comparable to those in developed Western countries. Nonetheless, Israeli military programs and the development of its power and superiority, still take a central place of prominence among the Israeli leadership.

Israel's sense of the real danger has diminished, as a result of the change in the surrounding strategic environment regarding the possibility of the rise of strong regimes that reflect the will of their people and carry ideologies that are hostile to Israel. Therefore, the Israeli government preferred to continue with the game of managing the peace process, without any serious pursuit of resolving the final relevant issues. It also favored the continued wager on the element of time, and profiting from the available regional and international environment, in order to impose further facts on the ground through the Judaization and settlement programs, and to achieve more Palestinian concessions. It seems that the experience of the past years, which shows that the Palestinian side is ready to give up and respond to the pressures, may represent an attractive element to the Israeli side to pursue its pressures and policies.



Endnotes

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- ¹⁵ See results of the 18th and 19th Knesset elections, The Knesset, http://www.knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res18.htm
http://www.knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res19.htm
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- ¹⁷ Mtanes Shihadeh, "Analysis of the 19th Israeli Knesset Election Results of 2013: Election Results in the Arab Community," site of Mada al-Carmel, June 2013. (in Arabic)
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- ¹¹⁴ See Shabak, 2012 Annual Summary, <http://www.shabak.gov.il/SiteCollectionImages/english/TerrorInfo/2012AnnualSummary-en.pdf>
- ¹¹⁵ See site of The Marker, 18/11/2012, <http://www.themarker.com/news/1.1867734> (in Hebrew); and *Haaretz*, 19/11/2012.
The exchange rate of the dollar against the Israeli shekel on 16/11/2012 was based on the Bank of Israel data, which was 3.952.
- ¹¹⁶ For the number of Israelis killed and wounded, see Shabak, 2013 Annual Summary.
As for the number of Palestinians killed and wounded 2009–2011, see Mohsen Moh'd. Saleh (ed.), *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2011/12* (Beirut: al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2013), p. 98.
And as for the number of Palestinians killed and wounded 2012–2013, see “Israeli Violations in the Period Between June 2011 and December 2013,” site of Wafa Info, <http://www.wafainfo.ps/atemplate.aspx?id=9223> (in Arabic)
Note: The numbers referred to on the Palestinian side for the years 2012 and 2013 are taken from Wafa Info. There are some differences found in other Palestinian sources, such as the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), which pointed to the killing of 306 Palestinians in 2012, and the annual report of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR), which indicated the killing of 256 Palestinians and the wounding of 1,207 others in 2012, and spoke about the killing of 46 Palestinians and the wounding of 496 others in the year 2013. As for The Department of International Relations at the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), it talked in its annual report, about the killing of 56 Palestinians and the wounding of 1,818 others.
See Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Press Release On the 65th Anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba, 14/5/2013, http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_nakba65E.pdf; the annual reports for the years 2012 and 2013, site of Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR), http://www.pchrgaza.org/portal/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=40&Itemid=172; and see site of Wefaq Press, 13/1/2014, http://wefaqpress.net/news_details.php?sid=11898
- ¹¹⁷ See site of The Prisoner's Center for Studies, 29/12/2012 and 23/12/2013, <http://alasra.ps/ar/index.php>
- ¹¹⁸ The Prisoner's Center for Studies, 23/12/2013.
- ¹¹⁹ See Addameer Monthly Detention Report, site of Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association—Addameer, 1/1/2012, 1/1/2013 and 1/1/2014, <http://www.addameer.org/einside.php?id=9>
- ¹²⁰ See *al-Hayat*, 30/10/2013; and *Haaretz*, 28/3/2014.
- ¹²¹ Alresalah Press, 30/10/2013.
- ¹²² See The Prisoner's Center for Studies, 23/12/2013.
- ¹²³ See site of Palestinian Prisoners Center for Studies, 3/1/2014, <http://www.asrapal.net/index.php?action=detail&id=5665>

- ¹²⁴ See *Haaretz*, 12/7/2013; and site of Arabs 48, 19/8/2013, www.arabs48.com
- ¹²⁵ *The Jerusalem Post*, 21/3/2013.
- ¹²⁶ *The Jerusalem Post*, 21/5/2013.
- ¹²⁷ See *The Jerusalem Post*, 22/3/2013 and 24/3/2013.
- ¹²⁸ *The Jerusalem Post*, 22/3/2013.
- ¹²⁹ See *Haaretz*, 26/3/2013; and *al-Hayat*, 28/3/2013.
- ¹³⁰ *Haaretz*, 7/7/2013.
- ¹³¹ *The Jerusalem Post*, 9/1/2013.
- ¹³² Israel Prepares to Block Funds if Reconciliation Goes Ahead, MEMO, 11/2/2013, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/middle-east/5216-israel-prepares-to-block-funds-if-reconciliation-goes-ahead>
- ¹³³ *The Jerusalem Post* and *Haaretz*, 10/8/2013.
- ¹³⁴ See site of Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 6/10/2013, <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2013/Pages/Cabinet-communique-6-Oct-2013.aspx>
- ¹³⁵ Felesteen Online, 17/3/2013.
- ¹³⁶ *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 31/12/2012.
- ¹³⁷ The Arabic site of Israel Broadcasting Authority—IBA (Arabil), 1/1/2013, <http://www.iba.org.il/arabil/arabic.aspx?classto=InnerKlali&entity=898097&type=1&topic=188>
- ¹³⁸ Arabil, 28/10/2013, <http://www.iba.org.il/arabil/?entity=967168&type=1&topic=0>; and *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 25/11/2013.y
- ¹³⁹ *Haaretz*, 25/11/2013.
- ¹⁴⁰ Sama, 10/11/2012.
- The spokesman for the Palestinian Authority president, Nabil Abu Rudaina, confirmed that after getting the resolution in the UN approved, the Palestinian people will be ready for negotiations that involve all final status issues. Abu Rudaina did not find any contradiction between going to the UN and resumption of negotiations. This position was confirmed by President Abu Mazen dozens of times, especially in the speeches he delivered from the rostrum of the UN in the years 2011, 2012 and 2013.
- ¹⁴¹ This is a direct talk between the researcher (Hani al-Masri) and a Palestinian official familiar with the Palestinian-European meetings, which took place directly after the European decision. He confirmed that Europe has agreed to vote in favor of a Palestine observer state and to make a decision regarding the settlements, in return for a Palestinian promise to resume negotiations. This matter was confirmed later by various Palestinian and European sources.
- ¹⁴² Ibid. See also *Official Journal of the European Union*, 19/7/2013, p. 9, site of European External Action Service (EEAS), European Union (EU), http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/israel/documents/related-links/20130719_guidelines_on_eligibility_of_israeli_entities_en.pdf
- ¹⁴³ Donia al-Watan electronic newspaper, 5/11/2011.
- ¹⁴⁴ Specific information obtained by the researcher (Hani al-Masri).
- ¹⁴⁵ Despite Palestinian assertions that the agreed upon nine-month period for negotiations is the farthest limit for these negotiations, the Israeli government, the spokeswoman for the US Department of State and the American Consul in Jerusalem declared from the outset that this date is a target date and not a final ceiling.
- ¹⁴⁶ Donia al-Watan, 2/11/2012; and Ahdas Elsaah electronic newspaper, 5/11/2012.
- ¹⁴⁷ *Haaretz*, 1/11/2012.

¹⁴⁸ *Haaretz*, 22/8/2013; and Safa, 23/8/2013.

¹⁴⁹ *Haaretz* and WAFA, 16/2/2014.

¹⁵⁰ See *al-Ayyam*, 1/1/2014.

'Abd al-Ra'uf Arna'ut wrote about the guidelines put forward by Kerry, whether regarding Jerusalem, the refugees or the borders. These guidelines are general but come very close to the Israeli position. They are similar to the security plan proposed by Yigal Allon, as they meet the Israeli core demands of keeping the Israeli army on the borders and on the crossings and of maintaining early-warning and intelligence facilities along the mountain ridge. Still the world was turned upside down on the plan in Israel and within the government, especially by Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon; because it included the notion that the military presence is temporary and is dependent on Palestinian security performance. And despite the fact that Israel is the judge of that, still it did not accept it. It seems that the matter is not real, it is rather an Israeli play aimed at encouraging the Palestinian negotiator to accept it or not to reject it on the pretext of the alleged Israeli rejection of it.

¹⁵¹ On 4/9/2013, the US Department of State spokesperson announced that to date Martin Indyk participated in a single meeting since the resumption of negotiations between the two parties. *Al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper published on 23/8/2013 that 'Abbas said: We approved the appointment of Martin Indyk to the delegation on a permanent basis, to be a third witness of the negotiating track. He added that Israel is the one that has reservations about having Indyk in the negotiations. This Israeli position is aimed at dealing alone with the Palestinians, despite the fact that Indyk is a Zionist and one of the leaders of The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the most powerful lobby in favor of Israel in the US.

¹⁵² *Al-Watan al-Arabi* newspaper, Dubai, 1/5/2013.

¹⁵³ *Al-Khaleej*, 22/7/2013.

¹⁵⁴ See Obama's speech in Cairo in 2009, and other speeches and statements made during his visit to Israel and the West Bank in 2013.



Chapter Three

The Palestinian Issue and the Arab World

The Palestinian Issue and the Arab World

Introduction

The years 2012 and 2013 brought about many changes in the Arab countries, which formed a strategic environment supportive of the Palestinian issue, especially with regard to Egypt and Syria. These changes had their implications on the Palestinian issue on the popular and official levels. However, an assessment of the outcome of these implications, whether positive or negative, is not possible given that the final results of the waves of Arab changes are not yet clear, and might need some time before they crystallize.

But generally speaking, the 2012 developments showed that the Palestinian issue remains a strongly presence in the collective Arab consciousness, and it is still able to steer popular opinion to embrace broad Arab concerns and major issues despite the immediacy of local concerns. The 2012 events also showed that the Arab regimes, should they rely on their inherent sources of power and true popular will, are able to affect the track of the Palestinian issue and the conflict with Israel, although their influence is limited and needs further support.

Additionally, the political crises of 2013 and the stumbling track of the Arab uprisings have weakened the ability of the Arab peoples to express their genuine will through representative institutions. The 2013 events also raised doubts about the possibility of achieving real change towards establishing an Arab environment that would support the resilience of the Palestinian people. An environment that would support Palestinian resistance, and their ability to face increasing Israeli infringements, especially regarding settlement construction and the Judaization of Jerusalem and *al-Aqsa* Mosque. Every Arab country became preoccupied with its internal issues and concerns at the expense of major issues and regional priorities.

It seems that changes and crises in the Arab countries will continue to influence the trends of the Palestinian issue in 2014. Accordingly, it is unlikely to witness any major breakthroughs in the peace process, resistance or reconciliation tracks as long as internal concerns and control of change movements occupy the political agendas of current regimes.

First: Stances of the League of Arab States

1. Impact of Changes and Uprisings on the Palestinian Issue

The repercussions of the uprisings and changes in the Arab world since early 2011 have crossed local borders to affect the regional role of the countries experiencing flux. This is true whether regarding their international relations or the size and direction of their impact in international and regional organizations, namely the League of Arab States.

The turmoil that struck the political regimes in Egypt and Syria in particular led to a change in the relative weights of the influential forces within the Arab League, especially regarding the Palestinian issue. This is because these two countries used to represent the main pillars of the “moderation” and “refusal” fronts across which Arab countries were aligned, and this categorization practically vanished in 2011.

At the same time, and beside the fact that many Arab countries were occupied with own their internal concerns has weakened the Arab League and its influence in general, the escalation of the Syrian crisis in 2012 and 2013 took on an advanced position on the Arab League agenda at the expense of other issues, namely the Palestinian issue. This was manifested in the two Arab summits held in Baghdad and Doha on 29/3/2012 and 26/3/2013 respectively where the Syrian file and internal issues in some Arab countries prevailed over the meetings. The Palestinian issue was not completely absent but the summits passed without providing anything new in this respect. Apparently, the most important outcome provided in the Doha Summit was the call by the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, to establish a fund for the support of Jerusalem, and vowing Qatari participation with \$250 million for its establishment.¹

The performance of the Arab League has showed some positive signs regarding the Palestinian issue during 2012 and 2013, particularly in the periods when elected parties assumed power, notably in Egypt. These signs were noticed in the Arab League’s position towards Hamas, when its Secretary General Nabil al-‘Arabi met Khalid Mish‘al, head of Hamas’s Political Bureau, on 6/1/2012. They were also noticeable in the solidarity visit by a delegate of Arab prime ministers headed by al-‘Arabi to GS, on 20/11/2012, during the Israeli offensive on the Strip. The delegates included ‘Adnan Mansur, Muhammad Kamel ‘Amr, Hoshiyar Zebari, Rafiq ‘Abdul Salam, ‘Ali Karti, and Nasser Judeh, Foreign Ministers of Lebanon,

Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia, and Jordan respectively. It also included Saudi State Minister for Foreign Affairs Nizar Bin ‘Obaid Madani and his Qatari counterpart Khalid Bin Muhammad al-‘Atiyyah as well as Riyad al-Maliki, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Ramallah-based government.²

But in general, the role played by the Arab League during 2012 and 2013 did not deviate from the 2011 track which was limited in presence and influence, and lacked any genuine action on the ground. This was true regarding continuous Israeli violations, such as settlement building, the Judaization of *al-Aqsa* Mosque and Jerusalem, and the GS siege. It was also true concerning the violations against Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons, the inter-Palestinian division and the reconciliation file, and in the settlement file which is discussed below in detail.

2. The Stance on the Peace Settlement

The years 2012 and 2013 brought no new developments in the position of the Arab League regarding the peace process or the League’s ability to influence negotiations. Neither could the new elected regimes add any major changes concerning the peace process. Thus, the general trend was to continue the commitment to the Arab Peace Initiative, while providing political cover for the PA through authorizing President Mahmud ‘Abbas to pursue any steps he would deem suitable in this context.

In January 2012, the Arab League supported “exploratory talks” with Israel. Then it declared its support for the Palestinian action plan presented by President ‘Abbas to the Arab League Council at the foreign ministerial level on 12/2/2012 regarding the commitments to resume direct talks. The Council approved of the provision of a financial security network at \$100 million per month for the PA to face financial pressures and Israel’s abstinence from transferring the tax money it collects on behalf of the PA,³ then it announced through the Follow-up Committee its support for President ‘Abbas’s plan to seek UN membership for Palestine.⁴

The following year, the stances of the Arab League remained identical with the position of the PA, where it announced its support for the peace talks that were resumed in July 2013 pursuant to the efforts of US Secretary of State John Kerry. It even explicitly agreed to the principle of a land swap within the frame of a final solution.⁵ The Arab League also agreed with President ‘Abbas on common principles including the refusal of recognizing Israel as a “Jewish state” as well as

the Israeli presence in the Jordan Rift Valley on the eastern border of the Palestinian state, while accepting the presence of international troops in the region.⁶

In light of the current data, there are no signs of an imminent change in the position of the Arab League regarding the peace process or its support of the PA. In other words, the Arab League is not able to evade US demands or conditions while the Palestinian side itself is compliant with these conditions, especially while the Palestinian political schism continues.

Second: Stances and Roles of Some Key Countries

1. Egypt

a. The Impact of Internal Changes on the Palestinian Issue

The changes witnessed in the Egyptian arena during 2012 and 2013 had the greatest impact on the Palestinian issue compared to changes that took place in other Arab countries. Egypt has a significant strategic status at the level of Arab and regional politics, and in the conflict with Israel; it is the largest Arab country, and a neighboring state to occupied Palestine, bordering GS. The Palestinian issue was always present during these two years in the internal Egyptian scene through two main files: the relationship with the GS and the relationship with Israel.

Since early 2012, and during the preparations for presidential elections, there was almost total consensus in the Egyptian positions regarding these above two files. This accordance persisted after the Freedom and Justice Party candidate, Muhammad Morsi, won the elections in June 2012 but it soon faced two major crises. In August 2012, an attack in the Egyptian Rafah claimed the lives of 16 Egyptian soldiers in what was known as the “Rafah massacre,” and suspicions were pointed at gunmen from the GS. On 3/7/2013, a military coup overthrew the elected president and was accompanied by an unprecedented campaign against the GS tunnels, the closure with the Rafah crossing, and a high-pitched media and political campaign against Hamas in GS, and against the positions previously adopted by President Morsi towards the Palestinians.

The impact of the Egyptian changes was evident during the Israeli offensive on GS in November 2012 when Egyptian diplomacy played an important role in

ending the assault as per the conditions of the Palestinian resistance; a landmark compared to the positions of the former regime.

However, generally speaking, it is possible to say that the positive signs shown in Egypt towards the Palestinian issue since the January 25 Uprising and which implied that Egypt could provide strong, positive leverage, have faced a setback with the military coup, which was accompanied by a political and media defamation campaign against the Palestinian resistance.

The main factor in enhancing Egypt's positive role towards the Palestinian issue during the recent period was the fact that the public mood was supportive of the Palestinian issue and able to express itself. Accordingly, the danger of the changes witnessed on the Egyptian scene lies in the attempts to target this public mood through defamation campaigns rather than by changing the ruling power itself.

As for future trends, it is unlikely that Egypt will play an influential role in supporting the Palestinian issue in the foreseeable future, whether on the level of the peace process or the resistance track. This is so especially if the implications of the military coup and its consolidation persist through the political transitional process. Thus, while relations between the Egyptian authorities and the resistance factions is witnessing a deepening crisis, Egypt's occupation with its internal crises and its international isolation limit its ability to influence the track of the Palestinian issue at the political level.

b. Egyptian-Palestinian Relations

The Egyptian-Palestinian relations, especially with the GS, improved from the beginning of the January 25 Uprising, and during the period, which preceded the Rafah attack, the effect of which remained limited during President Morsi's rule.

Candidates for presidential elections were inclined to improve Egyptian-Palestinian relations as the promise to work on lifting the GS siege was an important part of their platforms.

The improved relations were reflected in the facilitation of the movement of Palestinians and the passage of aid and visitors from different countries via the Rafah crossing, where the security perspective to the GS decreased noticeably. In addition, the Arab Affairs Committee in the Egyptian Parliament recommended that a legal study of the crossings between Egypt and GS and how to operate them be conducted. This study would allow the humanitarian aid to reach the Palestinian

people, and provide GS with petroleum and electricity, if Israel refrained from its commitments to provide security and services for GS as an occupied territory.⁷ Moreover, there were talks during that period about a three-phase plan to permanently solve the GS electricity problem and connect it with the eight linkage project.⁸

In addition, around 50 thousand Palestinians born to Egyptian mothers received Egyptian citizenship in compliance with the ruling of the Supreme Administrative Court issued in May 2012,⁹ while Palestinians living in Egypt, including those from Syria, were accepted in Egyptian public schools. Members of the Freedom and Justice Party in Shura Council, before its dissolution, launched an initiative to reactivate the law, which made Palestinians equal to Egyptians in obligations and rights, except for the right to run and vote in elections.¹⁰

The development of relations also led to Egypt's opening up to the Hamas movement whose leaders visited Egypt repeatedly. The relationship between Egypt and Hamas witnessed no problems in the first half of 2012 until the killing of the Egyptian soldiers in Egyptian Rafah on 5/8/2012.

Despite this incident, Egypt continued to play a positive role in GS, albeit temporarily, especially during the Israeli offensive on GS. Because of this offensive, Egypt recalled its ambassador from Tel Aviv, while the Israeli ambassador and his team left Cairo after receiving a letter of protest.¹¹ Egypt also led a wide diplomatic campaign to end the offensive and the Egyptian authorities kept the Rafah crossing open, even during holidays, to facilitate the exit of the wounded.¹² President Morsi dispatched Prime Minister Hisham Qandil to GS in support of the Strip, and he said that "Egypt would not leave Gaza alone," warning that "Egypt today is quite different from Egypt in the past."¹³

Yet at the same time, it seemed that the incident of killing the Egyptian soldiers in Rafah heralded the deterioration of relations between Egypt and the GS in general, and between Hamas and the Egyptian military in particular. Still, the presence of Morsi as president prevented the explosion of relations until he was ousted by the military coup. Ultimately, the incident unveiled the different approaches pursued by the military and presidential institutions towards the GS, which extended to the Egyptian political system at large.

Following the Rafah incident, the Egyptian military started a broad campaign to destroy the Gaza tunnels.¹⁴ Simultaneously, a wide military operation in was

launched in Sinai during which the Egyptian Air Force raided the Peninsula for the first time since 1973.¹⁵ Concurrently, some political figures called for closing the tunnels permanently,¹⁶ and for reconsidering the security annexes of the Camp David Accords to allow the Egyptian military to persecute “terrorism” in Sinai.¹⁷

The deterioration of the relations further crystallized with the publication of Egyptian media reports in March 2013 talking about “a war of tunnels” between Hamas and the Egyptian military.¹⁸ These reports also indicated that some Hamas members were involved in the Rafah attack,¹⁹ an accusation that was denied by the Egyptian military at the time,²⁰ as well as by Hamas who confirmed its absolute noninterference in Egyptian internal affairs.²¹

The tension in the relationship between Egypt and Hamas intensified after the ouster of President Morsi in early July 2013. Hamas-affiliated media outlets showed sympathy with Morsi and the MB against the coup, thus the coup leaders and their supporters perceived such position as another justification to escalate the media campaign against Hamas and the GS.

The Egyptian military had already enhanced its military deployment on the borders with GS in concurrence with the coup,²² and also escalated its campaign to destroy the tunnels in the region.²³ In addition, Egyptian authorities declared the closure of Rafah crossing without explanation,²⁴ then new access procedures were implemented requiring prior security approval for all age groups rather than the age group from 18 to 40 as had been the case previously.²⁵

The military also escalated its campaign to destroy the tunnels between Egypt and Gaza, and declared on 12/3/2014 that a total of 1,370 tunnels had been destroyed up to that date.²⁶ Destruction of tunnels was accompanied with the continued closure of the Rafah crossing for long periods in the following months and it was only opened for urgent cases and for limited groups and numbers of travelers. For example, there were more than five thousand travelers registered until mid-March 2014 after the crossing was closed for 36 consecutive days, and only a limited number of them was able to travel after the opening of the crossing.²⁷

Simultaneously, the Ministry of Health in the GS caretaker government announced the death of three people who needed urgent travel for medical treatment, since the Egyptian authorities tightened the closure restrictions on the Rafah crossings. According to the ministry the closure has “deprived around 450 medical conditions that were formally transferred for treatment in Egyptian

hospitals” of their proper medical care. The restrictions also led to a 30% decrease in the availability of the Essential Drugs List, in addition to the halt of more than 80% of the ministry’s construction projects.²⁸

As an indicator of the impact of the destruction of tunnels and closure of the Rafah crossing in the GS, economic indicators in the Strip showed a rise in the unemployment rate during the six last months of 2013 of 10.6%, an additional 51 thousand unemployed people. These implications were particularly noticed in the Rafah governorate, which recorded the highest rate of unemployment in Palestine: 48% in Q4 2013, a 16% increase compared to Q2, where the rate of unemployment in Rafah governorate reached 32%.²⁹

Also worthy of mention is the fact that the Egyptian authorities began establishing a one-km-deep buffer zone along the eastern border with GS in September 2013, an area to be kept empty of buildings and plants. The measure entailed the destruction of several houses in Egyptian Rafah on the outskirts of the GS.³⁰

Hamas later repeatedly confirmed its absolute noninterference in Egypt’s affairs, and the individual nature of such criticism by some Hamas members against the coup leader and Defense Minister Field Marshal ‘Abdul Fattah al-Sisi.³¹ It also reiterated that Hamas did not have any agenda for a conflict with Egypt, and it remained ready to form a joint security commission with the Egyptian side.³² Nonetheless, the Egyptian media campaign intensified paralleled with an official political campaign, which launched dangerous accusations and threats including the threat of military intervention against Hamas in the GS.³³ Hamas’s position, which negated the Egyptian accusation, was enforced by a leaked document from the Office of Military Intelligence Services and Reconnaissance in the Egyptian military signed by its Director General Mahmud Hijazi (who remained in his position after the coup). The document, which dates back to late May 2013, was obtained by Al Jazeera and aired on its media network on 27/3/2014. The document was related to some suggestions regarding restoring security and achieving development in Sinai and it called for increasing communication with Hamas in order to preserve security and stability on the borders with GS, but it did not include any accusations against the MB movement or Hamas of an intention to harm security in Sinai.³⁴

Reuters news agency quoted Egyptian security officials saying that the ruling authority in Egypt was planning to undermine Hamas rule in GS after the clamp

down on the MB movement in Egypt. The agency added that an eminent security official had commented on this issue, saying that “we cannot be liberated from the terrorism of the MB movement in Egypt without putting an end to it in Gaza which lies on our borders.”³⁵

The Egyptian relationship with Hamas is still witnessing the reverberations of the trial of ousted President Muhammad Morsi and the leaders of MB movement in addition to some Hamas and Hizbullah activists in what has been known as al-Natroun prison case. The accused in this case are facing many accusations including “the agreement and cooperation with members of Hizbullah and Hamas to create chaos in order to overthrow the state and its institutions.”³⁶ Another file is trying Morsi for accusations of “contacting” Hamas, Hizbullah, and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard to commit “acts of sabotage and terrorism” in the country.³⁷

The most important signs of tension between Hamas and Egypt following the coup, were mainly represented in the ruling issued by the Cairo Urgent Matters Court on 4/3/2014 to ban all Hamas activities in Egypt, and to ban all organizations, associations, groups and institutions affiliated with Hamas, or receiving from it any kind of support. The ruling was totally rejected by Hamas who considered the measure as “damaging for Egypt and its image and role towards the Palestinian issue” and “a free service for the Zionist occupation” stressing that it did not have any activity in Egypt to be banned in the first place.³⁸

Questions were raised regarding the political background of the ruling, especially in light of the weak evidence, and given that the court that looked into the case was not competent in such cases, let alone the fact that the case did not satisfy any conditions of urgency.³⁹

Other implications following the coup included a decision by Egypt’s Endowment Ministry to abolish the Jerusalem Commission affiliated to the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs.⁴⁰ Moreover, a lawsuit was filed to stop a decision granting citizenship to thousands of Palestinians.⁴¹

As relations with Hamas deteriorated, the Egyptian authorities maintained good relations with the PA and its Ramallah-based leadership. Thus, President Mahmud ‘Abbas rushed to visit Cairo after the coup and met interim President ‘Adly Mansur at the end of July 2013.⁴² He paid another two-day visit to Cairo in November and met Mansur again and Minister of Defense ‘Abdul Fattah al-Sisi.⁴³

c. The Stance on Peace Settlement and the Relation with Israel

Egypt's stance towards the Camp David Accords and relations with Israel was a major issue in the campaigns of presidential candidates during the first half of 2012. Thus, some candidates said that they would not recognize Israel and Camp David, while others called for a change in the agreement by amending some of its provisions. The candidates who reached the second stage of elections, Muhammad Morsi and Ahmad Shafiq, promised to observe the agreement and respect its provisions. However, and generally speaking, most candidates were cold or negative concerning the relations with Israel, and none of them declared his will to develop such relations. Even Shafiq, who expressed his readiness to visit Israel if necessitated by Egypt's interest, conditioned the development of the relations on "suitable behavior" from the other side.⁴⁴

Another indicator of the general mood in Egypt regarding relations with Israel, was the approval by the Parliament in March 2012 of expelling the Israeli ambassador and recalling the Egyptian ambassador from Tel Aviv, in objection to Israel's escalated raids against Gaza during that period. The Parliament also called for halting Egypt's supply of gas to Israel and reconsidering all agreements signed with it.⁴⁵

Gas exports to Israel was also present in the platforms of presidential candidates, where the gas line was blown up twice in 2012. One of these incidents⁴⁶ was in April, following the Egyptian decision to stop the gas supply to Israel permanently and terminate any contract with it in this respect, due to its "failure to respect its contractual obligations" as it failed to pay late financial dues.⁴⁷ This step was indeed another indicator of the deterioration of relations between Cairo and Tel Aviv, although the reasons provided were "purely commercial."

For its part, Israel refrained from any reaction that would further exacerbate the relations, it tried to mitigate this deterioration and show that relations with Egypt were normal. This was through sending a congratulatory messages to President Morsi on his election and on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, and the publishing by Israeli media of a message attributed to Morsi in response to it. Both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Shimon Peres sent Morsi congratulatory messages on his election as president of Egypt,⁴⁸ and Peres sent Morsi a message on the occasion of the month of Ramadan. Israeli press published what it said was Morsi's response to Peres's messages, which was denied by the office of the Egyptian Presidency.⁴⁹

At a later time, Peres's office leaked to the Israeli media the letter of credence which was handed over by 'Atef Salem upon his appointment as Egypt's ambassador in Tel Aviv. The copy of the letter, signed by Morsi, sparked Egyptian and Arab controversy at that time because of the language employed as the letter began with "Great and Good Friend" and ended with "highest esteem and consideration."⁵⁰ However, the Presidency spokesman Yasir 'Ali commented on the published letter saying that the wording was pure protocol and it was the same wording used to address all presidents since President Gamal 'Abdul Nasser, and did not represent any particular indications.⁵¹

Less than a month after this incident, Egypt announced the withdrawal of its ambassador from Israel in protest against the Israeli offensive on GS,⁵² another setback in the relationship between Israel and the MB movement-led Egypt.

Yet, at the same time, Israel maintained a "minimal level" of relations with the military institution, especially after the escalation of the Egyptian military's operations in Sinai following the killing of the Egyptian soldiers in Rafah. In August 2012 Egypt's Defense Minister 'Abdul Fattah al-Sisi called his Israeli counterpart Ehud Barak to discuss Israeli "concerns" regarding the Egyptian military presence in Sinai, and to coordinate with Israel regarding the military operation taking place there.⁵³

As military operations continued in the Peninsula, an Egyptian military spokesman declared at a later time that there was an agreement with Israel to increase the military presence in Sinai to face "criminal hotbeds," stressing coordination between the two sides regarding Camp David.⁵⁴

In the same context, there were news reports in March 2013 about a secret visit by an Egyptian security delegate including "senior officials" in Egyptian intelligence to Israel to meet officials in Israeli intelligence, according to *Yedioth Ahronoth*.⁵⁵

Following the military coup, Israeli officials were keen not to show their (welcoming) official stance towards developments in Egypt as Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu issued directions to his ministers to refrain from commenting on those events.⁵⁶ Ehud Barak has expressed this inclination clearly during an interview on CNN in an answer to a question about whether Israel was happy with the coup in which he said, "we shouldn't push ourselves to the front of these internal Arab historic dramatic transformations." However, he called on the "free

world” to support Egyptian Defense Minister al-Sisi and leading liberal figures, such as Muhammad al-Baradei.⁵⁷

Later statements stressed that Israel indeed welcomed the coup and the behavior of its leaders, and it considered it a strategic transformation that would serve its interests. In this context, the Israeli ambassador in Cairo described al-Sisi, during a talk with an Egyptian minister, as “a national hero.”⁵⁸ There was also the comment by former Defense Minister, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, regarding the accusation against ousted President Morsi of contacting Hamas, that such a step was a reassuring message from Egypt’s military to Israel and the West. The step was also perceived by Economy Minister, Neftali Bennett, as a sign that the strategic partnership between Israel and Egypt would develop in an unprecedented way.⁵⁹

Shortly after the coup, Israel’s Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) published a report containing several recommendations regarding the reaction Israel should assume in this respect. Among the recommendations was a call for Israel to “deepen its cooperation with the Egyptian army and continue to allow it to deploy troops in the Sinai.” The report also recommended that Israel continue “to support continued American security aid to the Egyptian army, expansion of civilian aid to Egypt by Western countries and international financial institutions, and international initiatives on Egyptian infrastructure development.” In addition, it recommended that Israel attempt to establish covert channels of coordination with the “Sunni monarchies” that hoped for the failure of MB movement rule in Egypt, after which Hamas would be among those “most severely damaged,” according to the report.⁶⁰

In concurrence, Israeli press and media were rife with analyses and commentaries welcoming the coup and perceiving it as an Israeli interest. Thus for example, an article by Dan Margalit, senior commentator in *Israel Hayom*, warned that the Israelis “will cry blood for generations to come if the coup fails and MB movement is back to power in Egypt.”⁶¹ In addition, a commentary in *The Jerusalem Post* described al-Sisi as the “Person of the Year in Regional Affairs.”⁶²

On the military level, the Gaza Division Commander in the occupation army, Mickey Edelstein, welcomed the campaign launched by the Egyptian military against the tunnels, saying that “what Egypt is doing is impressive for everyone.”⁶³

In the same vein, political and media circles in Israel welcomed the deterioration of relations between Egypt and Hamas, and the decision to ban the movement’s

activities in Egypt. Former Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Arens said that the war launched by Egypt against the tunnels minimizes Israel's need to launch a war on GS in the future. In addition, Yariv Levin, the Likud Knesset Member and head of the ruling coalition in the Knesset, commented on the ruling to ban Hamas, saying that it served as a precedent which Israel would resort to in its dealing with the supporters of Hamas in Israel, referring to Palestinians of the territories occupied in 1948 and their deputies in the Knesset.⁶⁴

2. Jordan

a. Impact of Arab Changes and Uprisings on the Palestinian Issue

Jordan was among the Arab countries that witnessed popular action calling for change, but the size and ceiling of this movement fell short of producing tangible change in the internal political formula. This was true even though Jordan witnessed the resignation of three governments in 2012 and 2013, as well as early legislative elections on 23/1/2013 according to a new electoral law, which was boycotted by the Islamic movement, the most important side among opposition forces.

In any case, it seemed that the internal action did not have a major impact on the Jordanian political positions related to the Palestinian issue, or on Jordan's relationship with Palestine or Israel. Apparently, 2012 witnessed a temporary development of relations between Jordanian officials and Hamas, whose relation with Arab officials developed in general following the popular Arab popular uprisings.

Jordan's position towards the Palestinian issue was related to the political developments of the peace process, and the events that have direct impact on Jordan's relation with the PA leadership in Ramallah and with Israel. In contrast, the Syrian and Egyptian crises did not have major repercussions on Jordan's interest in the Palestinian issue. Thus, the impact of the former was limited to the matter of dealing with the Palestinian refugees leaving Syria towards the Jordanian borders, whereas the latter had an impact on relations with Hamas.

In the context of the Syrian issue, the decision of the Jordanian government to prevent Palestinians holding Syrian documents from entering the Kingdom was striking. The decision was described as "strategic," intended to fight the "alternative homeland" and "naturalization" projects and preserve the right of return of Palestinian refugees. Jordan's Interior Ministry denied the figures of

the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which estimated Palestinian refugees holding documents at seven thousand. It said that they did not exceed 143 refugees held in Cyber City refugee camp.⁶⁵

The Jordanian position was clearly expressed by Prime Minister ‘Abdullah al-*Nsour*, who said that his government would not allow the flow of Palestinian refugees into the country in order “to protect their rights in their homeland Palestine.” He added that while international law did not allow the declining asylum seekers, some procedures were pursued to make sure that those arriving were seeking protection rather than looking to fulfil political aims, and would not change their immigration destiny, such as the case with the Palestinian refugees in Syria.⁶⁶

Among those prevented by Jordanian authorities from crossing the borders were some 20–30 Jordanians of Palestinian origin who used to live in Syria, where Jordan found out that their national insurance numbers had been withdrawn from them during their time in Syria, so they were denied access.⁶⁷

Previously, Human Rights Watch (HRW) had accused Jordanian authorities of forcibly returning some newly arriving Palestinians from Syria, and threatening others with deportation, such accusations were then denied by the Jordan government.⁶⁸

b. The Stance on the Peace Settlement

During 2012, Jordan sought to restore its role in Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. Thus, King ‘Abdullah II took the initiative early that year to sponsor an “exploratory” round of direct talks between the two sides to bring their views closer, in a step which was supported on the international level by the Quartet. Jordanian Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh said that the negotiations his country would host at that time were aimed at paving the way for serious talks leading to the final solution of the conflict, and resolving all issues directly affecting Jordanian interests.⁶⁹ Yet, those talks failed to achieve any progress and were stopped a month after they had begun, as Israel refused to stop settlement construction or recognize the 1967 lines as the basis for talks.

At a later date, Jordan supported the PA’s efforts seeking UN recognition as a non-member state. The Jordanian King perceived such a step as an international

message of support for the anti-violence track, and helpful in achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East according to the two-state solution.⁷⁰

Jordan, an adherent to the two-state solution, stressed its rejection of the talk about “confederalism,” which spread following UN recognition of the Palestinian state. It said that Israel had to pay for resolving the Palestinian issue as Jordan would not accept the settlement of the Palestinian issue at the expense of the identity of the Jordanian state.⁷¹ Statements by Jordan’s King and his Prime Minister ‘Abdullah al-Nsour reiterated that it would not be possible to talk about a Jordanian-Palestinian confederalism before Israel’s withdrawal from all occupied territories and the establishment of the Palestinian state.⁷²

The Jordanian foreign minister refused any talk about sovereignty granted to the Israeli forces on the borders in the Jordan Valley, which was a motion discussed in the Knesset in concurrence with US Secretary of State John Kerry’s visit in the region to push the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations forwards.⁷³

c. Jordanian-Palestinian Relations

Jordan maintained its strong relations with the PA and President Mahmud ‘Abbas, especially concerning the joint coordination regarding the developments of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

To strengthen this relationship, Jordan’s King ‘Abdullah II and Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas signed a treaty at the end of March 2013 to protect Jerusalem and the holy sites. The treaty was designed for Jordan and Palestine to make joint efforts to protect Jerusalem and the holy sites from Israeli Judaization efforts, and to protect all endowment property of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.⁷⁴

The signing of this treaty followed a unanimous UNESCO resolution regarding Dung Gate (*Bab al-Magharibah*) which banned Israel from pursuing any unilateral measure regarding the site given that it is occupied territory, as well as the need to obtain the approval of Jordan on any scheme for the gate.⁷⁵

The following month in April 2012, many Jordanian officials visited *al-Aqsa* Mosque including Prince Hashim Bin Al Hussein, Prince Ghazi Bin Muhammad, Jordanian Interior Minister Muhammad al-Ra’oud, and Jordanian Director of Public Security Hussein al-Majali.

Simultaneously, Jordan’s official relationship with Hamas witnessed an important shift throughout 2012 until the coup against President Morsi in mid-2013. Thus, Hamas

officially resumed its relations with the Jordanian leadership following Qatari mediation. A Hamas delegation headed by Mish'al visited Jordan three times; the first of which was on 30/1/2012 when a Hamas delegate arrived into Jordan with then Crown Prince of Qatar Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, while the two other visits took place in June 2012 and January 2013. During the meetings with Jordan's King and Jordanian officials, Hamas reiterated its refusal of all naturalization and alternative homeland projects, stressing that a new page had been opened between Hamas and Jordan.⁷⁶ Nonetheless, the relationship deteriorated after the military coup in Egypt in concurrence with security and political measures adopted in many Arab countries against Islamic movements in the region. This meant that Jordan's official relationship with Hamas is unlikely to be resumed, at least in the foreseeable future, in light of continued negative atmosphere against Islamic movements in the region.

Concerning the situation of Palestinians in Jordan, the Jordanian government returned 192 national numbers to Jordanians of Palestinian origin, whose citizenship has been revoked by virtue of secret written interpretations issued on the basis of Disengagement Decision Instructions.⁷⁷ This was the first time Jordan implicitly acknowledged the presence of secret directions to withdraw citizenship, that necessitated the formation of a committee for their review, knowing that the Interior Ministry used to deny the presence of such directions.⁷⁸

With the hope of improving the conditions of Palestinians in refugee camps, the government passed new directions to resolve the problem of over crowdedness suffered by camp residents by allowing expansion of construction of up to three floors.⁷⁹

d. The Relationship with Israel

The cold relations between Jordan and Israel continued in 2012 and 2013 despite the appointment of a new Jordanian ambassador to Tel Aviv after two years in which the position had been left unfilled. The relationship between the two sides was affected by various factors that led to tension, the most important of which was Israel's attempts to undermine Jordanian sovereignty over *al-Aqsa* Mosque. The appointment of Ambassador Walid Obeidat in Tel Aviv came amid popular opposition, even from the tribe of Ambassador Obeidat himself. However, official sources said that the return of the ambassador did not mean the relationship was warm again, but rather was within the limits of "conventions and commitments."⁸⁰

The crisis between Jordan and Israel started on the basis of continued Israeli infringements on *al-Aqsa* Mosque and the daily breaking into the mosque by Jewish settlers and extremists. The crisis was exacerbated following actions by the Israeli government infringing on Jordanian sovereignty over the mosque, and Jordanian MPs called on the government to pursue escalatory measures against Israel, including the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador in Amman. In May 2013, 87 MPs supported a motion of no confidence against the government because of its “lack of action” in expelling the ambassador.⁸¹ However, a number of MPs withdrew their signatures⁸² and the government declared that the Israeli ambassador had left Jordan after being recalled and handed a “strongly worded” protest note for his government.⁸³ Yet, the Israeli ambassador still returned to Jordan at a later time.

The crisis was renewed in February 2014 after the Israeli Knesset had discussed Jordan’s sovereignty over Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, an issue addressed in the articles of the peace treaty signed between Israel and Jordan in 1994. Ultimately, the Jordanian Parliament voted unanimously for the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador from Amman and recalling the Jordanian ambassador from Tel Aviv. Some MPs demanded that the government provide a draft for terminating the Treaty of Peace Between the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, known as the Wadi Arabah peace treaty. Yet, the Jordanian government did not respond to the vote given that the parliament’s role is only “legislative and regulatory” while the competence for recalling the Jordanian ambassador and expelling his Israeli counterpart “would need a sovereign decision,” meaning that only the King can handle the issue of the relation with Israel.⁸⁴

Worthy of mention is that upon discussing the law of State Security Court in December 2013, the Jordanian parliament excluded any act against Israeli occupation from trial before this court, and from the definition of acts of terrorism.⁸⁵ However, in April 2014 the parliament cancelled this exclusion.⁸⁶

On another level, the Jordanian King accused Israel of trying to foil Jordan’s peaceful nuclear program, through attempts to convince potential partners to not cooperate with Jordan in this respect.⁸⁷ Tel Aviv, however, denied these accusations and said that it had provided advice and help regarding the establishment of the reactor. These claims were denied by the Jordan Atomic Energy Commission (JAEC).⁸⁸

In return, there was news about a secret visit by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Amman in late 2012, but Jordan denied the validity of such news.⁸⁹

In another context, The World Bank announced in December 2013 that Jordan, Israel and the PA had reached an agreement to divide the water resources in what is known as the Two Seas Canal (the Red Sea-Dead Sea Conduit). The deal outlined the development of a desalination plant located in Aqaba, Jordan's port on the Red Sea, and suggested conducting a study to run a water pipeline between the Red Sea and the Dead Sea.⁹⁰ Israeli Energy Minister Silvan Shalom said that the deal, which he described as "historic," was "a breakthrough" given its "strategic-diplomatic" aspect.⁹¹

But overall, the Jordanian-Israeli relationship is not likely to develop positively in light of these tensions, especially that there is popular and parliamentary pressure on the Jordanian government and on King 'Abdullah II to pursue genuine steps to oppose Israeli violations against *al-Aqsa* Mosque. This issue is of particular sensitivity for the Hashemite throne due to the special symbolism it has enjoyed since the kingdom was established.

3. Syria

a. The Impact of Internal Developments on the Palestinian Issue

The Syrian crisis and its escalation in 2012 and 2013 had serious repercussions on the different aspects of the Palestinian issue. This was manifested in the undermining of the Syrian front vis-à-vis Israel on the political, military and strategic levels. It was also evident in the number of Palestinian casualties as a result of the conflict and the shelling and siege of the refugee camps, in addition to the fact that relations between the Syrian regime and the resistance factions, namely Hamas, became more tense. Such developments took place while the two parties to the conflict emphasized that the Palestinian issue was their priority, and confirmed their support for Palestinian rights.

The results of the ongoing crisis in Syria, which started in March 2011, were devastating for the country on all levels. Thus, the crisis did not only weaken the country for the present, but it also undermined it strategically as a front of resistance against Israel, especially after the deal reached to remove Syria's chemical weapons, which were supposed to provide it with "qualitative deterrent" to Israel.

As there is no sign of an imminent resolution of the crisis in Syria, some analysts have said that Syria with its current borders has come to a permanent end. For any political solution would lead to the division of the country, which has been de facto divided into spheres of influence; some held by the regime and others by the different opposition factions.

Palestinian refugees and their RCs in Syria have suffered enormous damage due to the ongoing crisis. Particularly, the Yarmouk RC was at the heart of the crisis, where it formed an arena for settling accounts between the combatants. It was subject to violent shelling and harsh siege starting late 2012, ongoing at the time of writing this report.

Battles between the Syrian regime, supported by the PFLP-General Command (GC) on one hand, and fighters from the Syrian opposition on the other hand, have led to the killing of lots of Palestinians by sniper bullets and shelling. In addition, tens of Palestinians were killed in the besieged camp because of famine and denial of food aid. The PFLP-GC declared on 24/11/2013 that a final resolution for the RC crisis has been achieved,⁹² but it failed. And although the fighting parties agreed also to a truce in mid-February 2014, it collapsed two months later, thus hindering the distribution of aid packages by UNRWA among camp residents.⁹³ The Yarmouk RC remains under siege at the time of writing.

During the Syrian crisis and until 26/3/2014, 2,143 Palestinians were killed, including 136 Palestinians died because of Yarmouk RC siege, and 895 others were killed by shelling in their neighborhoods.⁹⁴

b. Syrian-Palestinian Relations

The years 2012 and 2013 witnessed core changes in the relations between Hamas and the Syrian regime, which had provided the main arena for the Movement abroad. With the beginning of 2012, Hamas seemed closer to disengagement from the Syrian regime given the massacres it committed against its people. This inclination was expressed in Hamas's confirmation that the departure of its leaders from Syria would depend on the security situation.⁹⁵ On 27/2/2012, Musa Abu Marzuq, deputy head of Hamas's Political Bureau, stressed that Hamas leaders left Syria as they opposed the security solution pursued by the government and respected Syrian popular will.⁹⁶

In response, Ahmad Jibril, secretary-general of PFLP-GC, stressed that Hamas's decision to move its bureau from Damascus to Doha was a mistake.⁹⁷

As criticism of Hamas's decision intensified, Mish'al clarified that he had advised President Bashar al-Assad at the beginning of the uprising to comply with the demands of his people, yet his reaction was negative.⁹⁸

When in early November 2012 the Syrian regime took a revenge decision to close down Hamas's bureaus in Syria, the Movement said that the decision was expected and it was a foregone conclusion given that the bureaus had been closed in the past.⁹⁹ When he visited Jordan in early February 2013, Mish'al reiterated that the decision to leave Syria was made so that Hamas would not form a military cover for the regime's crimes.¹⁰⁰

When Hizbullah interfered militarily in support of the regime, Hamas called on the party on 17/6/2013 to withdraw its forces from Syria, stressing the right of the Syrian people to achieve their rights and the need to reach a political, peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis.¹⁰¹

As Hamas was subject to siege in light of its isolation from its old Syrian ally, and in light of the tense relationship with the Iranian ally, some voices within Hamas called for "correcting the error" and reassessing the relation with Syria and Iran positively. Ultimately, Mish'al stressed on 18/10/2013 that Hamas's alignment with the people was an honor, and that the Movement had not committed any wrong in admitting to.

Contrarily, the relationship between PIJ and the Syrian regime was not hurt as in the case of Hamas. Rather, the PIJ maintained its presence in Syria although it declared its alignment with the demands of the Syrian people.¹⁰²

The PIJ condemned the violence against the Syrians and Palestinians in Syria, and called for stopping bloodshed to protect Syrian internal affairs.¹⁰³ After the escalation of the crisis following Hizbullah's pro-regime interference, the PIJ denied its bias to the Syrian regime or participation in the fighting, clarifying that Ramadan 'Abdullah, secretary-general of the PIJ, shuttles between Cairo and Beirut.¹⁰⁴

As the relationship between the Syrian regime and Hamas deteriorated, its relationship with Fatah and the PA leadership in Ramallah developed. President Assad met 'Abbas Zaki, member of Fatah Central Committee, in October 2013

in his capacity as the personal envoy of Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas. During the meeting, Zaki reiterated the Palestinian people’s solidarity with Syria against the offensive it has been subject to. Zaki also said that the targeting of Syria and the exhaustion of its resources and military come within the context of a scheme aiming to divide the region and weaken it to serve Israeli interests.¹⁰⁵

c. Relations with Israel

No change was noticed in 2012 and 2013 in the relations of any Syrian side with Israel. Thus, while both sides of the crisis exchanged accusations regarding aid received from Israel, they both denied any negotiations or rapprochement with Tel Aviv.

In this context, Burhan Ghalyoun, President of the opposition Syrian National Council (SNC), reiterated the rejection of SNC or any opposition faction, of negotiations with the West or with Israel regarding the future of the occupied Golan Heights in return for their support to overthrow al-Assad regime. He said that Syria’s sovereignty would not be completely achieved without restoring the Golan Heights, adding that the democratic revolution in Syria would be more able to restore the Golan.¹⁰⁶

The most important development on the ground was Israel’s bombardment of three Syrian military posts to the north west of Damascus on 5/5/2013, after which al-Assad warned that the attack would turn the Golan Heights into a “resistance front.”¹⁰⁷ Nonetheless, the Golan front maintained its calm except for a shooting by a Syrian military unit at an Israeli military vehicle which trespassed the cease-fire line two weeks after the raid,¹⁰⁸ and after the opposition took temporary control of the Syrian side of al-Qunaitra border point in June 2013.¹⁰⁹ UN documents showed that Israel at that time had refrained from confronting Syrian tanks, which entered the disengagement zone in al-Qunaitra after coordination between the Syrian military and Israeli forces to ensure that the Syrian military presence targeted opposition militants only. In addition, Israel provided some opposition militants urgent health treatment in the said incident.¹¹⁰

4. Lebanon

a. Impact of Arab Uprisings and Changes on the Palestinian Issue

Although Lebanon did not witness the extensive popular action that many Arab countries had, it was drastically affected throughout 2012 and 2013 by the crisis

in neighboring Syria. This was in light of Hizbullah's participation in Syria, in addition to the displacement of large numbers of Syrians and Palestinians into its territories. Ultimately, the impact and changes of the Lebanese scene on the Palestinian issue were particularly related to these two files.

On the one hand, Hizbullah's interference in the fighting in Syria led to the loss of a major part of its popular support it enjoyed across the Arab world, seen as a resistance movement against Israel. The popular belief was that the Party's defense of the regime was contributing to the suppression of the Syrian people's revolution; a demonstration of supporting the oppressor against the oppressed. In addition, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries listed Hizbullah as a "terrorist organization" based on its interference in the Syrian fighting.

Hizbullah, for its part, insisted that its interference in Syria was to defend the resistance against a conspiracy being woven against it and against the Palestinian issue. Hizbullah Secretary General Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah stated: "what is wanted in Syria is the head of resistance in Lebanon and Palestine, and the head of the Palestinian issue, and of the Palestinian people."¹¹

This issue sparked talk about a deterioration in relations between the Lebanese resistance (Hizbullah) and its ally in Palestine (Hamas), based on the former's support of the Syrian regime and the latter's rejection of adopting similar stance and its consequent departure from Damascus. Sources from both sides, however, have tried to undermine the impact of the Syrian issue on their relationship. Still, it is not possible to deny the negative impact on the relation between Hizbullah and Hamas due to their different stances.

In this context, Hizbullah Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem stressed that "Hizbullah's relationship with Hamas is good [...] because we consider ourselves in the same trench of resistance against Israel." He also said that "he who is looking for problems between Hamas and Hizbullah will only exhaust himself [to no avail] because our relation is governed by cooperation and comprehension, and the contention over the Syrian issue is legitimate and it does not ruin our good relation."¹² Sheikh Qassem described Hamas as the "spearhead of resistance in Palestine, and one of the pillars of the resistance camp which did not lose the compass in facing the occupation."¹³

At a later time, Hizbullah political bureau member Hassan Hubballah, denied claims that Hizbullah had asked the Hamas leadership and its members in Lebanon

to leave the country, and he said that “this is the wish of the Israelis who are trying to turn resistance factions against each other, and it will never come true.”¹¹⁴ News discussing the alleged Hizbullah demand was based on a decision by the Lebanese General Security to freeze visa applications for some Hamas members. However, General Security justified its measure declaring that some Palestinian forces had forged documents using numbers and dates provided to some Hamas cadres, in attempt to enter Lebanon.¹¹⁵

On another hand, the displacement of Palestinian refugees from Syria to Lebanon to escape the ongoing fighting has pushed the issue of Palestinian refuge to the forefront, in a country where this file is of particular sensitivity. The most important reactions in this sense came from Minister of Energy and Water Gebran Bassil (Free Patriotic Movement) who called for closing the Lebanese borders,¹¹⁶ and for the deportation of Palestinian and Syrian refugees because they take the place of the Lebanese.¹¹⁷ Bassil’s statements were faced with condemnation namely from his colleague in the government Minister of Social Affairs Wa’il Abu Fa’our (Progressive Socialist Party) who said that “there is no need for exercising any act of revenge or racism against the Palestinian people.” He also stressed on behalf of the Lebanese government that “Lebanon will not close the borders in the face of any Palestinian or Syrian refugee.”¹¹⁸

Yet in August 2013, and as the number of Palestinian refugees displaced from Syria’s camps reached 60 thousand, the Lebanese General Security, based on governmental instructions, launched strict legal measures to regulate the access of Palestinian and Syrian refugees passing through land borders. Consequently, HRW condemned the Lebanese authorities’ refusal to allow most Palestinians fleeing Syria entry to Lebanon.¹¹⁹

b. Lebanese-Palestinian Relations

Palestinian RCs in Lebanon and the security conditions there, were the focal point of Lebanese-Palestinian relations throughout 2012 and 2013. The deterioration of the security situation in Lebanon fed this concern, especially with the outbreak of certain security incidents in which accusations were made, politically and in media outlets, at Palestinians or militants who sheltered in the RCs. The latter are generally considered “islands” lying outside the control of Lebanese central government. Indeed, Palestinians were officially accused, based on evidence and in limited incidents, including involvement in bombings that targeted Beirut’s

southern suburb (*Dahiye*), or in alleged schemes planning such attacks. But most accusations were fabricated by Lebanese media with no evidence, even before the series of bombings, in what seemed to be an orchestrated campaign, which was rejected by Palestinian factions. Thus, a counter campaign was launched to fight incitement against Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.¹²⁰

Palestinian factions in Lebanon held continuous discussions with Lebanese authorities concerning security matters. The issue was also discussed when Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas visited Beirut in July 2013, and when Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah visited Beirut in November of the same year, where they both met with Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati and other Lebanese officials.¹²¹

In addition, Lebanese Prime Minister Mikati called Head of Hamas Political Bureau Khalid Mish‘al in June 2013 to thank him for his efforts to neutralize Palestinian RCs, in the midst of clashes in what was known as the case of Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir and the Bilal Bin Rabah Mosque.¹²²

In the context of meetings between Palestinian factions and Lebanese officials, ‘Azzam al-Ahmad, senior Fatah official, discussed security issues with Lebanese officials on 16/3/2012, stressing readiness to turn in any wanted suspects who hide in Palestinian RCs.¹²³ Al-Ahmad added later that there was no Palestinian objection to the handling of the Lebanese army to RC security.¹²⁴

There was a Palestinian disagreement regarding the issue of arms in the Palestinian RCs, where President ‘Abbas sought to delegitimize the presence of weapons while Hamas and the PFLP considered it an issue linked to the right of return.¹²⁵

As for the stances of Lebanese parties and forces towards Palestinians in Lebanon, no remarkable change took place during this period and the issue of security conditions in the RCs remained the main point of contention. Striking in this context was a statement by leader of the Lebanese Forces Samir Geagea who called again for “disarmament in and outside the camps.” Geagea urged the government to “make this decision, and task the Lebanese army with implementing it... even if there is need for a similar war to the one that took place in Nahr al-Bared [RC].”¹²⁶ Geagea’s declarations came after the Lebanese army uncovered a “takfiri” cell within the military institution, where those behind it were believed to be hiding in ‘Ein al-Hilweh RC. Geagea’s declarations were similar to the

statement by deputy head of Future Movement (Tayyar al-Mustaqbal), Antoine Andraos, who called the army to enter 'Ein al-Hilweh RC saying, "Let there be al-Bared II and III."¹²⁷

Also the declarations of Lebanese MP Sami Gemayyel were within the negative stances towards Palestinian refugees. He urged the Lebanese government to facilitate travel process for Palestinian refugees to work abroad; given that Lebanon is a small country, which does not accommodate such a high number of refugees. He considered other countries to be much bigger than Lebanon and better able to accommodate these refugees, adding that these countries were in need of the additional work force.¹²⁸ Finance Minister Muhammad al-Safadi also said that giving Palestinian refugees the right to ownership in Lebanon might cause them to forget about their return to Palestine.¹²⁹

Yet in contrast to this gloomy side, the situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon witnessed some development. This was primarily demonstrated in the guide issued by the Lebanese Ministry of Interior and Municipalities entitled "The Palestinians and the Directorate of Political and Refugees Affairs." The guide intended to clarify and simplify administrative procedures related to the Palestinian refugees' civil status documentation in Lebanon and to contribute in supporting and improving the living conditions of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. This was the first official manual issued by the Lebanese government in this respect.¹³⁰ In addition, a hall was opened for Palestinian refugees to submit and receive various applications in the Directorate of Political and Refugees Affairs building after its rehabilitation. This step was intended to facilitate work and reduce time allotted for the completion of documents related to personal status of Palestinian refugees, while providing decent and respectful conditions.¹³¹

On the legal level, Labor Minister Charbel Nahhas issued a decision, which allows Palestinian refugees to acquire a three-year work permit without a work contract. It also allows them to practice all businesses that are considered to be restricted to the Lebanese, except businesses and professions regulated by laws and whose practice by Palestinian refugees requires issuing by relevant laws.¹³²

c. Lebanon and Israel

There was relative calm on the Lebanese front with Israel in 2012 and 2013. But this quiet was penetrated by some rounds of limited escalation after the launching of missiles on north Israel, not carried out by Hizbullah. Yet at the same time,

the “cold war” between Hizbullah and Israel, represented in building up military capacities in anticipation of any future war, continued relentlessly.

Israel continued to warn against Hizbullah’s growing military and missile capacities, especially against the probability that the Party might obtain chemical weapons from Syria. Ultimately, it expressed a commitment to “take necessary measures to prevent that.”

In return, Hizbullah uncovered the capacities and plans it now owns and is willing to use if a war broke out with Israel. In this context, Hizbullah Secretary General Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah warned that in any future war “for every building destroyed in Dahiyeh many buildings would be destroyed in Tel Aviv.”¹³³ At a later time Nasrallah said that there was possibility for killing thousands of Israelis by a limited number of missiles owned by the Party and “erected and focused” on specific targets.¹³⁴

Nasrallah also warned that Hizbullah might not only be restricted by defense stressing that “a day might come when we enter Galilee.”¹³⁵ Simultaneously, some Lebanese media outlets talked about the greatest maneuver in the history of Hizbullah, which lasted three consecutive days and simulated a scenario of Hizbullah’s occupation of Upper Galilee.¹³⁶

Nasrallah also revealed that Hizbullah was behind the UAV or drone, which Israel shot down in October 2012. He attested that the drone, called Ayyoub, “flew accurately in its planned track and trespassed Israeli measures, reaching the Dimona reactor region.”¹³⁷

As for expected developments, Hizbullah’s involvement in the fighting in Syria with a lack of an imminent resolution for the crisis there, in addition to the lack of any file that might urge Hizbullah to escalate against Israel, suggest that the Party might seek to avoid any confrontation with Israel at the current stage. This could be particularly discerned from the Party’s relatively cold reaction towards the Israeli raid on stronghold areas of Hizbullah in February 2014. Nonetheless, if Israeli escalation reaches serious levels, Hizbullah seems determined to retaliate promptly, especially that such a threat might be more dangerous for the Party in light of the Syrian crisis.

As for field developments, Israel accused Hizbullah of responsibility for the Bulgaria bus bombing in July 2012, which led to the murder of a few Israelis. But

the party denied the accusations and said that these were attempts to target the resistance through media and politics after the failure to target it through war and confrontation.¹³⁸ Afterwards, the EU listed the military wing of Hizbullah on the terror list.¹³⁹

In return, Hizbullah accused Israel of the assassination of Hassan al-Laqis, one of the Party's leaders, near his house in the southern suburbs of Beirut. It explained that al-Laqis has survived many assassination attempts that targeted him in different areas of Lebanon.¹⁴⁰

In another context, the conflict between Israel and Lebanon over the maritime borders and gas exploration rights in the Mediterranean continued to escalate in 2012 and 2013, and Lebanon could only safeguard the recognition of 530 km² out of 860 km² it has claimed.¹⁴¹ However, its attempts to secure more area of the claimed region and its resources are still intact, and it is likely that the issue would continue to interact between the two sides. Nonetheless, it is not likely for this issue to be a Lebanese priority as long as the political differences between the main political forces there continue.

5. KSA and the Gulf Countries

a. Impact of Arab Uprisings and Changes on the Palestinian Issue

The Gulf countries, especially KSA, seemed to be more distracted from the Palestinian issue in 2012 and 2013, than they were in 2011. Thus, although Gulf countries, except Bahrain, did not witness internal political turmoil like other Arab countries, they perceived these tensions as a source of concern, which influenced their agenda of regional priorities. Thus, the Syrian crisis and its repercussions, and the political crisis in Egypt, besides the deal regarding the Iranian nuclear program, topped their agenda, and this was particularly true for KSA.

Yet it is possible to say that Qatar has tried, more than its partners did, to maintain balance between its role on the Palestinian arena and its other regional concerns, especially regarding the Palestinian reconciliation and the Qatari relations with the PA and Hamas movement. Worthy of mention is the power change in Qatar; Prince Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani assumed power after his father conceded the throne voluntarily; this did not entail any change in Qatar's role or its relation vis-à-vis different Palestinian parties.

b. The Stance on the Peace Settlement

Gulf states maintained the same stance towards the peace process, where they support the positions of the PA head towards negotiations with Israel, and they supported his move in the UN. Additionally, the Arab Peace Initiative launched by KSA in the Beirut Arab Summit in 2002 did not witness any change or amendment.

In this context, KSA stressed during the 16th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Tehran in August 2012, its rejection of any modifications of the Arab Peace Initiative,¹⁴² and it called the NAM members to recognize the Palestinian state.¹⁴³

At a later time, Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs Saud al-Faisal welcomed the UN General Assembly decision upgrading the status of Palestine to a non-member observer state. He also said that such a step might have a positive change on the UN approach to the Palestinian issue.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, the GCC Secretary-General ‘Abdul Latif al-Zayani hailed the step, asserting that it was an appropriate opportunity for the resumption of direct negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis.¹⁴⁵

c. The Palestinian-Gulf Countries Relations

In 2012 and 2013, among the gulf countries, Qatar was the most prominent player in the Palestinian arena. This was evident in its reconciliation efforts and its sponsorship of the Fatah-Hamas Doha Agreement, which was signed in Doha on 6/2/2012. The Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas and the Head of Hamas Political Bureau Khalid Mish‘al agreed to form a national unity government headed by ‘Abbas. Moreover, Qatar Prince Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani visited GS and enhanced relations with Hamas. This was the first visit by an Arab leader to GS since Israel imposed the siege and the first by the Qatari Prince since 1999. During the visit, which included Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Hamad Bin Jassim Al Thani, many reconstruction projects were launched with Qatari funding reaching \$254 million.¹⁴⁶ Noteworthy here is that the visit sparked objections from the PA and Mahmud ‘Abbas, despite Qatari assurances that the visit would not violate Palestinian legitimacy and representation,¹⁴⁷ but it seems that these assurances were not enough.

As for news circulated in some media outlets regarding the deterioration of relations between Qatar and Hamas after the change of political leadership in Qatar

and after the military coup in Egypt, Hamas denied the validity of such news and stressed that “relations with Prince of Qatar Sheikh Tamim and with the Father Prince are strong.”¹⁴⁸

Saudi diplomatic action towards the Palestinian issue in 2012 and 2013 was “minor” when compared to other regional files, especially the Syrian crisis, the political crisis in Egypt, and the Iranian nuclear program. But this would not necessarily mean that KSA was absent from the Palestinian scene. Rather, it was among the most important financial supporters of the PA, as well as a key political supporter in the PA’s pursuit of statehood recognition.

KSA also had an important stance in the UN as it turned down a nonpermanent Security Council seat representing the Arab Group in October 2013 in protest against the “inaction” of the Council in the Syrian and Palestinian files. Commenting on this stance, the Saudi Foreign Ministry said in a statement that: “the current continuation of the Palestinian cause without a just and lasting solution for 65 years, which resulted in several wars threatened international peace and security is irrefutable evidence and proof of the Security Council’s inability to carry out its duties and assume its responsibilities.” Yet at the same time, the statement pointed out to the “inability to subdue the nuclear programs of all countries in the region, without exception, to the international control and inspection or to prevent any country in the region from possessing nuclear weapons.”¹⁴⁹ This was understood as an expression of KSA’s dissatisfaction with the deal achieved between the P5+1 and Iran regarding the latter’s nuclear program. It is an indicator of the extent of Saudi concern with the Iranian nuclear file and the Syrian crisis, in addition to the Palestinian issue.

Another important development in the Palestinian-Gulf countries relations during 2012 and 2013 was the visit by Haniyyah to a number of Gulf countries in January and February 2012, and Mahmud ‘Abbas’s visit to Kuwait in April 2013.

Haniyyah’s round, which was in concurrence with the signing of the Doha Agreement, was the second within Hamas’s attempts to break the Gaza siege after a first round of visits which included Egypt, Tunisia, and Turkey. The round in the Gulf included Doha, Manama, and Abu Dhabi in addition to Tehran, and it was an indicator of the Gulf’s openness to Hamas, especially considering that the visits were official, Haniyyah meeting the leaders of those countries.

But this rapprochement between Hamas and the Gulf countries, except Qatar, seemed to be a temporary situation which did not last for long, especially after the military coup in Egypt which was accompanied with deterioration in relations between Hamas and the ruling authority in Egypt and its Gulf supporters, namely KSA and UAE.

‘Abbas’s visit to Kuwait in April 2013 was the first by a Palestinian leader for more than 20 years. It was meant to restore relations damaged when late leader Yasir ‘Arafat did not condemn Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990. During ‘Abbas’s visit, the Palestinian Embassy in Kuwait was inaugurated after a 22-year closure.¹⁵⁰

d. Financial Support

Financial support remained the most important area of action for the GCC countries regarding the Palestinian issue in 2012–2013. They supported the PA budget, the GS reconstruction projects, and charitable projects supporting Palestinians in the WB, GS and countries of refuge.

KSA was the most important financial supporter for the PA, by urgently providing \$100 million in July 2012 to overcome its financial crisis,¹⁵¹ and declaring the transfer of another \$100 million in January 2013.¹⁵² It also announced in the same month, an increase in its contribution to the Arab financial safety net for the PA from \$14 million to \$20 million per month.¹⁵³

Moreover, in 2013 KSA paid, through the Saudi Fund for Development, \$86 million to UNRWA to support Palestinian refugees projects in the WB, GS and Lebanon.¹⁵⁴ UNRWA said at a later time that the Saudi Fund for Development had responded to the Agency’s Syria Appeal with a donation of \$10 million for the benefit of Palestinian refugees in Syria.¹⁵⁵

As for the GS reconstruction, the total amount of projects run by the Islamic Development Bank in GS, which include the GCC Countries’ Programme for the Reconstruction of Gaza, amounted to around \$460 million.¹⁵⁶ The Saudi Fund for Development provided \$88 million for the construction of housing units, including \$34 million dedicated for the third stage of the Saudi residential neighborhood project to the west of Rafah, and \$54 million as part of aid dedicated by the GCC for building 1,100 new residential units, and six news schools.¹⁵⁷

For its part, Qatar focused its financial support on GS reconstruction and called for supporting the Strip to contend with the Israeli siege. Qatar’s reconstruction

projects that amounted to \$254 million, were declared in concurrence with Prince Hamad's visit to GS. In addition, Qatar took responsibility for securing fuel for the GS power station, where the first Qatari grant included 25 million liters of diesel that entered GS via al-Ouja crossing in June 2012.¹⁵⁸ Later, Qatar transferred the value of the diesel grant to the treasury of the Ramallah-based PA starting mid-December 2013 after the power station shut down for 45 days due to exhaustion of the diesel necessary for its operation.¹⁵⁹

During the Israeli war on GS in November 2012, Qatar announced the provision of \$10 million to Egypt, as a contribution to the treatment of the injured who were receiving medical treatment in Egyptian hospitals.¹⁶⁰ Qatar also supported the PA budget by approving, in October 2013, a \$150 million grant to drop its debts.¹⁶¹

The UAE's financial aid for Palestine in 2012, through its different donor institutions, amounted to around UAE Dirham (AED) 507 million (around \$138 million) as per the foreign aid report issued by the UAE Ministry of International Cooperation and Development.¹⁶²

Kuwait provided \$50 million to support the PA budget after Palestinian President 'Abbas's visit to Kuwait in April 2013,¹⁶³ in addition to a \$50 million grant to The World Bank to support the Palestinian Reform and Development Program.¹⁶⁴ Additionally, Kuwait donated \$15 million to UNRWA for the benefit of the Palestinian refugees in Syria.¹⁶⁵

6. Other Arab Countries

a. Impact of Arab Uprisings and Changes on the Palestinian Issue

The stance towards the Palestinian issue was one of the most important questions brought about by the uprisings and changes witnessed in some Arab countries since the beginning of 2011, especially with the rise of Islamists to power. This issue was the center of focus for many studies centers concerned with the Palestinian issue. The conference held by al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations in Beirut in November 2012 was one of the most important of these events. It made it possible to directly identify the position of Islamists in those countries, where the conference papers supported the Palestinian issue and rejected normalization with Israel, and these were consistent with Islamists' positions before they assumed power, especially in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, and Yemen.¹⁶⁶

On the ground, the Palestinian issue was most clearly present in Tunisia and Morocco. In Tunisia for example, the stances of President Moncef Marzouki and Sheikh Rashid al-Ghannushi, head of An-Nahda (Renaissance) Party, the main partner in the ruling coalition in Tunisia after the uprising, supported Palestinian rights and rejected recognition of Israel. Tunisian Foreign Minister Rafiq ‘Abdul Salam accompanied the Arab ministerial delegate which visited GS to show its solidarity during the November 2012 Israeli war.

Yet at the same time, the issue of including a provision in the new constitution incriminating normalization with Israel triggered debate among political parties and elites, as to whether the issue should be included in the constitution or whether it was enough to issue a law in this respect without the need to enter a confrontation with the international community. Ultimately, the Constituent Assembly voted against the article and the final draft of the constitution was void of such a provision although it was included in the first draft.¹⁶⁷

In Morocco as well, King Mohammed VI, Prime Minister ‘Abdul Ilah Bin Kiran and the parliament supported the Palestinian issue, especially during the Israeli offensive on GS. But in return, there was controversy in Morocco regarding the participation of an Israeli Knesset member in the meeting of the eighth session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean which was held in Rabat in March 2012. This participation urged the parliamentary bloc of the Moroccan Justice and Development Party to withdraw from the session to protest his presence.¹⁶⁸ The Moroccan government led by the Party itself, demanded that the Israeli deputy leave early, and it reiterated the previous sovereign decision to sever relations between the two countries.¹⁶⁹

The controversy regarding normalization was sparked again in September 2013 after a visit of an Israeli academic delegation to a number of Moroccan cities, and another visit by Moroccan journalists to Israel following an invitation by the Israeli Foreign Ministry.¹⁷⁰ The two visits were revealed after four Moroccan parliamentary blocs representing Justice and Development, Progression and Socialism, Socialist Union of Popular Forces and Independence Parties presented a draft law incriminating normalization with Israel.¹⁷¹

Libya for its part supported GS during the Israeli war, and called on the Security Council to convene to discuss the issue. In addition, a Libyan diplomatic delegation including Vice President of the General National Congress Salah al-Makhzoum

and Deputy Prime Minister Sadiq ‘Abdul Karim visited GS in November 2012 at the behest of the Libyan Parliament.¹⁷² Worthy of mention here is that the issue of smuggling weapons from Libya to GS was highlighted in the media after the Egyptian Ministry of Interior seized weapons on their way from Libya to GS, as per the ministry, in July 2012.¹⁷³

b. Sudan

Tension between Sudan and Israel constituted one of the prominent issues in the Arab world throughout 2012 and 2013. Sudan has accused Israel of supporting rebels fighting against the government in the west of the country, and carrying out raids and targeted attacks in south Khartoum on 24/10/2012. This raid was the third incident of its kind after the two raids Israel was accused of conducting on eastern Sudan back in January 2009 and April 2011. In his statement right after the last incident, Sudanese Minister of Information Ahmad Bilal said that four Israeli jets pounded a military factory. He explained that some sections of the plant, which produces conventional weapons, were completely destroyed, while other sections were hit in part.¹⁷⁴ Israel declined to comment on the incident, although some Israeli websites mentioned that the 13th brigade of the Israeli air force carried out the strike, arguing that the factory provides Hamas with weapons and missiles.¹⁷⁵ However, although Sudanese Foreign Minister ‘Ali Karti denied this accusation, he stressed that his country would not stop its support for Hamas despite Israeli aggression.¹⁷⁶

Later, the ruling National Congress Party accused Israel, together with the Republic of South Sudan and the US, of involvement in a scheme aiming to fuel the situation in South Kurdufan and Darfur, through supporting the rebels there.¹⁷⁷ The Sudanese government repeatedly accused Israel of backing the rebels, an indication of the ongoing strained relations between Sudan and Israel.

Conversely, Sudan maintained its relationship with Hamas as was evident in the statements of Foreign Minister Karti, who was part of the Arab ministerial delegation that visited Gaza in solidarity during the Israeli aggression. It is also noted that Sudan hosted meetings of Hamas’s Shura Council at the end of 2011,¹⁷⁸ and denied reports of Khartoum’s alleged refusal to host Mish‘al in February 2012 after he left Damascus.¹⁷⁹

Third: Developments of Normalization

During 2012 and the first half of 2013, the public position of the 2011 Arab uprisings towards Israel continued to cripple prospects of official normalization. Despite some exceptions, Israel did not break down the barriers with hostile Arab states during that period, and there was a noticeable decline in the normalized relations between Israel and some Arab countries. However, after the July 2013 military coup in Egypt, governmental hostility retracted.

In 2012, most presidential candidates in Egypt rejected normalization with Israel. The vast majority of candidates expressed their intentions to downgrade relations with Israel and “strangle” the Camp David Accords or at least amend some of its articles. However, other candidates expressed their intention to abide by the Accords as a *fait accompli*, while maintaining the “cold peace” which does not involve any development in the relationship or even “breaking its stalemate.” Even Ahmad Shafiq, the sole candidate who showed readiness to visit Israel, did so on condition that it give him proof that it had good intentions.

Also in Egypt, the halt of gas exports to Israel in April 2012 and choosing not to resume them later was an additional indication of the decline in the relationship between Cairo and Tel Aviv, although this stoppage was attributed to a “purely commercial” reason related to Israel breaching its own contractual terms. The gas pipeline supplying Egyptian gas to Israel was bombed 14 times from the January 25 Uprising until the decision to stop exports.

In Jordan, where normalization of official relations continues, campaigns to resist it also continued in parallel, especially in boycotting Israeli products. These campaigns have obliged sellers to hide the sources of Israeli goods fearing that Jordanians would refrain from buying them. In some cases, these goods would reach the Iraqi market through indirect channels, which prompted the Iraqi government to issue memorandums protesting the entrance of Israeli products via Jordan.¹⁸⁰ Within the context of popular objection to normalization in Jordan, the Obeidat tribe urged one of its members, Walid Obeidat, to decline his appointment as Jordan’s ambassador in Tel Aviv in October 2012. Later, the tribe’s elders declared the excommunication of the ambassador after he has presented his credentials to Israeli President Shimon Peres.¹⁸¹

The exceptions to the rule, those normalizing relations with Israel, are mostly official authorities who have tried to keep matters covert in order not to enrage the public. These authorities are generally not affected by peoples' attitudes, and therefore were not reflective of public opposition to normalization. This confirms once again that any new governments that reflect the will of the people will increasingly reduce the chances of Arab normalization with Israel.

The most striking incident in this context was mentioned in *Yedioth Ahronoth* which said that Israel's President Shimon Peres gave an address by satellite to the participants in the Gulf States Security Summit held in Abu Dhabi in November 2013. The participants included foreign ministers of Bahrain, UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Yemen, and Qatar, along with those of other Muslim countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Bangladesh. The newspaper reported that the participating ministers refrained from talking directly to Peres who was only directly spoken to by UN-Under Secretary-General, Terje Roed-Larsen.¹⁸² In the same vein, in 2012 delegations from PA affiliated organizations, academics and diplomats from Egypt, Jordan, and Qatar attended the 12th Annual Herzliya Conference, where Prince El Hassan Bin Talal of Jordan gave a keynote address.¹⁸³

After the military coup in Egypt, and with the growing campaign against the MB movement in a number of Arab countries, there were several indications that official hostility towards Israel had started to retreat. This was stressed by the Director of Policy and Political-Military Affairs at the Israeli Ministry of Defense, Major General Amos Gilad, whilst evaluating the map of threats facing Israel. Gilad claimed that a "miracle" had occurred after the changes in the region, namely in Egypt and Turkey, where Middle Eastern hatred towards Israel was declining thanks to the particular role of the coup in Egypt in this respect.¹⁸⁴

According to the opinion of former President of the Division of Military Intelligence, General Amos Yedlin, KSA's classification of the MB movement as a "terrorist" organization was part of the same context and showed solidarity with Egypt's stance, which would ultimately improve the strategic environment for Israel in an unprecedented way.¹⁸⁵

Yedlin's embrace of this position can be comprehended in the light of press reports that talked about the overlap of interests between some Gulf states and Israel following the Egyptian coup. This overlap can be reflected in the hostile attitudes towards the "Political Islam" movements. According to *The Wall Street Journal*,

the overlapping interests between Israel and both KSA and the UAE aligned their efforts in Egypt in pursuit of promoting a coup against the MB movement. Thus, as one Israeli official expressed, an “axis of reason” was subsequently formed in spite of the lack of direct coordination between Israel and these two countries.¹⁸⁶

Other media outlets highlighted the existence of secret channels for such coordination. In this regard, the Hebrew version of the *Jerusalem Post* ran a report on 3/1/2014 written by Yossi Melman, a specialist in national security, intelligence and strategic issues. Melman talked about the role the Saudi ambassador in Washington has played in establishing secret ties with Tel Aviv, through meetings held with the leaders of Jewish organizations in Washington, and through corresponding, coordinating, and holding intensive meetings at the executive levels in both Tel Aviv and Riyadh.¹⁸⁷

On the economic level, the trade volume between Israel and its three most prominent Arab partners (Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco) recorded a sustained decrease during 2012 and 2013. The 2011 indicators were inconsistent with the atmosphere of growing hostility and widespread popular action against Israel in Arab countries since only a slight increase in trade volume was recorded as compared to 2010.¹⁸⁸ However, by the end of 2013, the trade volume decreased by 27.7% as compared to 2011, and by 25.7% as compared to 2010 (see table 1/3).

The decline came mainly as a result of the decline in the volume of trade with Egypt by 59.2% between 2011 and 2013. According to Israeli statistics, the Israeli export volume to Egypt declined from \$236.4 million in 2011 to \$119.4 million in 2013. In addition, Israeli import volumes hit their lowest levels by dropping 72%, from \$178.5 million in 2011 to \$49.8 million in 2013 (see table 3/3).

In Jordan, trade volume maintained its level with a slight decline of 4.5% between 2011 and 2013. However, the most prominent change was in the balance of exports and imports, where there was a decline in the Israeli export volume by almost half (52.7%), from \$210 million in 2011 to \$99.3 million in 2013. The Israeli import volume from Jordan increased by almost the same percentage (about 54.1%), from \$172.9 million in 2011 to \$266.5 million in 2013 (see table 3/3).

**Table 1/3: Volume of Trade Between Israel and Some Arab Countries
2010–2013 (\$ million)¹⁸⁹**

Country	2013	2012	2011	2010
Egypt	169.2	266.5	414.9	503.1
Jordan	365.8	359.5	382.9	279.7
Morocco	59.9	29	25.5	18.4
Total	594.9	655	823.3	801.2

Conversely, official Jordanian statistics showed different indicators: the volume of Jordanian exports to Israel in 2011 amounted to Jordanian Dinar (JOD) 53.2 million (\$75.1 million), as compared to JOD 58.6 million (\$82.8 million) in 2013, a 10.2% increase. Statistics also indicated a 9.3% decrease in the volume of Jordanian imports from Israel, reaching JOD 62.1 million (\$87.7 million) in 2013 after hitting JOD 68.5 million (\$96.8 million) in 2011. This means that the trade volume declined by approximately 0.8%, i.e., from JOD 121.7 million (\$171.9 million) in 2011 to JOD 120.7 million (\$170.5 million) in 2013 (see table 2/3).

Although it is not easy to reach definitive conclusions about the reasons for the difference between the Jordanian and Israeli statistics, it is clear that Israeli figures tend to be more commercial, and thus underestimate the declining volume of trade.

**Table 2/3: Volume of Trade Between Jordan and Israel According to
Jordanian and Israeli Statistics 2010–2013 (\$ million)¹⁹⁰**

Year	Jordanian exports to Israel		Jordanian imports from Israel		Trade volume	
	Jordanian statistics	Israeli statistics	Jordanian statistics	Israeli statistics	Jordanian statistics	Israeli statistics
2013	82.8	266.5	87.7	99.3	170.5	365.8
2012	75.4	205.5	100.6	154	176	359.5
2011	75.1	172.9	96.8	210	171.9	382.9
2010	90.7	94.1	89.2	185.6	179.9	279.7



In contrast, the Israeli trade volume with Morocco grew by 134.9% between 2011 and 2013, as the Israeli export volume to Morocco rose from \$21.6 million in 2011 to \$53.7 million in 2013. However, the Israeli import volume from Morocco stayed relatively small, although it rose from \$3.9 million in 2011 to \$6.2 million in 2013 (see table 3/3).

This growth in trade volume was evident even after the Islamist Justice and Development Party took lead of the Moroccan government in early 2012 and formed the first coalition government post the political reforms announced by King Mohammed VI in 2011. However, it should be noted that at the end of July 2013 the Party submitted, along with three other parties in the Moroccan Parliament, a bill that criminalizes normalization with Israel.¹⁹¹

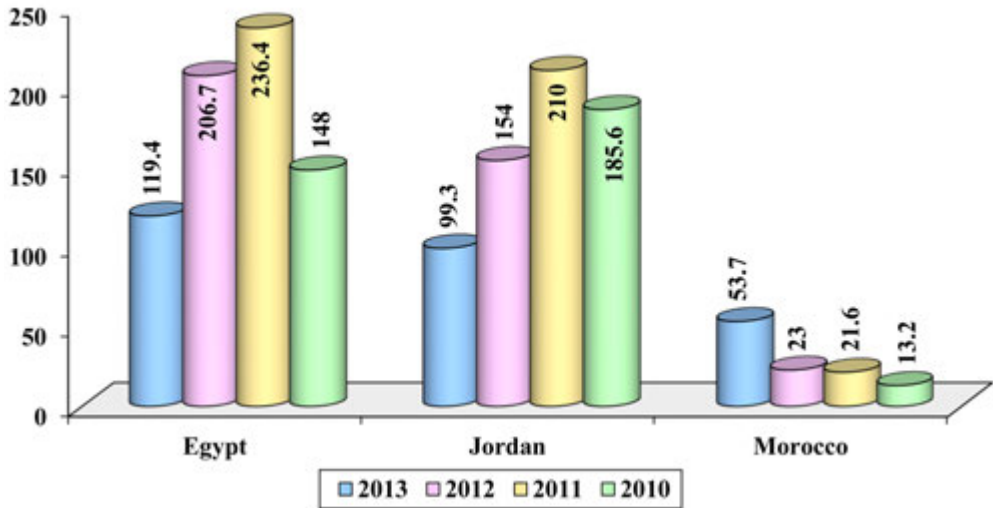
Nevertheless, the decline in the Israeli export volume to Arab countries seems likely to be temporary, especially considering that Israel started exporting gas to neighboring Arab countries, namely Egypt and Jordan, from the fields it recently discovered. It is worthy of mention here that, in February 2014, two companies in Jordan signed a gas supply agreement with Noble Energy, an American company owning 37% of the Israeli gas field, Tamar. This agreement states that the two companies import Israeli gas over 15 years starting in 2016. Estimated at about \$771 million, the agreement is expected to be put into action within two years.¹⁹²

This agreement was mentioned in *The Wall Street Journal* which also wrote about talks with Egypt for a potential deal to supply it with around eight billion cubic meters of Israeli gas to alleviate its energy shortage.¹⁹³ However, the Egyptian Ministry of Petroleum, which confirmed Egypt's need to make up for its deficit through importing gas, denied any intention to do that through Israel.¹⁹⁴

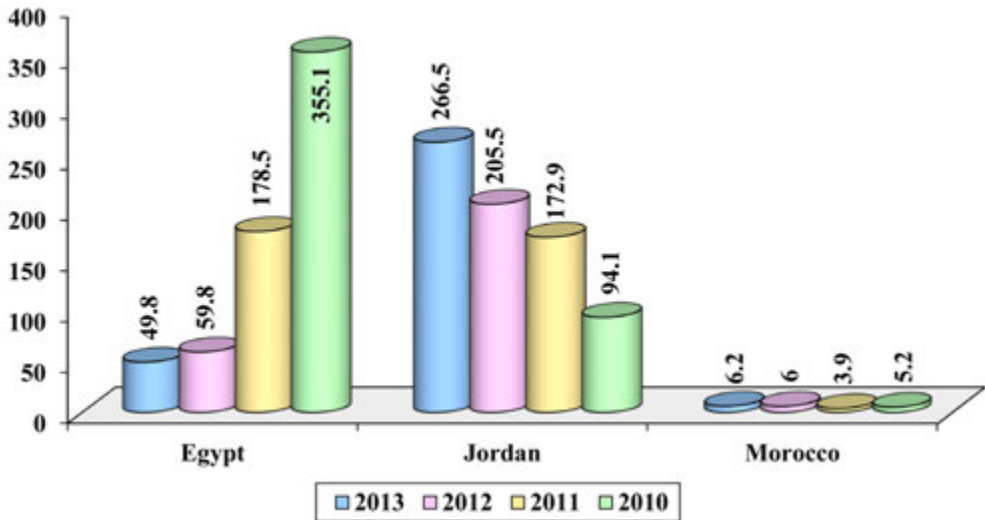
**Table 3/3: Israeli Exports and Imports to/ from Some Arab Countries
2010–2013 (\$ million)¹⁹⁵**

Country	Israeli exports to:				Israeli imports from:			
	2013	2012	2011	2010	2013	2012	2011	2010
Egypt	119.4	206.7	236.4	148	49.8	59.8	178.5	355.1
Jordan	99.3	154	210	185.6	266.5	205.5	172.9	94.1
Morocco	53.7	23	21.6	13.2	6.2	6	3.9	5.2

Israeli Exports to Some Arab Countries 2010–2013 (\$ million)



Israeli Imports from Some Arab Countries 2010–2013 (\$ million)



Fourth: Arab Public's Position and Its Directions

The political transformations and subsequent crises witnessed in a number of Arab countries had an impact on grassroots activities in support of the Palestinian issue during 2012 and 2013, as internal concerns prevailed over popular action. Moreover, what amplified the influence of these crises is their occurrence in Egypt and Syria, which are most closely associated with the Palestinian issue, or in other words, relate to the strategic environment that is most influential for the course of the Arab-Israeli conflict in general.

A general review of popular action during these two years indicate that concern with the Palestinian issue has retreated compared to the prevalence of internal affairs in different Arab countries. However, a closer look shows that the retreat is temporary and is dictated by necessity, as Palestine is still present in the consciousness of the Arab people. This is demonstrated through four key indicators:

1. Periods of relative calm in Arab countries were associated with a rise in popular action supporting the Palestinian issue. This was evident in concurrence with prominent events including the prisoners' strike in Israeli jails, and the November 2012 war on GS. Striking in this context was the action witnessed in Egypt during the first half of 2012, including solidarity visits to GS by popular delegates as well as delegates of parties and trade unions, along with al-Azhar action of solidarity with Jerusalem and *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

2. The Palestinian issue and normalization with Israel were strongly noticed in the foreign policy of various Arab parties and actors, particularly in Egypt and Tunisia, in the early stages of transition. Remarkably, consensus on supporting the Palestinian issue and refusing normalization were the dominant stances.

3. The Arab Opinion Index (AOI) of 2012/2013, a public opinion poll conducted by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS) in 14 Arab countries, showed that 84% of respondents believed the Palestinian issue to be an Arab cause, and not solely the Palestinians'. In addition, 87% of respondents rejected their countries' recognition of Israel.¹⁹⁶

4. Palestinians' interaction with the Arab uprisings. The PA and various factions sought to maintain a neutral stance with regard to the internal crises of Arab countries in order to avoid adverse reactions that might harm the Palestinian

issue in general, or Palestinians living in those countries in particular. However, on several occasions, the Palestinian street witnessed popular action in support of the uprisings and the demands of the Arab peoples, where the AOI showed that 72% of Palestinians evaluated the Arab revolutions positively.¹⁹⁷

Nonetheless, tackling the Palestinian issue in internal debates in different Arab countries has been accompanied with some negative side effects. In 2012 and 2013, some Arab countries launched campaigns of incitement against Palestinians or against certain Palestinian parties. For example, after the Syrian uprising, both Lebanese and Syrian media negatively dealt with Hamas's decision to leave Damascus by conducting accusation and defamation campaigns against the Movement.

In addition, the sympathy of Egyptian political parties with the Palestinian issue has been distorted as it was considered a violation of Egyptian national interest, especially after the July coup. Thus, some political actors and media outlets launched campaigns of incitement against Palestinians, especially Hamas and the GS, following what was known as the "Rafah massacre," where 16 Egyptian soldiers were shot to death in their camp in August 2012.

Lebanon has witnessed similar media incitement campaigns succeeding clashes in the 'Abra area, as well as the bombings in several Lebanese regions since the summer of 2013. Fingers of accusation were repeatedly pointed at Palestinian refugee camps as hubs for "terrorists."

However, it can be said that, so far, these negative attitudes remain limited and non-threatening in terms of changing the Arab public mood, which supports Palestinians and their issue. Yet, at the same time, caution must be taken to prevent their danger and address them in a serious manner.

The main events and issues that the Arab street positively interacted with are the Gaza siege, the Palestinian prisoners' hunger strike in Israeli jails, the Judaization of Jerusalem and *al-Aqsa* Mosque, and the aggression on GS.

Regarding the Gaza siege, public interaction was manifested through dozens of visits paid by Arab delegates to GS. In addition, the Arab public interacted with the "Battle of the Empty Stomachs," when Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails staged an open hunger strike starting 17/4/2012 to protest the poor conditions of their imprisonment. There was also Arab public interaction with individual prisoners' hunger strikes throughout 2012 and 2013.

The Arab street also protested against the daily violations and incursions into *al-Aqsa* Mosque. One of the most noticeable actions was the “Global March to Jerusalem” organized simultaneously in some Arab and Islamic countries, in concurrence with Land Day at the end of March 2012.

During the November 2012 Israeli war, Arab countries witnessed several demonstrations and events in solidarity with GS. This Israeli-dubbed war “Operation Pillar of Defense” was dubbed by Hamas “Operation Stones of Baked Clay,” and it lasted eight days following Israel’s assassination of the head of Hamas military wing, Ahmad Ja’bary, on 14/11/2012.

In April 2013, protests against Israeli violations headed down a new track, as a group called “Anonymous” carried out electronic attacks that targeted hundreds of Israeli private and government websites under what was called #OpIsrael.¹⁹⁸

Conclusion

Throughout 2012 and 2013, the changes and uprisings in Arab countries, which began early 2011, intensified into internal crises. Various internal and external influential actors tried to push things towards their political orientations and interests. In the midst of it all, the Palestinian issue was always present, whether directly or indirectly. Though limited, the Arab changes influenced the course of the Palestinian issue, internally and externally.

Neither in the time being nor in the near future does it seem plausible that the internally unstable Arab countries will build stable political structures that address internal crises, or meet public aspirations at the domestic level, let alone the external level. This limits the possibilities of establishing a strategic environment that would effectively influence the Palestinian issue or defy Israeli plans. In other words, this will probably embolden Israel to enforce its schemes on the ground, and the Palestinians would have no official support to confront them, especially in light of the Arab anti-MB movement campaigns, and their negative repercussions on Hamas, the most prominent Palestinian resistance faction.

In turn, this puts the Palestinians before the test of their ability to unite internally, and to create incentives that would push the surrounding countries into keeping the Palestinian issue on their agendas.

The ongoing crisis in Syria has resulted in weakening one of the main fronts in the struggle with the Zionist project. This has shattered the “Refusal Front” and ultimately influenced the resistance in both Lebanon and Palestine. Thus, in light of the lack of a solution to this crisis in the near future, any Israeli war on any of these two fronts is foreseen to be more dangerous.

Moreover, the Egyptian crisis intensifies the danger of war on GS, especially in light of the continued Israeli siege, and the Egyptian authorities’ inclination to escalate campaigns against Hamas and the resistance in the region. Today, regional resistance is once again facing one of the most difficult stages, given the decline in its relationship with its traditional allies and the loss of the ally it had gained after the Egyptian January 25 Uprising. In addition, the deterioration of Egypt-Hamas relations reduces the former’s ability to sponsor Palestinian reconciliation.

On the official level, the Arab League does not seem to be prepared to push the peace process towards achieving Palestinian rights, rather its role is limited to providing cover for any actions the PA deems appropriate. Any US and Israeli pressure on the Palestinians to provide additional concessions would not be faced by enough rejections, leaving the Palestinian negotiator alone in his struggle.

Endnotes

- ¹ See Baghdad Declaration, 23rd session of the Arab League Summit, Baghdad, 29/3/2012, site of League of Arab States, www.lasportal.org; and see also Doha Declaration, 24th session of the Arab League Summit, Doha, 26/3/2013, League of Arab States. (in Arabic)
- ² *Assafir*, 21/11/2012.
- ³ League of Arab States, 12/2/2012.
- ⁴ *Al-Khaleej*, 3/6/2012.
- ⁵ *Al-Hayat*, 18/7/2013.
- ⁶ *Assafir*, 30/12/2013.
- ⁷ PIC, 1/3/2012.
- ⁸ Sama, 19/2/2012.
- ⁹ *Elwatan*, 11/10/2012.
- ¹⁰ PIC, 12/6/2013.
- ¹¹ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 16/11/2012.
- ¹² *Al-Hayat*, 16/11/2012.
- ¹³ *Al-Ahram* newspaper, Cairo, 17/11/2012.
- ¹⁴ *Asharq Alawsat*, 8/8/2012.
- ¹⁵ *Al-Akhbar*, 9/8/2012.
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Chapter Four

*The Palestinian Issue and the
Muslim World*

The Palestinian Issue and the Muslim World

Introduction

Despite the dramatic regional changes in 2012–2013, where the map of regional powers influencing the Palestinian issue saw a reshaping, the Palestinian issue remained a priority across the Muslim world. Two regional players, Turkey and Iran, tried to play a more central role in setting a regional scene to match their interests, a matter that influenced the Palestinian issue.

In this chapter, we will review the major roles played by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) regarding the Palestinian issue during 2012–2013, in addition to two major Muslim countries, Iran and Turkey. We shall also take a closer look at public and official action in Pakistan and Malaysia, as well as Israeli economic relations with a number of Muslim countries.

First: Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

Despite changing the name of the organization and its slogan in 2011—ratified in Astana, capital of Kazakhstan, based on consensus among the organization members at the Foreign Ministers Meeting—and exhibiting a slogan of cooperation among member countries, the OIC performance toward the Palestinian issue continued along the same lines with no significant change. During 2012–2013, the organization dealt with the Palestinian issue in a manner disproportionate with its international weight as the second largest international organization after the UN. At the same time, such a performance reflected the official bureaucracy of the largest Muslim organization, rendering it ineffective in impacting the state of affairs in the region and passing a rather “ceremonial” impression of its meetings and summits.

During 2012–2013, the OIC continued its international diplomatic support for the Palestinian issue, supporting PA efforts to acquire UN recognition for Palestine as a non-member observer state. In this context, OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu considered the decision to be a “historic achievement towards ending

the Israeli occupation and the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people,” and he added that this political victory “has irreversibly put on record the Palestinian people’s right to statehood.”¹ The OIC Council of Foreign Ministers had called at its 39th session held in Djibouti on 15–17/11/2012 for all member states to support Palestinian efforts to expand international recognition of the Palestinian state based on the 4/6/1967 borders to all levels, including the UN.²

Regarding internal Palestinian relations, Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu welcomed the Doha Declaration signed on 6/2/2012 to reconcile Fatah with Hamas, and considered the move to be necessary to gain international support for the Palestinian issue.³

The organization continued to condemn Israeli violations against Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, and Ihsanoğlu slammed Israeli settlement building activities on the 1967 territories including East Jerusalem, asserting that it constituted a flagrant breach of international laws and resolutions. He added that such policies as well as the violations of holy sites are blatant assaults on the basic rights of the Palestinian people.⁴

During the 2012 Israeli war on GS, the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers appealed upon the UN Security Council “to assume its responsibility to safeguard international peace and security and... to take the necessary steps to bring an end immediately to Zionist aggression and raids currently being carried out against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.” The Council observed that “these serious acts of aggression are being committed at a time when efforts are continuing to reach a military truce in Gaza Strip and accomplish a comprehensive Palestinian reconciliation.”⁵

In efforts to support the perseverance of the Palestinian people, the OIC Foreign Ministers Council held a conference at the Azerbaijani Capital Baku on 11/6/2013 dedicated to building an Islamic financial “safety net” in support of Palestine. They “committed to finance the plan and contribute to the construction of social projects and adequate infrastructure, pledging to start action on these commitments as soon as possible in coordination with the OIC General Secretariat and in close coordination with the State of Palestine.”⁶

In 2013, Secretary General Ihsanoğlu visited the occupied Palestinian territories on 27/8/2013 as Mahmud ‘Abbas, head of the PA, awarded him the “al-Quds Star” decoration. During his stay, Ihsanoğlu visited Jerusalem and Hebron and “invited

all Muslims to visit the besieged al-Aqsa Mosque, with the understanding that such an act, however modest, would offer comfort and support for the Jerusalemites and consolidate them in their steadfastness.”⁷

Second: Turkey

In the context of the Arab uprisings, Turkey redefined its regional role as the Syrian revolution had a major impact on Turkish regional policies due to the geopolitical platform which Turkey and Syria share. The Turkish “zero-problem” policy no longer ruled, as the country clearly took sides with the revolutions, negatively impacting its relations with the Syrian regime and the Egyptian regime following the coup against Morsi. These policies have also had repercussions on Turkey’s relations with Iran, KSA, and UAE.

In these circumstances, Turkish-Palestinian relations improved significantly, particularly after the Israeli assault on the Freedom Flotilla in 2010, and deterioration of Israeli-Turkish relations. Events in Syria have helped the improvement of Turkish-Hamas relations, with some Hamas leaders opting to take Turkey as their base following their exit from Syria and due to the hostility of the Egyptian authorities.

In all cases, Turkish foreign policy under the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi—AKP*), ruling since 2002, has sought to combine a number of measures that seem intertwined and at times even contradictory.

All the while, Turkey attempts to respond to the historic legacy, and the Turkish public’s desire to support the Palestinian issue, and observe the Islamic background of the ruling party. Simultaneously it deals with the Palestinian issue as a key for an active role in the Arab world and the Middle East. In addition, the AKP’s gradual approach enables it to win support and take political stances proportionate with its internal strength and robustness.

On another level, this policy took into consideration Turkish membership of the NATO alliance led by the US, and the ruling party’s desire to submit Turkey’s application for EU membership, thus making sure that certain limits are not transgressed to avoid any crisis with these powers. Concurrently, Turkey took into consideration its relations with Israel, in their economic, political and military

forms, so that it could gradually decrease or dismantle the bilateral relations or even take stronger stances without disrupting the internal position of the ruling party or getting into direct confrontation with the West.

Relations with the Palestinian Side

Turkey's positive relations with the PA in Ramallah continued in 2012–2013. Palestinian President Mahmud 'Abbas visited Turkey on 29/2/2012, and met with Turkish officials to discuss Turkish-Palestinian relations, the peace process, as well as Palestinian reconciliation efforts and the developments of the "Arab Spring." On 4/6/2012, President 'Abbas visited Istanbul again, where he met separately with his Turkish counterpart 'Abdullah Gül and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and participated in the World Economic Forum in Ankara. Over the two years, 'Abbas continued to update Erdoğan, through telephone communications, on the situation in the region, the peace process, Israeli violations in Jerusalem, particularly those related to *al-Aqsa* Mosque, and Israeli attacks and violations against the Palestinian people and their property including those carried out by settlers.

In October 2013, a delegation of Palestinian businessmen participated in the Turkish business conference "The Role of Trade for the Development of Palestinian Economy," and both the National Economy Minister Jawad Nagi and his Turkish counterpart Zafer Caglayan participated at the conference. According to the head of the Palestinian Businessmen Association in GS Ali al-Hayek, an agreement was made to develop and enhance economic and commercial cooperation, increase the Palestinian-Turkish trade volume, and promote business partnership in different economic fields. The conference discussed signing two agreements related to investment and preventing double taxation, in addition to discussing the activation of the free trade agreement and promoting Palestinian products' entrance into the Turkish market.

On 20/11/2013, Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah met the Turkish envoy in Ramallah Şakir Özkan Torunlar, and signed an agreement to pay \$9.7 million in compensation to the owners of the lands in the industrial zone in Jenin. Hamdallah expressed his gratitude for Turkish keenness to end the divisions, work toward holding elections and resume the Palestinian democratic process. In November 2013, Özkan met Minister of Planning Muhammad Abu Ramadan discussing furthering cooperation between the two sides.

A Turkish delegation of the Union of Municipalities of Turkey, and the United Cities and the Local Government, Middle East and West Asia Section (UCLG-MEWA), visited WB during August 2013 in coordination with the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities. The visit was aimed at enhancing bilateral relations and exchanging expertise between the Turkish and Palestinian municipalities through signing twinning agreements.

On the ground, Turkey implemented several projects in 2012 and 2013, in Jerusalem, Hebron, Gaza, Tulkarem, Nablus, Tubas and other cities, with total Turkish support reaching around \$4 million in 2013.

On another level, Erdoğan's government adopted a positive stance toward Hamas, and had no reservations in dealing with its caretaker government. As President Gül reiterated on 12/5/2010, "The Hamas side won the elections in Gaza and so cannot be ignored."⁸ Turkey continued to defend Hamas as a political non-terrorist organization, with Erdoğan asserting that "Hamas is a resistance group fighting to defend their land. They won the elections in Palestine... I also told these [things] to U.S. officials. I don't accept Hamas as a terrorist organization."⁹ Erdoğan's government adopted an official stance calling for dialogue with Hamas and including it in the political and diplomatic process in order to reach a solution to the Palestinian issue. Turkey viewed the involvement of all active Palestinian powers, including Hamas who won the majority of parliamentary seats, as a condition for the success of Turkish mediation between Palestinians and Israel.

Meanwhile, Turkey became the ground for many Islamic activities and events supporting the Palestinian people, while Israel was condemned for "collective punishment," and Turkey constantly called for breaking the inhumane siege of GS. It viewed defending GS, condemning the siege, and calls to allow assistance into the Strip as an indirect support for Hamas, which has controlled the Strip since 2007.

The Turkish-Hamas relationship developed significantly during 2012–2013, with recurrent meetings being held. Parallel stances regarding the Arab uprisings as well as continued tensions in Turkish-Israeli relations have further developed Turkish-Hamas relations. Early in 2012, Prime Minister Haniyyah visited Turkey and met Turkish officials and leaders of all Turkish parties without any exception. In a noteworthy statement, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu observed that Haniyyah's visit is proof that the road to Palestine passes through Turkey.¹⁰

Haniyyah's subsequent tour in the region, 30/1–16/2/2012, that included Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Iran, UAE and Egypt, sent a message that Hamas wished to be seen as an independent movement, free of exclusive allegiance to any side.

On 18/3/2012, Khalid Mish'al, head of Hamas's Political Bureau, started a regional tour, where he met Turkish President 'Abdullah Gül and updated him on the latest developments of the Palestinian issue, the conditions of the Palestinian people, hostile Israeli practices, as well as the situation in Jerusalem, *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the holy sites and Judaization process. On 21/4/2012, Mish'al met Davutoğlu in the Qatari capital Doha, and discussed the Arab-Israeli conflict and the latest developments on the Palestinian scene, including Palestinian national reconciliation.

Turkish diplomacy was considerably active in its support for Hamas and GS during the Israeli war, 14–21/11/2012, applying pressure in regional and international venues, and in cooperation with Egypt and Qatar, to end the attack and lift the siege. As a result, the GS received broad official and public support, thus forcing the Israelis to comply with the resistance's conditions to end the assault, which Israelis dubbed Operation Pillar of Defense, and Hamas dubbed Operation Stones of Baked Clay.

Erdoğan arrived in Egypt on 17/11/2012 as Hamas and Israel engaged in a fervent war, and met Egyptian President Muhammad Morsi, in addition to the Prince of Qatar and Khalid Mish'al, who demanded ending the war and the siege. Such government diplomatic initiatives were active regionally and internationally to support the demands of the resistance. Erdoğan accused Israel of "ethnic cleansing by ignoring peace in this region and violating international law," stating that it is "occupying the Palestinian territories step by step." He added, "Israel will answer for the innocent blood it has shed so far," and said the UN had "turned a blind eye" on Israeli attacks against Palestinians; referring to the UN failure to impose sanctions on Israel despite the resolutions issued against it.¹¹

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu visited Gaza during the Israeli attack on 20/11/2012 along with a delegation of Arab foreign ministers. During the visit, he stated that Turkey would continue to support the Palestinian people in GS, WB and Jerusalem, to end the Israeli occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state with its capital Jerusalem. He addressed Palestinians in

GS, “Your pain is our pain,” he declared. “Your destiny is our destiny and your future is our future.”¹² The visit saw a number of symbolic expressions such as Davutoğlu kissing the hand of the mother of Ahmad Ja‘bari, deputy commander of the Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades, whose assassination by Israel was the spark to the 2012 Israeli war.¹³ In another moving scene, Davutoğlu burst into tears at al-Shifa’ hospital in GS, when he saw the killed and wounded there.¹⁴

A Hamas delegation headed by Khalid Mish‘al and Isma‘il Haniyyah visited Turkey and met Prime Minister Erdoğan on 18/6/2013 to discuss the major Palestinian issues. The Turkish government pledged to work on ending Israeli settlement activities in the WB, oppose the Judaization of Jerusalem, and work on lifting the GS siege, while promoting Palestinian reconciliation. Meanwhile, Erdoğan reaffirmed his wish to visit GS, mentioning that he may pay a surprise visit to the Strip at any time, and clarifying that his visit was delayed due to incidents in his country (the Taksim protests).

On other levels, Turkish support to GS continued in different forms. The President of the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) Serdar Çam met the mayors of GS municipalities on 28/3/2012 to take a closer look at the suffering caused by the Israeli siege. He also examined a number of important strategic projects funded previously by the Turkish government. Furthermore, the Interior Minister Fathi Hammad met his Turkish counterpart in Turkey in April 2013, and the Minister of Justice ‘Atallah Abu al-Sabah visited Turkey in June 2013 and discussed with his Turkish counterpart Sadullah Ergin the means of joint cooperation in the judiciary sector and supporting the Palestinian issue with regards to Israeli violations and ways to press international charges against Israeli crimes.

The medical authorities in GS received a medical delegation from the Filbel White Hands Association in April 2012, who performed the largest possible number of surgeries during one week. In January 2013, the GS Ministry of Health received Cengiz Ogo Togo, Aid Program Coordinator and Communications Officer at the Turkish Kimse Yok Mu organization, where they discussed the projects implemented by the organization for the ministry. The GS Minister of Health Mufid al-Mukhalalati visited wounded Palestinians in Turkish hospitals in May 2013. Moreover, the GS Ministry of Health signed a memorandum of understanding with the Turkish Red Crescent on 1/7/2013 to implement a resumption of furnishing

and equipping the Shuhada al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah, funded by the Program of the GCC for the Reconstruction of Gaza and managed by the Islamic Development Bank.

Relations with Israel

The Israeli attack on Freedom Flotilla at dawn on 31/5/2010, leading to the death of nine Turks on board, marked a sharp downturn in Turkish-Israeli relations. The incident triggered indignant official and public Turkish reactions toward Israel, not to mention international reactions, too. Prime Minister Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu drummed up political and media sentiments against Israel, with confirmations from Erdoğan that “Palestine is our problem, it has never been removed even for a day from our agenda,”¹⁵ and “Jerusalem is the apple of the eye of each and every Muslim.”¹⁶ On 10/5/2010 Erdoğan declared even more fervently that “If Jerusalem burns, the Middle East burns. If Jerusalem burns, the world burns.”¹⁷

Despite all efforts to reach a settlement that would satisfy both parties, Israel continued to reject Turkish demands for an apology, and a lift the GS siege, while at the same time it showed willingness to compensate the families of the nine Turks who died in the Israeli attack.

The report of the Secretary-General’s Panel of Inquiry on the 31 May 2010 Flotilla Incident, known as Palmer Report aroused angry responses from the Turkish side. The report, prepared by a pro-Israel majority, stated that Israel gave “an excessive reaction to the situation” but never demanded that Israel apologise, even saying that “the naval blockade was imposed as a legitimate security measure in order to prevent weapons from entering Gaza by sea and its implementation complied with the requirements of international law.” It, however, urged Israel to provide financial compensation to the families of the victims. On 2/9/2011, i.e., one day following the publication of the Palmer Report in *The New York Times*,¹⁸ Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu pronounced the beginning of a new phase of relations with Israel as Turkey declared a number of measures against Tel Aviv:¹⁹

1. Downgrading diplomatic relations between Turkey and Israel to the Second Secretary level. All personnel starting with the Ambassador above the Second Secretary level, will return to their countries.

2. Suspending all military agreements between Turkey and Israel.
3. "Turkey will take whatever measures it deems necessary in order to ensure the freedom of navigation in the Eastern Mediterranean."
4. "Turkey does not recognize the blockade imposed on Gaza by Israel."
5. Turkey "will extend all possible support to Turkish and foreign victims of Israel's attack in their initiatives to seek their rights before courts."

Moreover, Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan declared further escalation by "suspending all trade relations related with defence" and labelling it a "spoiled child." Davutoğlu had stated in mid-December 2011 that Turkey's recent policies in the Middle East "have made Israel kneel down" in front of Turkey and isolated the Israeli state in the region.²⁰

The Hamas movement welcomed the Turkish measures, considering them a natural reaction to the Israeli crime against the Mavi Marmara vessel and to Israel's consistent reluctance to bear the responsibilities for their crime and lift the siege on Gaza. Similarly, Hamas declared its rejection of the Palmer Report and described it as "unfair and unbalanced."²¹

Given the Turkish persistence, and in view of the changes in the region, Israel was obliged to apologise to Turkey on 22/3/2013 for the assault the Mavi Marmara. Erdoğan accepted Netanyahu's apology. In a phone call Netanyahu claimed that "the tragic consequences of the Mavi Marmara Flotilla were unintentional, and Israel regrets any injury or loss of life," and also "agreed to complete an agreement to provide compensation to the families of the victims," and added that "Israel had removed a number of restrictions upon the movement of citizens and goods in all the Palestinian territories, including the Gaza Strip." Then, the two agreed to normalize relations between their countries, and to return the Turkish ambassador to Tel Aviv and the Turkish ambassador to Ankara. Erdoğan added that his country would await concrete actions from Israel and would take practical steps during this stage. Netanyahu declared that the unravelling situation in Syria, and fears of al-Qaeda-affiliated militant groups resorting to the use of chemical weapons were the catalysts for such an apology in addition to the normalisation of Israeli-Turkish relations.²²

Until the end of 2013, the general Turkish stance was dissatisfaction with Israeli failure to fulfil its commitments. Turkish President 'Abdullah Gül clarified

in an interview with Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* on 6/10/2013 that “Israel apologized too late [and] some of our expectations were not yet met.” A senior diplomatic advisor in Ankara told the same newspaper that “even though Israel agreed to pay, an agreement still has not been reached regarding how the payment will be implemented.” It is noteworthy that another condition for the normalization of relations was not fulfilled, i.e., the removal of the Israeli blockade on GS. Hence, a breakthrough is not expected in the near future.²³

Economic Relations Between Turkey and Israel

The pragmatic Turkish trade relations under the AKP with Israel were not affected significantly by Turkey’s tendency to improve relations with the Arab and Muslim world, support the Palestinian issue and develop its relations with Hamas. Nor were they impacted by the huge political crisis on 31/5/2010 due to the Mavi Marmara assault.

In general, the Turkish administration managed its trade relations with Israel mostly independently from its political stances and procedures. The apparent contradiction between the tense political relations and improved trade relations between the two sides may be attributed to the existence of interest networks that manage their relations separately from political relations. These render the AKP government unable to impose its power and policies, especially in an open secular and economic environment that attempts to adhere to EU standards of trade relations. In addition, the Turkish army’s need for Israeli products and military technology is another factor impacting the trade between the two countries.

Thus, despite the escalating political tension, the trade volume between the two countries increased in 2011 by approximately 29.3% according to both Turkish and Israeli official statistics. However, official Turkish statistics, show generally higher trade indications than Israeli data, showing no significant changes in 2010, the year in which the Israeli attack took place, nor the following year. A 9.2% decrease can be seen in 2012, but was soon to recover in 2013 when trade volume soared by 25.4% compared to 2012, and 13.9% compared to 2011 (see table 1/4).

Israeli official reports show a decrease in trade volume by 13% in 2012 compared with 2011. Once again this rate recovered in 2013 with the volume increasing by 38.6% compared to 2012 and 20.6% compared to 2011 (see table 1/4).

These statistics confirm the pragmatic approach adopted by the two sides, as Turkey became the eighth commercial partner for Israel globally with a trade volume of \$5 billion in 2013.

Table 1/4: Volume of Trade Between Turkey and Israel According to Turkish and Israeli Statistics 2010–2013 (\$ million)²⁴

Year	Turkish exports to Israel		Turkish imports from Israel		Trade volume	
	Turkish statistics	Israeli statistics	Turkish statistics	Israeli statistics	Turkish statistics	Israeli statistics
2013	2,649.8	2,354.1	2,417.9	2,503.5	5,067.7	4,857.6
2012	2,329.5	2,082.7	1,710.4	1,421.4	4,039.9	3,504.1
2011	2,391.1	2,171.1	2,057.3	1,855.7	4,448.4	4,026.8
2010	2,080.1	1,800.1	1,359.6	1,310.7	3,439.7	3,110.8

Summary

Despite the official and public Turkish sympathy with the Palestinian issue, it's difficult for Turkey to be part of the structure of Arab policies in the region and to follow at the same time overt hostile policies toward Israel. Hence, given the current circumstances, it is not expected that Turkish-Israeli relations will drop to a complete breakdown. Turkey will continue its “calculated support” for Palestine and the Hamas Movement, demands to lift the siege on GS, and will resume its positive relations with the PA in Ramallah. At the same time, Turkey will avoid overt support for the Palestinian resistance, or stepping into a blatant support for western powers and Israel. Instead, it will opt for playing in “the grey area,” gradually raising the ceiling to the extent that it solidifies its internal, regional and international situation.

The official Turkish political stance remains under the Arab Peace Initiative ceiling, i.e., it calls for negotiations, recognition and normal relations, should Israel agree to retreat to the 1967 borders. In that sense, the Turkish disagreement with Israel has not changed Turkey's core European and Atlantic values regarding the existence of Israel, the necessity of recognising it, and the option of negotiations to reach peace with it.

The Arab revolutions, sparked in early 2011 in Tunisia and Egypt, and the stirring similar movements in other Arab states, which reinforced the impact of the Turkish role, brought no change to this specific Turkish strategy. The massive Turkish-Israeli trade volume highlights this pragmatic Turkish approach, which takes into account a broad and interrelated number of calculations that Turkey has skilfully utilised so far.

Third: Iran

For the third year in a row, the repercussions of the Arab uprisings have overwhelmed the Arab and regional scene. The lack of stability was the most prominent feature of this scene, forcing new governments to focus on internal issues like elections, the constitution, and the forming of cabinets.

The political, security, and strategic developments on the regional and international level led all calculations of profit and loss to revolve around these developments. They made the Palestinian issue and risks surrounding it—like Israel's Judaization plans and the forced displacement (Prawer Plan)—no more of a priority. Instead, the attention was directed toward issues like the US airstrikes on Syria and the consequent strategic changes in the regional balances of power, or the impact of the Iranian-Western-American understanding over the nuclear program, on the countries of the region, their interests and alliances. Attention was particularly fixed on the future of Egypt following the coup against President Morsi and deposing the MB movement, taking Egypt to a stage of instability on a political and security level. These events did not only reflect on GS, but on the relation between the new regime and Hamas, as well as on the Egyptian-sponsored inter-Palestinian reconciliation project.

The rising sectarian tensions in many countries of the region caused conflict to swerve significantly, whereas attention for Palestine receded in much of the literature, media discourse, speeches and the stances of movements and organizations including some political and Islamic figures. However, despite the above stated developments, the Israeli attack on GS at the end of 2012 brought Palestine back as a priority, albeit temporarily, in the Arab and Islamic worlds.

Like the rest of the Muslim and Arab countries, Iran continued to support the Palestinian issue. Yet, the idiosyncratic Iranian feature was that the Iranian leadership made a link between what they saw as an “Islamic awakening” (the Arab uprisings) and the Palestinian issue. Over the last two years, 2012–2013, in all the international conferences on this “awakening,” which were held in Iran, the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei asserted that the Palestinian issue came first. As he received state officials and ambassadors of Muslim countries on the Islamic occasion of Eid al-Fitr on 19/8/2012, he restated that “The issue of holy Quds and oppressed Palestine is... at the heart of the events that are taking place in the Middle East.” And added, “Thanks to Islamic Awakening, today the issue of Palestine has become the main issue of the world of Islam once again. You should not let this distinction and this advantage disappear and be concealed under the machinations and plots of the enemies of Muslims and the Islamic Ummah.”²⁵

At the international conference on “Women and Islamic Awakening,” Khamenei “referred to the failed efforts by the west to discourage the Islamic Republic from supporting the Palestinian nation and stressed that the Islamic Republic would continue supporting the Palestinian nation and other Muslim nations.”²⁶ Additionally, he explained at the Inauguration of Islamic Awakening and Ulama Conference, on 29/4/2013, that “one of the standards for judging whether Islamic Awakening movements are on the right path is the positions they adopt on the issue of Palestine.”²⁷

In his meeting with the head of the resigned Palestinian government Isma‘il Haniyyah on 12/2/2012, Khamenei stated that “recent victories in Palestine were partially responsible for the Islamic awakening in the region.”²⁸

On different occasions, other Islamic Republic officials asserted these stances and the priority given to the Palestinian issue. Iranian senior advisor to the Supreme Leader on international affairs and former Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati said, “The Islamic Awakening movement is, in fact, a reaction to governments’ ignorance of countries’ national dignity and independence, and to their dependence on the superpowers as well as their indifference to the issues of the Muslim world, especially Palestine.”²⁹ During his reception of the Palestinian leader Mahmud al-Zahhar, Saeed Jalili, Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, expressed the view that “support for Palestine and the opposition to the Zionist regime... [are] the common goals of the Islamic Awakening movement.”³⁰

The Non-Aligned Movement Summit

During this summit, Iran made sure to show their keenness for considering the Palestinian issue a priority. Hence, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi stressed that “Iran did its best to make the summit adopt powerful stances on Palestine and the final result of those efforts were quite favorable and materialized in the summit’s statement on Palestine.”³¹

Although in reality the Tehran 16th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement repeated the statements formerly adopted and called for in the previous summits regarding the core values of the Palestinian issue, this time the summit issued three statements largely focused on the Palestinian issue:

The first statement reaffirmed the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, the need to end the Israeli occupation, the independence of the Palestinian state, its capital being Jerusalem, and Palestinian refugees’ right to return according to UN resolution 194.

The second statement reiterated supporting the Palestinian people to obtain their legitimate rights under the PLO umbrella, the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, as well as supporting the efforts of the Palestinian reconciliation based on the Cairo and Doha agreements. The permanent representatives committee at the UN was assigned to help the Palestinian people achieve these goals including the upgrade to UN non-member status.

The third statement, coming as the first of its kind at the Non-Aligned summit, revolved around solidarity with prisoners, demanding their immediate release from Israeli prisons, and taking the necessary steps to this end at international venues.³²

UN Recognition of Palestine

The second event was the recognition of Palestine as a UN non-member observer state, which gained the support of Iran whose Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast affirmed that “This achievement is a good opportunity to restore the rights of Palestinians.”³³

Two observations can be recorded regarding the Iranian stance to this incident. Firstly, Iran considered this recognition “the first step for Palestinians towards gaining complete sovereignty over their occupied lands, returning to their homeland and continuing resistance against the illegitimate regime of Israel,” according to the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman.³⁴ This means that Iran, contrary to the

view propagated by many who saw the recognition as a start to the diplomatic path and end of resistance, linked the international recognition to the continuation of the resistance rather than its end.

The second observation relates to the shift in the Iranian stance toward this issue, since the Islamic Republic has traditionally shown reservations toward any recognition of Palestine as a state side by side with the Israeli state. In this regard, at the “Fifth International Conference on Palestinian Intifada” held in Tehran in early October 2011, the Iranian Supreme Leader explicitly stated that “Any plan to divide Palestine is completely unacceptable,” and that the “two-state idea which has been presented in the self-righteous clothing of ‘recognizing the Palestinian government as a member of the United Nations’ is nothing but giving in to Zionists’ demands—namely, ‘recognizing the Zionist government in Palestinian lands.’”³⁵

In 2013, Arab and Muslim countries were still occupied with their internal burdens, while the Palestinian issue witnessed a number of variables. The repercussions of the Gaza war internally and on relations between Iran and Hamas Movement, the resumption of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, the latest updates of the Palestinian reconciliation project, in addition to the reaffirmed stances of Iranian officials toward the Palestinian issue.

During this year, two major incidents took place: the election of Hassan Rouhani as Iranian president, and the Iranian-Western understanding regarding its nuclear program. The two incidents raised questions concerning the continuation of former Iranian policies toward the Palestinian issue. Some observers anticipated that the move of president’s seat from conservatives to reformists would bring a policy change, since reformists have traditionally been more accepting of political solutions to this issue. Following his election, however, Rouhani’s reactions to some Israeli threats demonstrated that Iranian stances remain the same regarding the illegitimacy of the Israeli state and the willingness to confront it in case the latter considered waging any war against Iran.

President Rouhani did not follow Ahmadinejad’s methods or repeat his stances regarding several issues like the “holocaust,” which Rouhani considered a “condemnable” crime according to CNN interview.³⁶ However, he explained that “this does not mean that, on the other hand, you can say Nazis committed crimes against a group; now, therefore, they must usurp the land of another group

and occupy it. This, too, is an act that should be condemned.”³⁷ Notwithstanding this, Iranian official sources denied that Rouhani mentioned the term “holocaust” and stated that the president generally condemned all crimes committed against humanity.³⁸

Repercussions of the War on GS and Relations with Hamas

The Israeli attack on GS at the end of 2012 resulted in the great moral victory achieved by the Palestinian resistance and in preventing the enemy from achieving its military and security targets. However, these ramifications raised questions about Hamas relations with Iran and the new Egyptian regime. A ceasefire was declared under direct Egyptian auspices during the President Morsi term, and Iran unveiled its military support for Hamas and the role of Iranian weaponry in “achieving victory in Gaza.”

At the Pakistani capital Islamabad, for instance, Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said in his word before the students of Quaid-i-Azam University that “We do not conceal our support of Palestine,” and added, “We have said that Zionist regime is a cancerous tumor and we help the Palestinian people, even by supplying them weapons. And during the 8-day war, the people of Gaza defended themselves with these helps and slapped the Zionists in the face.”³⁹

Both Iran and Hamas avoided discussing the disagreement between them due to divergent policies and stances regarding events in Syria. Despite this no-longer suppressible difference, Iranian statements and stances asserted the continued communication between the two sides. Indeed, any official statement about differences were not released until the communication between the two sides had resumed. Thus, statements by the Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Abbas Araqchi came to declare that “(Iran’s) friendly relations with the movement stays strong despite some misunderstandings on regional issues, which are on the way of being resolved.”⁴⁰

Highlighting the deteriorating and receding relations between Hamas and Iran, Hamas leader and member of the Political Bureau Mahmud al-Zahhar asserted that “Relations between Hamas and Iran have resumed,” and added that the ties had been “affected by the Syria situation, and Hamas has withdrawn from Syria so that it can’t be identified with this or that side,” and added, “We’ve confirmed we are not interfering in the Syrian case, or in any other Arab country.” As for the relations

with Iran he explained, "Our relations with Iran were not cut, and we don't wish to cut ties with any Arab countries either, even those that are fighting against us."⁴¹

The keenness to restore relations between Iran and Hamas, led Muhammad Nasr, member of the Hamas Political Bureau, to pay a visit to Iran. On this, Yusuf Rizqah, political advisor to Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyyah, commented that the causes uniting Hamas and Iran are those of Jerusalem and liberation, and they are factors that lead to unification rather than disagreement. He added that the common factors with Iran are many. For one, Iran faces American and Israeli threats that endanger them, as is the case with Hamas. In addition, Rizqah pointed out that Hamas did not interfere with Iranian internal issues and clarified that even regarding the Syrian issue, Hamas did not interfere but only expressed a stance supporting the Syrian people's right to freedom.⁴²

Moreover, Haniyyah asserted that they support Egypt and cannot dispense with Syria, Iran and all those who support Palestine.⁴³ Musa Abu Marzuq, member of the Hamas Political Bureau, summarized in his article "The Hamas Deadlock and National Values," in *al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper, the stance towards Syria and the resulting disagreements with Iran. He wrote that Hamas paid an expensive price for not interfering with the internal Syrian issue, and the price was leaving Syria, which was the most important arena for the movement. He added that Syrian events had their impact on the Hamas-Iran relations, and that Hamas tried to put aside their different stances, and maintain the levels of bilateral relations. Yet, he acknowledged that relations were affected and that they are trying to restore the eroded parts, for this is a way to serve the Palestinian people and cause.⁴⁴

The year 2013 ended without Iran-Hamas relations being restored. The rift between the two remained regarding the stance towards the Arab revolutions, specifically Syria, and was reflected in the feeble political communication and huge decline in Iranian financial and logistical support to Hamas. Nevertheless, both sides avoided a complete breakdown, and attempts continued to restore relations although slowly and gradually, particularly as the two sides were aware that resistance unites them, and the harsh siege and attempts to defeat Hamas in GS would significantly harm the whole resistance path should these attempts succeed. In view of this, restored relations are anticipated in the near future particularly in case of progress in the political settlement in Syria, or if Israel decides to wage new attacks on the Palestinian people in Gaza.

Palestinian-Israeli Negotiations

After a three-year freeze, and around 20 visits by US Secretary of State John Kerry, Palestinian-Israeli negotiations were resumed at the end of July 2013. It was noted that the resumption of negotiations came approximately three years after the “Arab Spring” began, which left the Arab countries unstable, and with a diminishing influence, particularly Egypt, influential among Arab countries and with an historical influence on the Palestinian issue.

The UN and most countries welcomed these negotiations, unlike Iran who was the only country to reject and condemn them, and called for “asserting the rights of Palestinians.” Instead of welcoming the move, Iran expressed its objection to the resumption of US-sponsored Israeli-Palestinian talks, anticipating that Israel would never agree to withdraw from the occupied WB. Spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry Abbas Araqchi said that “Tehran ‘along with Palestinian groups expresses its opposition to the proposed plan and it’s certain that the occupying Zionist regime will utterly not agree to withdraw from the occupied lands.’” Araqchi added that “Past experience shows that the occupying Zionist regime is basically not ready to pay the price for peace since war mongering and occupation lie at its very core.” Iran rules out a two-state solution, as Araqchi affirmed that the conclusive solution to the issue was “the end of occupation... self-determination for the Palestinians, the return of all refugees to their ancestral land, and the creation of an integrated Palestine with Al-Quds (Jerusalem) as its capital.”⁴⁵

Shura Council Speaker Ali Larijani called on “Palestinian revolutionary forces... to remain vigilant to foil the new plot” by the West and the US, who want “to revive peace talks between Israel and Palestine, saying the talks are meant to give the Zionist regime more breathing room.”⁴⁶

Some expected that the transfer of Iranian presidency from conservatives to reformists would reflect on stances regarding the Palestinian issue, particularly as President Rouhani defended the option of diplomacy and dialogue to resolve the outstanding issues with the West and the world. However, statements made by the new president prior to taking office left no room for such association when talking about the “fundamentals” of the Palestinian issue. One day prior to the assumption of his presidential duties, Iranian President-elect Hassan Rouhani questioned the value of efforts to revive peace talks. In a reference to the peace negotiations underway in Washington between Israel and the PA, Rouhani said that

“Israelis show a compromising face to the world but continue their expansionism in practice.”⁴⁷

Iranian Supreme Guide Khamenei’s position was clear and decisive rejecting these negotiations, which in his words “will definitely be to the disadvantage of the Palestinians.” In his speech on the occasion of the Muslim Eid Al-Fitr, he stated that the settlement negotiations between the PA and Israel “will definitely not produce any results other than what happened during previous negotiations in which Palestinians gave up their rights and encouraged the transgressors to transgress more and stop the lawful political activities of the people of Palestine.”⁴⁸ He added that the Palestinian:

oppressed nation continues to suffer from oppression and cruelty on a daily basis.... One of the disasters of today’s world is that an act of clear oppression, which is a combination of tens and hundreds of oppressive acts, is supported by those who claim they support human rights and democracy and who chant beautiful and colorful slogans, but who support criminals in practice.⁴⁹

Iranian stances, ranging from condemnation to rejection of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations seem convincing and justified when we read statements by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on 5/12/2013 saying, “I have expressed my concern since Geneva [Interim nuclear agreement between Iran and six powers] that the sanctions would begin to unravel, and I think steps must be taken to prevent further erosions of sanctions.”⁵⁰ At the same time, Netanyahu viewed the resumption of negotiations and the peace process with the Palestinians as important for Israel, saying, “resuming the diplomatic process at this time is important for the State of Israel both in order to try to bring about an end to the conflict and given the complex reality in our region, especially the security challenges from Syria and Iran.”⁵¹

Inter-Palestinian Dialogue (Reconciliation)

In early 2013, the Egyptian Presidency under Morsi announced that an agreement was reached with Fatah and Hamas delegations to immediately start implementing the previously signed agreements concerning Palestinian reconciliation. The actual implementation of these agreements did not start: First, due to the events in Egypt and the coup that overthrew the MB movement; second because Fatah and Hamas made no practical moves towards such reconciliations; and third, since the PA

proceeded with negotiations with the Israelis in the absence of any coordination or understanding with Hamas. Yet, the ramifications were not limited to a frozen Egyptian sponsorship of the inter-Palestinian agreement and the Egypt-Hamas relations deteriorated to their worst ever level.

Meanwhile, none of the Muslim countries objected to the Palestinian dialogue and reconciliation initiatives, rather they supported and encouraged the step. Nevertheless, the reconciliation was negatively influenced by the events in Egypt and the rest of the Arab countries, whose internal burdens and priorities overshadowed any foreign issue, including the Palestinian one.

Iran likewise welcomed Palestinian reconciliation and considered it necessary, declaring its willingness to host a dialogue between Palestinian factions. President Ahmadinejad, when receiving PA Head Mahmud ‘Abbas during the 16th Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Tehran in August 2012, announced that “the Islamic Republic of Iran is willing to provide any assistance to the Palestinians in a bid to reach national reconciliation.” Ahmadinejad further stated that “Today, Palestine is the most important regional issue which has even got international importance and the whole world is somehow involved in the issue.” The Iranian president added, “the Islamic Republic is a strong advocate of unity among Palestinians, because in such circumstances ‘their chances of liberating their lands (from Israeli occupation) will become much higher.’” Addressing President ‘Abbas, he explained that “We will warmly welcome you in Iran whenever you and our other Palestinian brothers are ready to sit for talks with each other, and lay the groundwork for harmony and unity between all Palestinian groups.”⁵²

Receiving the Foreign Minister of the Palestinian government in GS, Muhammad ‘Awad, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi called all Palestinian factions to “remain vigilant against enemy plots and to maintain their unity.”⁵³

Iran and Palestine After the Nuclear Deal with the West

After around 10 years of international and Western sanctions due to its continued nuclear program, Iran was finally able early under President Rouhani’s term to sign an initial agreement on 24/11/2013 concerning this program. The agreement with what became known as the P5+1 countries, and with the US, stipulates a gradual lifting of sanctions and recognition of Iran’s right to 5% proliferation in exchange for freezing any activities that may end up with Iran obtaining a nuclear bomb.

Discussions around this agreement were not limited to the gains or compromises made by each side, but it was considered a comprehensive political US-Iran understanding concerning all controversial issues, including Syria, Iraq, Bahrain, Lebanon and Palestine. According to this analysis, Iran would change its former policies toward these issues to become more in line with US policies. In the Palestinian case, this would mean that in the near future Iran will not be unyielding about resistance, or even call for it. In the Lebanese case, the understanding would imply calling Hizbullah to be engrossed in local politics and relinquish the role of resistance to Israel. If we consider resistance to be the core of the issue, the conclusion derived by these analyses would be that the Iranian nuclear agreement with the West would not work in favour of the Palestinian issue. Some PA-aligned viewpoints leaning toward negotiations with Israel, considered the Iranian-Western agreement a model to be followed with regards the Palestinian negotiations. However, the Israeli stance on the nuclear agreement ranged from seeing it as a “historic mistake” to criticising it as a form of “giving Iran priority at the expense of reaching a peace settlement with the PA,” while the Obama administration attempted to convince Israel that the nuclear agreement was after all in the best interests of Israel.

In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s severe criticism of this agreement was notable, voicing Israeli fears concerning the Geneva Agreement with Iran.⁵⁴ Former Shabak Chief Yuval Diskin slammed the step as he considered “the ongoing conflict with the Palestinians poses more of an existential danger to Israel than Iran’s renegade nuclear program.”⁵⁵ When the agreement was forged Netanyahu considered it a “historic mistake,” at a time when the US president stated, “we cannot close the door on diplomacy, and we cannot rule out peaceful solutions to the world’s problems.”⁵⁶ As for the US Secretary of State John Kerry, he affirmed on his way back from Israel that the Geneva Agreement is a positive one and said that “I would state to you unequivocally the answer is yes. The national security of the United States is stronger under this first-step agreement than it was before.”⁵⁷

In an attempt to reassure Israel, Obama “pledged to step up sanctions or prepare for a potential military strike if Tehran fails to abide by the pact.”⁵⁸

In an op-ed appearing on Bloomberg View website, American journalist and political analyst Jeffrey Goldberg wrote that “Netanyahu fears that the removal of even one brick from the wall of sanctions would cause the entire edifice to crumble.

And he's right." He adds that "the nightmare for Israel and Arabs is that Iranians... will get the relief they want without being forced to permanently mothball their nuclear facilities." According to Goldberg, Netanyahu's unwillingness to permanently freeze settlement growth on WB, to "make the sort of grand gesture toward the Palestinians that would advance the peace process, has caused even those in Washington and Europe who are sympathetic to his stance on Iran to write him off as generally immovable and irrational." Therefore, Netanyahu attempted to argue that Iran's transformation to a nuclear state and chances of reaching an Israeli-Palestinian settlement are two separate issues.⁵⁹

In a speech on Students Day at the Beheshti University, President Rouhani pointed to the recent deal reached between Iran and six major world powers in Geneva over Tehran's nuclear energy program and said the agreement "dealt a blow to Zionism." He "reaffirmed the country's entitlement to uranium enrichment as part of a civilian nuclear program."⁶⁰ Iranian leader Khamenei's reiterated statements supported the Palestinian issue and affirmed the illegitimacy of Israel, as he once again declared unwavering support for the Palestinian issue during President Rouhani's inauguration.⁶¹ Khamenei further stressed that "America is not a mediator. Rather, the Americans themselves are one side of these negotiations and they are on the side of the usurpers of Palestine, the Zionists."⁶² He also considered "the Zionist regime to be an illegal and bastard regime."⁶³

Regardless of the Iranian stance and statements of officials about their commitment toward the Palestinian issue, the scenario of the hypothetical post-agreement comprehensive understanding between Iran and the US seems unrealistic. We have seen how American threats to Iran continued after this agreement, and how Washington prevented Iran from attending the Geneva II Conference on Syria. Besides, the complex areas of disagreement between the two sides require a lot of time to be resolved, in addition to being tied to other stakeholders that do not contribute to resolution. As for the Palestinian issue, the resistance and Hizbullah are not even on the negotiation agenda of the Iranian leadership, even if President Rouhani favours diplomacy and dialogue to resolve problems with the West.

Summary

The Palestinian issue between 2012 and 2013 saw many challenges and risks including ones that were passed along from previous years like settlement building, negotiations, and Palestinian reconciliation and unity. Other challenges emerged

as a result of transformations taking place in the Arab and Israeli environment surrounding the Palestinian issue, and the impact of these transformations on the future of the resistance, which made important achievements, cannot be underestimated or disregarded.

Among the most important transformations and challenges that require strategies to be dealt with are:

- Instability in Arab Spring countries, particularly following the latest developments in Egypt, which made Hamas an enemy of the coup regime, and took relations with GS and the Rafah crossing back to their former pre-Jan 25 revolution mode.
- Sectarian instigation, which soared seriously following the Arab uprisings, so that a severe downturn is taking place when it comes to the strategic view of the Palestinian issue as a priority. This downturn places the Palestinian issue in a secondary rank that can be delayed, as some think, until national disagreements are settled or sectarian victories made.
- The Israeli side is well aware of the conditions emerging in Arab countries of division and conflict. Hence, given the lack of any power to press for a change of strategy, Israel will propose no compromises in negotiations with the Palestinian side, nor regarding the freezing of settlements.
- The Arab countries are engrossed in their internal affairs, with little room for attention to be given developments in Palestine, and the GS is facing additional besieging and closure of tunnels from the Egyptian side, leading to a depletion of the Strip's financial capacities and causing increasingly severely deteriorating economic and humanitarian conditions. Consequently it is strategically imperative for resistance movements to not only get over the disagreement with Iran, which still stresses the centrality of the Palestinian issue, but to further develop these relations. For the US strategic plans remain the same regarding the resolution of the Palestinian issue. Moreover, Israel's hostile plans toward GS in the coming stage are not hidden, but have risen to declared threats that can turn into a new war at any moment. It is also of Iranian strategic interests to explain the intricacies of its stances toward the uprisings and changes in the region, particularly in Syria; to listen to the voice of the Arab and Muslim public calling it to constantly stand by nations, their freedom and their national will in confronting corrupt and tyrannical regimes; and to give the opportunity for all sincere powers to block the road to foreign intervention in the region.

Fourth: Malaysia

Malaysia maintained its commitment to supporting the rights of the Palestinian people during 2012–2013 in accordance with international laws. It continued opposing the Israeli siege on GS, and supporting inter-Palestinian reconciliation efforts and PA efforts to secure UN non-member observer state status for Palestine. Malaysian representative to the UN Haniff Hussein reiterated his country's support of Palestine to be granted the UN non-member observer state status. He said, on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, "I would like to take this opportunity to pay Malaysia's utmost respect and tribute to the Palestinian people for their courage and strength in continuing to demonstrate steadfastness despite the immense hardship they face on a daily basis."⁶⁴

The year 2012–2013 marked a significant progress in official and public Malaysian support for the Palestinian people in general, and for Gazans in particular. In January 2013, for instance, the Malaysian Prime Minister visited the GS accompanied by his wife and an official government delegation. The visit reflected the special status of the Palestinian Issue in Malaysian consciousness, and highlighted Malaysian rejection of the GS siege, in addition to the concrete expression of Malaysian support for the perseverance of the Palestinian people, whether through the visit itself or the agreements signed during the visit on a number projects in GS. The Malaysian Prime Minister expressed the main reason behind his visit, saying: "We may come from thousands of miles away... but we are one Umma (Muslim nation) and we believe in the struggle of the Palestinian people."⁶⁵

On the public level in Malaysia, the Global March to Jerusalem Committee, made up of a number of non-governmental organizations, organized a rally in March 2012 that accommodated more than 10 thousand participants, and included a video-conference speech by the Palestinian Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyyah.

In April 2012, a number of Malaysian organizations launched a solidarity campaign with Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, where around 20 Malaysian organizations participated following an invitation from the Palestinian Cultural Organization Malaysia (PCOM). The participants called the Malaysian people to continue their efforts to support the Palestinian people through humanitarian aid and relief, as well as political support. The campaign further demanded the media to devote part of their broadcast to highlighting this human cause.

In the same context, Yayasan Restu held a book launch event, under the auspices of the Malaysian Minister of Home Affairs Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and in cooperation with PCOM, to launch the first al-Qur'an Mushaf Palestine, which uses the identity of Palestinian visual arts, while allocating the revenues for Jerusalem.

Within the reverberations of the Israeli war on GS in November 2012, and during their participation at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) conference in Cambodia, Malaysian Prime Minister Muhammad Najib Bin Tun Haji 'Abdul Razak called on US President Obama to pressure Israel to stop the war on GS. This war was covered daily by the Malaysian media, and there were public events and rallies to condemn it.

In December 2012, Malaysian Deputy Minister of International Trade and Industry Mukhriz Tun Mahathir visited the GS in the company of the Malaysian ambassador to Egypt. The delegation delivered medical aids to the Ministry of Health in GS.

A number of events were organized in 2013, in solidarity with the Palestinian people. On 15/8/2013, Perdana Global Peace Foundation organized a conference for Malaysian organizations working in Palestine, sponsored by former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Muhammad, to discuss the means of cooperation to support the Palestinian issue. In November 2013, the Kuala Lumpur Foundation to Criminalise War (KLFCW) held a tribunal for the crimes that were committed by the State of Israel and retired Israeli General Amos Yaron, in which several international judges took part. The Tribunal found the State of Israel guilty of genocide, and Amos Yaron of crimes against humanity and genocide.

Despite criticism from the Palestinian Presidency in Ramallah of the Malaysian Prime Minister's visit to GS in early 2013, neither Malaysian support to GS, nor its relations with Hamas, were affected. In fact, after receiving an official invitation, a Hamas delegation headed by Khalid Mish'al, head of the Hamas Political Bureau, went to Malaysia in December 2013 to take part in the general assembly of the ruling party, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO). Mish'al and the accompanying delegation were warmly welcomed by the party members as well as Malaysian officials and public figures. Mish'al delivered a speech at the international forum of UMNO, in addition to a speech at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM).⁶⁶

Fifth: Pakistan

Pakistani politics continued its support to the Palestinian issue and the core rights of the Palestinian people, including backing the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari highlighted this during a dinner reception for President Mahmud ‘Abbas during his visit to Pakistan in February 2013. “While expressing his joy over achieving non-member observer state status by Palestine at the UN, President Zardari noted with pride that Pakistan played a pivotal role in the process,” and hoped the step would lead to “the recognition of the legitimate Palestinian rights and hoped that it would prove to be a major stepping stone to Palestine’s full membership of the UN.” At the same time, Zardari strongly condemned the building of illegal settlements in WB, and “called upon the international community to stop Israel from building new settlements,” adding that “denial of inalienable right of self-determination to the people of Indian-administered Kashmir and Palestine carried the risk of instability of the Middle East and South Asia.”⁶⁷

On another level, the Pakistani Foreign Ministry offered a \$1 million grant to the PA to build a Palestinian embassy in Islamabad. Pakistani Foreign Office Spokesperson Aizaz Chaudhry said that “This grant is another reflection of the brotherly relations between the two nations,” adding that “Pakistan has always supported the Palestinian cause and will continue to do so.”⁶⁸

In December 2013, Palestinian ambassador in Pakistan Walid Abu Ali met with the Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, who reasserted that Pakistan “would continue its unequivocal and unwavering support to the Palestine cause.”⁶⁹

As for Pakistani-Israeli relations, the parliament speaker remarked that Israel continued to make efforts to build relations with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, but the latter’s response has always been to reject such relations as long as Israel occupies the Palestinian territories. The Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan further asserted that Pakistan would not go forward with any relations with Israel unless a Palestinian state with full sovereignty was established, with Jerusalem as its capital.⁷⁰

Sixth: Trade Exchange

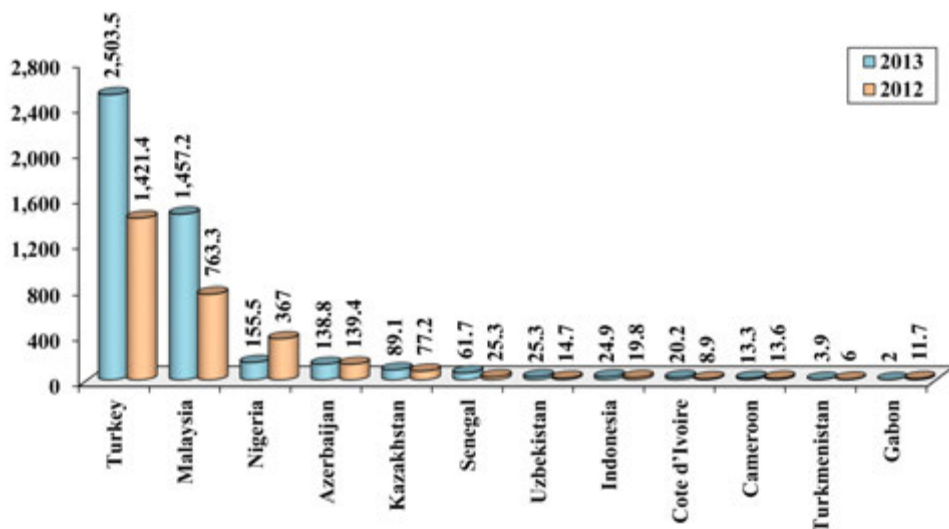
The year 2012 witnessed a remarkable downturn in the trade volume between Turkey and Israel, as Israeli exports to Turkey in 2012 fell to \$1,421.4 million, 23.4% less than in 2011, while Israeli imports decreased by 4.1%. The beginning of 2013, however, saw a breakthrough in relations between the two sides, which may explain the surge in trade volume. The Israeli Prime Minister gave an official apology to the Turkish people for the Mavi Marmara incident in which nine Turks were killed. In 2013, Israeli exports to Turkey surged by 76.1% compared to 2012, while Israeli imports increased by 13% compared to 2012.

As for Malaysia, 2012 recorded a clear decrease in Israeli imports from Malaysia by 20.9% compared to 2011, while Israeli exports to Malaysia increased by 6.4%. In 2013, Israeli exports to Malaysia, reached \$1,457.2 million according to Israeli data with a 90.9% increase compared to 2012, while Israeli imports continued to decrease by around 1.5% from 2012.

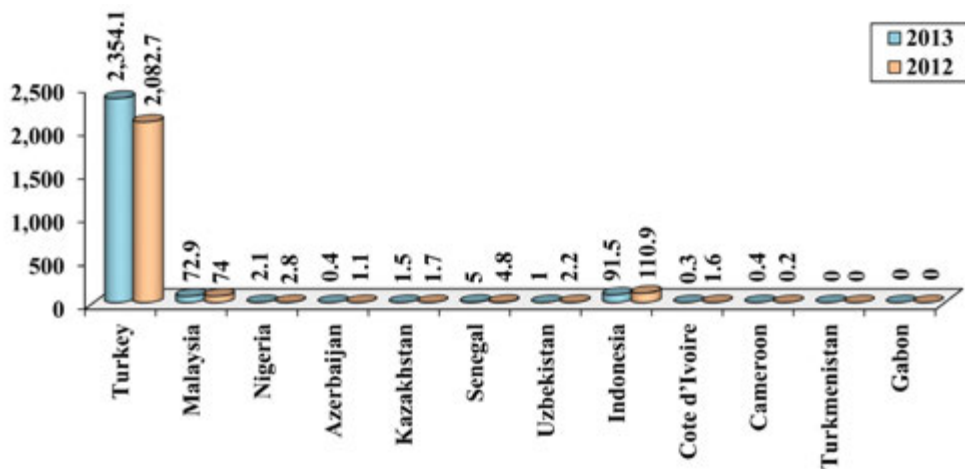
Table 2/4: Israeli Exports and Imports to/ from a Number of Non-Arab Muslim Countries 2010–2013 (\$ million)⁷¹

Country	Israeli exports to:				Israeli imports from:			
	2013	2012	2011	2010	2013	2012	2011	2010
Turkey	2,503.5	1,421.4	1,855.7	1,310.7	2,354.1	2,082.7	2,171.1	1,800.1
Malaysia	1,457.2	763.3	717.2	798	72.9	74	93.6	85
Nigeria	155.5	367	398.1	303.7	2.1	2.8	0.3	1.6
Azerbaijan	138.8	139.4	125.3	107.6	0.4	1.1	0.5	0.3
Kazakhstan	89.1	77.2	93.6	62.5	1.5	1.7	2.5	0.3
Senegal	61.7	25.3	12	3.3	5	4.8	4.3	2.6
Uzbekistan	25.3	14.7	19.7	37.2	1	2.2	4	3.3
Indonesia	24.9	19.8	17.5	12.9	91.5	110.9	119.7	106.2
Cote d'Ivoire	20.2	8.9	5.5	5.4	0.3	1.6	3.6	10
Cameroon	13.3	13.6	10.4	12.8	0.4	0.2	0	0.2
Turkmenistan	3.9	6	6.3	19.9	0	0	0	0
Gabon	2	11.7	16	8.8	0	0	0	0

Israeli Exports to a Number of Non-Arab Muslim Countries 2012–2013 (\$ million)



Israeli Imports from a Number of Non-Arab Muslim Countries 2012–2013 (\$ million)



Conclusion

In 2012–2013, the Palestinian issue remained at the forefront of Muslim public interest, despite the rapidly changing events of the “Arab Spring” region and the preoccupation of many Muslim countries with rearranging their priorities accordingly. Notwithstanding this, the support did not amount to the required level and was disproportionate with the weight of Muslim states and institutions. Notably, the OIC’s modest performance toward the Palestinian issue continued. It is not expected to change, unless the OIC carries out a major priority change or the views of some countries supporting the organization change, regarding the importance of activating the Muslim world role towards Palestine, and supporting it more effectively. Thus, keeping the Palestinian issue away from the regional power struggle and conflicts between the OIC states.

As for Turkey, its support of the Palestinian issue continued during 2012–2013, providing political, economic, and media support to the Palestinian people, demanding an end to the GS siege, and playing an effective role in UN recognition of Palestine as a non-member state. In addition, Turkey facilitated the movement of some leaders of the Palestinian resistance, especially following the military coup in Egypt and the consequent tightening grip on resistance forces, particularly Hamas. As for Turkish-Israeli relations, they were eased following the Israeli apology for the Mavi Marmara incident, but they are not expected to return to their former state.

Apparently, Turkey is expected to continue its support of the Palestinian issue—particularly GS, both economically and politically—and its positive relations with Hamas. At the same time, it is expected to avoid directly supporting the Palestinian resistance or having any clash with Western powers or Israel. Some factors must be taken into account in this context, including the impact of some internal Turkish developments, the limits set by Turkish membership in NATO, and Turkish efforts to join the EU.

On the Iranian level, Iran continued its refusal to recognize Israel, seeing it instead a usurping entity, while continuing to support the Palestinian resistance and reject the peace process. Despite these facts, the Islamic republic is more engrossed in resolving its economic problems in addition to the Syrian issue and regional calculations. It decreased its support for Hamas and its GS government due to disagreements on Syrian Conflict. However, the two sides are keen on preserving a reasonable level of relations, with efforts continuing to improve these relations and develop them.

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- ⁶⁸ Site of Anadolu Agency, 7/10/2013, <http://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/237430--pakistan-donates-1mn-for-construction-of-palestine-embassy>
- ⁶⁹ Site of AAJ News, Pakistan, 16/12/2013,
<http://www.aaj.tv/2013/12/pakistan-to-continue-supporting-palestine-cause-ayyaz/>
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Chapter Five

The Palestinian Issue and the International Situation

The Palestinian Issue and the International Situation

Introduction

The Arab Spring and the Iranian nuclear issue, the ramifications of the global financial crisis, the shifts of the Middle East's status in US geo-strategic thinking, and the decline of the Palestinian issue down the list of concerns, were some of the most important developments affecting the Palestinian issue in 2012 and 2013.

The result was that 2012 and 2013, though impacting the Palestinian issue from other angles, brought structural change to the Middle East through the change of Arab regimes; the upheaval of the position of Islamic movements in Arab societies; the revival of sub-cultures in the Middle East; and a rising Russian-Chinese role paving the way for a new international order. This order is likely to range between multipolarity or at least unipolarity but without the hegemony seen previously.

Such radical transformations could mean that traditional forms of Palestinian action must take these changes into account.

To have a clear vision of this new international reality, we must first assess two dimensions: constant elements of the international scene on one hand, and the variables on the other, considering their impact on the Palestinian scene.

First: The Quartet

The diplomatic efforts of the Quartet on the Middle East (the UN, EU, US and Russia) failed to impose an international solution on the parties of the Arab-Israeli conflict in general, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in particular.

A review of the data related to statements by the Quartet shows that the international body continued to orbit around in the same circle it had been moving in for more than a decade. In effect, the level of the Quartet's activity has not been consistent from year to year, and has been declining. Since 2002, the Quartet issued a total of 48 statements, as follows:¹

Table 1/5: The Diplomatic Activity of the Quartet 2002–2013

Year	2002–2004	2005–2007	2008–2010	2011–2013
No. of statements	5	21	12	10

The above table indicates that the level of the Quartet’s diplomatic activity has been declining sharply since 2005, with its 2011–2013 activity less than half of its 2005–2007 activity.

The Quartet issued three statements in 2012 and 2013, as follows:²

1. Statement on 11/4/2012: Confirmed continued support for the PA’s institution-building program, and called on the international community to provide \$1.1 billion to help the PA fulfill its commitments for 2012.

2. Statement on 30/7/2013: The Quartet welcomed the resumption of direct negotiations between the PA and Israel on 29/7/2013. The negotiations had been suspended since September 2010, following Israel’s rejection of a proposed freeze on settlement activity in the occupied territories. The Quartet confirmed in its statement support for efforts to reach a two-state solution within nine months. The Quartet welcomed the Arab League’s role in facilitating the resumption of the negotiations.

3. Statement on 27/9/2013: The Quartet stressed the need to observe the ceasefire reached on 21/11/2012 between the Palestinian resistance and Israel, and also emphasized the need to give attention to the humanitarian needs of GS.

Analyzing the general development of the Quartet’s role through its statements from 2002 to 2013 produces the following conclusions:

1. The activities of the Quartet were hindered by Israel’s resistance to “internationalizing” the Palestinian issue, as Israel sought to avoid having to confront an “international front” on some issues, such as settlements, human rights abuses and others. Israel preferred the bilateral approach (Palestine vs Israel) through direct negotiations, or through “US mediation,” because this allowed Israel to continue to take advantage of the balance of power that is skewed in its favor.

2. The Israelis had a desire to minimize the role of the UN and Russia (seen to be closer to the Palestinian position) on the one hand, and neutralize the European role given its global political and moral influence, on the other. On 9/12/2012, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov noted, “We are seeking the convocation

of the Quartet of international mediators. We are supported by the European Union and the UN while the United States, the fourth participant in this mechanism, does not want this.”³ In other words, the US hindered the work of the Quartet as well, given its desire to “monopolize” the peace process, in line with its interests. Perhaps Lavrov’s statement reinforces the general trend of a decline in the role of the Quartet, evident from the dwindling frequency of its meetings and statements regarding the Palestinian issue, which was consistent with the Israeli-American direction. It is sufficient to note that in 2012, the Quartet only issued one statement. In 2013, only 2 statements were made, compared to 10 in 2007, when after that the average number of statements began to decline.

3. The efforts of the Quartet were affected by the relations among its member states, especially the Western parties (the US and the EU) on one hand and Russia on the other. Political and economic relations between the parties in other arenas (Iran, Syria, Ukraine, etc.) affected the work of the Quartet, and has an impact on the Palestinian issue.

Second: The United States of America (US)

The suspension of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in September 2012, resumed in July 2013, reflected the failure of US efforts to reach a peaceful solution to the conflict. Things became more complicated with initial signs of shifts emerging in the US’s strategic vision of the structure of its international relations, particularly in the geo-strategic dimension. The US President’s National Security Advisor Susan Rice, laid out a framework for the new directions of US policy in the short and immediate terms. Rice said, “We can’t just be consumed 24/7 by one region, important as it is,” adding, “He [the president] thought it was a good time to step back and reassess, in a very critical and kind of no-holds-barred way, how we conceive the region.” The president’s goal, Rice continued, “was to avoid having events in the Middle East swallow his foreign policy agenda, as it had those of presidents before him.”⁴

Rice’s remarks are consistent with Obama’s previous declarations about the pivot to Asia-Pacific, which former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had alluded to, which could signal a change in the negotiating environment for both the PA and the Israeli government.

In addition, the perception of the US in the Middle East is increasingly negative, according to public opinion poll surveys in the region. A poll conducted by the Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project showed that confidence in Obama in Muslim countries had declined from 33% in 2009 to 24% in 2012, while approval of Obama's international policies fell from 34% in 2009 to 15% in 2012. The poll also showed that the level of support for the US in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Pakistan had dropped below the figures of 2008.⁵

In the same category falls the US drive for oil and gas independence from the Gulf region and other areas. In its 2012 edition of the World Energy Outlook (WEO), the International Energy Agency (IEA) proclaimed, "Extraordinary growth in oil and natural gas output in the United States will mean a sea-change in global energy flows." According to WEO's central scenario:

The United States becomes a net exporter of natural gas by 2020 and is almost self-sufficient in energy, in net terms, by 2035. North America emerges as a net oil exporter, accelerating the switch in direction of international oil trade, with almost 90% of Middle Eastern oil exports being drawn to Asia by 2035.⁶

This reinforces the perception that for the US, the strategic value of the Middle East is declining, which worries some Arab countries, and has raised questions among Israeli pundits regarding regional balances that could be deeply affected by this profound change.⁷

Amid these American developments, Palestinian-Israeli negotiations came to a halt, mainly because of Israel's refusal to suspend settlement activity. In the last three months of 2012 and throughout 2013, the US worked hard to get the negotiations back on track, probably to reinforce the impression that the peace process had not completely stopped. This is evident from the fact that the US Secretary of State John Kerry, who took office in January 2013, visited the area 10 times in 2013 (the last of which took place near the end of 2013 and the start of 2014). However, the frequency of Kerry's visits to the Middle East represented less than a third of his overall diplomatic activity on other international issues, if we use the total number of visits as the benchmark.⁸

However, what was intriguing about the way the US managed the crisis of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations was the political economy of these negotiations, where Palestinian negotiators were incentivized to return to the table through the

issue of economic aid to the Palestinian side, either by promising more of it or threatening to suspend it.

Such diplomacy was renewed in 2012 and 2013, with the US announcing in May 2013 it would provide economic aid, followed by announcing the resumption of negotiations (without any Israeli commitment to stop settlement building) in July 2013. This was one of the demands Obama had made during his second visit to the WB in March 2013, which he had previously visited in 2008.

From reviewing congressional resolutions and statements, it is clear that linking US aid to Palestinian political conduct has been one of the most striking features of the American position. One Congress report stated that funds may be provided to the PA if the president could prove that it was important to the US national security interests.⁹ The main US demands when linking aid to Palestinian political conduct can be summed up as follows:¹⁰

1. Stressing the need to ensure that aid does not reach armed resistance or “terrorist” groups, specifically Hamas.
2. The Palestinian side postpones its bid to join international organizations and conventions.
3. Warning the Palestinian side not to take any unilateral action.
4. Re-stressing the need for the PA to return to the negotiating table despite the continuation of settlement building.

The cessation of the negotiations was accompanied by disputes within the US administration regarding aid to the PA. The US Department of State made a lot of effort to unlock pre-approved aid to the PA in 2012 (worth \$495.7 million) and 2013 (\$200 million),¹¹ and succeeded in its efforts in March 2013. The US government also interceded with Congress to secure aid for the PA in 2014 worth \$440 million, including \$70 million for the security sector. The text of the bill for aid to Palestine states that “The FY 2014 request will help advance a negotiated, two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”¹²

The use of economic incentives in US diplomacy culminated on 26/5/2013 with the US Secretary of State John Kerry announcing, during a meeting of the World Economic Forum at the Dead Sea in Jordan, a plan backed by the Quartet Representative Tony Blair based on economic support for the PA to support the private sector in the occupied territories to the tune of \$4 billion, with private

sector experts giving advice to the PA in this area. Kerry said that these experts believe they could raise the Palestinian GDP by 50% over three years, lower the unemployment rate from 21% to 8%, and raise the median annual wage by 40%, which would make the PA less reliant on international aid.

Kerry revealed a new direction, namely, to replace governments with private sector in the provision of aid because “most governments don’t have the money, and in certain places, the private sector actually has a greater ability to move things faster than government does,” he claimed.¹³

Obama had called for increasing aid to Israel from \$3.029 billion in 2011 to \$3.098 billion in 2012 and \$3.115 billion in 2013.¹⁴ In comparison, we see that the value of US aid to the PA fell from \$545.7 million in 2011 to \$495.7 million in 2012, and then to \$426.7 million in 2013.¹⁵ The total US contribution to UNRWA for the year 2013 was \$244.5 million.¹⁶

Interestingly, on the subject of developing the Palestinian private sector, the US position is identical to the one contained in a study by The World Bank, which called for developing the private sector, integration into the global economy, and investing in education.¹⁷

On the other hand, the second concern (i.e., after the resumption of the negotiations) of US diplomacy in 2012–2013 remained focused primarily on Israeli security, as evident from:

1. Emphasizing the need to preserve the cease-fire in the GS, which had been reached on 21/11/2012, through mediation efforts made by deposed Egyptian President Muhammad Morsi, one day after the arrival of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. In a press conference with Egyptian Foreign Minister Muhammad Kamel ‘Amr, she thanked “President Morsi for his personal leadership to de-escalate the situation in Gaza and end the violence.” She then added “Now that there is a ceasefire, I am looking forward to working with the Foreign Minister and others to move this process.”¹⁸ The fighting between the Israeli army and units of the Palestinian resistance in the GS had lasted for a period of eight days.

The head of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey pledged his country’s support for Israel’s efforts, and for security and intelligence cooperation between the US and Israel, to prevent smuggling into the GS via the Sinai, describing the practice as “very worrisome.”¹⁹

2. Continuously emphasizing Israeli security, and considering it non-negotiable, as Obama said in his speech before an American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) meeting in March 2012, in which he proclaimed, “Israel’s security is sacrosanct. It is non-negotiable.”²⁰

It seems that strategic US-Israeli alignment does not necessarily require tactical agreement. This is evident on the subject of Iran’s nuclear program, which was the subject of the strategic contention between the Israeli and American sides. During Obama’s visit to the region on 20/3/2013, the Israeli side appeared uncomfortable with the prospect of a peaceful solution between the US and the EU, and Iran, regarding the latter’s nuclear program, especially in light of the assurances made by Obama ahead of the visit, saying that “he does not want to see more conflict in the oil-producing Gulf region.”²¹

The US showed no interest in enforcing the UN resolution, approved by 176 countries, calling for “Israel’s accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA] safeguards, in realizing the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East.”²² However, controversy surfaced between the two sides with allegations that the US was spying on the email accounts of certain Israeli officials in 2013.²³ This re-raised the issue of the Israeli spy in the US, Jonathan Pollard, which reinforced the view that there are primordial cracks in the wall of strategic alignment between the two parties.

3. The US position with regard to ensuring Israel’s security is bolstered by continued US military aid to Israel. For example, the US granted Israel \$680 million to strengthen the Iron Dome anti-missile system, and “stockpiled in Israel \$800 million worth of Israeli weapons for emergencies.” These weapons, may be used by Israel in case of emergency, with American approval, and they include missiles, armored vehicles, and artillery ammunition.²⁴

4. Adapting agreements gradually to balance them in favor of the Israeli side, to reassure it over its security concerns. There were unofficial reports in the media about discussions led by Kerry for:

- a. Amending the Arab peace plan, which was declared in Beirut in 2002, to accept the idea of land swaps between the Palestinian and Israeli sides, an issue that President Obama had raised on 19/5/2011.²⁵ The Israeli media even reported that the swaps could include giving lands in the Palestinian

triangle (of the territory of Palestine occupied in 1948) to the PA, in return for keeping Israeli settlements in the WB under Israeli sovereignty.²⁶

- b. During a second visit in the second week of December 2013, Kerry proposed a plan to the Palestinians whereby Israel and the PA accept a security arrangement that would leave Israeli troops stationed inside a future Palestinian state, on the border with Jordan.²⁷

It seems that Kerry felt, with the end of 2013, that the deadline that was set for reaching an agreement between the two sides (April 2014) was no longer possible, given that no progress was being made. This prompted him to seek to persuade the two sides to take any measures that create the sense that progress was being made and that diplomacy had not yet hit a dead end. However, US diplomatic activity after mid-2013 continued without official clarification. At a time when the media reported US-backed projects like turning the Jericho area into an “economic hub”; bringing Jordan into a solution; maintaining Israeli deployment in the Jordan Valley for a certain period of time; and for Israel to withdraw from some areas such as the area north of the Dead Sea. However, none of these projects were officially declared.²⁸

5. Closely following developments in the Arab region (especially in the countries of the Arab Spring) and their implications for Israel’s security. The change that took place in Egypt with the ouster of the elected President Muhammad Morsi on 3/7/2013 was closely followed by the Americans and Israelis. This diverted attention away from the Palestinian issue at times, and at other times linked those changes to Israeli security, especially with the intensifying clashes between the Egyptian armies and the so-called Islamic groups, as well as the growing strength of similar groups in Syria and Iraq. These circumstances drove the US to close down its embassies in August 2013, because of what was described as “terrorist threats.”

6. US and Israeli officials were at pains to stress that there was no link between the Arab Spring and the Arab-Zionist conflict, because making this kind of link would have put more pressure on the Israelis. Both John Kerry and the Israeli President Shimon Peres emphasized the separation between the two, during speeches at the meetings of the World Economic Forum at the Dead Sea on 26/5/2013.²⁹

The US Congress has often acted to obstruct and resist any progress on the Palestinian issue. After Palestine was recognized as a non-member observer state of the UN on 29/11/2012, members of Congress called for closing down the Palestinian mission in the US.³⁰ The spokesperson for the US Department of State Victoria Nuland confirmed the US's rejection of the PA to be rebranded the "State of Palestine."³¹

7. The US insistence that the Palestinians abandon armed resistance. In remarks to the press, spokesperson Victoria Nuland said that Hamas, ahead of any dialogue, must meet the conditions of the International Quartet, namely to recognize Israel, renounce "terrorism," and recognize the agreements signed between Israel and the Palestinians.³²

On the other hand, President Barack Obama continued to emphasize the need to establish a Palestinian state. In a press conference in Ramallah in March 2013, he remarked that the "United States is deeply committed to the creation of an independent and sovereign state of Palestine," but blamed Hamas for the situation in the GS. He said:

I would point out that all this stands in stark contrast to the misery and repression that so many Palestinians continue to confront in Gaza—because Hamas refuses to renounce violence; because Hamas cares more about enforcing its own rigid dogmas than allowing Palestinians to live freely; and because too often it focuses on tearing Israel down rather than building Palestine up. We saw the continuing threat from Gaza again overnight, with the rockets that targeted Sderot. We condemn this violation of the important cease-fire that protects both Israelis and Palestinians—a violation that Hamas has a responsibility to prevent.³³

The US administration continued to express rejection of settlement policy, including in East Jerusalem.

All of the above corroborates the diagnosis regarding the practical approaches of the US administration to ensure Israeli superiority, in a way that renders the results of the negotiating process hostage to the balance of power, which is tipped in favor of Israel.

American Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) That Support Palestinian Rights

There is a phenomenon worthy of attention in relation to political attitudes among the American public vis-à-vis the Palestinian issue. A report by the pro-Israel Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in 2013 looked at hundreds of “anti-Israel” groups operating in the US, pointing out that “the domestic anti-Israel movement has grown significantly since the second intifada in 2000 and, more recently, since the 2008–9 Gaza War.” The report indicates that “the groups that comprise today’s anti-Israel movement lob any and every accusation against Israel—including charges of Nazi-like crimes, apartheid policies, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and genocide.”³⁴

The report identifies 10 such groups as being the “worst of the worst.” The leaders of these groups speak on college campuses; distribute their literature in “anti-Israel” conferences; write editorials in local and national newspapers; appear on TV and radio shows; and are successfully gaining support through social media. The work of these groups developed after the war in Gaza in 2012 and the Arab Spring, with focus on Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel. These groups also work in coordination with each other and sponsor each other, in conferences, demonstrations, and public relations activities against Israel.³⁵ The following table shows the 2013 top 10 anti-Israel groups in the US, according to the ADL:

Table 2/5: The 2013 Top 10 Anti-Israel Groups in the US (in Alphabetical Order)³⁶

Name	Year founded	Social media presence	
		Facebook likes	Twitter followers
Act Now to Stop War and End Racism	2001	3,000	750
American Muslims for Palestine	2005	8,500	3,100
CODEPINK: Women for Peace	2002	13,200	22,800
Friends of Sabeel-North America	1997	1,400	260
If Americans Knew/ Council for the National Interest	2001	11,700	700
Jewish Voice for Peace	1996	30,100	9,600
Muslim Public Affairs Council	1988	13,000	3,800
Neturei Karta	1938	5,300	1,200
Students for Justice in Palestine	2001	21,400	1,300
US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation	2002	15,000	6,800

In addition to these groups, there is the Jewish American organization J Street, which was founded in 2008. J Street is considered less biased than the AIPAC. Its 2013 conference was attended by about 2,800 members in addition to members of Congress. J Street supports the two-state solution and an end to settlement in Palestinian territory.³⁷

Third: The European Union (EU)

A study supervised by the EU in 2013 on the state of the PA, 20 years after Oslo Accords, came to discouraging conclusions. The study found that the PA was in a serious crisis as a result of number of factors, including:³⁸

1. The crisis of legitimacy: The study argued that the PA had lost legitimacy and credibility, citing the protests in the WB in the months of August and September 2012, which were directed primarily against the PA, rather than the occupation. The frustration in Palestinian society was due to the belief that the “chances for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the next five years are slim to non-existent” (69% of Palestinians in the WB), while 77% of the WB residents believed that corruption was a problem in PA institutions.

2. The PA’s lack of a clear strategy: The European study mentions that ‘Abbas had offered a medley of alternative options such as the internationalizing the conflict via the UN; pushing for a restart of negotiations based on the 1967 borders and a settlement freeze; broad-based popular non-violent resistance; pursuing reconciliation with Hamas; or threatening to dismantle the PA. However, none of these strategies was adopted in the end, and the PA proceeded without a clear strategy.

3. The political exclusion of the Palestinian majority: The gradual replacement by the PA of the PLO has led to the marginalization of the majority of Palestinians in the Diaspora and denied them the institutional mechanisms to influence decision-making.

4. Israeli policies on the ground, especially the continuation of settlement construction and Israeli military incursions into PA-controlled areas.

5. The failure of the US, the EU, and the Quartet to achieve anything: The study finds that the failure of these powers to apply more consistent pressure on Israel

to fulfil its obligations under international resolutions and negotiated agreements has been particularly damaging. International support for the PA has unwittingly helped to consolidate the status quo, for example, with permit restrictions in Area C. In particular, the EU and the US have invested in the PA the resources usually devoted to post-conflict, while their policies have been tantamount to making the conflict more manageable, rather than aimed at making peace more of an imperative.

In its conclusions, the study makes a number of recommendations, such as resuscitating the PLO and separating it from the PA; holding elections for the PA; and reform within both Fatah and Hamas, as well as strengthening civil society and public policy.

Perhaps the contradictory statements attributed to the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process Andreas Reinicke on 3/12/2013—that the EU intends to suspend aid to the PA, which amounts to about €300 million (\$411 million) annually, if the ongoing negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian sides fail—underscore the debate within the EU regarding the crisis of dealing with the Palestinian issue. Reinicke even said that “some people suggested giving the money to other countries, like Syria, Mali and other places around the world.” He added that this issue could be raised again in the event of the failure of the peace talks at the end of the nine-month deadline, “because the question is, what’s the money for if a Palestinian state isn’t established?” Reinicke also said that the EU was well aware that if it cuts off aid to the PA, the latter “will collapse,” and that “the EU is considering a gradual cessation, if and when such a decision is made.” Reinicke added, “Were that to happen, the PA would cease to function and its security services and organizations would fall apart. Israel would then have to take the responsibility for the West Bank, including the payment to civil servants and public officials.”³⁹

But on the other hand, the spokesperson of the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Maja Kocijancic, in remarks to Italy’s news agency Adnkronos International (AKI), said that the EU had not made any declarations in this regard, adding that the issue was not being discussed. She also said that the EU still strongly supported the peace talks as the best way to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and achieve security and stability in the region.⁴⁰

Such inconsistency in attitudes within the EU reveals some variation in European trends, but also shows the depth of the impasse in the peace process, and the inability of the EU to effect a quantum leap. European policies remained traditionally centered on the same points contained in the statement of the Council of the EU in May 2012, namely:⁴¹

1. Affirming “its commitment to a two-state solution and its conviction that the ongoing changes across the Arab world make the need for progress on the Middle East peace process all the more urgent.”
2. Recalling “the applicability of international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory, including the applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilians.”
3. Welcoming “the exchange of letters between the parties initiated on 17 April [2012],” and stressing the need “to resume direct negotiations on the basis of the Quartet statement of 23 September 2011.”
4. Reiterating commitment to Israel’s security and condemning the firing of rockets from GS.
5. Condemning settlement building and demanding the dismantling of all settlements built since 2001, according to the Road Map.
6. Condemning evictions and demolition of homes in East Jerusalem, and “the prevention of peaceful Palestinian cultural, economic, social or political activities.”
7. Condemning “the worsening living conditions of the Palestinian population in Area C... as well as plans of forced transfer of the Bedouin communities, in particular from the wider E1 area.”
8. Condemning “continuous settler violence and deliberate provocations against Palestinian civilians.”
9. Stressing the need to address the risks resulting from the financial difficulties of the PA.
10. Reiterating that “a way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two states.”
11. Calling for “intra-Palestinian reconciliation,” and looking forward “to the holding of elections as an important contribution to Palestinian state-building.”

12. Calling for facilitating “the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from the Gaza Strip,” with full recognition of “Israel’s legitimate security needs.”

Statements by the EU and its representatives did not deviate from these stances, as evident from the following statements:

1. A statement concerning settlement building, by the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton in November 2013, after the November 3 Israeli announcement that tenders were issued to build 1,859 housing units in East Jerusalem and the WB. Ashton said:

The EU has repeatedly stated that settlements are illegal under international law... The EU deplores the latest settlement announcement and calls on the Israeli government to reverse its decision. Any actions that could hamper or undermine the on-going negotiations must be avoided.⁴²

2. After the meeting of Catherine Ashton with the Palestinian president on 24/10/2013, the spokesperson of Ashton said:

The High Representative expressed full support of the European Union for the on-going Palestinian–Israeli negotiations which should lead to a two–state solution with the State of Israel and independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition... and reiterated the call for intra–Palestinian reconciliation as an important element for the unity of a future Palestinian state and for reaching a two–state solution.⁴³

3. The European Parliament had adopted a resolution in July 2012, with a majority of 291 members against 274, and 39 abstentions, calling on Israel to end the demolition of homes, evictions, and deportations against Palestinians, criticizing the Israeli actions in Area C of the occupied Palestinian territories. The European Parliament also expressed support for the two-state solution with the amendments that the parties themselves may agree to.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, European aid to the PA fell from €200 million (around \$257 million) in 2012 to €168 million (around \$223 million) in 2013. But interestingly, around €7 million (around \$9 million) from European aid goes to Area C of the WB (62% of WB area and inhabited by only 6% of the Palestinians), and is controlled by Israel and contains most Israeli settlements.⁴⁵ The EU also provided €153.5 million (around \$209.8 million) in 2013 to UNRWA.⁴⁶

On the other hand, there were a multitude of European statements regarding the boycott of Israeli products originating in Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 and there were some financial restrictions on European enterprises that support the settlements, notably in Norway.⁴⁷ However, a report in 2012 drafted by Hans van den Broek (former EU commissioner for external relations between 1993 to 1999), with contributions from 22 European NGOs, confirmed that the EU had imported \$300 million worth of goods from settlements every year, which is 15 times more than imports from the Palestinians.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, labor unions of France, Ireland, Britain, Italy and Sweden signed an agreement to boycott goods from Israeli settlements, including telecommunication services in the WB.⁴⁹

However, on 30/6/2013 the European Commission adopted a Notice containing guidelines requiring all EU countries to refrain from any funding, cooperation, granting of facilities, scholarships, research grants, or awards to any party based in Jewish settlements in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, which consist of the Golan Heights, GS, and the WB, including East Jerusalem. These guidelines stated that any future agreement to be signed with Israel should include clauses stipulating that settlements are not part of Israel, and therefore, are not covered by any agreement. Moreover, the Official Journal of the EU published these guidelines on 19/7/2013.⁵⁰ Perhaps this was why Israel responded by preventing a delegation from the EU from entering the GS.⁵¹

The Europeans give special attention the issue of Palestinian prisoners through the activities of European NGOs such as the European Network to Support the Rights of Palestinians Prisoners—Ufree, or through the efforts of parliamentary blocs in the European Parliament, or the activities of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, which are all engaged in efforts for their release.

Fourth: BRICS Countries⁵²

The importance of this group, which held its first summit in 2009, is that it includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (joined in 2010), and represents an emerging force that has increased its share of global economic output from 16% in 2000 to 23% in 2013, includes 42% of the world's population, is

responsible for 33% of the growth in global output, and is home to 42% of global monetary reserves.⁵³

These countries are traditionally seen as closer to Palestinian positions. This was clear from the few statements the BRICS group has issued since its inception. Between 2012 and 2013, the group issued a number of statements that clarified its positions on the Palestinian issue as follows:

1. The Delhi Declaration on 29/3/2012: After emphasizing the importance of security and stability in the Middle East, the BRICS countries agreed that “the period of transformation taking place in the Middle East and North Africa should not be used as a pretext to delay resolution of lasting conflicts but rather it should serve as an incentive to settle them, in particular the Arab-Israeli conflict.” The parties affirmed their “commitment to achieving comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of the universally recognized international legal framework including the relevant UN resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative.” The group urged “the Quartet to intensify its efforts and call for greater involvement of the UN Security Council in search for a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.” The group also called upon “Palestinians and Israelis to take constructive measures, rebuild mutual trust and create the right conditions for restarting negotiations, while avoiding unilateral steps, in particular settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.”⁵⁴

2. Statement by the Foreign Ministers of the BRICS countries on the sidelines of the 68th session of the UN General Assembly on 26/9/2013: The ministers welcomed the resumption of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations which they said was an “encouraging development.” They stressed that “the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a prerequisite for building a sustainable and lasting peace in the Middle East region.” They expressed hope that negotiations would “lead to a two-state solution with a contiguous and economically viable Palestinian state, existing side by side in peace with Israel, within internationally recognized borders, based on those existing on 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.” The ministers also called on the Quartet to submit reports regularly to the Security Council regarding its efforts, “which should contribute to concrete progress.” Moreover, the ministers “expressed concern about the construction of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, which constitutes a violation of international law and is harmful to the peace process.”⁵⁵

When comparing the statements made by the BRICS countries to those of the Quartet and the EU, the following may be observed:

1. The position on Jerusalem is more pronounced in the statements made by the BRICS countries compared to the attitudes of other international bodies. The BRICS countries refer unequivocally to East Jerusalem as falling within the territory of a Palestinian state, while the US and most European countries say the fate of the city is subject to “negotiations,” rather than international law and international legitimacy.

2. The statements by BRICS countries do not refer to land swaps, unlike the statements of Western powers in general.

3. The statements by BRICS countries do not contain phrases usually attached to some issued in Western statements, for example the phrase “as agreed upon by the parties,” usually used when referring to issues such as the refugees, borders and Jerusalem. This phrase is common in most US official statements in particular and European statements in general. This is often attached to all issues, including the settlements despite their being condemned, as evidenced by the guidelines of the European Commission in 2013 when it declared that it would not recognize “any changes to pre-1967 borders, other than those agreed by the parties to the Middle East Peace Process.”⁵⁶

4. Emphasizing the need for a greater role for the Security Council in the BRICS group statements seems more pronounced compared to the statements of other parties, noting that Israel does not favor UN intervention in the conflict.

5. Emphasizing Israeli security is more pronounced in the statements of the EU, the Quartet, and the US, compared to those of the BRICS countries.

6. The statements of the BRICS countries seem more averse to condemning Hamas, especially the launch of rockets on Israeli positions and settlements.

7. There are many common points between the BRICS group and other actors on several issues, such as condemning settlement building as against international law, and the recognition of the need for a Palestinian state.

When addressing the attitudes of each member of this group separately, it is worth being aware of the strategic orientations of those countries that are particularly interested in the Palestinian issue, specifically Russia, China and India, without losing sight of other members.

1. Russia

The document published by the Russian Foreign Ministry and approved by President Vladimir Putin in February 2013 shows the most prominent features of Russian strategic directions; the document states:⁵⁷

International Priorities: The most important principles that Russian foreign policy will promote include:

- a. Emergence of a New World Order “based on international law and principles of equality, mutual respect and non-interference in internal affairs of states.”
- b. Ensuring the enforcement of, and respect for, international law, and preventing arbitrary and politically motivated interpretation of fundamental international legal norms and principles in favor of certain countries.
- c. Strengthening international security by “reducing the role of the use of force in international relations while enhancing strategic and regional stability,” and supporting “the process aimed at establishing zones free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.”
- d. International Cooperation in the Sphere of Economy and Environment.
- e. International Humanitarian Cooperation and Human Rights.

Regional Priorities: The Russian document arranged geopolitical regions in the world in order of importance as follows:

- a. Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (former Soviet Union Republics) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).
- b. The EU.
- c. Coordination with NATO.
- d. Balkan region.
- e. The US.
- f. Asia Pacific.
- g. India and China.
- h. The two Koreas, Japan and all ASEAN countries.
- i. The Middle East.
- j. Latin America and the Caribbean.
- k. Africa.

Although Russia's regional priorities are not detailed until paragraph 42 of the document (especially for CIS and the CSTO), the Middle East was not mentioned until paragraph 88 (i.e., it was preceded by 46 higher priorities). This means that the Middle East as a geopolitical region came in ninth place in order of importance out of the 11 zones mentioned in the document. The document clarifies the Russian position on the crisis in the Middle East on the basis of:

- a. The establishment of a Palestinian state.
- b. Achieving a peaceful settlement through negotiations between the parties.
- c. The establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.

There appears to be a degree of convergence between the EU and Russia on foreign policy toward the Middle East, shown in the following statement issued by the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and EU High Representative Catherine Ashton in December 2012, where the two sides:⁵⁸

- a. Called on the parties to engage in negotiations “on the basis of UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, 1397, 1515, 1850, the Madrid principles including land for peace, the Roadmap, the Arab Peace Initiative and the agreements previously reached between the parties.”
- b. Affirmed that “all parties must avoid acts which undermine confidence and the viability of a two-state solution.”
- c. Reiterated that “settlements are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace,” and opposed any actions that could “jeopardize the possibility of a contiguous and viable Palestinian state.”
- d. Would not “recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties.”
- e. Called “on Israel to avoid any step undermining the financial situation of the Palestinian Authority.”
- f. Called on the Palestinian leadership to constructively use its status as a UN non-member observer state and “not to undertake steps which would deepen the lack of trust and lead further away from a negotiated solution.”

- g. Welcomed the “21 November [2012] ceasefire between the Gaza Strip groups and Israel,” and called “for the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of goods and persons to and from the Gaza Strip.”
- h. Called for “intra-Palestinian reconciliation.”

It seems that Russia understands the US predicament in the Middle East, and believes that it offers a greater opportunity for diplomatic engagement in the region. This has been evident during the crisis in Syria since 2011 and in Egypt since the ouster of Egyptian President Muhammad Morsi in July 2013, in addition to the Russian role in the Iranian nuclear program issue.

The formation of the BRICS group and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)⁵⁹ gave impetus to Russian approaches. Interestingly, however, statements by the SCO from its founding in 2001 until 2013, did not include any reference to Middle East problems, with the exception of one reference in the statement of presidents in June 2012 regarding the Syrian crisis, calling on the parties to engage in dialogue.⁶⁰

The Russian position on Hamas is different compared to the positions of other major powers. While European powers generally, and the US especially, treat Hamas as a “terror group,” Russia, as evident from repeated positions, does not perceive Hamas from this angle. This was expressed clearly by Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov in an interview with Rossiya-24 television channel on 28/4/2012, during which he said, “The West considers Hamas to be a terrorist organization. We do not think so and we have regularly worked with Hamas and continue this work.” Lavrov added, “Political Islam is a normal phenomenon. It does not raise any concern with us, and we do not have to try hard to learn to work with these parties because we have worked with them, the Islamists, for a very long time.” Lavrov said that “ignoring such parties and movements leads to negative results,” and added, “Hamas won elections in Palestine, won honestly, and everyone recognized that. The elections were free and fair but the West refused to recognize the results because the West considers Hamas to be a terrorist organization.”⁶¹

The Russian positions in this regard were reiterated continuously with frequent meetings between Hamas leaders and Russian officials in 2012 and 2013. Lavrov stressed that “the Palestinian issue must remain a top priority and should not be neglected as a result of the upheavals of the Arab Spring.”⁶²

As for Russian economic diplomacy on the Palestinian issue, it remains modest when compared to the size of European or American aid. In July 2012 Russia declared that it would provide \$2 million to UNRWA for 2013.⁶³

2. China

Chinese policy in the Middle East is consistent with the theory of China's peaceful rise developed by Chinese thinker Zheng Bijian, or the peaceful development of former President Hu Jintao. Both of these approaches focus on using soft power and avoiding neo-mercantilism or protectionism, where the growing strength of China economically and militarily is not be a threat to international peace and security. This means that China engages all with countries with fewer ideological restrictions.

The features of this policy are evident in the fact that Chinese trade relations continue to grow with both the Arab region and Israel, with oil being the center of trade with Arabs, and technology with Israel. This was the gist of Chinese policy toward the Middle East in 2012 and 2013.

Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping, during a meeting in Beijing with Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman in March 2012, stressed China's desire to deepen relations and build trust with Israel. Israel and China cooperate in the areas of communications technology. Agreements were signed between Israeli and Chinese companies in the Chinese city of Chengdu, which is one of the most important centers of Israel activity in China.⁶⁴

Sino-Israeli military cooperation is also growing, demonstrated by the increasing frequency of military meetings between the two sides. In May 2012, the chiefs of staff of the two countries' armies met. Moreover, Chinese warships visited the port of Haifa in August 2012, in preparation for a joint military exercise.⁶⁵

On the other hand, China supports the establishment of a Palestinian state, condemns the settlements, and condemns acts of violence. China also called on Israel to halt its raids on GS in March 2012, and to improve the conditions of Palestinian prisoners, and supported the accession of Palestine to the UN as a non-member observer state.

In a meeting between Palestinian President Mahmud 'Abbas and Chinese President Xi Jinping in May 2013 in Beijing, the Chinese president put forward a four-point proposal to resolve the conflict in the Middle East as follows:⁶⁶

- a. Establishing “an independent state enjoying full sovereignty on the basis of the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital...at the same time, Israel’s right to exist and its legitimate security concerns should also be fully respected.”
- b. Taking negotiation “as the only way to peace between Palestine and Israel.” Both sides should “meet each other half way.” Taking “credible steps to stop settlement activities, end violence against innocent civilians, lift the blockade of the Gaza Strip and properly handle the issue of Palestinian prisoners” should be an immediate priority. Moreover, “Comprehensive internal reconciliation on the part of Palestine will help restart and advance the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks.”
- c. “Principles such as ‘land for peace’ should be firmly upheld,” as well as “the relevant UN resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.”
- d. “The international community should provide important guarantees for progress in the peace process. Relevant parties of the international community should have a greater sense of responsibility and urgency, take an objective and fair position.” The parties should also “increase assistance to Palestine in such fields as human resources training and economic development.”

At the end of the talks, the two sides signed an agreement for economic and technical cooperation as well as for cooperation in the educational and cultural spheres.⁶⁷

3. India

Palestinian-Indian relations evolved to the level of embassies during a visit by Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas to India on 10–12/9/2012. India provided financial assistance worth \$10 million, and three agreements were signed between the two sides in the fields of information and communication technology, vocational training and construction of schools. India was among the countries that oversaw the drafting of a resolution for the recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer state of the UN in November 2012.⁶⁸

Indo-Israeli relations have also continued to evolve. In 2012, there were multiple visits by Indian officials and ministers to Israel, such as the visits of: minister of communication, information technology and human resource development (3–8/4/2012), ministers of agriculture (15–17/5/2012), a delegation from the Ministry of Defense (3–7/6/2012), minister of tourism (23–26/6/2012),

and secretary of the Ministry of Textiles (4–8/9/2012). Also, four ships of the Indian fleet visited the port of Haifa (30/7–2/8/2012). Moreover, the sixth round of India-Israel Free Trade Agreement negotiations was held in Israel (20–23/1/2013).⁶⁹

Fifth: Japan

Perhaps the most important development concerning Japanese efforts in the Middle East after the Corridor for Peace and Prosperity announced in 2006, was the hosting of the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD) on 13–14/2/2013, attended by Japan's Special Envoy for the Middle East Yutaka Iimura. The conference encouraged the two-state solution, and seeks to consult with aid agencies and Asian and Arab business leaders to expand trade and investment in Palestine.⁷⁰

In addition to this, Japanese officials were involved in efforts to support the peace process. Japanese Foreign Minister Koichiro Gamba visited the region in May 2012, following a visit by the Palestinian president in April 2012. In July 2013, the new Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida conducted a second visit.⁷¹

Statements issued by the Japanese government in 2012 and 2013 condemned the Israeli decision to build housing units in East Jerusalem.⁷² The statements also called for offering aid to counter the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the GS, and financial aid to Palestine and UNRWA. Japanese aid to the Palestinians from 1993–2013 is estimated to be in the vicinity of \$1.35 billion, including \$27 million to UNRWA in 2012, and \$28.8 million in 2013.⁷³

Sixth: The United Nations (UN)

By observing the activities of the UN, it is noticeable that the general characteristic of its role in the Palestinian issue is the continuation of its traditional attitudes in most of the topics that were discussed during the two years 2012 and 2013. However, a “relative” change was a UN resolution issued on 29/11/2012 to recognize Palestine as a non-member observer state of the UN. This was a significant legal development that confers greater legitimacy on the Palestinian entity, but did not alter the overall political behavior of the direct and indirect parties to the conflict.

Beyond this development, the activities of the UN remained in the confines of their traditional pattern, as is clear in the 67th and 68th sessions in 2012 and 2013, as follows:

1. The General Assembly

a. The 67th session of the UN General Assembly in autumn 2012: The General Assembly adopted 19 resolutions on the Palestinian issue, including most notably:⁷⁴

1. A resolution supporting the Palestinian people's sovereignty over their natural resources in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem (the same support was offered to the Arab population of the occupied Golan). The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 170 in favor to 7 against (including Israel and the US).
2. A resolution on 20/12/2012 supporting the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 179 in favor to 7 against.
3. A resolution deeming Israeli practices harmful to human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 164 in favor to 8 against.
4. A resolution rejecting settlement in the occupied territories and the Golan Heights. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 169 in favor to 6 against.
5. A resolution calling for the application of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War in the occupied Arab territories, including East Jerusalem. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 171 in favor to 6 against.
6. A resolution calling for supporting UNRWA. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 172 in favor to 6 against.
7. A resolution to provide aid to Palestinian refugees. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 170 in favor to 1 against (Israel).
8. A resolution calling for providing assistance to the Palestinian people. The resolution passed without being put to a vote.

9. A resolution emphasizing a peaceful settlement to the Palestinian issue. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 163 in favor to 6 against.
10. A resolution calling on the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat to continue its special information program on the question of Palestine. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 160 in favor to 7 against.
11. A resolution calling on the secretary-general for providing the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat with the necessary resources and ensuring that it continues to carry out its program. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 103 in favor to 7 against.
12. A resolution calling the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP) to continue to exert all efforts to promote the realization of the rights of the Palestinians. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 106 in favor to 7 against.
13. A resolution on 29/11/2012 to recognize Palestine as a non-member observer state of the UN. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 138 in favor to 9 against.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that this resolution grants the state of Palestine “the right to sign the Rome Statute” establishing the International Criminal Court (ICC).⁷⁵

- b. The 68th session of the UN General Assembly in autumn 2013: The General Assembly adopted the following resolutions:⁷⁶
 1. Declaring 2014 a year for solidarity with the Palestinian people and calling on the CEIRPP to arrange this in cooperation with governments and other bodies. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 110 in favor to 7 against.
 2. Encouraging the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat to develop mechanisms for dialogue among peoples, and to promote peace in the region. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 163 in favor to 7 against.
 3. Calling for an international conference in Moscow, on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 1850 of 2008, to make progress and expedite

the resumption of the peace process in the Middle East. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 165 in favor to 6 against.

4. Deeming all legal and administrative actions taken by Israel to change the legal status of East Jerusalem illegal and invalid, and calling for halting all settlement activity and all actions that affect *al-Aqsa* Mosque. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 162 in favor to 6 against.
5. Calling on Israel to withdraw to pre-1967 borders including the Golan Heights, and emphasizing that peace and coexistence cannot be ensured until Palestinians obtain their legitimate rights. The resolution was adopted by a recorded vote of 112 in favor to 6 against.

When examining the level of support for these resolutions, it becomes clear that the general average of support for Palestinian rights in the UN (General Assembly) in 2012 was 155 in favor, while the average of countries opposed was 7. The general average of support in 2013 was 142 countries, a decline from the previous year (though this has to do with the nature of the resolutions). By reviewing the voting patterns, it becomes clear that the states opposed to Palestinian rights at the UN during the sessions are: Israel, the US, Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Canada, Australia, Czech Republic and Panama. This means that most world powers except the US are more responsive to the aspirations of the Palestinian people, while Israel finds support for its positions primarily in a group of microstates and the US.

In spite of the tepid role of the UN in the Palestinian issue, it represents a mirror of the gradual and progressive evolution in countries' attitudes towards the Palestinian issue. This explains Israel's concerns regarding the shift in the attitudes of the international community and its desire not to internationalize the Palestinian issue.

2. United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

ECOSOC adopted the following resolutions concerning Palestine in 2012 and 2013:⁷⁷

- a. A resolution to open all crossings in GS, in accordance with a UN Security Council resolution in 2009. The resolution called on Israel to abide by the Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization known as the Paris Protocol, which was

signed in Paris in 1994, the cessation of demolition of buildings and opening the way for individuals to move freely, and stopping the exploitation of Palestinian natural resources. The resolution deemed the continuation of the construction of the Separation Wall a violation of international law.

- b. A resolution holding Israel responsible for hindering the development of Palestinian women, urging the international community to assist them, and calling on Israel to abide by international covenants on human rights.

3. Secretariat

The Secretariat of the UN, represented by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, reiterated a number of traditional attitudes about the situation in Palestine during the period 2012–2013:

- a. Emphasizing in a statement on 2/12/2012 the illegality of the settlements in the Palestinian territories.⁷⁸
- b. Sending a message on 11/12/2012 to an international conference held in Baghdad, expressing solidarity with Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons.⁷⁹
- c. Rejecting, in a statement on 30/10/2013, settlement activities in the Palestinian territories occupied after 1967, and considering these acts illegal.⁸⁰

4. United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC)

The HRC reaffirmed its traditional attitudes in resolutions and statements during the period 2012–2013, in particular:⁸¹

- a. Asserting right of self-determination of the Palestinian people.
- b. Highlighting the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem (the WB and GS).
- c. Following-up the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (Goldstone Report).
- d. Re-emphasizing rejection of settlement in the occupied Palestinian territories.
- e. Emphasizing in the statements of 2013 the same issues as before, in addition to issuing a report on the repercussions of settlements on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories.

In March 2012, the HRC, with a majority of 36 votes to 1 (the US), voted to “dispatch an independent international fact-finding mission to investigate the

implications of the Israeli settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.”⁸²

The attitudes of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Richard Falk, regarding Israeli practices, were indicative of the growing international criticism of Israeli practices. In a press conference in Amman, Falk said that “Israel remains fully responsible to uphold its legal obligations in Gaza,” and stressed that the suffering of Palestinian refugees is a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Falk said that “self-determination is a fundamental, inalienable human right.” Falk spoke criticizing the Israeli stance on his mission, saying, “It is unfortunate the Government of Israel refuses to cooperate with this mandate from the United Nations Human Rights Council. I did again request Israel’s cooperation with the mission. However, as in the past, Israel did not even bother to respond to my request.” He concluded, “Israel’s occupation, now in its 45th year, must be brought to an end, if Palestinians are ever to attain their basic rights under international law and sustainable security and peace achieved for both peoples.”⁸³

Richard Falk went on to warn that “businesses should not breach international humanitarian law provisions. Nor should they be complicit in any breaches. If they do, they may be subject to criminal or civil liability.” Falk said that positive responses were received from some companies, who suspended their operations or relocated them to the WB.⁸⁴

The HRC had hosted an international debate in Geneva in March 2012, during its 19th session, to discuss Israeli violations of human rights in the occupied territories. The HRC succeeded in obtaining the signatures of some 300 international organizations on a statement condemning Israeli violations of Palestinian rights and calling for lifting restrictions on their movement.⁸⁵

5. Security Council⁸⁶

The activities of the Security Council during the period 2012–2013 focused on briefings by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman on the general situation in the occupied Palestinian territories (settlement activity, Israeli arrests of Palestinians, the demolition of houses and acts of violence between

the two sides, and a cease-fire in the GS, as well as living conditions, particularly in relation to energy and construction in the GS, etc.).

In September 2013, the Security Council held hearings for Robert Serry, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, who stressed the need to resume negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian sides, calling for the two state solution to be given the opportunity to become a reality, and describing the harsh living conditions in both the GS and the WB.

UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Oscar Fernández-Taranco also submitted a report to the Security Council in August 2013, stressing his concern regarding continued settlement activities and arrests of Palestinian citizens, and expressing concern about the security situation in the GS.

6. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

A report issued by UNRWA said the agency needed approximately \$300 million to fulfill its growing needs in 2013.⁸⁷ The agency received its largest contribution from the US in 2012, to the tune of \$233 million. In 2013 it received a total of \$244.5 million.⁸⁸

Seventh: International Public Opinion

Global polls represent an important dimension, although the political implications they imply often do not appear immediately. In previous reports, we pointed out to the decline in international community approval of Israeli policies, which is worthy of attention, especially by Palestinian officials, due to its long term effects.

Global polls show that evaluations of Israel's influence in the world, already largely unfavorable in 2011, worsened in 2012 and 2013, as the following table shows:

Table 3/5: Views of Israel's Influence by Country 2012–2013 (%)⁸⁹

Country	2012		2013	
	Mainly positive	Mainly negative	Mainly positive	Mainly negative
US	50	35	51	32
Canada	25	59	25	57
Chile	21	34	29	41
Mexico	19	44	13	53
Brazil	17	58	15	58
Peru	11	35	16	40
Russia	25	26	23	32
France	20	65	21	63
UK	16	68	14	72
Germany	16	69	8	67
Spain	12	74	4	70
Nigeria	54	29	35	38
Kenya	45	31	42	15
Ghana	19	19	44	32
Egypt	7	85	1	96
China	23	45	32	33
South Korea	20	69	23	56
Australia	18	65	16	69
India	17	29	16	26
Pakistan	9	50	12	65
Indonesia	8	61	12	70
Japan	3	45	3	54
Poland	–	–	15	44
Greece	–	–	15	46
Turkey	–	–	8	81
Global average	21	50	20	52

When comparing evaluations of Israel's influence in the world in 2012 with 2013, it is possible to observe that negative views of Israel's influence rose by 2%, while positive views declined by 1%.

On the other hand, reports by international NGOs were an important source of information on international public opinion about Israeli policies, especially

highly credible organizations like Amnesty International. In its reports for 2012 and 2013, Amnesty International closely tracked Israeli practices, especially in areas such as the humanitarian crisis resulting from the siege of the GS, restrictions on the movements of the residents of the WB, forced evictions, excessive use of force, arrest without a warrant, the conditions endured by detainees, torture, and the situation of refugees. These reports condemn all Israeli practices in all of these areas.⁹⁰

Amnesty International was founded in 1961 and awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977; operates in 150 countries, and cooperates with about three million people across these countries. It is therefore important to recognize the importance of its reports.

On 5/7/2012 Oxfam International (an organization focused on poverty and injustice, operating in about 90 countries) held Israel fully responsible for the poor living conditions in the territories occupied in 1967, which prompted the Israeli government to issue sharp criticism against the reports published by Oxfam.⁹¹

In the same vein, in February 2012, the Israeli government clashed with World Vision, a Christian Anglican organization, and one of the wealthiest charitable organizations in the world (\$2.8 billion), after making unproven accusations that a branch of the charity in Australia provided financial support to the PFLP.⁹²

Reports by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for the years 2012 and 2013 also highlight the poor conditions of Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons and the living conditions in the GS and the WB. These reports are usually distributed in 80 countries.⁹³

Conclusion

If we exclude the fact that Palestine obtained a seat as a non-member observer state in the UN and the continuing decline in international support for Israel, 2012 and 2013 were characterized by the decline of the Palestinian issue behind international and regional developments. Most notably the repercussions of the Arab Spring and the Iranian nuclear file, translated into the failure to fulfill international promises regarding the two-state solution or even regular international economic aid to the PA.

This coincided with the failure of the internal Palestinian reconciliation deal, confusion in the policies of the PA (cabinet reshuffles, and the pending resignation of the Palestinian negotiating team), and the continuation of settlements. In addition, there were credible reports about a possible compromise on the Jordan Valley that remained circulated in the media without official clarifications regarding claims about an American project that essentially includes the continuation of Israeli military presence in the Jordan Valley.

Israeli-Palestinian negotiations resumed while there were pledges to reach a solution in mid-2014, a continuation of settlement building, and a bid by the US administration to divert attention towards partial projects (such as the Jordan Valley, the release of some detainees and economic development in the 1967 occupied territories), and these indicate that 2014 will bring very high risks. This is especially in light of the Arab preoccupation with local concerns, regional deals with the major regional powers, and deteriorating relations between Palestinian resistance forces and the powers that traditionally support them.

Endnotes

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Chapter Six

The Land and the Holy Sites

The Land and the Holy Sites

Introduction

During 2012–2013 Jerusalem witnessed great leaps in Israel’s Judaization project. During the 2013 elections, groups advocating the construction of the “temple” and the destruction of *al-Aqsa* Mosque were able to acquire elections unprecedented political status. At the same time, they managed to improve their organization, activities and ability to coordinate. No observer or researcher will fail to see that the Judaization of Jerusalem is one of the central goals of the Israeli state, for which it utilizes resources and energy; it is progressing on the ground in an unprecedentedly efficient manner, and that it has been increasingly acquiring US cover.

Israeli settlement expansion continues to go hand in hand with land confiscation programs, construction of housing units, destruction of Palestinian agriculture, imposition of control over Palestinian water, laying bypass roads, and demolition of Palestinian homes. This is in addition to the continuing the siege of the GS and military attacks against it, destruction of its infrastructure, obstruction of fishing, and other programs for attacking Palestinians and their land.

First: Islamic and Christian Holy Sites

1. *Al-Aqsa* Mosque

a. Developments in the Political, Religious and Legal Stances Towards *al-Aqsa* Mosque

After *al-Aqsa* Mosque was occupied in 1967, the occupation authorities enacted a law called “Protection of Holy Places Law,” which consisted of five items that included protecting the holy places from “desecration and any other violation,” and determined a punishment for those who desecrate them or “violate the freedom of access of the members of the different religions to the places sacred to them.”¹ In practice, the Israeli government interpreted this text by directing the Israeli police to prevent Jews from entering *al-Aqsa* Mosque, citing many factors and considerations. The mosque was placed under the management of the Ministry

of Defense, in a tacit admission that *al-Aqsa* Mosque is an occupied territory, the same as the rest of the WB territories captured in the war of 1967, contrary to what Zionist decrees had declared in their theory of annexing Jerusalem.

In view of these historical facts, this law and its interpretation by the Israeli police constituted a barrier to Orthodox Jews advocating the construction of the “temple.” And with their gradual rise since the 1990s, these groups faced two choices: either to enact substitute legislation in the Knesset that explicitly states “the rights of Jews” over *al-Aqsa* Mosque, or resort to Israeli courts in the hope of securing gradual change in the interpretation of this law.

Since 1993, these groups began a game of exchanging roles with Israeli courts; at first they presented an inquiry to the “Supreme Court” in which they asked whether what it called the “Temple Mount” was part of the “Land of Israel”; the reply came in the affirmative. Then at the turn of the 21st century, they applied for Jews’ entry into the mosque, based on the first judgment. In 2003, a provision was issued that allows Jews to enter the mosque; thus, for the first time, changing the task of the Israeli police from preventing Jews from entering, to allowing them in. Then, in 2005, a new provision was enacted that allowed Jews entry en masse “in non-Muslim prayer time.” The court thus disclosed for the first time, albeit implicitly, an agenda for dividing *al-Aqsa* Mosque. Then in 2010, these groups presented a request to make offerings inside *al-Aqsa* Mosque; the court denied their request for security reasons.²

It seems that this legal route has reached saturation in terms of what can be achieved, as the rules of access to *al-Aqsa* Mosque have indeed changed. With the accumulation of permissions allowing Jews to enter the mosque, individually and in groups, the task of the Israeli police having changed from preventing them from entering, to protecting them and their incursions. A special task force was formed to protect Jews inside the mosque, and a security field of cameras, thermal sensors, and three-dimensional simulation programs was installed in all parts of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the roofed and the non-roofed areas.

Despite these developments, extremist Jewish groups went to the Knesset again to complete their project. And since they had, in the previous Knesset, a limited pressure group of seven deputies, on 9/8/2012 they let their deputies present a plan to divide *al-Aqsa* Mosque into a full temporal division; consisting of nine hours a day for Jewish worshipers, and nine hours a day for Muslim worshipers,

and to limit access to it to Jews on Jewish holidays and to Muslims on Islamic holidays.³ Despite the fact that the Speaker of the Knesset withdrew this item from circulation at that meeting, fearing the repercussions of discussing it, the project has revealed the goals of these groups in unequivocal terms.

The 19th Knesset elections on 22/1/2013, gave the temple groups greater political influence; and in the formation of the government emerging from the elections, they comprised a bloc of six ministers and deputy ministers, namely:⁴

1. Uri Yehuda Ariel, one of the biggest advocates of continuous incursions into *al-Aqsa* Mosque, and an active participant in them. He belongs to The Jewish Home Party (*HaBayit HaYehudi*), and was appointed Minister of Construction and Housing.
2. Naftali Bennett, a member of The Jewish Home Party, Minister of Religious Services, Minister of Industry, Trade, and Labor, and Minister of Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs.
3. Danny Danon is the one who proposed a bill to ban the early morning (Fajr) call to prayer (Adhan) from mosques, a member of Likud-Yisrael Beitenu, Deputy Minister of Defense.
4. Zeev Elkin is the one who proposed division in terms of time allowed to visit *al-Aqsa*, presented on 9/8/2012; a member of Likud-Yisrael Beitenu; Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.
5. Tzipi Hotovely is a member of the Likud Party, Danon's partner in the bill to ban the early morning call to prayer; Deputy Minister of Transport and Road Safety.
6. Eli Ben-Dahan, a member of The Jewish Home Party, Deputy Minister of Religious Services.

In addition, there are two leaders at the Knesset level: Rabbi Moshe Feiglin, a member of Likud-Yisrael Beitenu, is deputy speaker of Knesset, and Miri Regev, chairwoman of the Knesset Internal Affairs and Environment Committee.⁵

Despite this unprecedented progress, these groups did not submit a new draft law on the division to the Knesset. They rather opted to use their newfound powers to put pressure on state agencies to advance their agenda. Thus, they offered an idea for consideration to the effect that *al-Aqsa* Mosque is not under Israeli sovereignty, and that the entire state's apparatus must discuss ways to subjugate it to Israeli

sovereignty. Thus, the Knesset Internal Affairs and Environment Committee convened more than once to discuss this subject; it was also discussed in a special report by the state prosecutor. Starting on 14/4/2013, marches and sit-ins by these groups were organized to provoke public opinion, and a three-track campaign was launched:

1. Pressuring the Israeli police to amend the rules of entering the mosque, and restrict Muslims' entry to it, with a focus on the times targeted for division, in particular the time of forenoon (Duha). Consequently, Israeli police amended entry rules to *al-Aqsa* Mosque, and visiting Jews repeatedly attacked Muslims there.
2. Restricting Islamic endowments (Waqf) activities, and imposing supervision upon their restoration work.
3. Political abolition of the status quo, culminating on 25/2/2014 with long discussions in the Knesset on the transfer of sovereignty on *al-Aqsa* Mosque de facto to Jordanian sovereignty.⁶ In fact, Jordan has limited administrative powers over *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the Islamic endowments and the Islamic courts, through the Department of Islamic Endowments and the Jerusalem Council of Endowments. However, and since sovereignty is a concept linked to possessing coercive power and the ability to enforce the law by using this force, it is effectively already in the hands of the occupation.

The temple groups view what happened in 1967, consecrating the administrative authority of endowments over *al-Aqsa* Mosque, as an historical sin. Today they look forward to using their new influence to correct this path and to place the mosque under the authority of the Israeli Ministry of Religious Services, to be administered directly by Israel, taking advantage of the state of regional political vacuum around it, and the unprecedented US support for its agenda. A document was revealed by al-Aqsa Association for Waqf and Heritage on 11/10/2013; the group called *Manhigut Yehudit* (Jewish leadership) in the Likud Party presented a scheme to the Minister of Religious Services including temporal and spatial division of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, and the basis upon which it should be run. For the first time, the scheme explicitly disclosed the plan for a spatial division of the mosque, aiming to define two spaces for the prayer of the Jews in the Eastern courtyards of the mosque: the first colored green and allocated to individual prayers of Jews, and the second colored brown and allocated to their collective prayers.⁷

Map 1/6: Spatial Division of *al-Aqsa* Mosque

There are 19 associations with “temple”-related missions, registered with the Registrar of Associations, and enjoying wide cooperation from the Knesset, Israeli government, and the political establishment.⁸

b. The Excavations and Constructions Under *al-Aqsa* Mosque and in Its Vicinity

The previous highest increase in the number of declared excavations was registered before 21/8/2012, as four new excavations were added on the west side, most notably those of the Jewish Quarter; excavations at the Old City’s “New Gate,”⁹ one site in the south, and another in the north called “Solomon Quarries.” Israel began restoration work on this renowned historical cave; and in December 2011, a new opening was made in the Jerusalem City wall to the east of the cave’s entrance, which turned out to be an opening of an excavation annexed to the cave. The authorities claimed at the time that it constituted an emergency exit for the cave’s visitors. Excavation work is still ongoing in this cave that extends

naturally 250 meters to the south; and it is likely that these operations aim to add an additional southern area to the cave, to connect it to the network of tunnels below *al-Aqsa* Mosque, in order to form a northern gateway to these excavations.¹⁰

Since then, it seems that the number of excavations has stabilized, and that throughout 2013, efforts have been focused on connecting these excavations the one with the other to prepare them for visitors, by forming an integrated underground tourist city.

Table 1/6: Number of Excavations Under *al-Aqsa* Mosque and in Its Vicinity, 1/8/2012–1/8/2013¹¹

Region		Southern side	Western side	Northern side	Total
Type of excavations	Completed	5	12	0	17
	Active	12	13	5	30
Total		17	25	5	47

Number of Excavations Under *al-Aqsa* Mosque and in Its Vicinity, 1/8/2012–1/8/2013

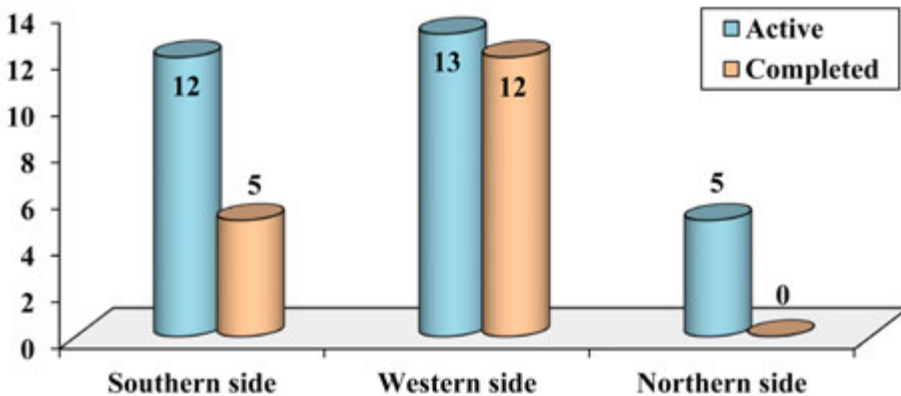
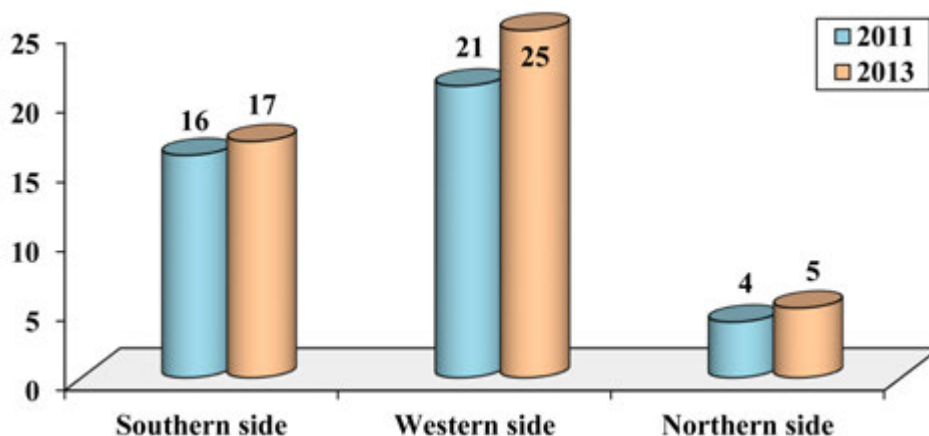


Table 2/6: Number of Excavations Under *al-Aqsa* Mosque and in Its Vicinity, 21/8/2011–1/8/2013¹²

Region	No. of excavations on 21/8/2011	No. of excavations on 1/8/2013	% increase
Southern side	16	17	6
Western side	21	25	19
Northern side	4	5	25
Total	41	47	15

**Number of Excavations Under *al-Aqsa* Mosque and in Its Vicinity,
21/8/2011–1/8/2013**



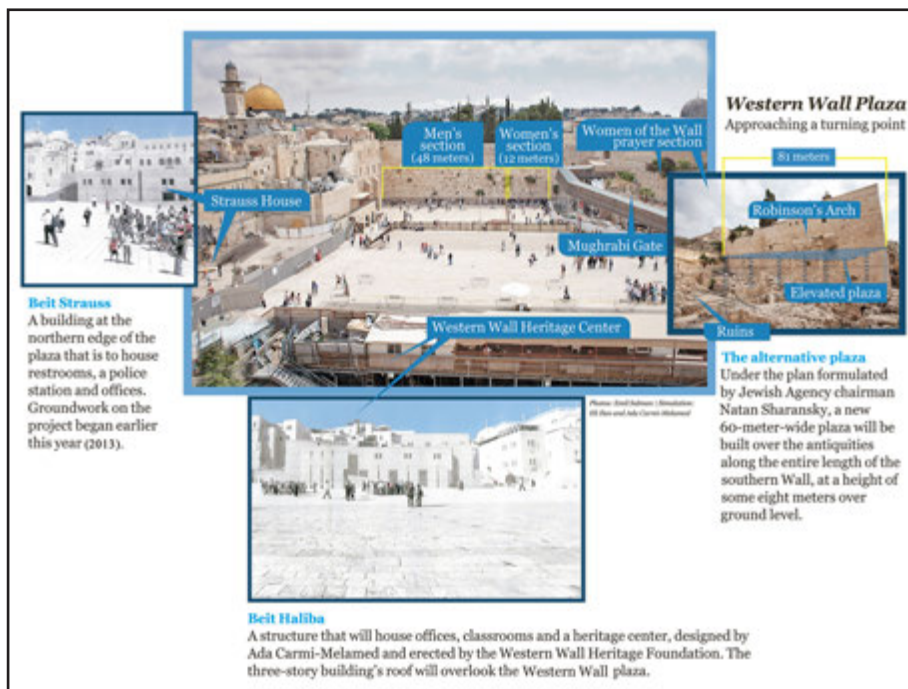
The year 2013 witnessed the crystallization of a new vision for structures in the vicinity of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, in particular in the area around the Western Wall. In 2007, the plan “old Jerusalem” known as the “Kedem Yerushalayim” had presented a concept that included the establishment of a religious seminary in the western end of the Western Wall Square and a synagogue above the Tankaziyya School. However, it is now considered the minimum plan on which the different spectra of Zionists agree, while they seek to make additions that vary from one team to another. These additions remained controversial until 2013, when a set of new buildings west of *al-Aqsa* Mosque were approved, including:

1. The Temple Institute’s new Visitors’ Center, taking the place of the Biblical Institute that was proposed in the scheme of “Kedem Yerushalayim.” These buildings are larger than the previously proposed institute.¹³
2. The plan to establish the “Strauss House” as a new Judaizing structure north of Western Wall Square. This consists of three floors and has an area of 900 square meters,¹⁴ in place of the one floor building previously proposed, the plans of which were presented for approval in 2010. And on 5/2/2013, stone archways in the area were demolished in order to start digging the foundations of this complex.¹⁵
3. The Natan Sharansky plan: to build an enormous wooden deck that would cover 500 square meters and be suspended seven to eight meters off the ground by steel beams to create an additional space for worship in the south of the Western Wall Square.¹⁶

Kedem 1



The Plan to Expand Western Wall Square¹⁷



The Strauss House¹⁸



As for the southern side, on 13/2/2012 a construction plan was approved for the most important and largest project in the “Kedem Yerushalayim” scheme, which has become known as the “Kedem Center.” It will be built in Silwan, facing the walls of Jerusalem’s Old City. It will reach a height of seven stories with a total area of 16,400 square meters, making it the largest Judaizing landmark approved so far in the vicinity of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, from all four sides.¹⁹

The Kedem Center in Silwan²⁰



The Issue of the Mughrabi Hill²¹

The Israeli authorities had fixed a period of one month, starting on 28/10/2011, for the demolition of the Moroccan Hill, sparking a wave of public uproar in Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian interior. The Israeli Prime Minister was forced to back down on the demolition plan at the last moment on the evening of 27/11/2011. Following this backing down, work at the site was suspended for several months; however, it was resumed quietly, starting in May 2012. Axes and hoes were used in the demolition works to avoid drawing attention and in order not to provoke any protests.²² Press reports stated that, on 9/7/2012, a truck laden with dust and debris was taken out of the site overnight.²³ As for UNESCO, the implementation of decisions relating to the “Ascent to the Mughrabi Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem” continues to be a fixed item on the agenda of its Executive Board, without achieving any breakthrough in this file.

c. Jewish Presence Inside *al-Aqsa* Mosque and Interference in Its Administration

The year 2013 witnessed an intensification of incursions into *al-Aqsa* Mosque, in quantity and quality. Perhaps the most significant developments in this regard can be summarized as follows:

1. Official figures leading the incursions: Dignitaries from the temple groups reaching advanced parliamentary and ministerial positions, they started advocating and encouraging incursions. The Minister of Construction and Housing Uri Ariel and the Deputy Speaker of the Knesset, Moshe Feiglin, took the lead in calling for successive intrusions into the mosque.
2. Periodical intrusions by members of the military: a new program was introduced in the army to familiarize recruits with the “Temple Mount,” whereby two incursions are implemented each week, one by male recruits and another by female recruits. Each group usually consists of 60 male or female recruits. Most of the time, and in conjunction with this intrusion, the Israeli police impose a full closure of the mosque.

Incursions by Male Soldiers**Incursions by Female Soldiers**

As for interference in the administration of the mosque, Israeli forces have intensified restrictions on worshippers there. Friday prayers were held on 15, 22 and 29/3/2013 in a near-empty mosque. Restoration works carried out by the Endowment authorities were closely monitored. The Israeli police conducted inspection tours of those works, photographed them and halted them. They even summoned the Endowment crews working there for questioning, as happened on 28/5/2013.²⁴

Over the past two years, the policy of preventing Endowment employees from entering *al-Aqsa* Mosque has evolved. As on 6/9/2012, the occupation authorities issued an injunction prohibiting the director of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, Sheikh Najeh Bkeirat, from entering the mosque, only three days after his appointment. They arrested him on 16/9/2012, holding him for two days, for approaching the mosque at a distance of less than 20 meters.²⁵ The ban was renewed on 3/3/2013,²⁶ and again on 11/9/2013.²⁷ In contrast, the Jordanian Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs merely condemned the ban, a few days after it was imposed.²⁸ With the renewal of the ban twice, it found that it had no choice but to remove Sheikh Najeh Bkeirat on 17/2/2014 from his post as director of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

2. Jerusalem's Islamic Holy Sites

The Mamilla Cemetery, located west of Jerusalem's Old City, was the highest ranking Islamic holy site to be violated during this period. Drilling continued there to establish the "Center for Human Dignity-Museum of Tolerance." On 19/3/2013, al-Aqsa Association for Waqf and Heritage revealed 10 judaizing schemes that would totally devour the 25 remaining donums of its area. They include the development of "Independence Park," a warehouse for storing "heavy equipment

and machines, which belongs to contractors who work on nearby projects,” pathways for walking, a promenade, and new buildings of both the central and magistrates courts.²⁹ The Israeli government announced on 10/6/2013 that it was backing down from the project of building a court complex on the cemetery’s grounds,³⁰ while maintaining the rest of the projects.

3. Jerusalem’s Christian Holy Sites

a. The Vatican Agreement

In early 2012, the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee, charged with discussing the fate of Vatican’s properties and tax privileges, announced that it had made progress on the way to signing an agreement regulating this issue between the two sides. June 2012 was chosen as the date for convening the next round of negotiations in the hope of reaching an agreement.³¹ The Vatican did not make public the substance of the anticipated agreement, leaving plenty of room for speculation. The critical points, of which Palestinian and several Arab sources had warned, including the PA, Jordan and Morocco,³² can be summed up in two basic points:

1. The agreement may implicitly recognize Israel’s sovereignty over Jerusalem and the territories occupied in 1967: as the disposition of the church’s properties in Jerusalem will be done in agreement with the Israeli authorities, particularly those properties in the eastern part of the city. This means the implicit concession of the Vatican—with the religious weight it represents—of the legitimacy of Israeli sovereignty over these territories.
2. The vague destiny of the Last Supper room—Cenacle: a number of Christian denominations believe that the Last Supper described in the Gospel of Jesus Christ with his disciples took place in the upper room the Cenacle of the building known today as the Mosque and Tomb of David. This is a shrine that has historically remained in Muslim control and in the continual custody of the Jerusalemite Dajani family. Before the occupation, Christians were able to visit the Cenacle inside this sanctuary. Following the occupation of the city in 1948, the occupation authorities handed over its management to the Ministry of Religious Services; and it was converted to a synagogue for Sephardic Jews, the Sephardim. There was a leak to the media in 2012 that the Vatican might

agree to keep the building under Jewish management in exchange for allowing Franciscan monks to administer the Cenacle of the Last Supper or visit it at certain times of the year.

Until December 2013, negotiations over this agreement remained in progress and had not reached the signing stage.

b. Attacks on Churches and Monasteries

The years 2012 and 2013 witnessed an intensification of attacks by the Tag Mehir or “pay the price” settlement movement. These attacks were carried out against Christian holy sites, and included burning and writing abusive language. On 7/2/2012, an attack against the Monastery of the Cross was recorded;³³ and on 20/2/2012, a similar attack was implemented against the Baptist Church west of Jerusalem.³⁴ Then on 4/9/2012, vandals set fire to the front door of Latrun Monastery, a Trappist monastery located outside the city, and offensive phrases were written on its walls.³⁵

c. The Dwindling Number of Christians in Jerusalem

The Arab Christian presence in Jerusalem remains under threat of extinction; at the end of 2012, the number of Arab Christians in Jerusalem numbered only 11,800 persons,³⁶ that is, a slight increase of 200 people over a two-year period; in 2010, their number was 11,600 persons.³⁷ Thus they made up less than 4% of the city’s Arab population at the end of 2012, and less than 1.5% of the total population of the city in the same year.

4. Islamic and Christian Holy Sites in the Rest of Palestine

The extremist settlement movement, Tag Mehir, continued its attacks on Islamic and Christian holy sites during 2012–2013; and its members continued also to escape being called to account. On 17/6/2013, the Israeli government refused to classify this organization as a terrorist organization.³⁸ It seems that it is satisfied with the role played by this movement in terrorizing Palestinians and making them feel that they are under constant threat.

During 2012, the Solidarity Foundation for Human Rights counted 18 attacks on holy sites, most of which were implemented by the Tag Mehir movement; in addition to total or partial destruction of 34 mosques during Operation Pillar of Defense, which Hamas dubbed Operation Stones of Baked Clay. It also counted 13 attacks during 2013, a total of 31 attacks over two years, detailed in the following table:

Table 3/6: Most Notable Israeli Attacks on the Holy Sites in the Rest of Historic Palestine 2012–2013³⁹

Date	Event
3/1/2012	Israeli authorities confiscate amplifiers belonging to Muhammad al-Fateh Mosque in Jaffa, occupied since 1948, and forbid broadcasting the Islamic call to prayer (Adhan).
11/1/2012	A group of settlers write slogans insulting Islam and the Prophet Muhammad on the walls of ‘Ali Bin Abi Talib Mosque in the village of Deir Istiya in the Salfit district.
25/1/2012	A group of settlers smash a number of graves in the cemetery of the city of Beisan, occupied since 1948.
13/2/2012	The Israeli Supreme Court issues a decision banning the broadcast of Adhan through loudspeakers in the Salman al-Farisi Mosque in the village of Bourin in the Nablus district.
19/2/2012	Jewish extremists vandalize the mosque of Wadi ‘Ara in the territories occupied in 1948.
27/2/2012	A large group of settlers storm the Nabi Yunus Mosque in Halhul, north of Hebron, and perform Jewish rituals inside the mosque.
9/4/2012	Municipality of Ashkelon, occupied since 1948, turn the Muslim cemetery in the city into a parking lot.
10/4/2012	Israeli Bulldozers vandalized the grave of Ezzedeen al-Qassam in the Islamic cemetery in the city of Jaffa, occupied since 1948.
18/6/2012	Jewish settlers set fire to the mosque of the Jaba’ village, northeast of Jerusalem.
10/7/2012	An Israeli company embarks on huge excavations in the Sheikh Muwannis Cemetery in the Jaffa district, occupied since 1948, to build residential apartments for the University of Tel Aviv’s students.
18/7/2012	Extremist member of the Knesset, Michael Ben-Ari, tears up a Bible in front of the media, describing it as a “vile book.”
23/7/2012	The Israeli Ministry of Construction and Housing levels dozens of Muslim graves in the cemetery of the village Majdal al-Sadiq, displaced since 1948.
10/8/2012	A number of Israeli police storm and search the mosque of the town of al-Tira, occupied since 1948.
27/8/2012	Israeli forces deliver to the construction committee of Abu ‘Ubaida Mosque, in Wadi al-Samn south of Hebron, a decision to halt construction operations of the mosque.
13/9/2012	Extremist settlers write racist slogans in Hebrew on the walls of Salman al-Farisi Mosque in the city of Hebron.
19/11/2012	Settlers burn the entrance of al-Ribat Mosque in the village of ‘Urif in the Nablus district.
4/12/2012	Israeli bulldozers demolish the mosque of al-Mafqara east of Yatta in the Hebron district, and that for the second time in two years.
24/12/2012	Israeli soldiers storm al-Taqwa Mosque in the village of Fahma in the Jenin district.
2/1/2013	Dozens of armed settlers storm al-Hamidiyah archaeological mosque in the town of al-Khader in the Bethlehem district, having already wrenched one of its windows off its hinges.
14/1/2013	Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman storms the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, accompanied by a number of settler leaders and journalists.

Date	Event
27/1/2013	Israeli forces raid al-Murabitin Mosque in the town of al-‘Ayzariyah and launch a wide inspection campaign inside the mosque.
7/4/2013	Settlers write racist slogans and threats to the Arabs on the walls of Bilal Bin Rabah Mosque and Salah al-Din al-Ayyoubiy Mosque in the Taqou’ village in the Bethlehem district.
24/4/2013	Dozens of Israeli soldiers storm Halima al-Sa’diyyah Mosque in the city of Jenin.
30/4/2013	Dozens of settlers attack al-Ribat Mosque in the village of ‘Urif in the Nablus district and damage its contents.
12/5/2013	A group of settlers dig up a number of tombs in Sawiya village near Nablus.
13/5/2013	Settlers write racist slogans on a mosque in the village of Umm al-Qatf in Wadi ‘Ara inside the territories occupied in 1948.
13/6/2013	Jewish extremists write racist slogans and draw six-pointed stars on a number of graves in the Orthodox Christian cemetery in the city of Jaffa, inside the territories occupied in 1948.
21/8/2013	Extremist settlers from the Tag Mehir movement vandalize the Beit Jamal Monastery in Jerusalem, with graffiti and damage it by throwing a Molotov cocktail at its exterior.
6/10/2013	Settlers write racist slogans on the walls of a mosque in the village of Beit Iksha northwest of Jerusalem and try to storm it.
9/10/2013	Settlers draw six-pointed stars on the walls of a mosque in Burqa village near Nablus.
8/12/2013	Settlers write offensive phrases on the walls of al-Huda Mosque in Baqa al-Gharbiyyeh, occupied since 1948.

Second: Jerusalem’s Population Under Occupation

Obsession with demography remained at the heart of Israeli thinking concerning the city of Jerusalem. The agenda of dividing *al-Aqsa* Mosque had the support of a pressure group made up of deputies and ministers, who favoured reducing the growth of the city’s Arab population and modifying the ratio of the population in favor of the Jewish population. This is a declared policy and an object of consensus among successive Israeli governments. It is also the central objective of the Jerusalem Master Plan 2020. In the face of the ongoing dilemma of internal migration of Jews out of Jerusalem, in a way that drains the effect of the natural increase and the new immigrants from abroad, the state apparatus has begun to rely more on the expulsion of the Arab population than on attracting a larger Jewish population to the city, and on at least the expulsion of Arabs from the central neighborhoods around the Old City, in the hope of taking hold of this center.

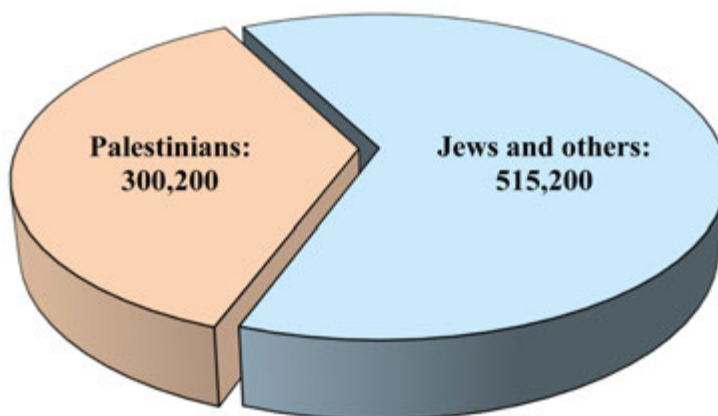
1. The Reality of the Demographic Battle⁴⁰

Table 4/6: Number of Residents in Jerusalem (Its Eastern and Western Parts) 2010–2012⁴¹

Group	Year	Population	% Annual growth	% of the total population
Palestinians	2010	283,900	2.9	36
	2011	293,000	3.2	36.4
	2012	300,200	2.6	36.8
Jews and others*	2010	504,200	1.4	64
	2011	511,400	1.4	63.6
	2012	515,200	0.9	63.2

* This category includes Jews, non-Arab Christian residents, and those not classified by religion. The number of the “others” in 2012 reached 12,400, constituting 1.5% of the city’s population.

Number of Residents in Jerusalem (Its Eastern and Western Parts) 2012



The above table indicates that Jerusalemite population growth continues to move at rates that surpass those of Jews, and that the percentage of Palestinian residents of the city is still on the rise. But we must be aware of what Israeli statistical

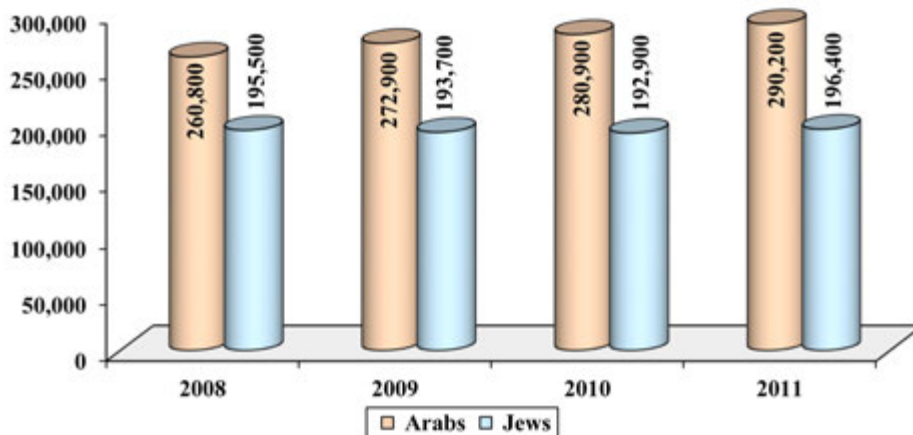
sources do not tell us, which is that an unknown ratio of the Arab population currently live outside Jerusalem's municipal boundaries, due to restrictions on housing and conditions that drive the Arab population out of the city. These people may lose their Jerusalem residency cards, if the Israeli authorities are able to find a mechanism to verify their place of residence, and then expel them from the city.⁴²

As for the Eastern part of the city, according to data by the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies (JIIS), the ratio of residents has evolved over the four years 2008–2011 as follows:

Table 5/6: Number of Residents in the Eastern Part of Jerusalem 2008–2011⁴³

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011
Arabs	260,800	272,900	280,900	290,200
Percentage (%)	57.2	58.5	59.3	59.6
Jews	195,500	193,700	192,900	196,400
Percentage (%)	42.8	41.5	40.7	40.4

Number of Residents in the Eastern Part of Jerusalem 2008–2011



It is noticeable here that, in the eastern part of the city, the demographic balance is tipped in favor of the Arabs, and that there is a faster increase in their ratio compared to the Jewish population. This is due to the eastern part's limited attraction for the Jewish population, in spite of the giant settlement projects under construction there.

Following a careful reading of the Jerusalem statistical yearbook for 2012–2013, *Jerusalem: Facts and Trends*, and the numbers issued by the Israeli CBS on Jerusalem, we notice the following:

- a. Until the end of 2011, the growth of the Jewish population in Jerusalem (1.4%) was lower than the growth of the Jewish population in Israel (1.7%).
- b. The percentage of Jerusalem's population who defined themselves as ultra-orthodox (30%) is the highest among Israel's large cities and is significantly higher than the proportion of ultra-orthodox Jews in Israel (9%). This is what made their presence in Jerusalem triple that in Israeli society in general,⁴⁴ and made them the primary cause of secular Jews leaving the city.
- c. In 2010, the total fertility rate of Jewish women in Jerusalem was 4.2, higher than the total fertility rate among the Arab women of Jerusalem, which measured 3.9.⁴⁵ And the natural growth rate of the Arab population was 27.2 per thousand persons and 23 per thousand for the Jewish population (excluding the immigration factor), after it was 19 per thousand for Jews in the year 2000.⁴⁶
- d. In any case, the effect of these biomarkers does not affect the total population growth. The ultra-orthodox Jews expel more secular Jews from the city's Jewish population than they add through their natural rate of growth. Thus, during the years 2007–2011, a total of 89,830 residents left Jerusalem for other localities in Israel, and 56,760 new residents arrived in Jerusalem from other localities. In total, the population of the city shrunk by 33,070 residents as a result of a negative migration balance;⁴⁷ among them 7,500 left during 2011 alone.⁴⁸
- e. The numbers of immigrants coming in from abroad cannot compensate for the attrition caused by the negative internal migration from the city. Despite the fact that Jerusalem was the city where the highest number of immigrants arrived from abroad and took residence during 2011. Yet the number of those immigrants did not exceed 2,300,⁴⁹ due to the reduction in Jewish immigration to Israel in general.
- f. Major settlements within Jerusalem's municipal boundaries vary in their ability to attract Jewish settlers. Development schemes of these settlements and their infrastructure have succeeded in bringing back the appeal of some of them, for example, Ramot Alon and Gilo. The following table may perhaps illustrate the ability of major settlements to attract Jewish residents:

Table 6/6: Number of Residents of the Most Prominent of Jerusalem's Settlements, Selected Years⁵⁰

Year	1985	1992	2000	2006	2011
Pisgat Ze'ev	14,800	29,400	36,500	38,700	36,800
Neve Ya'akov			20,300	19,200	18,700
Ramot Alon	21,100	38,100	38,000	41,000	41,400
Gilo	23,900	30,400	28,400	25,400	27,800
East Talpilot	11,800	15,200	12,850	11,100	12,500

g. In contrast, numbers point to the existence of a limited trend among the Arab population to leave the central neighborhoods of Jerusalem and head to its outskirts. It seems that the focused Israeli policy has succeeded in achieving this. For the repellent neighborhoods were: the Old City, from which 1,240 Palestinians left, while from Wadi al-Joz and Sheikh Jarrah 430 left, and from Shu'fat, 360 Palestinians left. As for the neighborhoods that received Arab residents in internal migration, they were those isolated outside the city and behind the Separation Wall. Thus, Kfar 'Aqab and 'Atarot received 1,060 Palestinians, Shu'fat Refugee Camp 690, and New 'Anata 360.⁵¹

2. Attempts to Expel Palestinian Residents

a. Intensification of the Pressure on al-Bustan Neighborhood

In 2009, the occupation authorities made a decision to demolish 88 properties in al-Bustan neighborhood. Neighborhood residents initiated legal proceedings before Israeli courts against the decision; and at the same time instituted a state of popular protest. They set up a permanent solidarity sit-in tent that has become a destination for supporters; in addition, they performed their Friday prayers in the tent. This action protected them from the execution of those demolition orders. The municipality began using multiple methods to break this popular movement. It proposed a settlement that, at face value, aimed at lessening the inhabitants' loss; while in essence, shifts the dispute to the residents themselves. For it proposes the demolition of only 29 properties out of the original 88. In return, the residents share the rest of the properties. Moreover, Israeli forces targeted the activists in this matter, such as Sheikh Musa Odeh who was sentenced to three months' imprisonment in 2012 for throwing stones at Israeli soldiers; and the Israeli forces

tortured his youngest son Musallam (12 years) who was arrested more than 12 times and was placed under house arrest.

Up to the end of 2012, these policies had not succeeded in breaking the popular movement of al-Bustan residents. Thus, the municipality resorted to threats of mass demolition, in September 2012 at the latest if the residents did not respond to the proposed settlement. But when the deadline came, they referred the matter to the Knesset (10/9/2012). The Knesset, in turn, discussed the issue and declared that its State Comptroller's Committee would take a tour of the neighborhood on 26/10/2012 to discuss the application of the Planning and Construction Law to the case at hand. In light of this repeated threat, the municipality sent its crews more than 15 times in 2012 alone to distribute demolition orders, or to take photographs and measurements in preparation for demolition; yet, it could not tear down one house in al-Bustan neighborhood in two years. However, the Israeli authorities still hope to be able, with time and with continued pressure on the population, to exhaust and break their popular movement.

b. Evacuation of Bedouin Communities East of Jerusalem

At the beginning of 2011, al-Jahaleen Arab Bedouins, residents of the Bedouin communities located in eastern Jerusalem, received eviction notices. It became known then that the Israeli army was planning to fully empty that area of its Bedouin population in order to pave the way for completing the eastern sections of the Separation Wall, which will annex the settlement bloc of Adumim to the city of Jerusalem. During the years 2012–2013, the Israeli army continued its campaign to implement this evacuation quietly, trying to avoid drawing any attention. They chased them along their travel routes in the vicinity of Jerusalem to force them to migrate to the points of concentration northwest of Jericho, where they want to force them to reside. On 18/4/2012, Israeli forces demolished 16 Arab al-Jahaleen structures in the north of Jerusalem.⁵² Then on 8/6/2012, they demolished several houses and barns belonging to them in the east of the city.⁵³ Raid and demolition operations continued at intervals until early 2014, when on 17/2/2014, they demolished five residential structures.⁵⁴ Then on 12/3/2014, they demolished several residential and agricultural structures.⁵⁵ At the beginning of this displacement campaign, the number of Arab al-Jahaleen in the region was estimated at 2,300 people;⁵⁶ while the precise number of those who have migrated from the area under these procedures is not known.

3. Demolition of Houses and Structures

The number of housing units demolished in Jerusalem in 2012 was 61, including 14 self-demolitions, i.e., they were demolished by their owners. As for 2013, the number of demolished structures totaled 106, including 14 structures demolished by their owners.⁵⁷

4. The Palestinian Population's Deepening Cost of Living Crisis

Figures released by Israeli sources continue to confirm the general trend of poverty among Jerusalemites, which has been fixed at 70% since the year 2009.

Table 7/6: Extent of Poverty in Jerusalem and Israel 2010–2011 (%)⁵⁸

Category	2010	2011
Within the non-Jewish population	77	73
Within the Jewish population	25	24
In Israel	24	25

The latest field survey (the socio-economic survey conducted in 2008) showed that 100% of the Arab population in Jerusalem are classified as poor, while only 24% of the Jewish population fall in this category.⁵⁹ And if this data is compared with the data of the labor market, which says that in 2011, the rate of participation in the labor market in Jerusalem among Palestinian men (over 16-year-old) was 59%, while that among Jewish men it was 49%,⁶⁰ we conclude that this poverty is artificial and is the outcome of a methodical impoverishment process.

5. Conditions on the Ground in Jerusalem

A study of developments in Jerusalem over the years 2012–2013 cannot be complete without a look at the conditions of confrontation on the ground that the city had witnessed over these two years, especially during 2012. According to a daily review of events in the city, statistical research showed that in 2012 alone, there were 78 confrontations, 6 stabbings and 21 other incidents. These resulted in casualties in the ranks of Israeli soldiers, through petrol bombs, beating or burning. Al-‘Isawiyyah, Silwan, Shu‘fat Refugee Camps and Jerusalem’s Old City were the main centers of this flare-up, which used to end at the Qalandia checkpoint, without an echo of it or response to it continuing in the WB.⁶¹

The repeated raids of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the incursions of the municipal crews, the demolition orders they distributed in the neighborhoods, and the prisoners' hunger strikes, in particular that by the Jerusalemite prisoner Samer al-'Issawi, constituted the main flash points in the city.

Third: Judaization and Settlement in Jerusalem

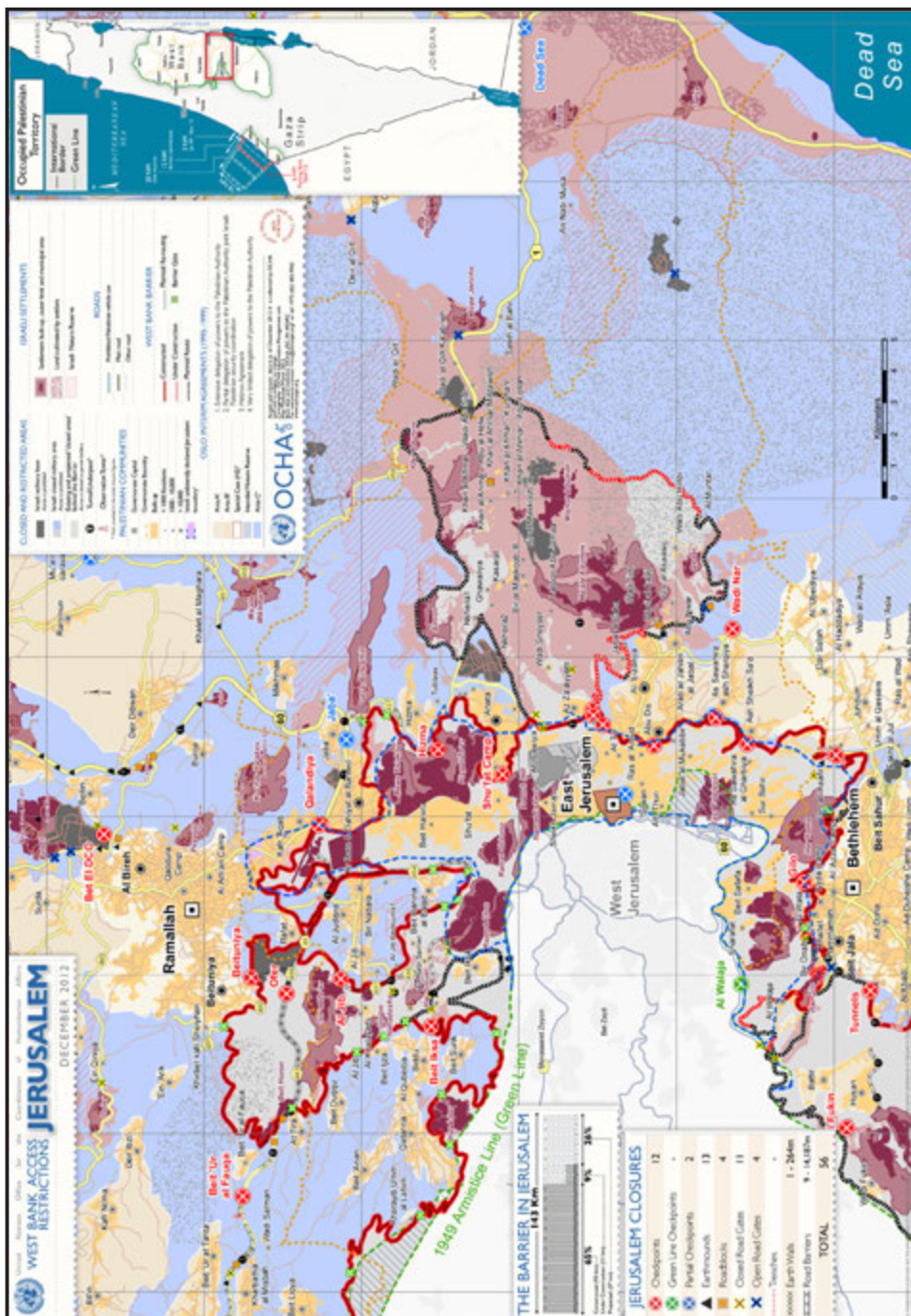
1. Developments in the Building of the Separation Wall Around Jerusalem

Despite the Israeli government's repeated media threat to finish the Wall's eastern section around Jerusalem, which includes the Ma'ale Adumim settlement and the blocs of settlements surrounding it up to Jerusalem's city limits, within what is known as Project E1, in reality the work on these sections remained unchanged during 2012. Statistics by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-occupied Palestinian territory (OCHA-oPt) stated that what was added to the Wall during this period was only three kilometers on the section surrounding Qalandia from the west, in the far north of Jerusalem; this made the isolation of Qalandia complete. As for developments in the work on the Wall, they are illustrated in the following table:

**Table 8/6: Work on the Separation Wall Around Jerusalem,
December 2011–December 2012⁶²**

Category	2011	2012
Constructed (km)	90	93
Percentage (%)	63	65
Under Construction (km)	14	13
Percentage (%)	10	9
Projected (km)	38	37
Percentage (%)	27	26
Total length of the Wall (km)	142	143

Map 2/6: The Separation Wall and Jerusalem Closures⁶³



2. Consolidating the Settlements in the WB

2012 and 2013 witnessed a regular pace of settlement building. In 2012, the building of 12,244 housing units was approved. While in 2013 the building of 11,066 new housing units was approved in various parts of the WB. However, in the latter year, a larger geographical distribution of units was approved. The number of settlements that received approval for new housing units was 36 settlements throughout most of the WB.

Table 9/6: Residential Units Approved or Proposed for Construction in the Settlements of Jerusalem and the Rest of WB 2012–2013⁶⁴

Location	Settlement	2012		2013		Total
		No. of approved or proposed units for construction	Total no. of housing units in each governorate	No. of approved or proposed units for construction	Total no. of housing units in each governorate	
Jerusalem	Ramat Shlomo	1,500	10,558	1,918	3,904	14,462
	Gilo	942		891		
	Giv'at Hamatos	4,627		–		
	Har Homa	168		210		
	Ma'ale Adumim	2,490 (E1 region in general)		204		
	Kfar Adumim			329		
	Pisgat Ze'ev			–		
	Giv'at Ze'ev	831		131		
	Kochav Ya'akov	–		38		
Salfit	Alei Zahav	–	–	1,144	2,292	2,292
	Bruchin	–		550		
	Elkana	–		284		
	Yakir	–		160		
	Ariel	–		135		
	Kiryat Netafim	–		19		
Ramallah	Modi'in 'Illit	–	106	992	2,099	2,205
	Talmon	–		559		
	Beit El	–		326		
	Shilo	–		142		
	Adam	106		80		

Location	Settlement	2012		2013		Total
		No. of approved or proposed units for construction	Total no. of housing units in each governorate	No. of approved or proposed units for construction	Total no. of housing units in each governorate	
Nablus	Itamar	–	452	675	1,217	1,669
	Gilgal	–		234		
	Karnei Shomron	350		218		
	Immanuel	102		–		
	Bracha	–		90		
Bethlehem	Betar Illit	398	1,128	322	601	1,729
	Efrat	207		155		
	Giva'ot	523		–		
	Alon Shevut	–		60		
	Nokdim	–		40		
	Tekoa	–		24		
Hebron	Sansana	–	–	325	700	700
	Ma'on	–		230		
	Karmiel	–		97		
	Tene	–		48		
Tubas	Rotem	–	–	170	170	170
Qalqilya	El Matan	–	–	37	52	52
	Alfei Menashe	–		15		
Jericho	Almog	–	–	31	31	31
Total		12,244		11,066		23,310

Regarding Jerusalem in particular, the essential trends and developments of the settlement program can be read through:

The Continued Strengthening of the Southern Sector Settlements

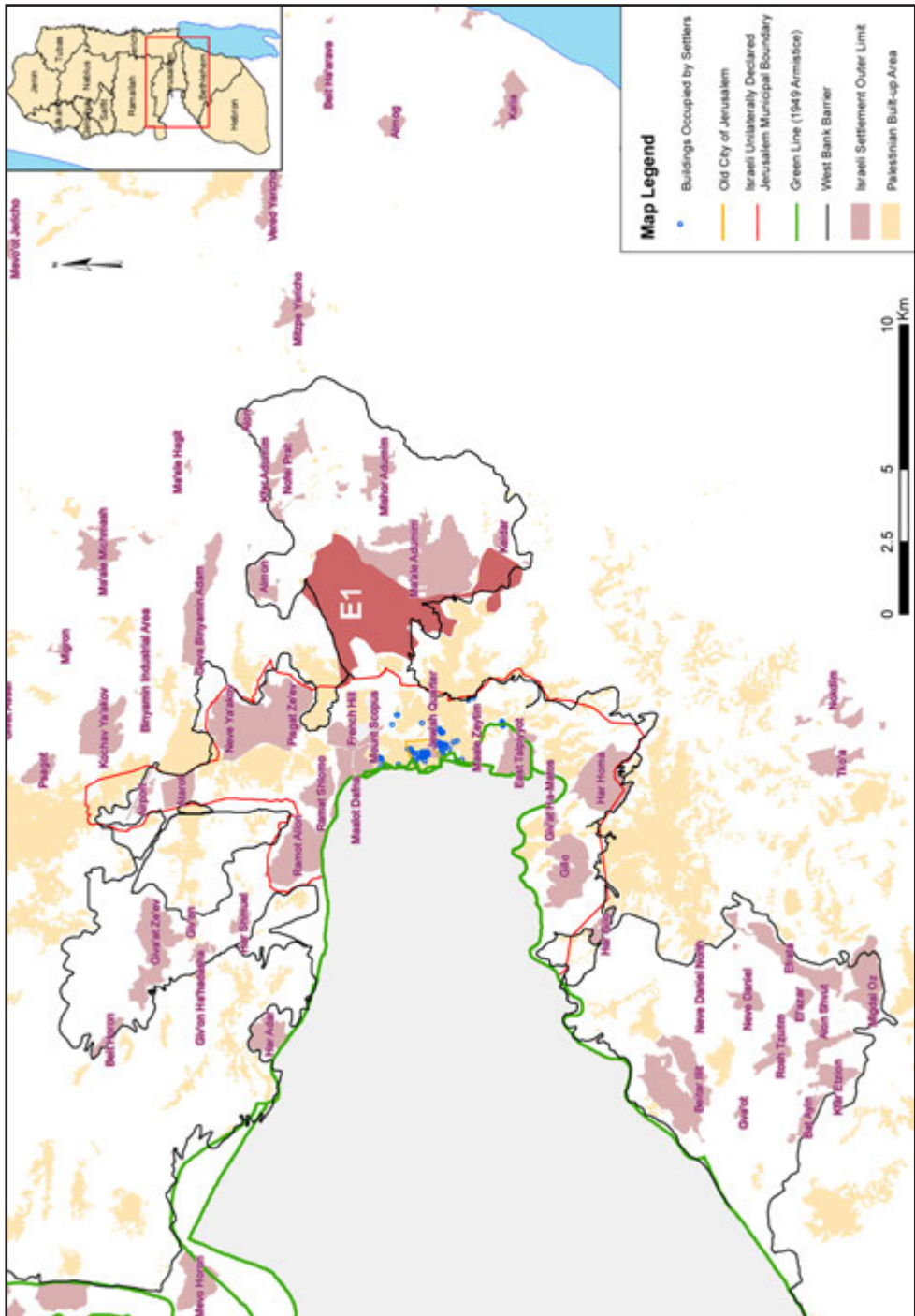
During the preceding years, the clear Israeli direction was to strengthen the south Jerusalem settlements. These mainly consist of the settlement bloc of Har Homa and Gilo (including Har Gilo); and in 2011, the settlement of Giv'at Hamatos was added to them as a principle settlement within this bloc. This trend can be attributed to the success of the Har Homa settlement in attracting Jewish citizens, after several disappointing results in the eastern settlement blocs, and to some extent the northeastern ones. Har Homa is very close to the Jewish commercial and urban center in west Jerusalem; it is also connected to it by direct road that do not pass through any Palestinian neighborhoods.

During 2012–2013, the general trend to strengthen the southern bloc settlements did not seem to have changed; as in 2012, the construction of 5,737 housing units in the southern sector settlements was approved, representing 54.3% of the total units approved that year, as can be seen in table 9/6. The largest number of these housing units was in Giv‘at Hamatos, where the approval of a plan to expand it was done in one stroke as part of what the Israeli government considered “punitive measures” in retaliation for the decision to recognize Palestine as a non-Member Observer State in the UN; it approved the building of 4,627 residential units in one single decision. In 2013, the government sanctioned the construction of 1,101 housing units in the southern settlement sector, representing 28.2% of all the approved housing units in Jerusalem during that year. It seems that the slower pace of sanctioning construction in 2013 came to make way for finishing the 2011–2012 approved housing units in the southern sector; 17,064 housing units.⁶⁵ It would also make room for the completion of the infrastructure projects vital to the success of the expansion in this region, the most important of which is Highway 50, which will link the southern sector settlements to the Jewish center in the west of Jerusalem. The municipality depends on this Highway to spread the success of the Har Homa case to the rest of the settlements in this sector.

Ramat Shlomo: An Attempt to Promote the North

In 2012–2013, the settlements situated north of the Old City were promoted, in parallel with promoting those in the southern sector, while attempting to achieve territorial contiguity between the settlements of Ramot Alon, Ramat Shlomo and Ramat Eshkol. These settlements enjoy the same distinction enjoyed by Har Homa to the south, which is being directly connected to the Jewish center in west Jerusalem, and is a natural extension of it. The attempt to promote this settlement sector was subject to questioning and study by Israeli planners, as its population has been stable since the beginning of the 1990s, and only achieves limited growth. So, the decision to expand construction in this bloc carries a degree of risk, but what happened in 2012–2013 was that the construction of 3,418 housing units was already approved (see table 9/6). If we add the number of approved housing units in the northern settlement sector Ramat Shlomo, Ramot Alon, and Ramat, during 2011–2013, we find that they belong to the second phase in terms of new constructions, with a total of 4,953 housing units over the next three years.⁶⁶

Map 3/6: Jerusalem Settlements⁶⁷



Looking at map 3/6, we find that the southern and northern sectors together constitute the two main pillars of the plan to encircle the Old City and isolate it from the mass of the Arab population. The two sectors have the same characteristic, which is being a natural extension of the Jewish center in west Jerusalem, and being directly connected to it. This allows them to attract Jewish citizens and is a more conservative and realist development than the previous attempts at development in the eastern settlements.

Adumim Bloc: Between Politics and Realism

In 2012–2013, the Adumim bloc (located outside Jerusalem's municipal "boundaries," which constitute the main Jewish attempt to expand eastward) was the third most rapid in terms of expansion, as, over a two-year period, the construction of 3,023 housing units was approved.

When examining the trends in the expansion of the Adumim bloc over a longer period of time, we find that, during 2011, it did not exceed 40 units; while in 2012, it reached 2,490, and then decreased in 2013 to 414. The announcement made in 2012 came the day after the vote on granting Palestine non-member UN observer status, in the context of "punitive measures" carried out by Israel in retaliation for this move.

The expansion in the Adumim bloc is not a consistent policy, rather a deliberate response to a political development that provoked the Israeli government. The Adumim bloc is the bloc least able to attract the Jewish population in the vicinity of Jerusalem. In spite of its having an area equivalent to the entire area of the Jerusalem municipality, its population has grown by only about seven thousand settlers over a 10-year period, with the population at the end of 2011 standing at approximately 36 thousand settlers.⁶⁸ At the same time, over the past few years, an American-European position was formed that considers that the expansion of the bloc dashes the hopes of a two-state solution. This position helps to deter Israel from planning to expand it or even from completing the sections of the Wall around it, and explains the use of the expansion of this bloc as a political response to developments that Israel considers to be a threat to its interests.

Nof Zion into Phase III

Project Nof Zion began as an investment by the company Digal Investments & Holdings Ltd, a private initiative to establish an upscale residential suburb designated for the wealthy, on the northern slopes of Mount al-Mukaber facing Jerusalem's Old City, and targeting mainly Jewish buyers from the US.⁶⁹ Work on the first phase was completed in 2008, in conjunction with the global economic crisis that began in the US. At that time, the Nof Zion project faced hindrance of sales and marketing; to the extent that the investment company offered Arab and Islamic parties the option of selling the entire phase through intermediaries.⁷⁰ The Project continued to stumble until 2011, when its financial crisis was overcome by introducing new partners, and by obtaining the sponsorship of the Ministry of Construction and Housing and the Jerusalem Municipality to allocate the settlement for religious Jews. Work resumed on the second phase and ended in late 2013. The Israeli Construction and Housing Minister laid the foundation stone for the third phase of this settlement in August 2013.⁷¹ The second and third expansion phases aspire to solve the problem of the isolation of this settlement from Jewish neighborhoods, by trying to connect it to the East Talpiot settlement, located to the southwest of Nof Zion.

Summing up, in 2012 and 2013, the construction of 14,462 housing units in the settlements of Jerusalem were approved, 47% of them located in the southern sector settlements, and 24% in the northern ones. If the residential units approved during 2011—as in the table 10/6—are added to the analysis, fundamental change in settlement planning policies toward Jerusalem can be inferred. First, the thinking was of centralized internal and external settlement rings, which failed to attract the hoped-for population, since they were distant and isolated from the Jewish center of west Jerusalem. Then there was a more realistic and conservative policy that adopted the formation of two wide settlement sectors in the south and the north, directly connected to the Jewish center of west Jerusalem, a “natural extension” of it. They also encircle the Old City and isolate it from most of the Palestinian population bloc concentrated in the farthest neighborhoods.

Table 10/6: Number of Approved Housing Units in the Settlements of Jerusalem and the Rest of WB 2011–2013⁷²

Category	No.	Percentage (%)	Expected assimilative capacity
Approved housing units in the southern sector	18,165	44.6	61,761
Approved housing units in the northern sector	4,953	12.2	16,840
Approved housing units in the rest of Jerusalem settlements and the WB	17,600	43.2	59,840
Total	40,718	100	138,441

3. Infrastructure That Reinforces the Jewish Presence

The same settlement trends can be detected in the infrastructure that the Israeli municipality in Jerusalem works on establishing, for the southern settlement sector is being enhanced by Highway 50, which connects it to the Jewish center of west Jerusalem. Also, the northern settlement sector is being enhanced by Jerusalem Road 21, which connects it to the ‘Atarot industrial park, built on Qalandia’s lands; while the cable car project aims to attract more Jewish visitors to the south-western region of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, where the Western Wall Square and its Judaized environs lie.

Highway 50

During 2013, the Moriah Jerusalem Development Company, along with the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem, began work on building Highway 50, which will secure a direct link between the southern settlement sector and the Jewish center in the west of Jerusalem, thus enhancing the chances of this sector attracting Jewish residents. At the same time, this road aims at connecting the residents of the Gush Etzion settlement bloc in Bethlehem with Jerusalem’s Jewish Center by linking it to Route 60, which reaches those settlements; thus providing territorial contiguity between Jerusalem’s municipal borders and the Gush Etzion bloc to the south. The budget allocated for this highway is estimated at about \$1.1 billion, as it will

be a multi-lane highway, with many exits and services. It is expected to devour 238 donums from the Palestinian towns of Beit Safafa and Shurfat, and turn both towns into marginal outliers that have no territorial contiguity with any Palestinian population mass in Jerusalem.⁷³

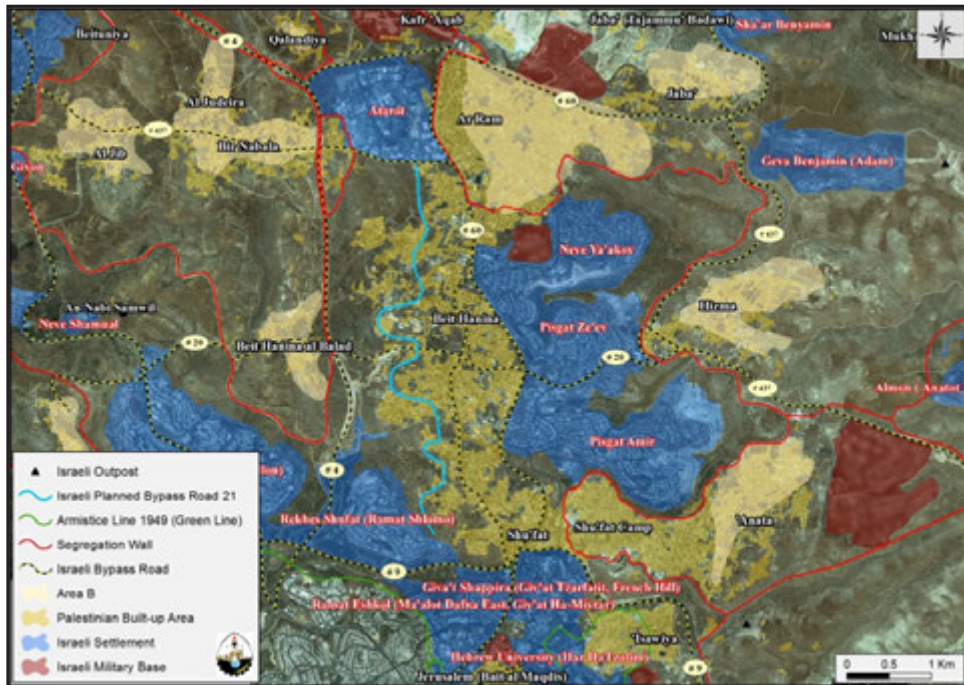
Map 4/6: Highway 50⁷⁴



Jerusalem Road 21

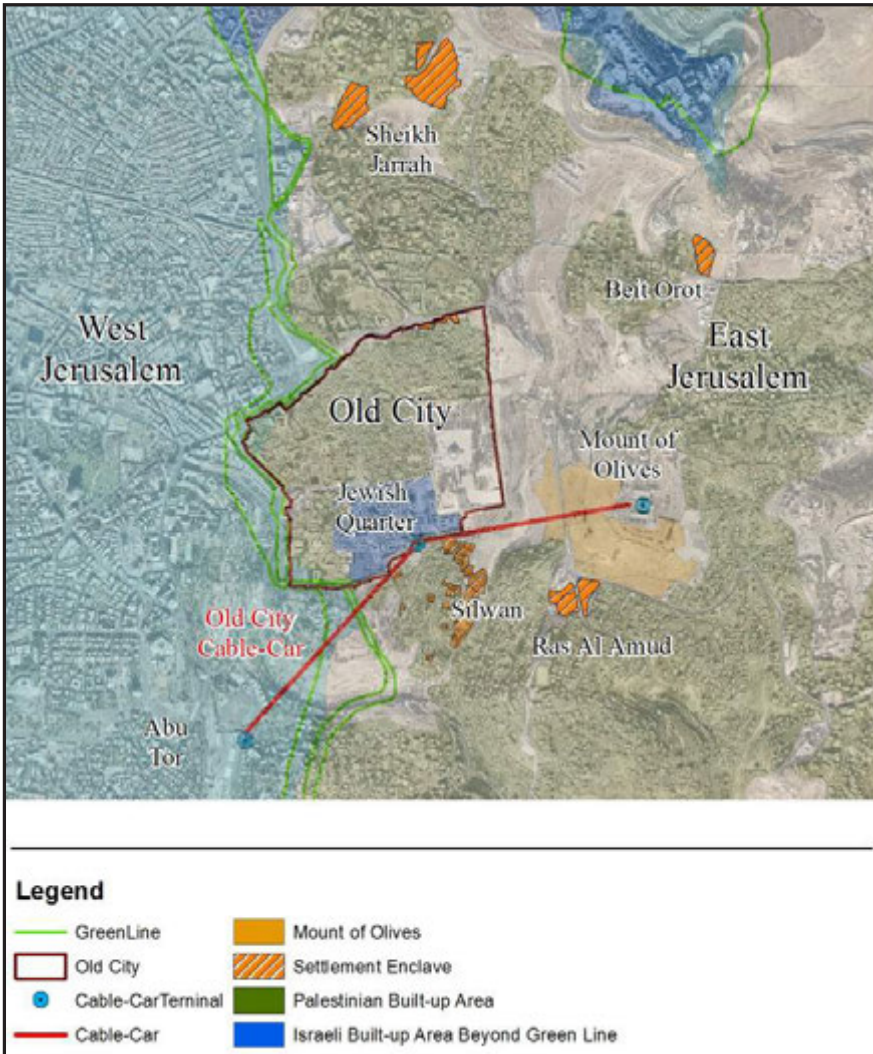
On 21/1/2013, Israeli bulldozers began work on building a road that connects the settlement of Ramat Shlomo, which forms the center of expansion for the northern settlement sector, to 'Atarot industrial zone established on the lands of Qalandia to the north. The road is designed to attract the Jewish population to this settlement by providing job opportunities in the Industrial region for its residents. They would be the closest and most able to access the facilities of the 'Atarot industrial zone without being compelled to have contact with the Palestinian population in the suburb of Beit Hanina, which separates the two regions. It is expected that work on this road will continue until 2015, and that its cost will be nearly \$30 million.⁷⁵

Map 5/6: Jerusalem Road 21⁷⁶



The Cable Car Project South of Jerusalem's Old City

On 1/5/2013, Jerusalem Municipality published a plan to build a cable car to transport passengers to the Mughrabi Gate, the entrance of the Western Wall Square. The mayor said that this cable car will consist of two main lines: the first from the Mount of Olives, and the second from the west of Jerusalem, and the system would be capable of ferrying between four and six thousand passengers an hour.⁷⁷ It is clear from this scheme that its aim is to bring the largest possible number of Jewish tourists to the area of the Western Wall and the Jewish Quarter, which form the focus of the Jewish presence in the Old City of Jerusalem. This scheme was disclosed during the election campaigns of candidates for the municipal elections in Israel, for which the mayor of Jerusalem, Nir Barkat, was preparing to run in the month of August 2013, in the hope of winning a new mandate.

Map 6/6: The Cable Car Project for Jerusalem's Old City, May 2013⁷⁸

Fourth: Political Developments Concerning Jerusalem

1. Developments in the US Position on Jerusalem

The year 2012 witnessed important developments in the US position on Jerusalem, especially as it was an election year. It presented a good opportunity for Israeli blackmail and for Israel to gain more concessions. These developments can be summarized as follows:



a. On 31/7/2012, the US Department of State issued its International Religious Freedom Report for the year 2011. This report carried new positions in US foreign policy; they used to refer to *al-Aqsa* Mosque as “Haram al-Sharif/ Temple Mount,” they changed the order to become “Temple Mount/ Haram al-Sharif.” They also removed the usual observation found at the beginning of the report stating that Haram al-Sharif is “among the holiest sites in Islam. Jews refer to the same place as the Temple Mount.”⁷⁹ These amendments show that the report has begun to adopt the name “Temple Mount” as the default title. The most prominent development was the report’s criticism of the Israeli government policy that “denies all non-Muslims opportunities to worship at the Temple Mount” and that “only Muslims are allowed to pray at the site, although their access has been occasionally restricted due to security concerns.” Police “removed non-Muslim visitors if they appeared to be praying.”⁸⁰ The report also criticized the policy of the Jordanian-controlled Jerusalem Islamic Waqf that “restricts non-Muslims from entering the Dome of the Rock shrine and Al-Aqsa Mosque, a practice it started in the year 2000. The Waqf does not allow non-Muslim religious symbols to be worn on the Temple Mount/ Haram al-Sharif.”

This report came ahead of the position of the Israeli government itself in this regard, and framed Israeli actions in a “defensive” position: “defending” itself and “justifying” its policies of preventing non-Muslims from praying in the mosque. The 2012 Report on International Religious Freedom, which was issued in mid-2013, confirmed the same position,⁸¹ which means that the US position on *al-Aqsa* Mosque has indeed changed, and the matter was not a mere mistake or a hasty position in the previous report.

b. The inclusion of the item “Jerusalem is the capital of Israel,” as an item on the program of the election candidates, both the republicans and the democrats, in the presidential race.

c. Placing al-Quds International Institution, the leading popular Arabic and Islamic institution working in the field of Jerusalem, on the “terrorism” list on 4/10/2012.⁸²

2. Holy Sites Custodianship Agreement

On Sunday 31/3/2013, an announcement was made in Amman of the signing of an agreement between the Jordanian king and the PA president concerning Jerusalem’s custodianship, which Jordanian and Palestinian news agencies

headlined as the agreement on “The Defense of Jerusalem and Holy Sites.” A careful review of this agreement and the titles of the signatory parties reveals that, in practice, it does not bear any legal value; rather it bears no more than a moral and nominal status.

The Palestinian signatory party has no role in Jerusalem in his capacity as the PA president, as the Oslo Accords deny him this role; although the PLO and the presumed State of Palestine have the right to the future of Jerusalem as part of the right of self-determination of the whole Palestinian people, which has not yet been achieved. This strips this agreement of any legal or real value, except that it recognizes the facts on the ground and confirms them morally; and perhaps it will resolve any possible clash over the representation of Jerusalem after Palestine was accepted as a non-member observer state at the UN.

Although the official news agencies and various media, which picked up the news, headlined the agreement as an agreement on “The Defense of Jerusalem and Holy Sites,” or “to protect al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy sites,” the agreement itself does not mention the word “protection” or any of its derivatives, except for the characterization of the historical role of the Sharif Hussein Bin Ali, and it does not mention the word “defense” except for the characterization of the role of Jordan as “better able to work for the defense of Islamic holy sites... .”

Furthermore, the text of the agreement did not mention any of the threats to *al-Aqsa* Mosque and the holy sites, for it is devoid of the words “occupation” or any of its derivatives, and “Israeli” or any of its derivatives, as well as the words “Zionist,” “assault” and “violation.”⁸³

Fifth: Israeli Settlement Expansion in the WB

In 2012, Israeli settlements and outposts witnessed remarkable expansion. An analytical study conducted by ARIJ, confirmed that since the beginning of 2012 and until August of the same year, and out of 199 Israeli settlements (the total number of Israeli settlements in the WB), Israel carried out expansion works on 151 settlements, 76% of the total number of Israeli settlements in the WB. The expansion included the construction and adding of an additional 1,018 buildings and 854 new mobile homes.⁸⁴

The expansion of Israeli settlements in the WB continued during 2013 at a fast pace. The expansion plans announced by the Israeli government, represented by its different ministries (Ministry of Construction and Housing, Israel Land Authority, and Israeli Civil Administration and others...) were announced in a way that affirmed the vitality and status of settlements in any final peace settlement agreement with the Palestinian side. In 2012, plans and tenders for 12,244 new housing units were announced. As for 2013, plans and tenders were announced for the construction of 11,066 housing units in 36 Israeli settlements, located in 8 Palestinian governorates out of a total of 11 governorates in the WB. Most of these, 7,957 housing units (72% of the total settlement units) are in the Israeli settlements located west of the Separation Wall that Israel seeks to annex to its borders under any agreement with the Palestinians.⁸⁵

During 2013, Israel confiscated 10,800 donums of Palestinian lands in the occupied WB for various military and settlement uses, including 196 donums in eastern Jerusalem. The confiscation of more than half of this area (5,770 donums) was done in the month of July;⁸⁶ this is the month in which the Palestinian side agreed to resume the peace process, after a lapse of nearly three years.

The figures released by ARIJ for the year 2012 pointed to a rise in the number of Israeli settlers living in the settlements from 240 thousands in 1990 to more than 656 thousands in 2012. These settlers live in 196 Israeli settlements and 232 outposts, scattered throughout the WB, including those that were set up in eastern Jerusalem.⁸⁷ According to ARIJ, the number of settlers in the WB amounted to 693 thousand settlers in 2013.⁸⁸ As for the statistics by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), they indicate that the number of settlers in the WB totaled 563,546 settlers at the end of 2012, living in 144 settlements; of these, 26 settlements are in the Jerusalem Governorate.⁸⁹ The population of Jewish settlers in the Israeli settlements in the occupied WB has grown at an annual rate of between 4.7–4.9% since the year 2000, at a time when the population growth rate in Israel was 1.7%.

Israel has insisted on continuing its settlement activities, even after the re-launch of the peace process. Thus, Israeli authorities agreed to issue tenders and bids for 1,573 new housing units in Israeli settlements in the occupied WB at the start of the first round of negotiations on 31/7/2013.⁹⁰ *Maariv* newspaper revealed on 31/7/2013 a secret agreement between Netanyahu and Naftali Bennett, Chairman of The Jewish Home Party, to let pass the building of 4,500 housing units in the WB and Jerusalem

settlements. In the second round of negotiations, and specifically on 13/8/2013, Israel agreed to issue tenders and bids for the construction of 2,125 housing units in the WB. Also in October 2013, Netanyahu issued a decision to build 1,500 housing units in Jerusalem, in conjunction with the release of a second batch of Palestinian prisoners during the negotiation process.⁹¹ Furthermore, the Israeli Defense Minister froze the former government's decision, which allowed the establishment of the Palestinian al-Nuway'imah village on part of the territories of the Jordan Valley, and canceled the decisions by Israeli courts to dismantle four Israeli outposts, and worked on legitimizing them, albeit indirectly.⁹²

As for Israeli sources, which seem to be trying to minimize the seriousness of the settlement and Judaization measures, they indicate that "work began on 2,534 new housing units in the settlements in 2013, compared to 1,133 in 2012."⁹³ The number of housing units on which work has been completed totaled 1,271 units in 2012, while in 2013, their number reached 1,365 units.⁹⁴

Sixth: Israeli Attacks on Agriculture and Water Resources

Agriculture in Palestine is an integral part and a key component of the Palestinian national, cultural, economic and social fabric. It is a symbol of resilience, defiance and adherence to a land that has become a target of confiscation and settlement. The Israeli blockade and other practices during 2012–2013 caused significant damage to this vital sector, notably:

- Bulldozing, uprooting and burning of fruit trees, estimated at more than 45 thousand olive trees and numerous citrus trees; in addition to the destruction of agricultural facilities.
- Confiscation of thousands of donums of land to the benefit of settlements and the building of bypass roads.
- Crossings closure has impacted agricultural exports, and had a negative effect on the freedom of transporting and marketing agricultural goods at home, causing damage to some of these goods, especially vegetables and fruits; and that led to lowering their prices.
- Closure of the fishing port in GS and restricting the movement of fishermen inflicted approximately a \$2 million loss in fisheries income.

Israel continued its attacks on Palestinian farmers and Palestinian lands. At first it bulldozed lands belonging to Palestinians in the Jordan Valley; then it demolished whole Arab villages and displaced their inhabitants. Moreover, it destroyed their crops and deprived them of ability to gather and pick them; not to mention what the settlers do in spraying crops with toxic pesticides and cutting thousands of olive, citrus and fruit trees.

Palestinian farmers suffer from attacks by armed settlers, who chase them in the WB in order to terrorize them and force them to abandon their crops. For example, during the week 4–10/10/2012, 220 olive trees and 20 vineyards were destroyed in Bethlehem and Nablus. With the start of the olive harvest season, the WB territories witnessed significant escalation in the attacks. In many instances, the Israeli occupation forces sided with the settlers, provide them with protection, and forced Palestinian farmers to leave their lands.⁹⁵ During the olive harvest season (15/9–30/11/2012), Israelis carried out more than 76 attacks on olive trees and farmers, among them 70 attacks were carried out by Jewish settlers, and 6 attacks were carried out by the Israeli army. Thus, 2,183 olive trees were damaged, of which 1,900 trees were cut or uprooted.⁹⁶ In 2013, Israeli forces and settlers uprooted more than 13,057 fruit trees, including 880 trees in eastern Jerusalem.⁹⁷

During Israel's November 2012 war on GS, Operation Pillar of Defense, which Hamas dubbed Operation Stones of Baked Clay, the Israeli army systematically destroyed the agricultural sector. The Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture estimated the losses in plant production to be more than \$110 million, which included vegetables and various fruits and field crops, etc., beside the destruction of one thousand agricultural wells.⁹⁸ During this aggression, Israeli forces razed 10,062 fruit trees (olives, citrus and fruits), and destroyed an area of 1,016 donums of greenhouses, 2,704 donums of exposed vegetables, 467 donums of strawberries and 4,271 donums of field crops. It also destroyed 22 nurseries, 2 agricultural experiment stations and 2 nurseries belonging to the Ministry of Agriculture.⁹⁹ The targeting by Israeli forces of Palestinian agricultural lands turned them into lands plagued by white phosphorus shells, depleted uranium and various internationally banned weapons.¹⁰⁰

As a result of Israel's depletion of groundwater basins, and because of restrictions imposed on drilling and rehabilitation of wells, the amount of water extracted by the Palestinians was reduced to less than the quantity stipulated in the Oslo Accords. In 1999, the Palestinians used to extract 138 million cubic meters (MCM) of water from the aquifers of the WB; however, this amount decreased to less than 93 MCM

in 2009 and to 86.9 MCM in 2011.¹⁰¹ As for the coastal basin, the amount extracted was estimated to be 178.8 MCM in 2011, which exceeds the amount of the safe extraction of the basin three fold. The coastal basin suffers from degradation in water quality, and Yusuf Ibrahim, head of the Environment Quality Authority of the GS Caretaker Government, announced in late May 2013 that 90% of water from the aquifer in the GS had become unfit for human consumption, due to measures taken by the Israeli occupation of stealing water, razing border wells, and failure to rationalize water consumption. Ibrahim confirmed that 20% of GS beaches are unfit for recreation, for they are polluted with wastewater.¹⁰²

Israel built dams in the northeastern regions of GS to prevent the arrival of water from the WB and intercept groundwater coming to GS. This is in addition to depleting water by drilling wells to draw it, and retaining valleys' water inside the Green Line, especially Wadi Gaza, which plays a role in increasing the amounts of underground water. Furthermore, Israel drilled more than 24 wells in the settlements that surround GS, in order to drain millions of cubic meters of water.¹⁰³

A report by OCHA-oPt in 2012 mentioned that Israeli settler activity in WB has "significantly impaired Palestinian access to, and use of, a growing number of water springs." It added that in 40 springs settlers had begun to develop the surrounding area into a "tourist attraction." They began gradually developing the springs and their environs, including the construction of pools to collect the springs' water, and the installation of picnic benches and tables. They even gave these places Hebrew names. This has provided jobs and income to the settlements, at the expense of the Palestinians.¹⁰⁴

In addition to the unfair distribution of water between Palestinians and Israelis, and Israel's theft of Palestinian water, there is the problem of lack of water networks for a number of Palestinian communities. For example, Israel refuses to connect Palestinian homes in Area C to the water network, which forces tens of thousands of them to buy water; in addition, in the summer, they are forced to buy water at prices many times as high as those paid by "their neighbors," the Israeli settlers.¹⁰⁵

Water statistics in the WB carried out by PCBS in 2010 indicate that the number of Palestinian communities that have no water networks totals 109. So the citizens in these areas depend on the purchase of water from water tanks at high prices, and on drilling rainwater harvesting wells as alternative sources, causing them much hardship. Perhaps one of the strangest actions carried out by Israel is that, at the time that it withdraws water from Palestinian lands and depletes their groundwater

to supply its cities, it goes back and sells the surplus to them, as the amount of water purchased in 2011 from Israel National Water Company (Mekorot) amounted to 57 MCM in the WB and GS (excluding those parts of the Jerusalem Governorate annexed by Israel after its occupation of the WB in 1967).¹⁰⁶

Seventh: Demolition of Buildings

Israel continued the demolition of Palestinian homes and expulsion of Palestinian citizens from their homes and public buildings in Area C of the WB (which is the area under total Israeli military and civilian control), as well as in eastern Jerusalem.

The majority of house demolitions and expulsion of the Palestinian population are in violation of Article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. According to statistics by OCHA-oPt, during 2012, 540 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C, including 165 residential structures were demolished, on the pretext that they lack Israeli permits for construction; this led to the displacement of 815 people, over half of them children.¹⁰⁷ The occupation agreed to only 5% of requests for building permits submitted by Palestinians in Area C.

A study by ARIJ indicated that the number of homes demolished by the Israeli authorities in the WB during 2013 totaled 267, including 95 in eastern Jerusalem. As for the houses threatened with demolition, their number reached 978 houses, including 255 houses in eastern Jerusalem.¹⁰⁸

In the course of their aggression on GS (dubbed by Israel “Operation Pillar of Defense”), the Israeli occupation forces carried out extensive destruction of buildings and public facilities, in November 2012. Al Mezan Center for Human Rights pointed out that at least 963 houses were damaged or destroyed, including 92 completely. Of those 92 houses, 52 were directly attacked. Another 179 houses sustained serious damage. The Center said that the occupation forces destroyed dozens of public facilities that sustained varying degrees of damage, among them:

10 health centers, 35 schools, 2 universities, 15 NGO offices, 30 mosques, 14 media offices, 92 industrial and commercial facilities, 1 UNRWA food distribution Centre, 8 ministry buildings, [it should be mentioned that the Abu Khadra Complex contains numerous ministerial headquarters, and was calculated as a single case], 14 police/security stations, 5 banks, 34 vehicles, 3 youth clubs, 3 cemeteries, and 2 bridges.¹⁰⁹

Eighth: The Separation Wall

There was no major change in the construction state of the Separation Wall during 2013; however, the Israeli army issued an extension of the validity of a number of Israeli military orders issued for military use for “the purpose of the construction of the wall” in several areas of the WB, including the city of Beit Jala, west of Bethlehem, the village of Walaja, northwest of Bethlehem, the village of Bil’in, west of Ramallah, and the village of ‘Azoun ‘Atma in Qalqilya, and on the south side of the Hebron Governorate. According to a report by ARIJ, there was 55 km of the Wall (7% of its total length) under construction; while 495 km (64%) were completed. Moreover, 224 km of the Wall (29%) was still in the planning phase.¹¹⁰ The report issued by OCHA-oPt in 2013, mentioned that in addition to what has been constructed already, there remains 10% of the route of the barrier under construction, while the construction of 28% of it has been planned, but Israeli authorities have not begun work on it yet.¹¹¹

Until July 2012, the UN Register of Damage collected over 26 thousand claims for material damage caused by the construction of the Wall in the northern WB.¹¹² According to OCHA-oPt report “The Humanitarian Impact of the Barrier, July 2013” about 11 thousand Palestinians, living in 32 communities located between the Wall and the Green Line, depend on the granting of permits or special arrangements to live in their own homes.¹¹³ And in order to access agricultural lands, farmers are directed to 74 gates in the Wall, the majority of which (52) only open during the olive harvest season (October-December).¹¹⁴

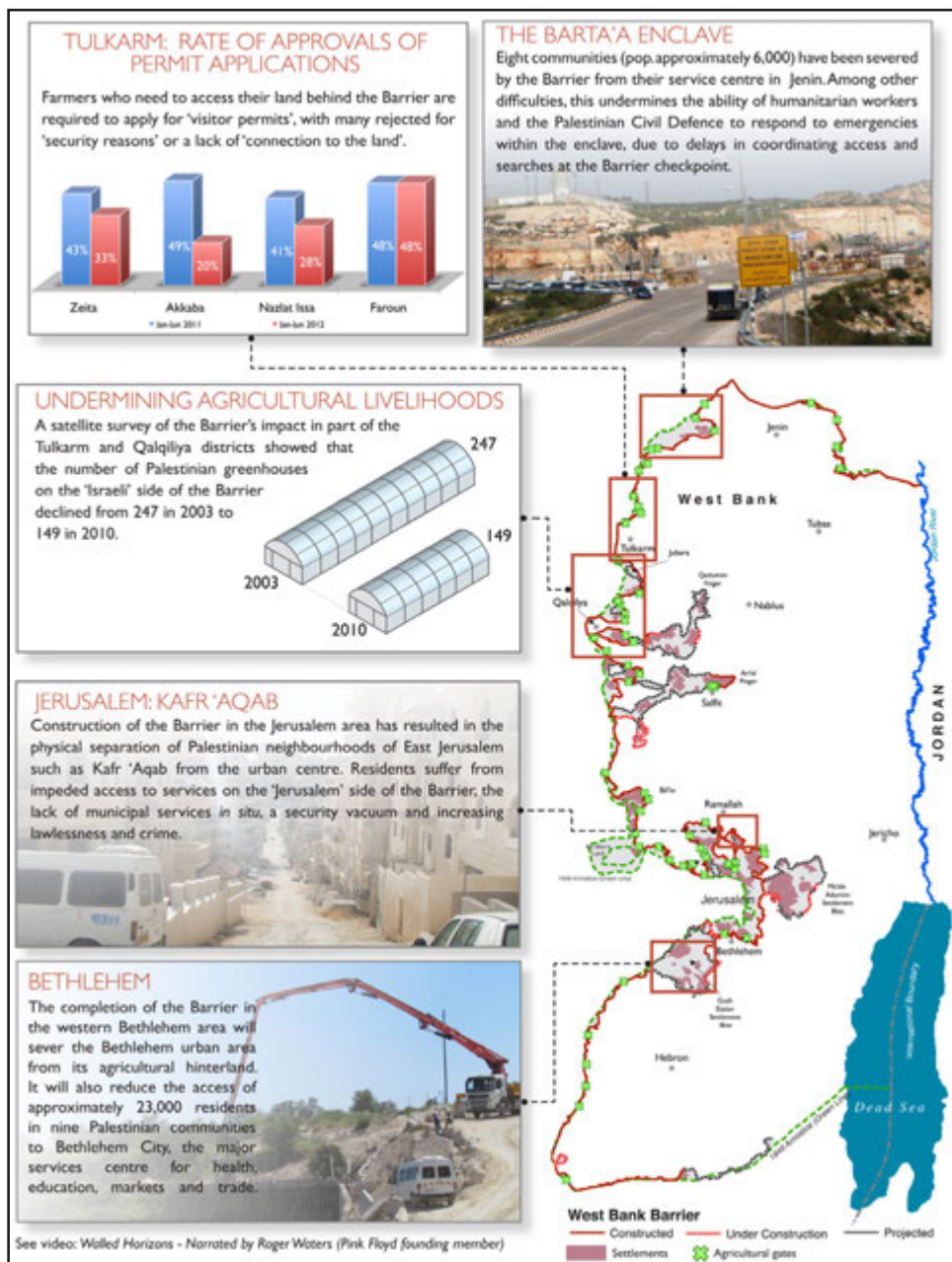
The report added that nearly half of the Israeli settlements in the WB (71 out of 150) and over 85% of the settler population are located in the area between the Green Line and the Wall’s route.¹¹⁵ OCHA-oPt’s report “The Humanitarian Impact of the Barrier, July 2012” said that the agricultural livelihoods of thousands of families in 150 Palestinian communities have been severely undermined due to the permit and gate regime, which restrict access to their farmlands behind the Wall. The majority of permit applications are regularly rejected on grounds that farmers failed to prove their “connection to the land” to the satisfaction of the Israeli authorities. “The limited opening of the ‘agricultural gates’ has forced permit-holders to stop cultivation or to shift from labor-intensive to rain-fed and low-value crops.”¹¹⁶

According to the same report, during the olive harvest season of 2011, 42% applications submitted for permits to access areas behind the Wall were rejected citing “security reasons” or lack of “connection to the land.”¹¹⁷

Map 7/6: The Separation Wall Route in the WB, July 2011¹¹⁸



Map 8/6: The Impact of the Separation Wall on the Humanitarian Situation 2012¹¹⁹



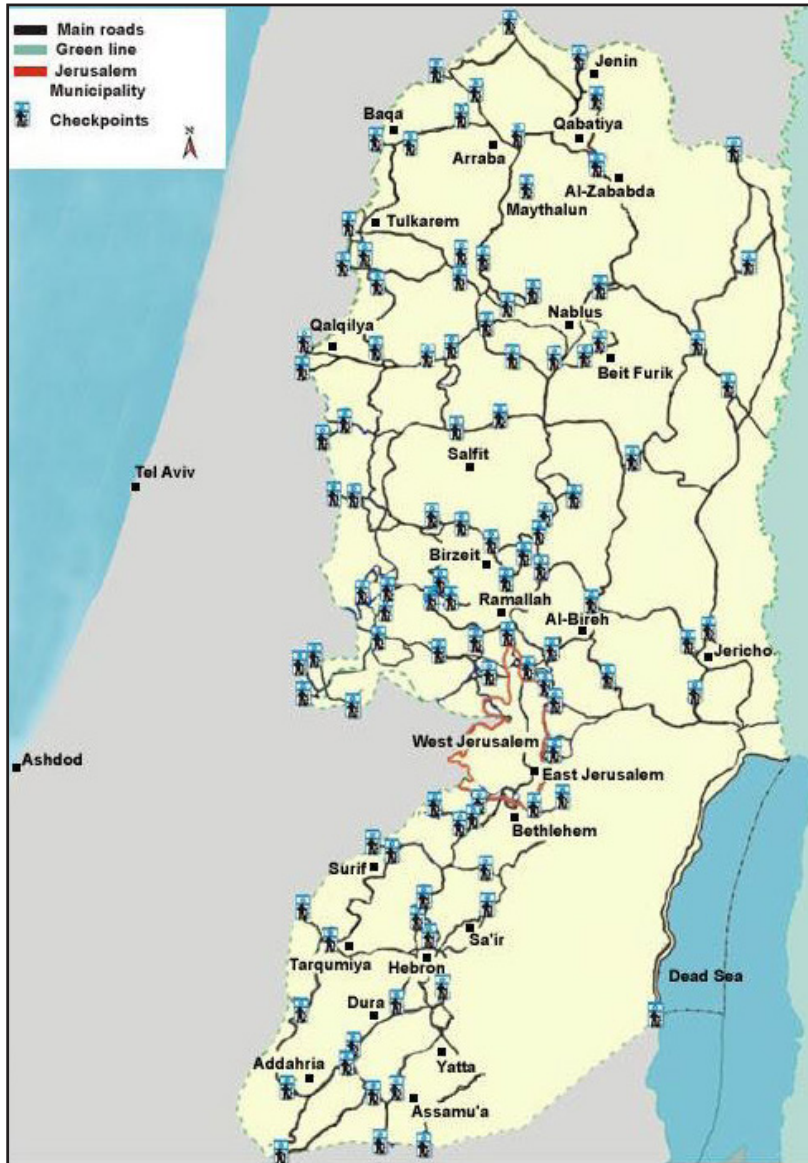
Ninth: Bypass Roads and Checkpoints

Israel continued the policy of enhancing its influence and making life easier for the settlers in the WB through the expansion of road construction. ‘Abdul Hadi Hanash, a Palestinian expert in settlement affairs, said that the “bypass roads constructed by Israel on WB lands have a length of about 900 km.” He alerted observers to the presence of Israeli proposals to build new roads with an estimated length of about 600 km. He explained that these roads would lead to the usurpation of more than 18 thousand donums of Palestinian agricultural lands, and the uprooting of tens of thousands of olive trees and grapes.¹²⁰

According to the new modified Israeli plans, Israeli authorities have begun construction work on a new network of roads, which will link cities within Israel and illegal settlements and outposts in the WB. Work has begun on Highway 9, which will link the coastal Israeli city of Hadera with the north of the WB, 20 km in the direction of the Trans-Israel Highway 6 to connect with the intersection of Baq‘a and Jatt, along the Separation Wall, and all the way to the Jordan Valley and the borders with Jordan. The damages caused by this plan will affect Palestinian villages inside the Palestinian territories occupied in 1948, in the second section of the scheme known as Highway 61. About 700 donums of private property owned by the people of western Baq‘a and Jatt will be confiscated. This plan will also prevent any territorial contiguity between the two villages, and will swallow all the land that had been earmarked for their expansion.¹²¹

A report by B’Tselem—The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, mentioned that up to February 2014, there were 65.12 km of roads in the WB that Israel had classified for the sole, or virtually sole, use of Israelis, first and foremost of settlers. It also prohibits Palestinians from even crossing some of these roads with cars, thereby restricting their access to nearby roads that they are ostensibly not prohibited from using. In these cases, Palestinian travelers have to get out of the car, cross the road on foot, and find an alternative mode of transportation on the other side.¹²²

In the comprehensive closure survey completed at the end of June 2012, OCHA-oPt field teams documented and mapped 542 obstacles blocking Palestinian movement within the WB. These include 61 permanently staffed checkpoints (excluding checkpoints on the Green Line), 25 partial checkpoints (staffed on an ad-hoc basis) and 436 unstaffed physical obstacles, including roadblocks, earth mounds, earth walls, road gates, road barriers, and trenches.¹²³

Map 9/6: Israeli Checkpoints in WB¹²⁴

Conclusion

Based on this detailed reading of the developments concerning Jerusalem, we can expect, in the near future, the temple groups to continue to take advantage of their unprecedented political influence, and work to intensify their storming



of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, and to impose a permanent and real change in the rules of access to the site. They will try to completely write off the Islamic Waqf and place the mosque under the administration of the Israeli Ministry of Religious Services, or at least to reach an agreement on a joint management by the two sides. It is expected that the demographic balance in Jerusalem will continue to go in favor of the Arab population; however, the main point of strength that the Israeli authorities will try to take advantage of is to take account of the numbers of Jerusalemites isolated outside the Wall and try to deprive them of their blue residency cards. It is also expected that the pace of settlement will continue and be concentrated in the South and North sectors, and that work will continue on the completion of infrastructure projects that promote these two sectors, along with the possibility of proposing new projects. If this is achieved, it will begin to rein in the demographic imbalance in favor of the Palestinians in the city.

Due to Israeli settlement and Judaization policies, the suffering of the Palestinian people will apparently not end; for the resumption of the peace process in the second half of 2013 had no effect on the feverish pace of construction of new settlements in the WB. The increasingly racist and extremist Israeli government, supported by an Israeli society moving in the same direction, continues with its hostile programs in a more severe and efficient manner. These programs involve the confiscation of lands, construction of settlement housing units, laying hands on water resources, destruction of Palestinian infrastructure, construction of the Separation Wall and building bypass roads.

It is expected that the same Israeli policies will continue in the short term, taking advantage of the weak state of Palestinians, and the sorry state of affairs in several Arab countries, represented in internal strife caused by the process of change and uprisings; in addition to the counter-waves to change and external interference. Furthermore, these Israeli policies will continue to benefit from the international environment, especially American cover, to work as a state above the law, not subject to pressure or accountability. However, in the event that the Palestinians manage to put their house in order and launch a new uprising, and in the event conditions in the Arab region changed for the better, in a way that serves the course of revolutions and change to the advantage of the people of the region, this will impose new and significantly different calculations on the Israeli side.

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Chapter Seven

Demographic, Economic and Educational Indicators

Demographic, Economic and Educational Indicators

Introduction

Doubtless demographic, economic and educational statistics are important indicators regarding the situation of the Palestinian people and its possible future trends. Yet, while examining these figures, it is important to consider the fact that the Palestinian people face exceptional conditions. This is because a part of the Palestinian people is living under the brutal Israeli occupation with all its tools of destruction, suppression, and exploitation, while the other part lives in the Diaspora and exile, suffering the bitterness of homelessness, refuge and denial. Here lies the problem of statistical studies: they do not pinpoint this exceptional situation and the role of the occupation in foiling the productive and creative ability of the Palestinian people, or in disabling institutional structures of the Palestinian state and its institutions. Moreover, some statistics, especially on the demographic level, are only rough figures due to the presence of a large number of Palestinians living abroad in different countries and under diversified political regimes.

This chapter seeks to present, comprehensively and objectively, the Palestinian demographic situation at home and abroad. However, in its study of economic and educational aspects, the chapter focuses on the WB and GS as statistics provided by concerned PA institutions tend to be more accurate than those from other governments.

First: Demographic Indicators

1. The Palestinian Population Worldwide

Palestinians worldwide were estimated at 11.807 million in 2013 compared to around 11.553 million in 2012 and 11.225 million in 2011.¹

Based on place of residence, Palestinians are categorized into Palestinians living in historic Palestine, which includes the territories occupied in 1948 and 1967, and those in the Diaspora. On one hand, Palestinians in historic Palestine are estimated at 5.916 million forming half the Palestinians worldwide. 4.485 million Palestinians, amounting to 38% of Palestinians worldwide, live in territories occupied in 1967, while 1.43 million Palestinians live in territories occupied in 1948 (Israel), forming around 12.1% of Palestinians worldwide (see table 1/7).

On the other hand, Palestinians in the Diaspora are estimated to number 5.891 million, amounting to half the Palestinians worldwide. These Palestinians are mostly concentrated in neighboring Arab countries, especially Jordan, which was home to around 3.535 million Palestinians at the end of 2013, 29.9% of Palestinians worldwide. Palestinians in other Arab countries are estimated at 1.691 million, thus forming 14.3% of Palestinians worldwide, and they are mostly present in neighboring Arab countries including Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and the Gulf countries. Palestinians in foreign countries total an estimated 665 thousands, 5.6% of Palestinians worldwide (see table 1/7).

At the end of 2012, Palestinians worldwide were estimated to number 11.553 million, of whom 4.357 million were living in the WB and GS, in addition to around 1.398 million Palestinians in territories occupied in 1948, 3.459 million in Jordan and 1.683 million in other Arab countries. Their number in foreign countries was estimated to be 656 thousands (see table 1/7).

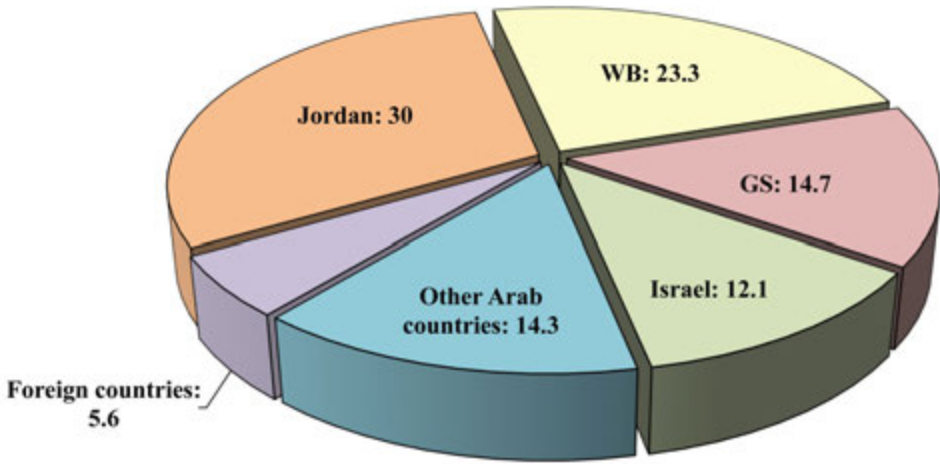
Table 1/7: Palestinian Population Worldwide Estimate According to Place of Residence at the End of 2012 and 2013 (thousands)²

Place of residence		2012		2013	
		Population estimate	Percentage (%)	Population estimate	Percentage (%)
Palestinian territories occupied in 1967	WB	2,684.1	23.2	2,754.7	23.3
	GS	1,672.9	14.5	1,730.7	14.7
Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel)*		1,398.3	12.1	1,430.2	12.1
Jordan**		3,459.1	29.9	3,535.2	30
Other Arab countries		1,682.9	14.6	1,690.6	14.3
Foreign countries		655.5	5.7	665.3	5.6
Total		11,552.8	100	11,806.7	100

* For the Palestinian population in the 1948 occupied territories; the number does neither include the Palestinians in the 1967 occupied territories, including Jerusalem, nor does it include Arab Syrians, Lebanese or non-Arab Christians or those classified as "Others." In contrast, Israeli statistics have published figures different from those of the PCBS, as the Israeli CBS estimated the number of Arab Palestinians in 1948 occupied territories at around 1.683 million in 2013. If we deduct the number of citizens in East Jerusalem, that is 308 thousands (based on 2012 statistics) and the number of citizens in the Golan Heights which is about 25 thousands, then the number of 1948 Palestinians totals 1.35 million.

** The number of Palestinians in Jordan was estimated at the end of 2009 to be 3,240,473, based on the 2.2% annual growth rates issued by the Jordanian Department of Statistics (DoS).

**Palestinian Population Worldwide Estimate According to Place of Residence
at the End of 2013 (%)**



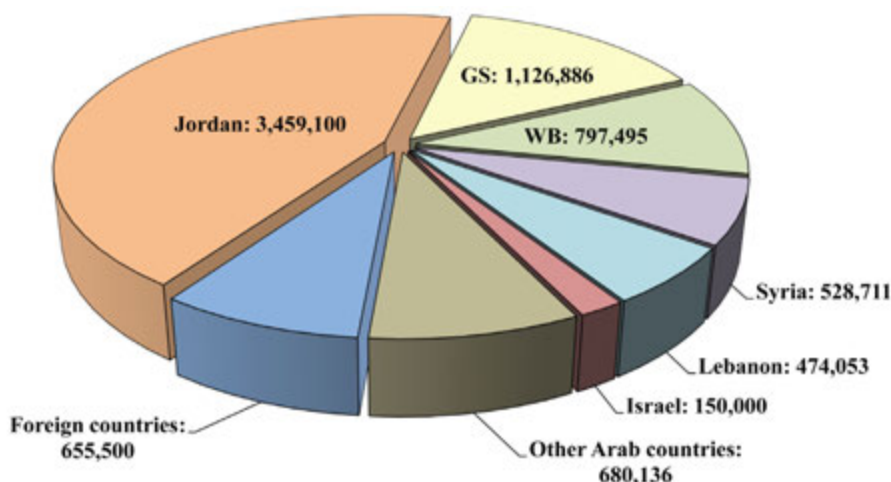
Palestinian refugees are not only those living outside Palestine, but they also include around 1.924 million refugees in Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, in addition to 150 thousand refugees expelled from their lands but still living in the territories occupied in 1948 (Israel). According to 2012 estimates, the number of Palestinian refugees is 7.872 million amounting to 68.1% of the total Palestinian population. There is a lack of reliability in calculating some figures due to changes of country of residence or citizenship, but this will be of marginal impact due to the large overall number of Palestinian refugees.

Table 2/7: Palestinian Refugees Worldwide; Population Estimates in 2012³

Country	WB	GS	Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel)*	Jordan	Lebanon	Syria	Other Arab countries	Foreign countries	Total
Population estimate	797,495	1,126,886	150,000	3,459,100	474,053	528,711	680,136	655,500	7,871,881

* Estimated number.

Palestinian Refugees Worldwide; Population Estimates in 2012



2. The Demographic Characteristics of Palestinians

a. The WB and GS

The number of Palestinians in the WB and GS at the end of 2013 was estimated at 4.485 million of whom 2.755 million lived in the WB (61.4%) and 1.731 million in the GS (38.6%).

Estimates for 2013 show that 44.2% of Palestinians in the WB and GS are refugees descending from the territories occupied in 1948 and estimated to total 1.984 million refugees. Around 818 thousand refugees were found to be living in the WB, thus constituting 29.7% of total WB Palestinians, while in GS their number reached 1.166 million refugees, 67.4% of the total Gazan population.

**Table 3/7: Palestinian Total and Refugee Population in the WB and GS
2012–2013⁴**

Year	Place of residence	Total population		Refugee population	
		Estimate	Percentage (%)	Estimate	Percentage (%)
2012	WB	2,684,066	61.6	797,495	29.7
	GS	1,672,865	38.4	1,126,886	67.4
	WB & GS	4,356,931	100	1,924,381	44.2
2013	WB	2,754,722	61.4	818,489	29.7
	GS	1,730,737	38.6	1,165,870	67.4
	WB & GS	4,485,459	100	1,984,359	44.2

The Palestinian community in the WB and GS is considered to be young with those aged under 15 years were estimated at 39.9% of the population by the end of 2013. However, there is stark difference between the WB and GS, as 37.7% of the population in the former is aged under 15 years compared to 43.3% in the latter. Conversely, the elderly (65 years and over) constitute only a small percentage of the total population, estimated at 2.9%, with 3.2% in the WB and 2.4% in the GS (see table 5/7).

Males in the WB and GS were estimated at 2.279 million at the end of 2013 compared to 2.207 million females, with a sex ratio 103.2 males per 100 females. In the WB, there were around 1.399 million males compared to 1.355 million females with a sex ratio 103.3. In the GS, males amounted to 879 thousands compared to 852 thousand females, with a sex ratio of 103.2.⁵

Data show that the dependency rate (number of dependent persons per 100 individuals at work age, 15–64 years) in the WB and GS decreased from 101.3 in 1997 to 74.8 in 2013. However, dependency rate in the WB is lower than that in the GS and it decreased in the former from 94.7 in 1997 to 69.5 in 2013, whereas in the latter it decreased from 114.5 in 1997 to 84.1 in 2013.⁶

Data also show a slight increase in median age (age that divides the population into two numerically equal groups, i.e., half the population is below that age and half above it) in the WB and GS during 1997–2013, where it ranged between 16.4 years in 1997 and 19.3 years in 2013. Comparing WB and GS figures during the same period shows a difference in median age, which increased in the WB from 17.4 years in 1997 to 20.3 years in 2013 and in the GS from 14.8 years in 1997 to 17.9 years in 2013.⁷

Demographic estimates also show that the Crude Birth Rate (CBR) in the WB and GS will decrease from 32.6 births per thousand population in 2013 to 31.9 births in 2015. In 2013, CBR in the WB was estimated at 29.7 births compared to 37.1 in the GS.⁸

Available data shows that the Crude Death Rate (CDR) in the WB and GS is relatively low when compared to the rates in other Arab countries. CDR is also expected to decrease in the WB and GS from 3.8 deaths per thousand population in 2013 to 3.6 deaths in 2015. In addition, a slight difference is noticed when comparing CDR in the WB and GS. Thus, while CDR is expected to decrease from 4 deaths per thousand population in 2013 to 3.8 deaths in 2015 in the WB, it is expected to

decrease from 3.7 deaths per thousand population in 2013 to 3.5 deaths in 2015 in the GS. This shows an improvement in the quality of life and access to medical care in addition to improved health awareness and development of health services.⁹

The natural population growth rate (the difference between the birth and death rates) in the WB and GS amounted to 2.9% in 2013 with 2.6% in the WB and 3.4% in the GS. Growth rates are expected to maintain the same level for the coming four years (2014–2017). This is so because the continued improvement in health levels, the decrease in the mortality rate, and the high fertility rates will lead to an increase in the natural population growth rate, which would necessitate suitable economic and social policies to accommodate the expected increase. Fertility in the WB and GS is considered high compared to fertility rates in other countries given early marriage, especially for females, and the desire to have children as part of the customs and traditions prevailing in Palestinian society.¹⁰

There are indicators that the fertility rate of Palestinian women has decreased, especially since the 1990s. Based on the results of the Palestinian household survey in 2010, there has been a decrease in the total fertility rate in the WB and GS where there were 4.4 births per woman over 2008–2009 compared to 6 in 1997. Comparing WB with GS shows an increased fertility rate in the GS compared to the WB during 1997–2009; where in the WB there were 4 births per woman over 2008–2009 compared to 5.6 births in 1997, while in GS there were 5.2 births per woman over 2008–2009 compared to 6.9 in 1997.¹¹

Total fertility rate is noted to be high in the WB and GS, where it amounted to 4.2 births per woman in 2010 (3.8 births in the WB and 4.9 births in the GS) compared to Arab countries. In 2012, the fertility rate in Jordan for example reached 3.5 births per woman compared to 3 births in Egypt and 2.2 births in Tunisia; thus, the WB and GS are considered to have high fertility rate.¹²

Due to the decreased mortality rate in the WB and GS, life expectancy has increased reaching 72.9 years in 2013 (71.5 years for males and 74.4 years for females). However, there was a difference between WB and GS figures where life expectancy in the WB reached 73.3 years in 2013 (71.9 years for males and 74.8 years for females) compared to 72.3 years in the GS (71 years for males and 73.8 years for females). The increase in life expectancy is due in part to improved health level and gradual decrease in mortality rates among infants and children.¹³

Available data for 2012 showed a decline in average household size in the WB and GS compared to 1997 where it decreased from 6.4 persons in 1997 to 5.3 in 2012. In

the WB, average household size decreased to 5.1 persons in 2012 compared to 6.1 in 1997 while in the GS it decreased to 6 persons in 2012 compared to 6.9 in 1997.¹⁴

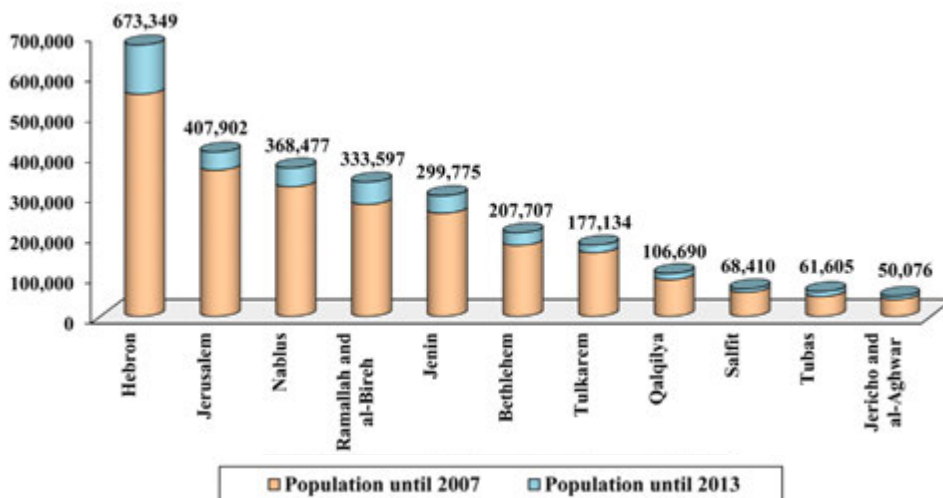
It is noticed that the annual growth rate (2007–2013) is high in all GS governorates compared to the WB. The highest is in North Gaza governorate, then in Rafah followed by Deir al-Balah whereas the highest annual growth rate in the WB is in Tubas and Hebron governorates.

The Palestinian population is distributed into 16 governorates, 5 of which in GS and 11 in the WB. Figures for 2013 show that Hebron is the largest governorate in terms of population, estimated at 15% of total population in the WB and GS, followed by Gaza governorate with 13.3% and Jerusalem governorate with 9.1%. Figures also show that Jericho and al-Aghwar is the least populated governorate with 1.1% of the total population in the WB and GS. The following table shows estimated population count in the WB and GS governorates based on PCBS figures.

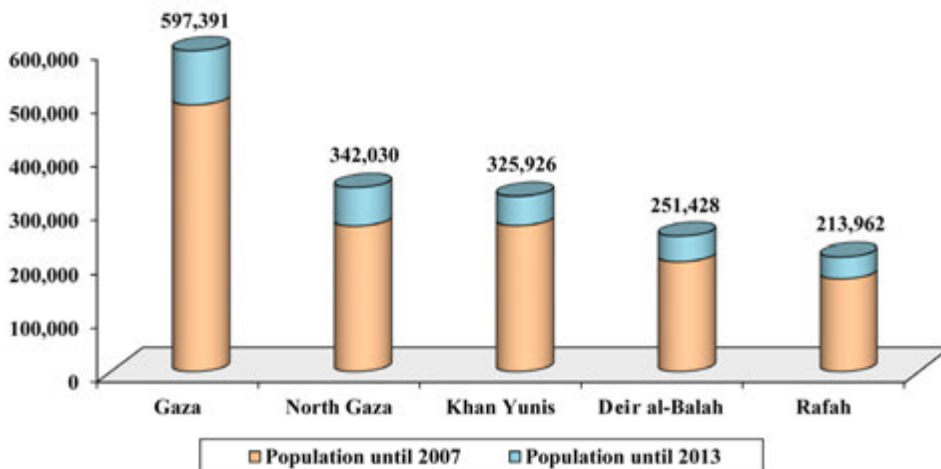
Table 4/7: Estimated Population Count by Governorate, 2007 and 2013¹⁵

Governorate	2007	2013	Annual growth rate 2007–2013
WB	2,345,107	2,754,722	2.7
Jenin	256,212	299,775	2.7
Tubas	48,771	61,605	4
Tulkarem	158,213	177,134	1.9
Nablus	321,493	368,477	2.3
Qalqilya	91,046	106,690	2.7
Salfit	59,464	68,410	2.4
Ramallah and al-Bireh	278,018	333,597	3.1
Jericho and al-Aghwar	41,724	50,076	3.1
Jerusalem	362,521	407,902	2
Bethlehem	176,515	207,707	2.7
Hebron	551,130	673,349	3.4
GS	1,416,539	1,730,737	3.4
North Gaza	270,245	342,030	4
Gaza	496,410	597,391	3.1
Deir al-Balah	205,534	251,428	3.4
Khan Yunis	270,979	325,926	3.1
Rafah	173,371	213,962	3.6
Total (WB & GS)	3,761,646	4,485,459	2.9

Estimated Population Count in WB Governorates 2013



Estimated Population Count in GS Governorates 2013



b. The Palestinian Territories Occupied in 1948 (Israel)

There were an estimated 1.43 million Palestinians in Israel at the end of 2013 compared to around 1.398 million in 2012, i.e., an increase of 2.3%. Available data regarding Palestinians residing in Israel in 2012 shows that those aged under 15 years totaled 36.1%, while those aged 65 years and over amounted to 4.1%.¹⁶

Available estimates for 2012 show the total fertility rate for Palestinians residing in Israel at 3.3 births per woman, which is high as compared to the general fertility rate in Israel of 3 births per woman. Available data also show that the average

Palestinian household size in Israel reached 4.8 persons in 2012. Moreover, CBR and CDR were estimated at 24.8 births and 2.8 deaths per thousand respectively, while the infant mortality rate was 6.6 deaths per thousand live births, taking into account that the sex ratio reached 102.2 males per 100 females. However, these figures do not include Arab citizens in the Syrian Golan Heights or citizens in J1 of Jerusalem governorate. They also exclude Lebanese Arabs who moved to live temporarily in Israel. The Israeli authorities consider all these categories within its population and within the Arab population as a whole.¹⁷

c. Jordan

Palestinians living in Jordan were estimated at 3.535 million at the end of 2013 compared to 3.459 million at the end of 2012 (see table 1/7).

According to data available for 2010, the Palestinian average household size in Jordan was 4.8 persons, while the annual growth rate reached 2.2%. The total fertility rate among Palestinian women in Jordan was 3.3 births per woman, and CBR was 29.2 births per thousand people. The infant mortality rate in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan was 22.6 deaths per thousand live births, while mortality rate among children aged under 5 years was 25.7 deaths per thousand live births for the same year.¹⁸

Based on UNRWA figures, the total Registered Persons (RPs) in Jordan was 2,110,114 as of 1/1/2013 compared to 2,047,367 as of 1/1/2012, with a 3.1% annual growth rate. The RPs in Refugee Camps (RPCs) as a percentage of the total RPs was around 18% as of 1/1/2013. It should be noted that according to UNRWA figures, the total RPs in Jordan was 2,133,756 as of 1/7/2013.¹⁹

d. Syria

According to UNRWA figures, the total RPs in Syria was 528,711 as of 1/1/2013 compared to 510,444 as of 1/1/2012, with 3.6% annual growth rate. The RPCs as a percentage of the total RPs was around 30% as of 1/1/2013. Worthy of mention is that these figures do not include the Palestinians who were displaced to Syria in 1967 and 1970, since most of them are not registered with UNRWA. It should be noted that according to UNRWA figures, the total RPs in Syria was 546,646 on 1/7/2013.²⁰

The suffering of Palestinian refugees in Syria has increased as a result of the ongoing crisis there. Although Palestinian refugees and factions generally hold on to a policy of noninterference in internal Syrian issues, their camps haven been turned into arenas for clashes and destruction. Of 540 thousand refugees, around 440 thousand were in urgent need of continuous aid as of early 2014, while around 270 thousand Palestinian refugees had to move to more secure areas within Syria. Around 80 thousand refugees had to leave the country, including to Lebanon, which took around 53 thousand; Jordan, 14 thousand; Egypt, 6 thousand and GS, 860. Other refugees moved to Turkey, Libya and Malaysia among others.²¹

Around 52 thousand Palestinian refugee houses in Syria have been damaged or destroyed. In addition, UNRWA's basic education system has been severely affected, with 18 school buildings transformed into refuge centers, and another 68 were damaged or rendered inaccessible. Moreover, out of 66 thousand Palestinian students, only 47 thousands were enrolled during the academic year. Besides, 13 out of 23 UNRWA primary health centers were shut down. As refugees' conditions deteriorated, UNRWA launched a humanitarian appeal to raise \$417 million to meet the basic needs of Palestinian refugees in 2014.²²

According to the most recent available data regarding Palestinian refugees in Syria, those aged under 15 years amounted to 33.1% of the total, while those aged 65 years and over amounted to 4.4% in 2009. Data shows that in 2010 the Palestinian average household size in Syria was 4.1 persons, while the annual growth rate was 1.6%. The total fertility rate among Palestinian women in Syria reached 2.5 births per woman in 2010, whereas CBR was 29.2 births per thousand population. The infant mortality rate for Palestinians in Syria was 28.2 deaths per thousand live births, while the mortality rate among children aged under 5 years reached 31.5 deaths per thousand live births in 2010.²³

e. Lebanon

According to UNRWA figures, the total RPs residing in Lebanon was 474,053 as of 1/1/2013 compared to 465,798 as of 1/1/2012, with 1.8% annual growth rate. The RPCs as a percentage of the total RPs was around 50% as of 1/1/2013. It should be noted that according to UNRWA figures, the total RPs in Lebanon was 478,740 as of 1/7/2013.²⁴

Available data regarding Palestinians in Lebanon in 2011 show that 31.1% of refugees are under 15 years of age while 6.1% are 65 years and over. The sex ratio was estimated at 98.2 males per 100 females. Data also estimates that unmarried Palestinian females in Lebanon (12 years and over) at 43.7% of the Palestinian population, those married at 52.2%, divorced at 2.3% and widowed at 1.7%.²⁵

According to PCBS figures, the average household size was 4.4 persons in 2011, while the fertility rate among Palestinian women in Lebanon reached 2.8 births per woman. Infant mortality rate for Palestinians in Lebanon was 15 deaths per thousand live births, while mortality rate among children aged under 5 years was 17 deaths per thousand live births for the same year.²⁶

f. General Comparisons Among Palestinians

Comparing some of the major demographic indicators summarized in table 5/7, the following can be discerned:

- The percentage of Palestinians aged under 15 years is highest in GS and lowest in Lebanon.
- The dependency rate in GS is highest, followed by that of the Palestinian population in Jordan, then Israel and then the WB. Syria and Lebanon see the lowest dependency rate.
- The percentage of Palestinians aged 65 years and over is highest in Lebanon, then Jordan and lowest in GS.
- CBRs are highest in GS and WB, and lowest in Lebanon and Israel, which leads to demographic pressure in the GS in particular.
- CDRs remained high in the WB and GS where it reached 3.8 deaths per thousand in 2013. This is due to the Israeli occupation and its racist policies pursued over decades, especially killing the Palestinians.
- The natural population growth rate remained the same in the PA territories, yet it remained high in the GS as compared to the WB.

Table 5/7: Selected Demographic Indicators of Palestinians by Residence²⁷

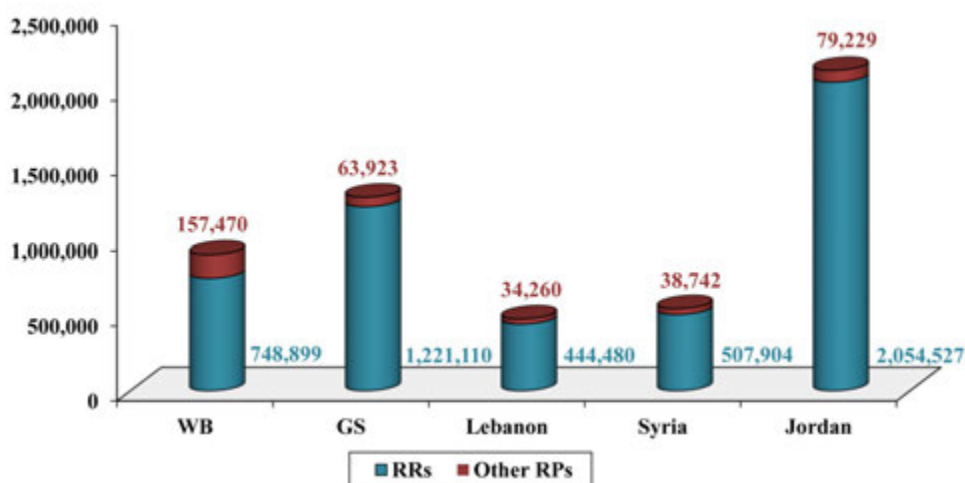
Indicator	WB 2013	GS 2013	WB & GS 2013	Israel 2012	Jordan 2010	Syria 2010	Lebanon 2011
% of individuals under 15 years	37.7	43.3	39.9	36.1	35.9 (2007)	33.1 (2009)	31.1
% of individuals 65 years and over	3.2	2.4	2.9	4.1	5.2 (2007)	4.4 (2009)	6.1
Dependency rate (per 100 individuals 15–64 years)	69.5	84.1	74.8	77.9 (2007)	84 (2007)	59.7 (2007)	62.1 (2007)
Sex ratio (males per 100 females)	103.3	103.2	103.2	102.2	–	100.4 (2009)	98.2
CBR (births per 1,000 population)	29.7	37.1	32.6	24.8	29.2	29.2	25.8 (2010)
CDR (deaths per 1,000 population)	4	3.7	3.8	2.8	–	2.8 (2006)	–
Total fertility rate (births per woman)	3.8 (2010)	4.9 (2010)	4.2 (2010)	3.3	3.3	2.5	2.8
Natural population growth rate	2.6	3.4	2.9	2.5 (2010)	2.2	1.6	2.2 (2010)
Average household size (individuals per house)	5.1 (2012)	6 (2012)	5.3 (2012)	4.8	4.8	4.1	4.4

3. The Palestinian Refugees

The UNRWA has recently provided updated statistics regarding the number of refugees in the areas of its operation where recent digitization of UNRWA's registration records enables it "to present more detailed beneficiary statistics." UNRWA classified those registered with it into two categories, labeling them "Registered Refugees (RRs)" and "Other Registered Persons." The latter category includes those eligible to receive the Agency's services according to the UNRWA website. It is likely that these include beneficiaries who do not qualify for UNRWA's definition of the Palestinian refugee, which is a limited definition that does not cover all categories of refugees. The following table shows the number of RR and the Other RPS according to UNRWA estimates as of 1/7/2013:

Table 6/7: UNRWA's Figures as of 1/7/2013²⁸

Region	RRs	Other RPs	Total RPs
WB	748,899	157,470	906,369
GS	1,221,110	63,923	1,285,033
Lebanon	444,480	34,260	478,740
Syria	507,904	38,742	546,646
Jordan	2,054,527	79,229	2,133,756
Total	4,976,920	373,624	5,350,544

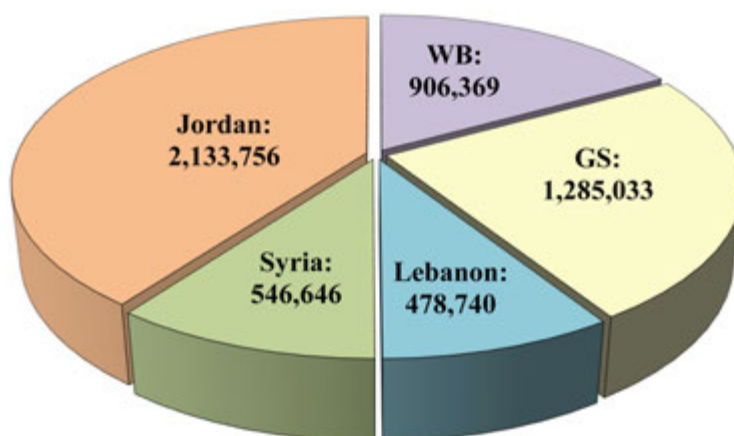
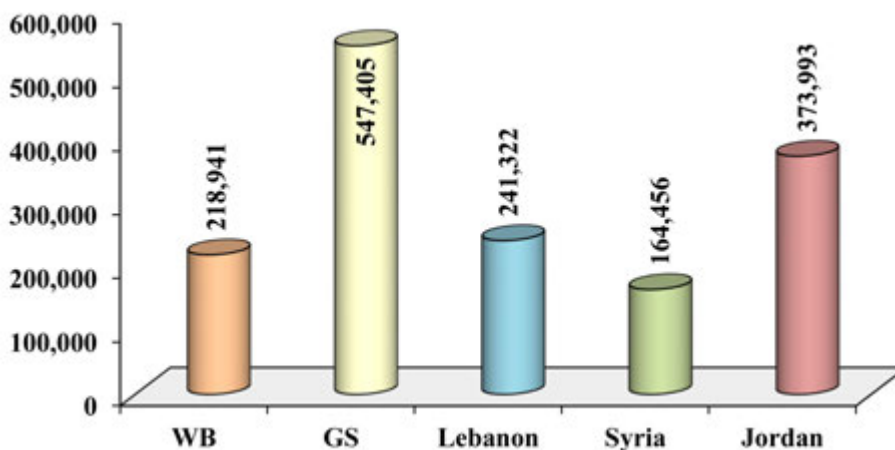
UNRWA's Figures as of 1/7/2013

The total RPs in UNRWA's five regions of operation are estimated at 5.351 million as of 1/7/2013, 39.9% of whom live in Jordan, 41% in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 (24% in GS and 16.9% in WB) and the other 19.1% in Syria and Lebanon (see table 6/7). The RPCs as a percentage of the total RPs amounted to 29% as of 1/7/2013. It is also noted that the percentage of RPCs in Lebanon and the GS is the highest of all the regions.

It is also noted that the average family size in all areas with a Palestinian presence is slightly decreasing over time; the general average decreased from 4.6 persons per family in 2006 to 4.4 persons in 2010.

Table 7/7: UNRWA-RPs, Their Births and Families by Region²⁹

Region	RPs 1/7/2013	CBR 2010	Average family size 2010	Families 2010	Refugee camps	RPCs 1/7/2013	RPCs as % of RPs 1/7/2013
WB	906,369	29.4	4	44,502	19	218,941	24
GS	1,285,033	31.4	4.5	106,009	8	547,405	43
Lebanon	478,740	25.8	3.9	55,926	12	241,322	50
Syria	546,646	29.2	4.1	35,016	9	164,456	30
Jordan	2,133,756	29.2	4.8	73,025	10	373,993	18
Total	5,350,544	–	4.4	314,478	58	1,546,117	29

UNRWA-RPs by Region as of 1/7/2013

UNRWA-RPCs by Region as of 1/7/2013


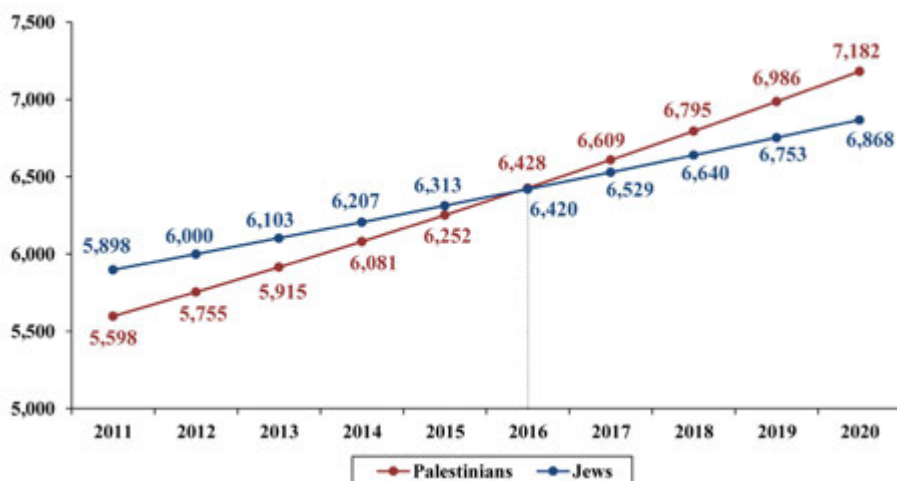
4. Demographic Growth Trends

Despite the relative decrease in the natural growth rate among the Palestinian population, this rate remains high as compared to other populations including the Israelis. Based on PCBS estimates, Palestinians in historic Palestine amounted to around 5.9 million at the end of 2013, while Jews reached 6.1 million according to Israel's CBS estimates. Based on annual growth rates which amount to 2.9% for Palestinians in the WB and GS, 2.5% for Palestinians in territories occupied in 1948 (Israel), and 1.7% for Jews, the number of Palestinians and Jews in historic Palestine will be equal in 2016; where each will count around 6.42 million should growth rates remain unchanged. Jews living in Palestine will comprise 48.9% of the population in 2020, where they will amount to 6.87 million compared to 7.18 million Palestinians.

Table 8/7: Estimated Population Count of Palestinians and Jews in Historic Palestine 2011–2020 (thousands)³⁰

Year	Palestinians			Jews
	WB & GS	Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel)	Historic Palestine	
2011	4,231	1,367	5,598	5,898
2012	4,357	1,398	5,755	6,000
2013	4,485	1,430	5,915	6,103
2014	4,615	1,466	6,081	6,207
2015	4,749	1,503	6,252	6,313
2016	4,887	1,541	6,428	6,420
2017	5,029	1,580	6,609	6,529
2018	5,175	1,620	6,795	6,640
2019	5,325	1,661	6,986	6,753
2020	5,479	1,703	7,182	6,868

Estimated Population Count of Palestinians and Jews in Historic Palestine 2011–2020 (thousands)



Second: Economic Indicators in the WB and GS

Palestinian economic developments in 2012 and 2013 witnessed a sharp transformation in economic development, which decreased in 2012 and then deteriorated more sharply in 2013. Such a deterioration heralded a new stage characterized by slow growth or stagnation that could last for years to come. 2014 growth expectations tend to be mysteriously split among different tracks ranging between optimistic and pessimistic expectations. These trends are based on reasonable assumptions, which make it difficult to predict a specific track in light of shaky conditions regarding Israeli-Palestinian talks, in addition to the suffering in GS as a result of the blockade, the closure and destruction of border tunnels and the crumbling infrastructure. Other factors that make it difficult to predict a definite track include the ongoing process of Judaization in WB, settlement building, the Separation Wall and security checkpoints which restrict the movement of individuals and trade, in addition to stumbled attempts to end inter-Palestinian division.

1. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in PA Territories (WB and GS)

GDP is considered one of the most important widespread economic indicators, and it reflects the progress of economic growth and development generated by different activities in the society.

a. Average GDP Growth

Based on PCBS data, GDP has increased from \$6,797.3 million in 2012 to \$6,896.7 million* in 2013, with an annual growth rate of 5.9% and 1.5% for the two years respectively, i.e., an average 3.7%. It should be noted that these figures are calculated at constant prices, where 2004 is the base year. This growth rate is considered low compared to 2011 and the preceding years, except 2006, which witnessed a decrease of 5.2% (see table 9/7).

This level of growth is consistent with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) assessment of economic activity in the WB and GS for 2013, which noted that growth remained weaker than was expected in light of continued public financial stimuli.³¹ This economic environment is enhanced by restrictive Israeli measures obstructing productive activities and enterprises, and it remains one of the most important factors for economic deterioration over the two years analyzed.

Growth expectations for the period 2014–2016 are reflected in the general trend line for simple regression analysis, which shows an expected annual growth at 5.4% with sequential gradual decline based on probable future scenarios.

Table 9/7: GDP in PA Territories 2004–2013 at Constant Prices (\$ million)³²

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
GDP	4,198.4	4,559.5	4,322.3	4,554.1	4,878.3
Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	+12	+8.6	-5.2	+5.4	+7.1

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012*	2013**
GDP	5,239.3	5,724.5	6,421.4	6,797.3	6,896.7
Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	+7.4	+9.3	+12.2	+5.9	+1.5

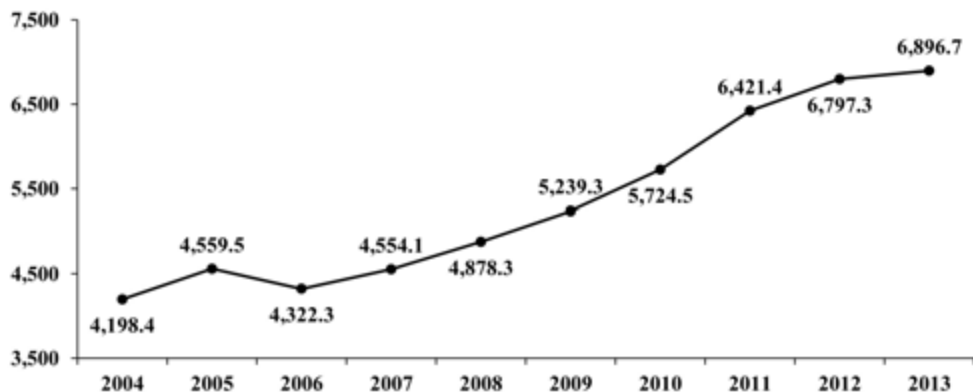
Note: The data excludes those parts of Jerusalem which were annexed by Israel in 1967. The base year is 2004. This will be applied to all the following tables in this chapter.

* Preliminary estimates.

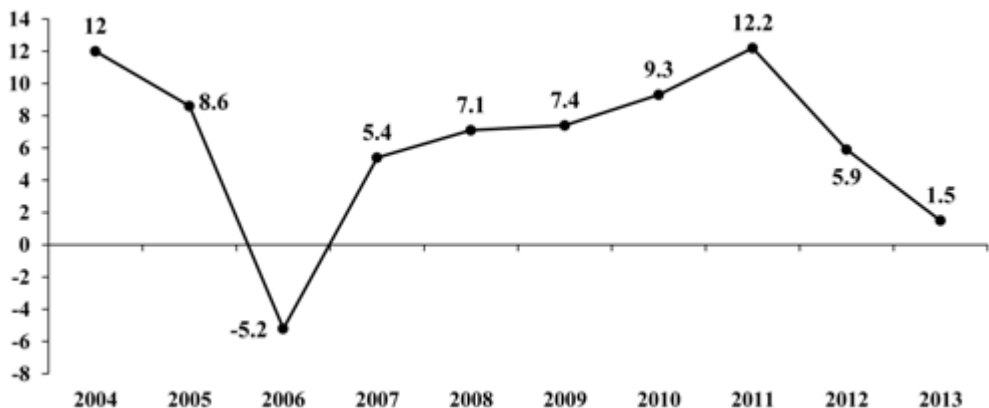
** The 2013 data was calculated according to the actual value of the first three quarters of the same year.

* PCBS preliminary estimates, at constant prices, show that the GDP in PA territories in 2013 was \$11,906.9 million, where 2010 is the base year; see PCBS, *Press Report, Preliminary Estimates of Quarterly National Accounts (Fourth Quarter 2013)* (Ramallah: PCBS, March 2014), http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_QNAQ42013E.pdf

GDP in PA Territories 2004–2013 at Constant Prices (\$ million)



Average Annual Growth or Deterioration of the GDP in PA Territories 2004–2013 at Constant Prices (%)



b. GDP Growth in the WB and GS

There was significant difference in GDP growth between the WB and GS in 2012 and 2013. In the WB, GDP decreased by 0.4%, while in GS it witnessed an increase of 6.9%, and the end result was a decline in growth average, as mentioned above (see table 11/7).

As for share in GDP by region, the WB share was high with an inclination towards decline while the GS share was low with an inclination towards increase (see table 10/7), taking into consideration that the WB population comprised

61.4% of the total, combined WB and GS population in 2013.³³ This factor, coupled with the large area of the WB compared to the GS and the Israeli's tightening siege on the Strip, explains why the WB's share of GDP is higher than that of the GS.

Table 10/7: GDP in the WB and GS 2008–2013 at Constant Prices (\$ million)³⁴

Year	WB		GS		WB & GS	
	GDP	Percentage (%)	GDP	Percentage (%)	GDP	Percentage (%)
2008	3,716.7	76.2	1,161.6	23.8	4,878.3	100
2009	3,979.6	76	1,259.7	24	5,239.3	100
2010	4,315.4	75.4	1,409.1	24.6	5,724.5	100
2011	4,764.7	74.2	1,656.7	25.8	6,421.4	100
2012*	5,030.5	74	1,766.8	26	6,797.3	100
2013**	5,008.4	72.6	1,888.3	27.4	6,896.7	100

* Preliminary estimates.

** The 2013 data was calculated according to the actual value of the first three quarters of the same year.

GDP in the WB and GS 2008–2013 at Constant Prices (\$ million)

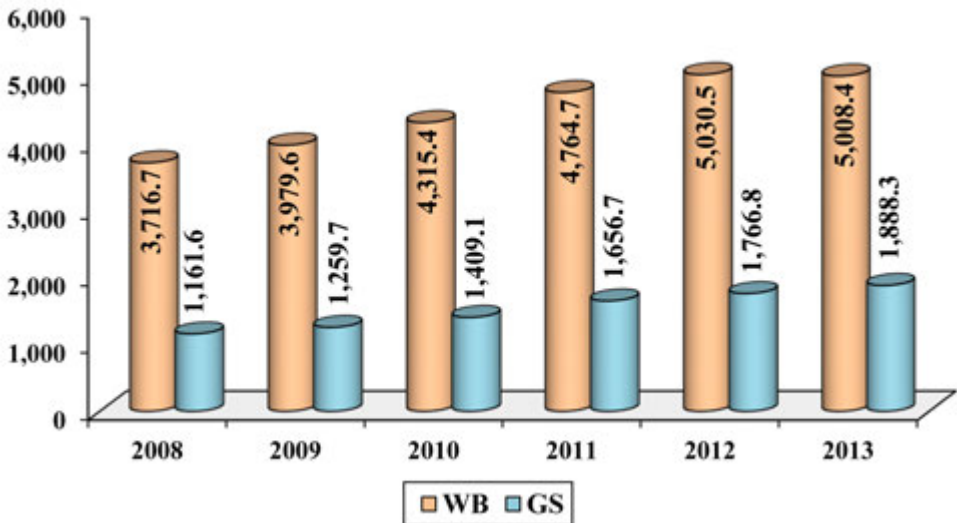


Table 11/7: GDP Growth in the WB and GS 2008–2013 at Constant Prices
 (\$ million)³⁵

Year		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012*	2013**
WB	GDP	3,716.7	3,979.6	4,315.4	4,764.7	5,030.5	5,008.4
	Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	+12	+7.1	+8.4	+10.4	+5.6	–0.4
GS	GDP	1,161.6	1,259.7	1,409.1	1,656.7	1,766.8	1,888.3
	Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	–6.1	+8.4	+11.6	+17.6	+6.6	+6.9

* Preliminary estimates.

** The 2013 data was calculated according to the actual value of the first three quarters of the same year.

Despite discrepancy in GDP growth over the past years, Palestinian domestic absorption (domestic demand or total domestic consumption) remained high and constituted 144.2% of GDP in 2012, while the net export of goods and services was negative and it constituted 44.2% of GDP. This reflects the expansion of consumer culture and a lack of a rationalization policy, especially as most citizens are on low incomes and can barely afford to meet their essential needs as well as the danger of transforming the economy of an occupied people to consumer rather than productive economy.³⁶

Despite the above, there are promising chances for independence in order to achieve a prominent leap in economic development, especially given that a major part of the Palestinians' economic resources are still either not invested or not under Palestinian control. According to The World Bank report on the future of the Palestinian economy, the total potential value added (direct and indirect) as a result of the alleviation of restrictions on access to, and activity and production in, Area C is likely to have amounted to 35% of Palestinian GDP in 2011, which would contribute to economic independence. Area C is controlled by Israel on the security and administrative levels and it constitutes around 61% of the WB. In other words, the core of the problem of Palestinian economy lies in the Israeli occupation and its subsequent negative implications.³⁷

c. GDP in PA Territories and Israel

Israel has great production energy through its goods and services activities. Its laborers enjoy high levels of production. Consequently, Israeli GDP increased, at current prices, from \$213.227 billion in 2008 to \$291.819 billion in 2013, at a growth estimated at \$78.592 billion and a rate of 36.9%. This growth is related to the

diversity of civil and military products, and it is reflected on the size and spread of exports. Palestinian GDP was humble compared to that of Israel and it increased, at current prices, from \$6.247 billion to around \$11.297 billion over the same period; thus representing a limited percentage compared to Israeli GDP. Palestinian GDP covers a limited part of the local market need due to Israeli impediments which have disrupted the process of productive enterprises and hindered exports. In 2013, Israeli GDP was 26 fold (2,583%) more than its Palestinian counterpart. Should internal and external conditions remain intact, future growth expectations predict a continuing growth gap between the two sides, and a relative, limited improvement of the Palestinian economy.

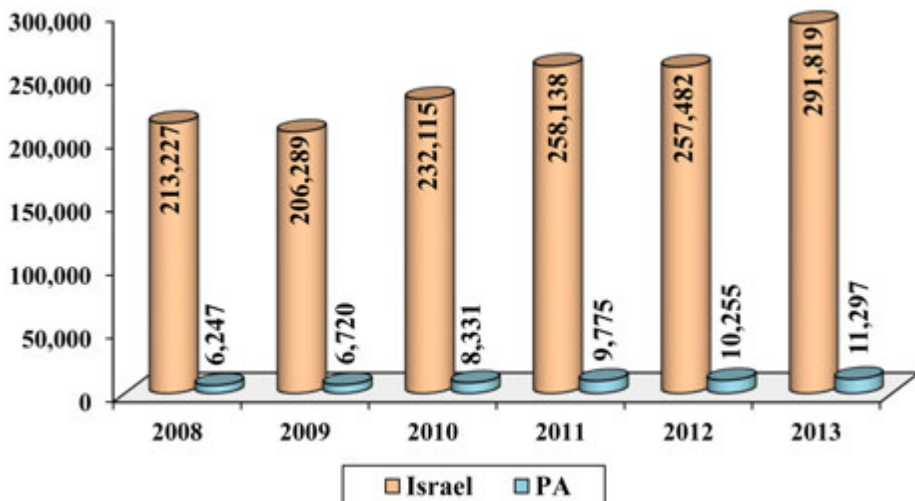
Table 12/7: GDP in PA Territories and Israel 2008–2013 at Current Prices
(\$ million)³⁸

Year	PA	Israel
2008	6,247	213,227
2009	6,720	206,289
2010	8,331	232,115
2011	9,775	258,138
2012	10,255*	257,482
2013	11,297**	291,819

* Preliminary estimates.

** The 2013 data was calculated according to the actual value of the first three quarters of the same year.

GDP in PA Territories and Israel 2008–2013 at Current Prices



2. GDP per Capita in PA Territories

This indicator is important as it can measure the ability of individuals to meet their need for goods and services from one time to another, especially when calculated at constant prices, and then preserve the purchasing power of used currency. The level of this indicator depends on growth rate of real GDP and the rate of population growth.

a. Average Growth of GDP per Capita

Based on PCBS data, GDP per capita amounted to \$1,679.3 and \$1,660** for 2012 and 2013 respectively, with a growth rate of 2.7% for 2012 and a decrease of 1.1% in 2013, i.e., an average 0.8%. It should be noted that these figures are calculated at constant prices, where 2004 is the base year (see table 13/7).

Table 13/7: GDP per Capita in PA Territories 2004–2013 at Constant Prices (\$)³⁹

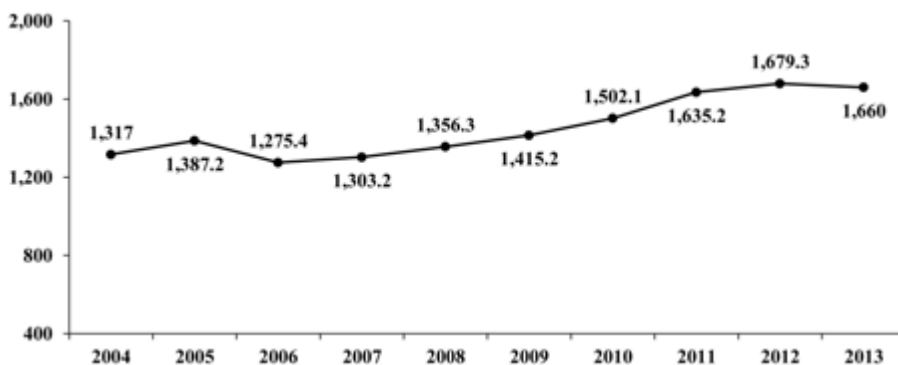
Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
GDP per capita	1,317	1,387.2	1,275.4	1,303.2	1,356.3
Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	+7.3	+5.3	–8.1	+2.2	+4.1

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012*	2013**
GDP per capita	1,415.2	1,502.1	1,635.2	1,679.3	1,660
Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	+4.3	+6.1	+8.9	+2.7	–1.1

* Preliminary estimates.

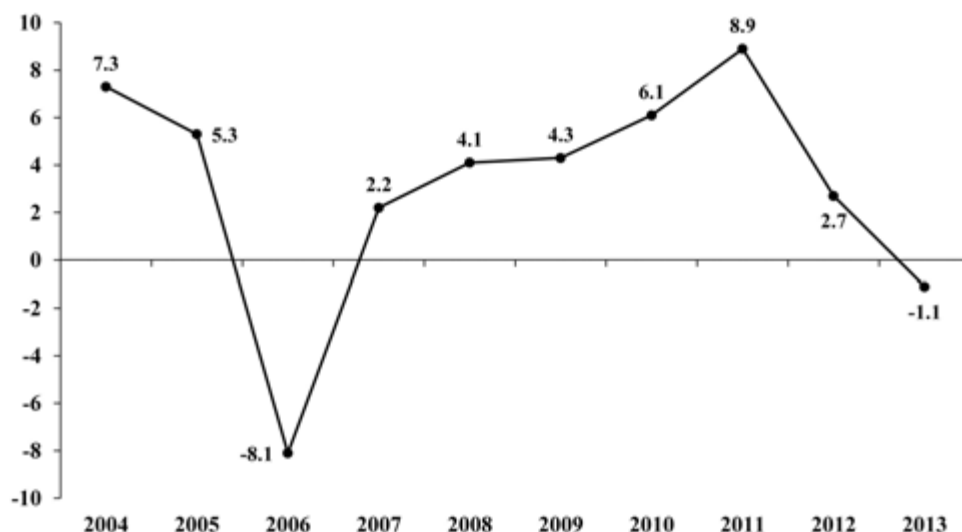
** The 2013 data was calculated according to the actual value of the first three quarters of the same year.

GDP per Capita in PA Territories 2004–2013 at Constant Prices (\$)



** PCBS preliminary estimates, at constant prices, show that the GDP per capita in PA territories in 2013 was \$2,855.1, where 2010 is the base year; see PCBS, *Press Report, Preliminary Estimates of Quarterly National Accounts (Fourth Quarter 2013)*.

**Average Annual Growth or Deterioration of the GDP per Capita in
PA Territories 2004–2013 at Constant Prices (%)**



b. GDP per Capita in the WB and GS

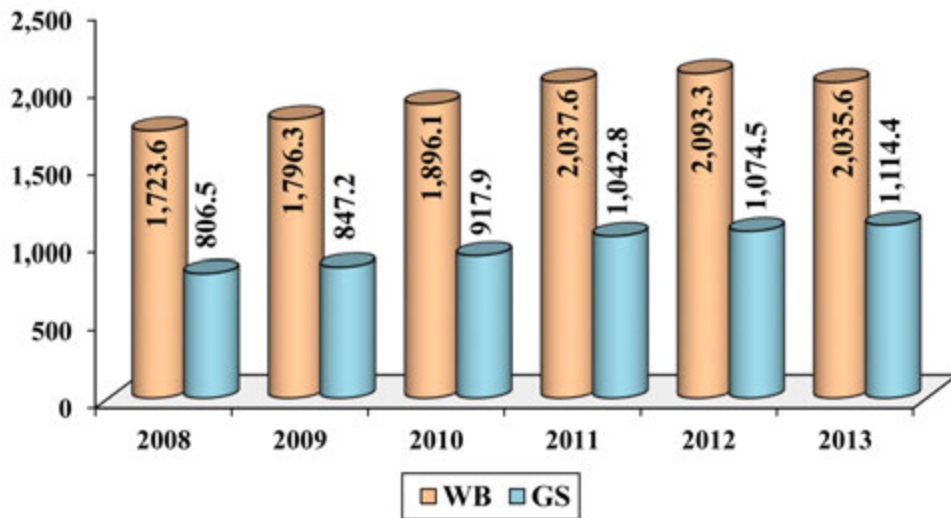
There is a difference in growth of GDP per capita in the WB and GS for 2012 and 2013 as it deteriorated by a two-year average of 0.05% in the WB and 3.35% in the GS. Growth expectations until 2016 show a continued slow growth with more deterioration in the WB than in the GS.

Table 14/7: GDP per Capita in the WB and GS 2008–2013 at Constant Prices (\$) ⁴⁰

Year		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012*	2013**
WB	GDP per capita	1,723.6	1,796.3	1,896.1	2,037.6	2,093.3	2,035.6
	Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	+9.1	+4.2	+5.6	+7.5	+2.7	-2.8
GS	GDP per capita	806.5	847.2	917.9	1,042.8	1,074.5	1,114.4
	Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	-9	+5	+8.3	+13.6	+3	+3.7

* Preliminary estimates.

** The 2013 data was calculated according to the actual value of the first three quarters of the same year.

GDP per Capita in the WB and GS 2008–2013 at Constant Prices (\$)**c. GDP per Capita in PA Territories and Israel**

The GDP per capita in PA territories continued to be low compared to its Israeli counterpart, the latter was around 13 folds more than the former in 2012 and 2013. This gap is primarily due to the Israeli occupation and its arbitrary policies which prevent the natural growth of Palestinian economy, leading to a deterioration in the Palestinian GDP level at a time when Palestinians witness higher population rates than the Israeli side, and endure a more difficult work environment under the occupation, which negatively affects wages as well as living standards and saving levels. Ultimately, there is a big gap between the Palestinian and Israeli sides which allows the Israeli individual to enjoy better living conditions than his Palestinian counterpart where living standards remain low.

Palestinian GDP per capita, at current prices, in PA territories reached \$2,719 in 2013 compared to \$2,534 in 2012 and \$2,489 in 2011. Conversely, Israeli GDP per capita, at current prices, amounted to \$36,227 in 2013 compared to \$32,569 in 2012 and \$33,252 in 2011.

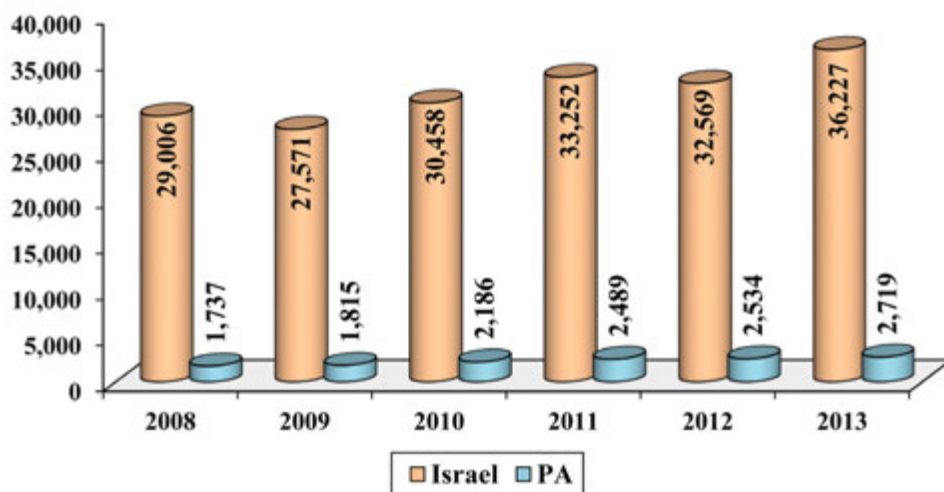
Table 15/7: GDP per Capita in PA Territories and Israel 2008–2013
at Current Prices (\$) ⁴¹

Year	PA	Israel
2008	1,737	29,006
2009	1,815	27,571
2010	2,186	30,458
2011	2,489	33,252
2012	2,534*	32,569
2013	2,719**	36,227

* Preliminary estimates.

** The 2013 data was calculated according to the actual value of the first three quarters of the same year.

GDP per Capita in PA Territories and Israel 2008–2013 at Current Prices (\$)



3. Public Debt

Public debt is an obligation on the debtor to pay premiums and financial obligations, and it represents a heavy burden on those countries that fail to repay it when it is due. Tracing the size of Palestinian public debt with its domestic (internal) and foreign (external) sources shows that it has increased from \$1,557 million in 2008 to \$2,376 million in 2013, i.e., an increase over the said period amounting to \$819 million and of 52.6% (see table 16/7).

Debt evolution for 2012 and 2013 shows a high growth at 12.2% for the first year then a decrease of 4.3% in the following year, an average of 4%, while debt has remained high from early 2014 and till now (see table 16/7).

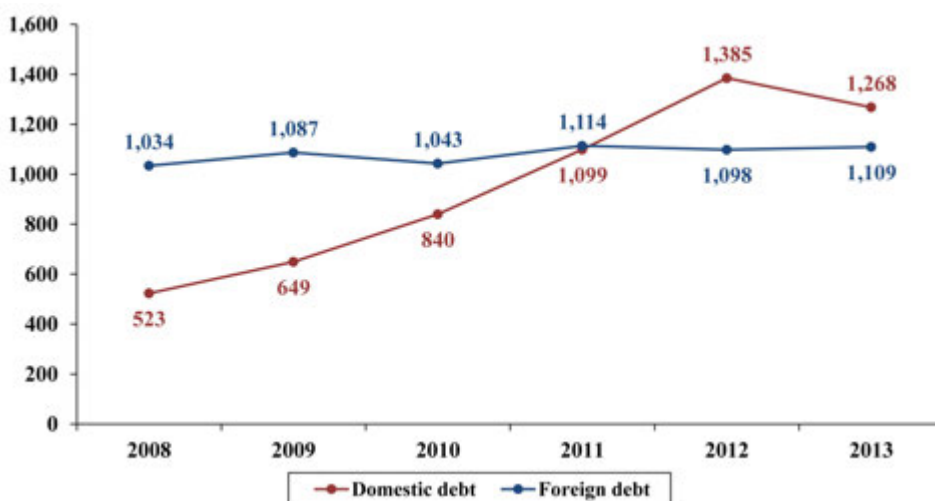
External debts constituted around 66.4% of public debt in 2008 and declined to 46.7% in 2013, while internal debts increased from 33.6% to 53.4% over the same period. This means that the PA has relied more on domestic resources, such as banks and the Energy Authority, due to facilitations and easier loans.⁴²

However, internal debt has its dangers on the banking system where credit granted to the government exceeded the ownership equity of all banks, which urged caution when dealing with this phenomenon.⁴³ It is expected that the public debt for 2015 and 2016 will continue to increase achieving relatively high growth, in addition to the increase of the per capita public debt.

Table 16/7: Public Debt in PA Territories 2008–2013 (\$ million)⁴⁴

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Domestic debt	523	649	840	1,099	1,385	1,268
Foreign debt	1,034	1,087	1,043	1,114	1,098	1,109
Public debt	1,557	1,736	1,883	2,213	2,483	2,376
Per capita public debt (\$)	407	441	465	531	578	530

Public Debt in PA Territories 2008–2013 (\$ million)



4. The PA's General Budget (Ramallah)

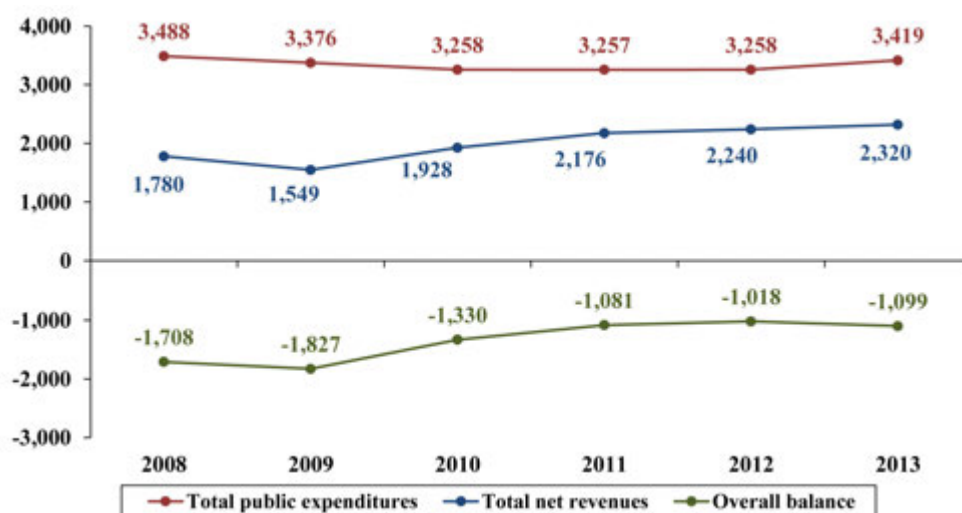
The PA general budget has triggered controversy due to the continued fiscal deficit, large dependence on donors, and expanded borrowing, in addition to criticism regarding financial excesses and structural imbalance of the general budget, especially inflation of wages and salaries compared to total expenditures.⁴⁵ Tracing the PA budget for 2012 and 2013 shows that current and development expenditures have increased at 0.03% and 4.9% respectively, and at an average 2.5% (see table 17/7).

Total net revenues, which include tax and non-tax domestic revenues besides clearance revenues and tax refunds, have achieved different growth estimated at 2.9% and 3.6% for 2012 and 2013 respectively, i.e., an average of 3.3%. This reflects a noticeable improvement in collecting revenues in addition to the fiscal policy, which supports reducing the general budget deficit by increasing revenue. Ultimately, the overall balance decreased at a rate 5.8% and 8% for 2012 and 2013 respectively thus forming relative success for the deficit reduction policy (see table 17/7).

This is consistent with the Palestinian government's pursuit of a fiscal policy according to a stable strategy based on improving tax performance and expanding it, and on the efficiency of debt management.⁴⁶

Table 17/7: Fiscal Operations of the PA (Cash Basis) 2008–2014 (\$ million)⁴⁷

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014 Budget
Current expenditures and net lending	3,273	3,190	2,983	2,961	3,047	3,251	3,865
Development expenditures	215	186	275	296	211	168	350
Total public expenditures	3,488	3,376	3,258	3,257	3,258	3,419	4,215
Total net revenues	1,780	1,549	1,928	2,176	2,240	2,320	2,586
Overall balance (including development expenditures)	-1,708	-1,827	-1,330	-1,081	-1,018	-1,099	-1,629

Fiscal Operations of the PA (Cash Basis) 2008–2013 (\$ million)

Preparation for the 2014 general budget took place under difficult and complicated conditions in which the treasury suffered a harsh financial crisis regarding the government's ability to meet its entitlements.⁴⁸ Thus, the budget depended on a policy of maximizing self-resources aimed at immunizing political decision and enhancing its independence while meeting citizens' needs.⁴⁹ The 2014 budget envisages modest further progress in fiscal consolidation but still leaves a sizable financing gap. Wage expenditure is budgeted to rise by nearly 5%. The budget envisages laudable reductions of untargeted fuel subsidies and rationalization of allowances, limits the rise in operating expenditures and transfers, and targets a reduction in net lending.⁵⁰

This budget was presented along with a revenue system strategy for 2013–2016, which included decreasing debts to limit the financing gap. It should be noted here that the newly formed government in Ramallah, which assumed office in June 2013, was able to decrease debts from \$4.8 billion to \$4.4 billion.⁵¹

5. General Budget of the GS Caretaker Government

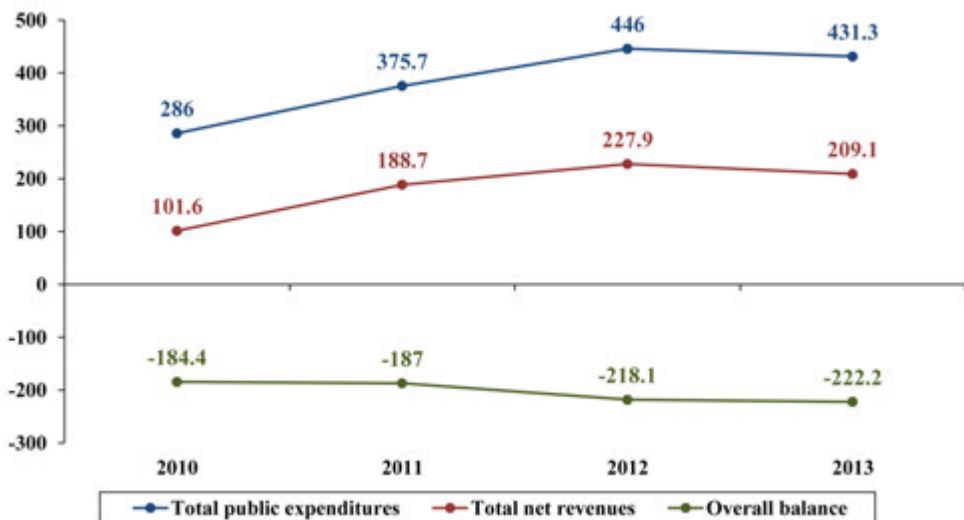
The government in GS pursued certain financial measures following the incidents of June 2007, including the preparation of annual budgets to allow the government to perform its responsibilities and obligations ensuing from the inter-Palestinian division. Thus, the increase in public expenditure was normal in order to meet the government's new obligations.

Tracing the financial situation of the government in GS throughout 2010–2013 shows that public expenditures have assumed an increasing trend with limited deterioration in 2013 due to the developments of the GS blockade. Total net revenues also increased remarkably during 2010–2012, but decreased in 2013 due to Egypt's tightened border restrictions and closure of most tunnels, which are considered the main lifeline for the economy of besieged GS.

Table 18/7: Fiscal Operations of the GS Caretaker Government 2010–2014
(\$ million)⁵²

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014 Budget
Current expenditures	284.1	366.4	440.4	423.5	698
Capital and development expenditures	1.9	9.3	5.6	7.8	85
Total public expenditures	286	375.7	446	431.3	783
Tax revenues	43.4	121	148.7	153.1	130
Non-tax revenues	58.2	67.7	79.2	56	65
Total net revenues	101.6	188.7	227.9	209.1	195
Overall balance	-184.4	-187	-218.1	-222.2	-588

Fiscal Operations of the GS Caretaker Government 2010–2013 (\$ million)



The 2013 budget has focused on the quality of public services in addition to orienting development expenditures towards development projects which stimulate investment and contribute to economic growth, without ignoring aid and relief work to mitigate the harsh conditions of the blockade.⁵³

The 2014 budget bill estimated total public expenditures at \$894 million,⁵⁴ which was then reduced to \$783 million,⁵⁵ i.e., around 12.4% compared to previous estimates due to the tightened blockade. Conversely, the size of total net revenues was estimated at \$195 million, i.e., a big deficit amounting to \$588 million (75.1% of the \$783 million), which explains the major dependence on foreign sources to cover the deficit. Further, the 2014 budget bill stressed the importance of fiscal policy, which supports public services, including security and public order, given their importance and strategic vitality.⁵⁶

Financial expectations for 2015 and 2016 point to a continued growth in expenditures and revenues, with continued financial deficit, which is connected to fluctuating foreign aid.

6. Work and Unemployment

The labor force is an important economic human resource. It includes those who are actually working in addition to those unemployed and seeking to work. The level of employment is considered an important indicator that shows how much human resources are exploited, by measuring the level of adult participation. On the Palestinian level in the WB and GS, the labor force participation rate increased from 43% in 2011 to 43.6% in 2013,⁵⁷ thus reflecting the improved investment in manpower as a productive power. Other human resources not participating in the production process include adult students at different educational levels, non-working housewives, patients and the disabled, among others.

The total Palestinian labor force in the WB and GS reached 1.114 million by the end of 2012. Those actually employed accounted for 858 thousands, 77% of the total Palestinian labor force; while those unemployed amounted to 256 thousands accounting for 23% of total Palestinian labor force. This meant that a major part of the labor force was unemployed and deprived of a source of income necessary to meet their essential needs, which threatened social security and enormous efforts are required to face high and chronic unemployment. Doubtless, Israeli practices have played a major role in creating this situation, especially after *al-Aqsa Intifadah* in September 2000 (see table 19/7).

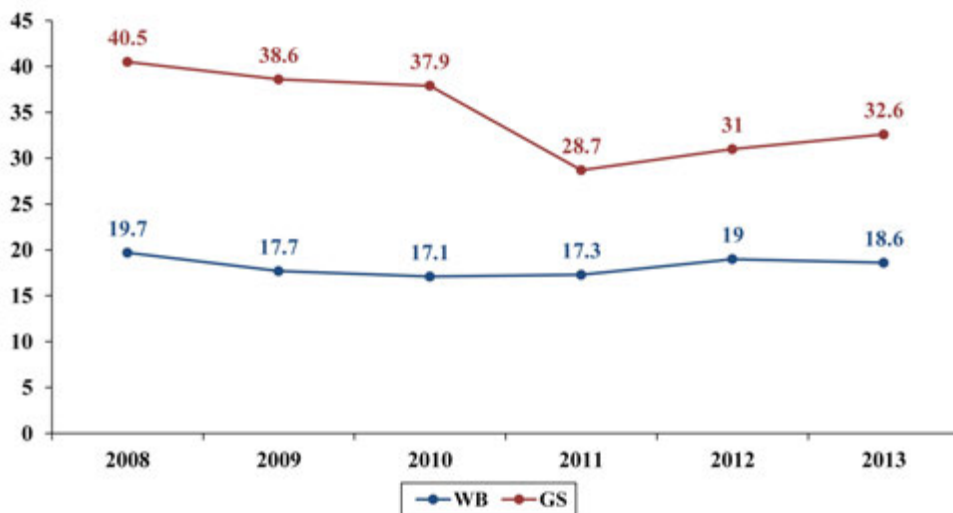
The unemployment rate is lower in the WB than in the GS, 19% in the former compared to 31% in the latter in 2012 (see table 19/7). The difference further increased between age and sex groups, as unemployment tends to be very high among youths, especially fresh graduates, and even higher among females where GS women suffer increased marginalization in the labor market. It is noted that female youths suffer more than other groups despite their high level of education.⁵⁸

Development of the labor force in 2013 produced limited fluctuation in the employment level and continued escalation of unemployment accompanied by the disappointment of those unemployed. The total Palestinian labor force reached 1.155 million including 759 thousands in the WB and 396 thousands in the GS, and with higher participation in the WB amounting to 45% compared to 41.2% in the GS. The unemployment rate in the WB and GS amounted to 23.4% with a stark difference between the WB and GS, which meant a high average of dependency rates among those employed.⁵⁹

Table 19/7: Distribution of Palestinians Aged 15 Years and Above in the WB and GS by Labor Force and Unemployment 2008–2013 (thousands)⁶⁰

Year		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
WB	Labor force	609	643	665	718	743	759
	Unemployment	120	114	114	124	141	141
	% of unemployment	19.7	17.7	17.1	17.3	19	18.6
GS	Labor force	299	308	311	341	371	396
	Unemployment	121	119	118	98	115	129
	% of unemployment	40.5	38.6	37.9	28.7	31	32.6
WB & GS	Labor force	908	951	976	1,059	1,114	1,155
	Unemployment	241	233	232	222	256	270
	% of unemployment	26.5	24.5	23.8	21	23	23.4

Percentage of Unemployed Palestinians Aged 15 Years and Above in the WB and GS 2008–2013 (%)



Palestinian employment in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel) and East Jerusalem besides WB settlements reached 105 thousand workers at the end of 2013, representing 13.5% of total labor force in the WB. Around 34,300 Palestinians work without Israeli permits while 18,700 Palestinians hold Israeli identity or a foreign passport. This means that around 32.7% of WB laborers working in these territories are threatened with security prosecution and are vulnerable to extortion by employers. As for the GS workers, they are still prevented from working within Israel.⁶¹

7. Development of Industrial Activity

Industrial activity covers different categories including: mining and quarrying; manufacturing; electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply; water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities. Manufacturing has represented the highest share of industrial activity in 2013 as it constituted 81%, followed by electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply at 11.9% then mining and quarrying at 5.8% and at last water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities at 1.2%. Supply of electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning contributed with high percentage in growth in 2013 estimated at 12.7%, which enhanced industrial activity due to steady increase in the demand for electricity supply at the level of consumption and production (see table 20/7).

Tracing the development of industrial activity in 2012 and 2013 shows that industrial GDP amounted to \$810.5 million in 2012 constituting 11.9% of total GDP at constant prices, and at a growth rate of 4.8% compared to 2011. It also increased in 2013 to \$889.6 million constituting 12.9% of total GDP at constant prices, and at 9.8% growth rate compared to 2012, i.e., at an annual average of 7.3% for the two years; thus achieving stark development after its deterioration in 2009 and 2010.

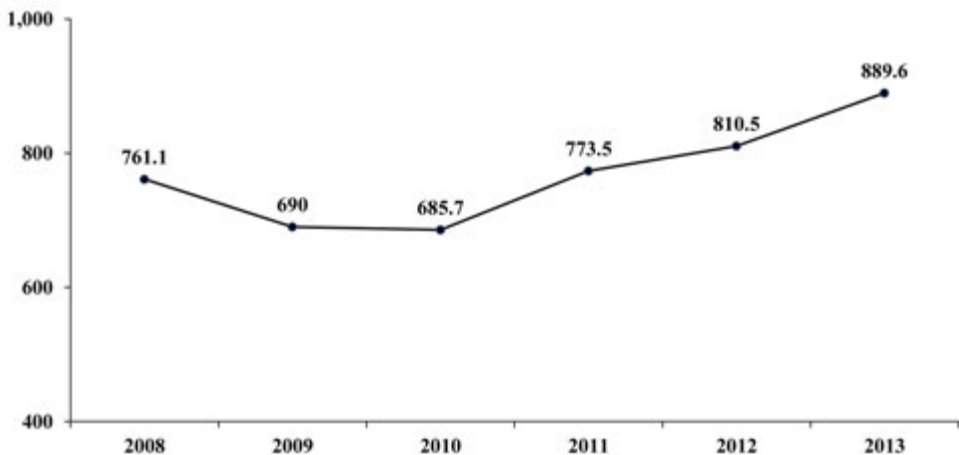
Table 20/7: Industrial GDP in PA Territories 2008–2013 at Constant Prices (\$ million)⁶²

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012*	2013**
Mining and quarrying	21.5	22.6	24.3	49.1	49.2	51.6
Manufacturing	539.3	540.6	544.6	625.4	657.6	720.8
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	165.4	104.7	91.3	90	94.3	106.3
Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	34.9	22.1	25.5	9	9.4	10.9
Total	761.1	690	685.7	773.5	810.5	889.6
Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	+9.4	-9.3	-0.6	+12.8	+4.8	+9.8

* Preliminary estimates.

** The 2013 data was calculated according to the actual value of the first three quarters of the same year.

Industrial GDP in PA Territories 2008–2013 at Constant Prices (\$ million)



8. Development of Agricultural Activity

Agriculture is an important traditional activity based on production of food crops necessary for domestic and foreign markets. Tracking the development of this activity in 2012 and 2013 shows that agricultural GDP amounted to \$332.6 million in 2012, with a 12.6% decrease compared to 2011, and constituting only 4.9% of GDP at constant prices. Agricultural GDP also deteriorated to \$286.4 million in 2013 at 13.9% decrease compared to 2012, and with average deficit for the two years of 13.3%. Thus, the share of agricultural activity of the GDP at constant prices deteriorated to 4.2% in 2013 (see table 21/7).

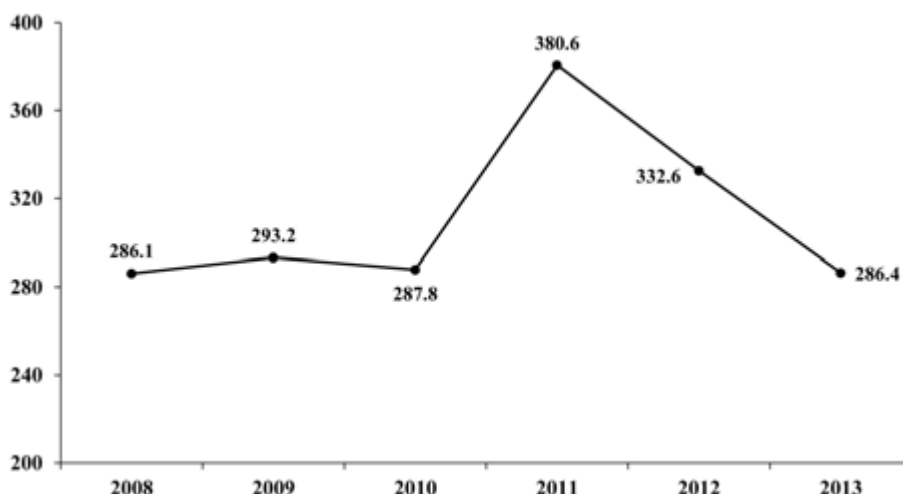
Table 21/7: Agricultural GDP in PA Territories 2008–2013 at Constant Prices (\$ million)⁶³

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012*	2013**
Agricultural GDP	286.1	293.2	287.8	380.6	332.6	286.4
Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	+13.4	+2.5	-1.8	+32.2	-12.6	-13.9

* Preliminary estimates.

** The 2013 data was calculated according to the actual value of the first three quarters of the same year.

Agricultural GDP in PA Territories 2008–2013 at Constant Prices (\$ million)



This deterioration is due in part to the decline in agricultural GDP in the WB where it sharply decreased from \$240.4 million in 2012 to \$187.9 million in 2013, a 21.8% decrease. The deterioration in agricultural activity is exacerbated by the fact that the Israeli occupation prevents Palestinians from exploiting agricultural lands in Area C, which is controlled by Israel on the administrative and security levels. Such Israeli measures have had a negative influence on the Palestinian side but its impact was mitigated by the tangible increase in GS agricultural GDP, which amounted to 7%. It increased from \$92.2 million in 2012 to \$98.7 million in 2013 despite Israel's arbitrary measures in GS including preventing Gazans from exploiting their border line.⁶⁴

9. Trade

Foreign trade is one aspect of international economic relations and transactions which allow the export of surplus product and import of products not available on the local market to meet the needs of consumers.

PA-controlled territories are mostly dependent on import with few Israeli restrictions that become stricter on capital goods which promote the economy of the country. Conversely, export opportunities remain limited because of Israeli obstacles, which means an aggregate trade deficit, as a result of the difference between imports and exports.

Tracing the evolution of trade between the PA and foreign sides throughout 2012 shows that total imports amounted to \$4,697.4 million at 7.4% increase compared to 2011, while exports amounted to \$782.4 million at 4.9% increase. Thus, trade deficit for 2012 increased at 7.9% compared to the previous year and it amounted to \$3,915 million thus representing 83.3% of total imports (see table 22/7).

In 2013, exports improved and increased to around \$839.4 million, i.e., \$57 million more than 2012 and at 7.3% growth rate. Conversely, imports decreased to around \$4,579.8 million, i.e., \$117.6 million less than 2012, a 2.5% decrease. Accordingly, the deficit reached \$3,740.4 million, which was \$174.6 million less than 2012 and at a 4.5% decrease. Ultimately, the deficit decreased compared to total imports and amounted to 81.7% in 2013 compared to 83.3% in 2012, which is a positive trend that reduces the trade deficit as absolute value and as a percentage (see table 22/7).

Table 22/7: Commodity Trade Balance in PA Territories 2008–2013
 (\$ thousand)⁶⁵

Year	Trade volume	Exports	Imports	Deficit
2008	4,024,614	558,446	3,466,168	–2,907,722
2009	4,119,140	518,355	3,600,785	–3,082,430
2010	4,534,025	575,513	3,958,512	–3,382,999
2011	5,119,308	745,661	4,373,647	–3,627,986
2012	5,479,725	782,369	4,697,356	–3,914,987
2013*	5,419,200	839,400	4,579,800	–3,740,400

* Preliminary data.

Regarding foreign trade expectations for 2014–2016, the general trend points to an increase in the size of exchange with continued increase in the deficit gap due to Israeli policy, which allows expansion of consumer imports while hindering exports. It is important to reduce the trade deficit to the lowest possible level while taking into account reducing or limiting imports. This can be done by determining necessities, luxuries, consumer and capital goods, and whether they could be produced locally. The 2011 imports list is topped by fuel oil (diesel), gasoline and natural gas at around \$912.4 million, i.e., around 21.6% of total imports, then portland cement at 2.7%, which means these commodities accounted for around 25% of total imports.⁶⁶ In line with this, there is need for the development and diversification of exports and enhancing their growth while reaching out to more countries to reduce the trade deficit noticeably within deliberate trade policies.

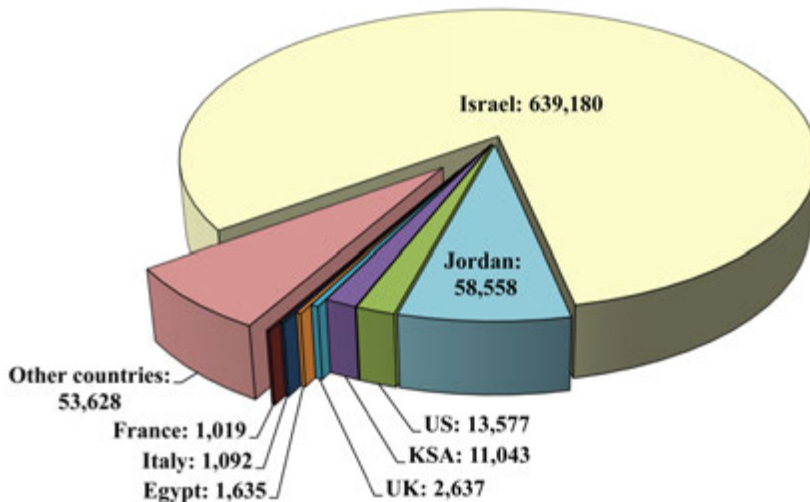
According to PCBS, PA trade with Israel was high at the level of imports and exports. Thus, Palestinian exports to Israel reached around \$639.18 million, which is 81.7% of total Palestinian exports in 2012, while Palestinian imports from Israel amounted to around \$3,351.8 million, constituting around 71.3% of total Palestinian imports, which confirms the commercial dependency on Israel (see table 23/7).

It should be noted that Israel's CBS provides relatively different figures regarding trade with the PA for 2012. According to these figures, Palestinian imports from Israel reached around \$3,833 million, which is more than Palestinian official figures by around \$482 million; while Palestinian exports to Israel accounted for around \$538 million, which is less than Palestinian official figures by around \$101 million.⁶⁷

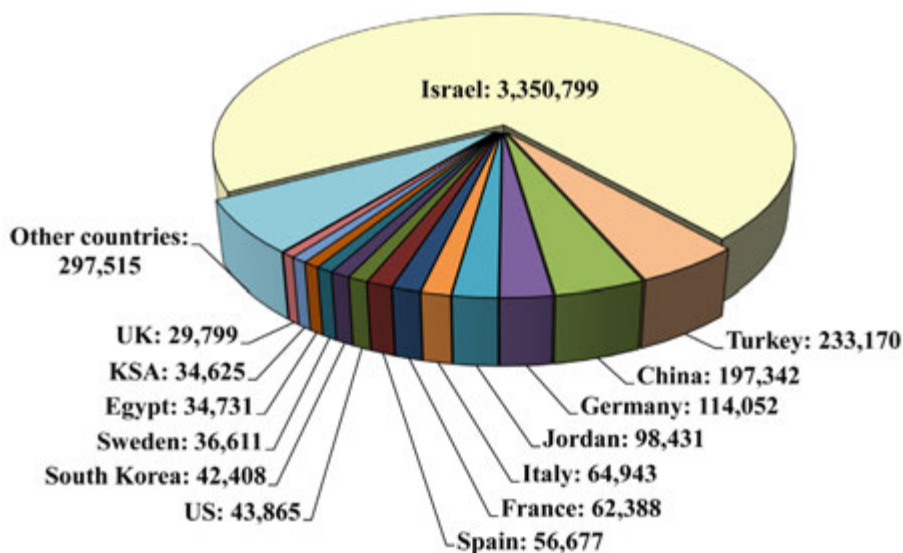
Table 23/7: Volume of Palestinian Trade, Exports and Imports in Goods in PA Territories to/ from Selected Countries 2011–2012 (\$ thousand)⁶⁸

Country	Trade volume		Palestinian exports to:		Palestinian imports from:	
	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011
Israel	3,989,979	3,734,875	639,180	643,853	3,350,799	3,091,022
Turkey	234,024	215,148	854	418	233,170	214,730
China	197,342	194,127	–	–	197,342	194,127
Jordan	156,989	128,909	58,558	38,927	98,431	89,982
Germany	114,819	101,481	767	1,135	114,052	100,346
Italy	66,035	63,195	1,092	1,378	64,943	61,817
France	63,407	49,571	1,019	1,353	62,388	48,218
US	57,442	48,604	13,577	8,702	43,865	39,902
Spain	56,677	56,141	–	1	56,677	56,140
KSA	45,668	32,699	11,043	9,654	34,625	23,045
South Korea	42,639	47,600	231	697	42,408	46,903
Sweden	36,670	33,582	59	397	36,611	33,185
Egypt	36,366	35,031	1,635	998	34,731	34,033
UK	32,436	31,318	2,637	1,794	29,799	29,524
Other countries	349,232	347,027	51,717	36,354	297,515	310,673
Total	5,479,725	5,119,308	782,369	745,661	4,697,356	4,373,647

Palestinian Exports in Goods in PA Territories to Selected Countries 2012 (\$ thousand)



Palestinian Imports in Goods in PA Territories from Selected Countries 2012 (\$ thousand)



10. PA's External Financing

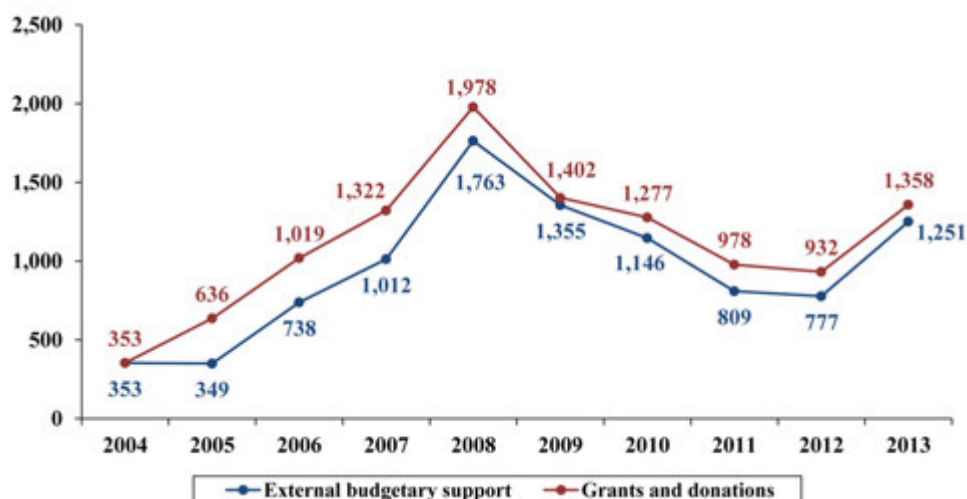
The PA budget has been dependent on donor support to finance development projects and programs. This was so since the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in September 1993 between the PLO and Israel, where arrangements took place to hold a donors conference in Washington in October 1993, which was later followed by forming an advisory committee to decide on aid to Palestinians. This was followed by a series of attempts at economic and social development starting with the emergency aid program (1994–1995) and the subsequent plans associated with donor aid.⁶⁹ Although aid was essentially targeted at development plans and programs, it was soon changed to target the public budget yet without coverage of deficit, whether totally or in a continuous way.

It should be noted that there are slight differences between figures provided by Palestinian Ministry of Finance and Palestine Monetary Authority (PMA) regarding total aid provided to the PA in 2012 and 2013. The following table reveals the evolution of foreign aid based on PMA figures during the period 2004–2014:

**Table 24/7: PA External Budgetary Support and Development Financing
2004–2014 (\$ million)⁷⁰**

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014 Budget
External budgetary support	353	349	738	1,012	1,763	1,355	1,146	809	777	1,251	1,329
External financing for development expenditures	0	287	281	310	215	47	131	169	155	107	300
Grants and donations	353	636	1,019	1,322	1,978	1,402	1,277	978	932	1,358	1,629
Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	-43.1	+80.2	+60.2	+29.7	+49.6	-29.1	-8.9	-23.4	-4.7	+45.7	+20

**PA External Budgetary Support and Development Financing 2004–2013
(\$ million)**



The above shows that the PA received continuous aid from donors in 2004–2013 amounting to \$11,255 million and at annual average of \$1,125.5 million. However, this aid oscillated between \$353 million and \$1,978 million for 2004 and 2008 respectively. The share of development programs was low and fluctuating and there was no consistent policy for aid in terms of stability and regularity. In addition, aid has undergone several stages where it increased between 2004 and 2008, then deteriorated from 2009 to 2012 heading again to decline in line with policies aimed at reducing public budget deficit successively.

The third stage was 2013–2014 where aid increased again in 2013 accompanied by an increase in general expenditures, with expectations for continued aid in 2014, which means deterioration of previously adopted policies to reduce dependence on foreign aid. Apparently, this trend was connected to American pressures to accept the resumption of the peace process accompanied with an increase in foreign aid.

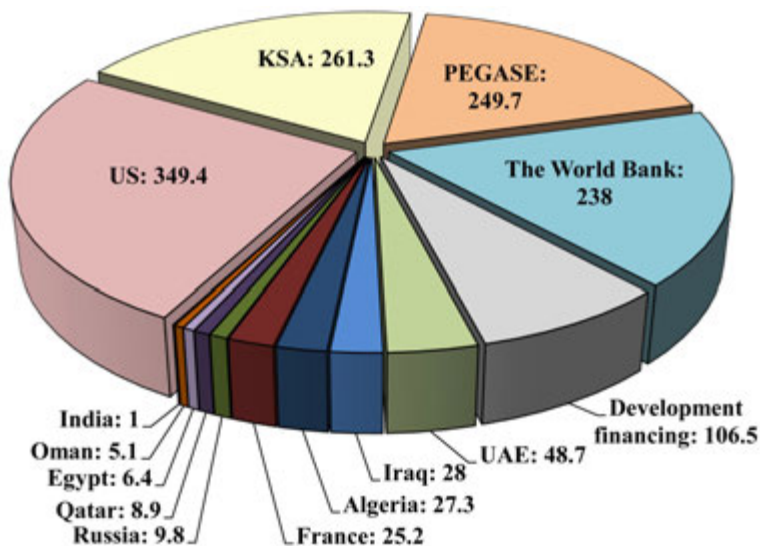
Despite the importance of aid to overcome financial problems, there were no efforts to achieve independent Palestinian economic decision-making. In addition, aid encouraged the PA to expand expenditure and borrowing whenever needed.

Donors in 2013 were spearheaded by the US with \$349.4 million, KSA with \$261.3 million, then Mécanisme Palestino-Européen de Gestion et d'Aide Socio-Economique (PEGASE), which means the Palestinian-European Mechanism for Management of Socio-Economic Aid, with \$249.7 million, followed by The World Bank with \$238 million. It is noted that Arab aid to PA increased at 67.1% in 2013 as compared to 2010. KSA spearheaded the Arab donors, for its annual share of total Arab aid ranged from 38.1% to 67.7%, from 2010–2013. Despite this apparent increase, Arab aid remained less than foreign aid as it represented 25.3% only of international aid in 2010 (\$230.8 million out of \$912.7 million) and it reached 54.2% in 2012 (\$272.7 million out of \$502.7 million). Although Arab aid in 2013 increased at 41.4% compared to 2012, its percentage compared to international aid decreased in the same year to 44.2% (\$385.7 million out of \$873.1 million).

Table 25/7: Sources of External Financing for the PA 2010–2013 (\$ million)⁷¹

Donor	2010	2011	2012	2013
Arab donors	230.8	288.2	272.7	385.7
KSA	143.7	181.7	103.8	261.3
UAE	42.9	42.5	84.3	48.7
Algeria	26.3	52.3	25.9	27.3
Qatar	9.8	–	29.5	8.9
Egypt	8.1	1.6	3.2	6.4
Oman	–	10.1	–	5.1
Iraq	–	–	26	28
International donors	912.7	526.1	502.7	873.1
PEGASE	374.6	287.7	212.3	249.7
The World Bank	279.5	172.1	266.1	238
US	222.9	51.7	–	349.4
France	15.9	14.6	24.3	25.2
Russia	9.9	–	–	9.8
India	9.9	–	–	1
Development financing	129.8*	168.9*	156.2	106.5
Total	1,273.3	983.2	931.6	1,365.3

* Development financing includes old grants for line ministries, co-financing for the projects of Ministry of Education, grants to build the capacities of different Palestinian institutions and others.

Sources of External Financing for the PA 2013 (\$ million)

11. Economic Expectations for the PA on the Short and Medium Run

To foresee the Palestinian economic situation in 2014, there were several expectations for the economic growth. Ranging from optimism to pessimism, there are three possible scenarios:⁷²

- a. **Optimistic Scenario:** Encouraging factors regarding peace talks and political conditions may emerge, which would motivate donors to increase aid. These factors would be accompanied with improving infrastructure, executing projects, and mitigating restraints that hinder economic development, where GDP will range between 7.4% and 10.9%. These rates are plausible, since in 2008–2011 similar rates were reached.
- b. **Pessimistic Scenario:** The peace process might fail, political conditions deteriorate, aid could shrink, with tightened Israeli hindrances, and a decrease in tax collection and increased tax evasion, besides procrastination in tax clearance transfers. These conditions would have negative economic implications: mainly a negative decline in GDP ranging between 0.5% and 8.9%, coupled with increase in unemployment rates and poverty level, and deterioration of saving rates in addition to displacement of investments.
- c. **Base Scenario:** It assumes that present conditions will continue without any core changes, coupled with a flow of aid at current levels, in addition to continuing the financial procedures that are capable of decreasing the deficit of public budget. Accordingly, GDP expectations range between 3.2% and 3.8%, without remarkably exceeding demographic growth, which means a limited growth in GDP per capita.

IMF forecasts have estimated growth at around 2.5%, with sub-par performance in the medium term, leading to an increase in unemployment rates based on the unknown outcomes of the peace process. The IMF has summarized those tracks on the short and medium term where initiatives by major donors are expected to be launched upon a breakthrough in the peace talks, especially the Economic Initiative for Palestine, which could boost average annual real GDP growth to about 6.5% during the period 2014–2019. The failure of peace negotiations, however, would lead to a severe political and security crisis that would lead to economic contraction coupled with aid reduction.⁷³

This base scenario is the likeliest to crystallize given the ability of Palestinian economy to adapt with various developments, in light of keenness to avoid the deterioration of current conditions.

Thus, there is urgent need for in-depth reading of these expectations, and to present conclusions that benefit decision makers, especially as Palestinian demographic growth has dangerous implications on chronic problems. Indeed, the number of Palestinians is expected to increase to around 7.2 million in 2020,⁷⁴ only to be faced with complicated living conditions and destroyed infrastructure as highlighted in international reports warning against crises that might emerge if current problems remain unresolved.⁷⁵

Third: Educational Indicators in the WB and GS

Despite the suffering of the Palestinian people under occupation, education remains one of its concerns where it is pursued as one of the tools of steadfastness and expression of national identity in a creative and positive way. This section of the chapter casts light on the most important Palestinian education indicators in the WB and GS in 2012 and 2013.

1. The General Educational and Cultural Situation

Palestinians in the WB and GS represent one of the most educationally advanced groups in the Arab world, with an illiteracy rate of 4.1% and 3.7% and a literacy rate that reached 95.9% and 96.3% in 2012 and 2013 respectively. The latter is the second highest in the Arab world after Qatar.⁷⁶ The educational attendance of individuals in the age group 6–11 years from both sexes reached 98.9% in 2013.⁷⁷

As for tools of information and communications technology at home, 2012 figures show that 95.7% of families in the WB and GS have mobile phones, 40% have telephone lines, 97.3% have TV sets, 95% have satellite dishes, 51.4% have computers while 32.1% have access to the internet. In addition, 2012 figures show that there are 2,725 mosques in the WB and GS (1,864 in the WB and 861 in the GS). Moreover, according to 2013 figures there are 656 cultural centers in the WB and GS (574 in the WB and 82 in the GS), 15 museums and 9 theaters.⁷⁸

It is important to remember here that the Palestinians are people living under occupation and suffering the destruction of their infrastructure and the inability to develop their capacities, except within the conditions set by the occupation authorities. Based on this context, the above figures highlight the keenness of the Palestinian people to learn and achieve including through media and cultural exchange. The figures also reveal Palestinian success in the educational battle of wills within such a destructive frustrating environment.

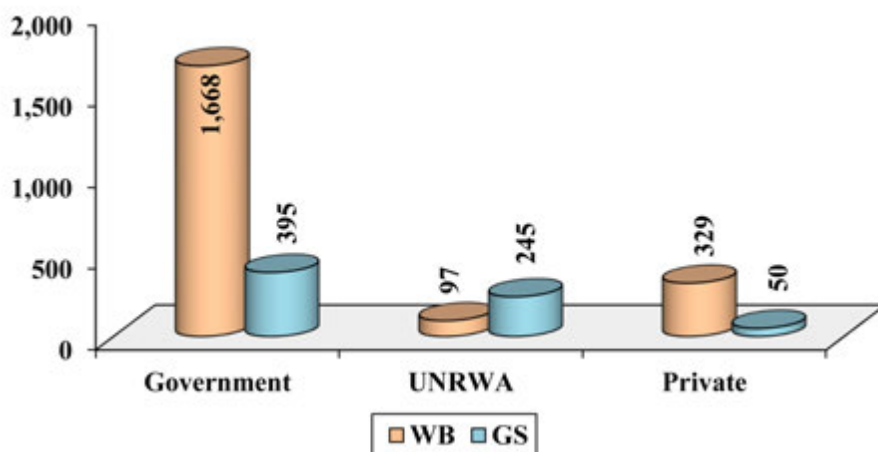
2. Basic and Secondary Education

There were 2,784 Palestinian schools covering basic (elementary and intermediate) and secondary education in the academic year 2013/2014, including 2,094 schools in the WB and 690 schools in the GS, i.e., around 75.2% of schools are in the WB and 24.8% in the GS. It is noted that most government schools are in the WB which is home to 1,668 schools comprising 80.9% of government schools compared to 395 schools in the GS comprising 19.1%. The scarcity of government schools in the GS is relatively compensated for by the presence of UNRWA-run schools that amount to 245 schools compared to 97 similar schools in the WB. Taking into consideration the fact that there are 2.755 million people in the WB, compared to 1.731 million in the GS (i.e., 61.4% in the WB compared to 38.6% in the GS), the number of schools in the WB is higher than the number of schools in GS when compared to their populations. This is probably because the population in the WB is distributed over a larger area of land and among more cities and villages, and thus needs more schools. In addition, the higher number of UNRWA schools in the GS reflects the high level of poverty suffered by most of the population in GS (see tables 1/7 and 26/7).

Table 26/7: Basic and Secondary Schools in the WB and GS by Supervising Authority 2009/2010–2013/2014⁷⁹

Academic year	Region	Government	UNRWA	Private	Total
2009/2010	WB	1,534	97	286	1,917
	GS	387	228	45	660
	WB & GS	1,921	325	331	2,577
2010/2011	WB	1,573	98	304	1,975
	GS	399	238	40	677
	WB & GS	1,972	336	344	2,652
2011/2012	WB	1,609	99	311	2,019
	GS	396	244	48	688
	WB & GS	2,005	343	359	2,707
2012/2013	WB	1,639	99	321	2,059
	GS	399	245	50	694
	WB & GS	2,038	344	371	2,753
2013/2014	WB	1,668	97	329	2,094
	GS	395	245	50	690
	WB & GS	2,063	342	379	2,784

Basic and Secondary Schools in the WB and GS by Supervising Authority 2013/2014



Students in basic and secondary schools in the academic year 2013/2014 amounted to 1.152 million, including 571,908 males and 579,794 females, with a 1.3% increase when compared to 2012/2013. The number of teachers in these schools amounted to 63,017 in the academic year 2013/2014 compared to 62,110 in 2012/2013. Teachers included 25,756 males and 37,261 females in the academic year 2013/2014 compared to 25,675 males and 36,435 females in 2012/2013. There were an almost equal number of male and female student sections amounting to around 15 thousand sections for each in the academic year 2013/2014 whereas mixed sections for the same academic year reached 7,756 (see table 27/7).

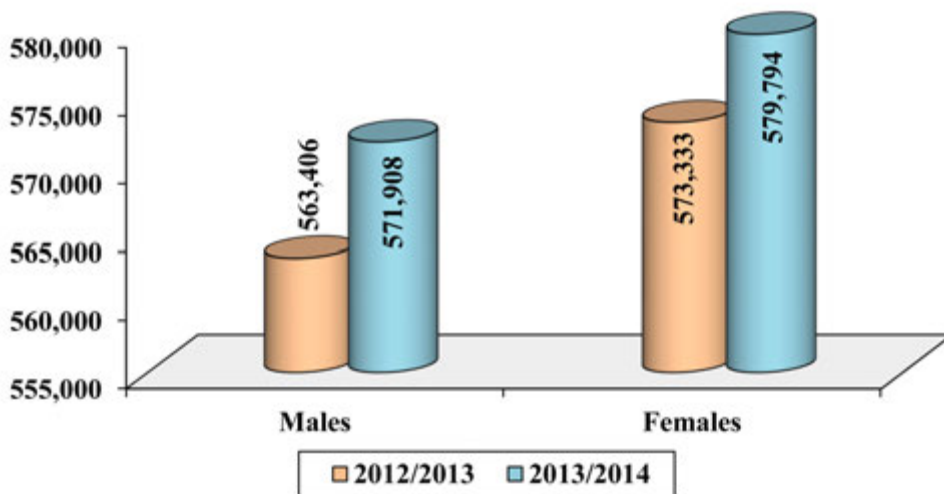
Table 27/7: Number of Schools, Students, Teachers and Sections in PA Territories by Sex 2012/2013–2013/2014⁸⁰

Sex	Schools		Students		Teachers*		Sections	
	2012/2013	2013/2014	2012/2013	2013/2014	2012/2013	2013/2014	2012/2013	2013/2014
Males	995	992	563,406	571,908	25,675	25,756	14,848	15,053
Females	923	933	573,333	579,794	36,435	37,261	15,090	15,355
Mixed**	835	859					7,587	7,756
Total	2,753	2,784	1,136,739	1,151,702	62,110	63,017	37,525	38,164

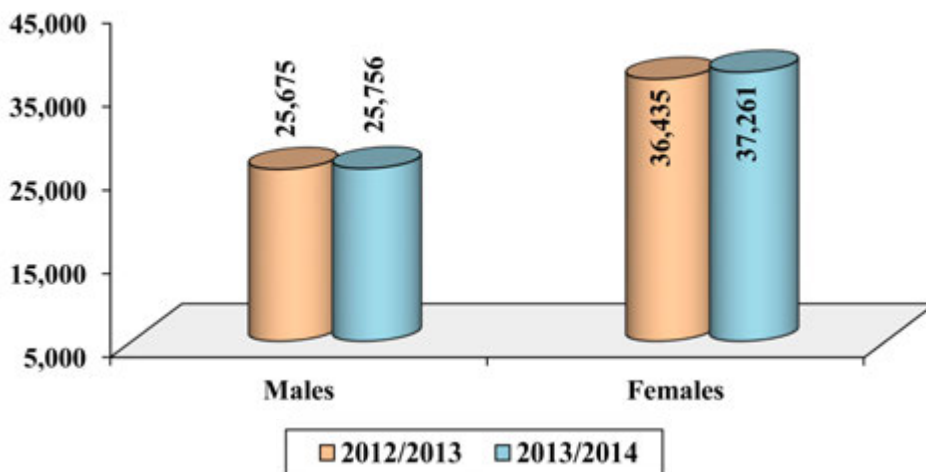
* Teachers: All teaching and non-teaching staff in school except employees and janitors.

** The number of students and teachers in mixed schools is added to the males and females numbers.

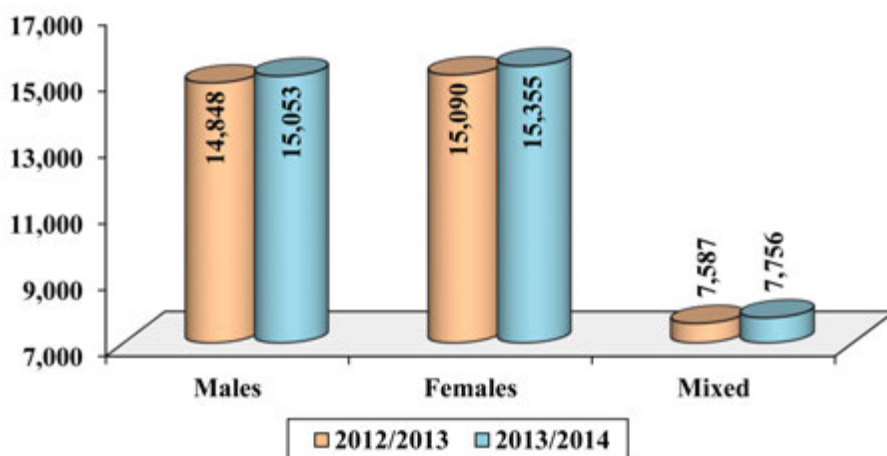
Number of Students in PA Territories by Sex 2012/2013–2013/2014



Number of Teachers in PA Territories by Sex 2012/2013–2013/2014



Number of Sections in PA Territories by Sex 2012/2013–2013/2014



Reports of academic year 2013/2014 show that government schools, which amount to 2,063, represent 74.1% of total schools in the WB and GS. Students in government schools, who amount to 764,219, represent 66.4% of total students in the WB and GS. Government schools teachers number 44,391, thus constituting 70.4% of WB and GS teachers. Sections in government schools amount to 25,933 representing 68% of total sections in the WB and GS. These indicators show that education by the government comprises more than two thirds of the educational process in basic and secondary schools. If we take into account the UNRWA-run schools, we notice that most students depend on low-costing education provided by these schools compared to limited number of students seeking private education (see tables 27/7 and 28/7).

Table 28/7: Number of Schools, Students, Teachers and Sections in Government Schools in PA Territories 2009/2010–2013/2014⁸¹

Academic year	Schools	Students	Teachers*	Sections
2009/2010	1,921	766,190	22,952**	–
2010/2011	1,972	766,234	42,339	25,223
2011/2012	2,005	761,691	42,961	25,323
2012/2013	2,038	762,499	43,814	25,679
2013/2014	2,063	764,219	44,391	25,933

* Teachers: All teaching and non-teaching staff in school except services employees and janitors.

** Data includes the WB only.

3. University Education

Several Palestinian universities in the WB and GS provide traditional education to their students. An-Najah National University in Nablus is the largest among these universities with 21,327 students in the academic year 2012/2013. It is followed by the Islamic University of Gaza with 19,938 students, then Al-Aqsa University in Gaza with 17,094 students. There was a total 123,484 university students in the same academic year in the WB and GS, including 68,548 students in the WB and 54,936 in the GS. This means that students in GS represent around 44.5% of total students in the WB and GS, taking into account that Gazans represent 38.6% of total population in the WB and GS (see tables 3/7 and 29/7).

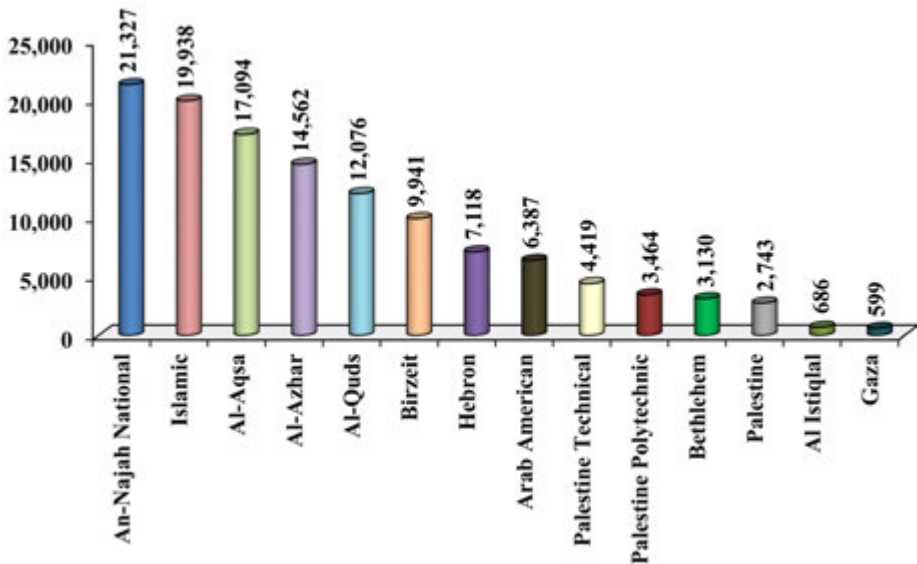
In addition, female students outnumber their male counterparts, as they reached 71,909 in universities providing traditional education compared to 51,575 male students in the academic year 2012/2013, which means that female students constituted 58.2% compared to 41.8% male students. This phenomenon is no longer deemed strange in the Arab world and, while there is no room to study it here, it shows in some of its aspects the success of the Palestinian woman in assuming her position side by side with her male peers. It also shows that Palestinian female students have better chances to finish their university education while male students generally have to leave school and join the job market to help their families with the struggle to afford the costs of living, or even leave home to pursue higher education abroad (see table 29/7).

It should be noted here that male faculty members still outnumber their female counterparts, where there were 5,309 male teachers (79.9%) compared to 1,332 females (20.1%) in the academic year 2012/2013. This means that it is still too early for the high percentage of female students in universities to be reflected in faculties, noting that the number of faculty members includes all teachers in universities and colleges other than community colleges. Ultimately, quite a large number of female university graduates do not join the labor market and work instead as housewives, which explains the high percentage of males in labor market.⁸²

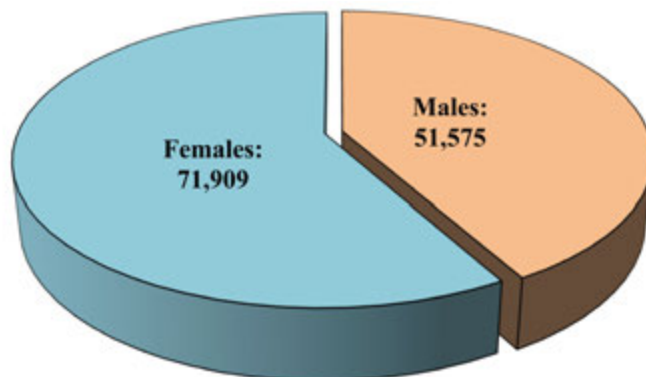
Table 29/7: Number of Students in Traditional Universities in PA Territories by Sex 2012/2013⁸³

University	Enrolled students		
	Males	Females	Total
An-Najah National	9,116	12,211	21,327
Al-Quds	5,972	6,104	12,076
Birzeit	3,618	6,323	9,941
Hebron	1,831	5,287	7,118
Arab American	3,285	3,102	6,387
Palestine Technical-Kadoorie	2,239	2,180	4,419
Palestine Polytechnic	1,897	1,567	3,464
Bethlehem	766	2,364	3,130
Al Istiqlal (The Palestinian Academy for Security Sciences)	546	140	686
Islamic-Gaza	7,774	12,164	19,938
Al-Aqsa-Gaza	4,966	12,128	17,094
Al-Azhar-Gaza	7,089	7,473	14,562
Palestine-Gaza	2,200	543	2,743
Gaza	276	323	599
Total	51,575	71,909	123,484

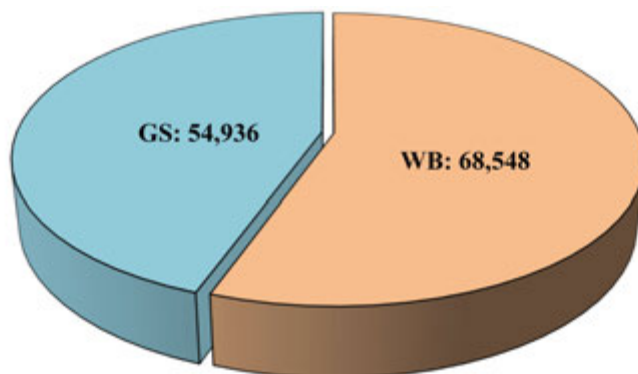
Number of Students in Traditional Universities in PA Territories 2012/2013



Number of Students in Traditional Universities in PA Territories by Sex 2012/2013



Number of Students in Traditional Universities in the WB and GS 2012/2013

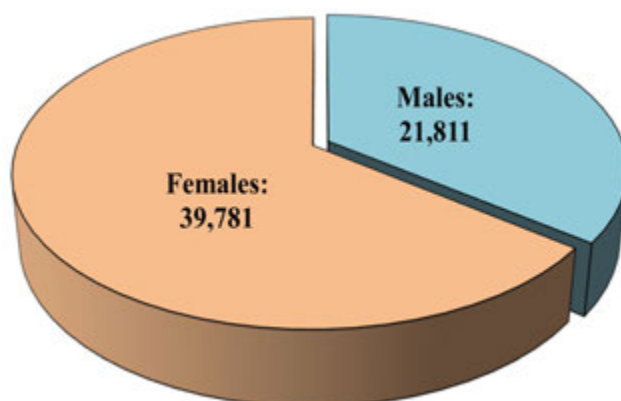


Al-Quds Open University provided open education for 61,592 students in the academic year 2012/2013 including 21,811 males and 39,781 females. This university has 17 centers in the WB and 5 in the GS.⁸⁴

Table 30/7: Number of Students Seeking Open Education in PA Territories by Sex 2012/2013⁸⁵

University	Enrolled students		
	Males	Females	Total
Al-Quds Open University	21,811	39,781	61,592

Number of Students Seeking Open Education in PA Territories by Sex 2012/2013



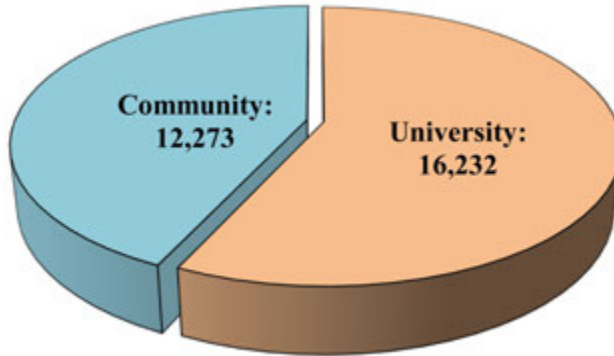
4. University and Community Colleges

There are 38 university and community colleges in the WB and GS (18 college universities and 20 community colleges). According to figures available from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, there were 34 university and community colleges providing education for 28,505 students in the academic year 2012/2013, including 15 college universities attended by 16,232 students, which award bachelor's degrees, and 19 community colleges attended by 12,273 students which award intermediate diplomas.⁸⁶

Table 31/7: Number of Students in University and Community Colleges in PA Territories by Sex 2012/2013⁸⁷

Colleges	Number	Enrolled students		
		Males	Females	Total
University	15	7,666	8,566	16,232
Community	19	6,391	5,882	12,273
Total	34	14,057	14,448	28,505

Number of Students in University and Community Colleges in PA Territories 2012/2013



Conclusion

Around 66 years into the crisis which shattered the social fabric of the Palestinian people after the 1948 war, more than half the Palestinian people still live in historic Palestine where Palestinians are likely to outnumber Jews on this land soon (2016–2017). This remains a source of concern for the Israeli side, which could resort to brutal tools to get rid of the Palestinian demographic burden. In addition, around 80% of Palestinians in the Diaspora still live in the region surrounding occupied Palestine awaiting a day of return. Although Palestinian population growth and fertility rate have witnessed deterioration in recent years, these rates remained high compared to those in Israel and other countries of the world.

The Palestinian people does not only suffer from the occupation and its oppression, but it also faces harsh conditions in the Diaspora and countries of refuge, especially in regions of crises and clashes. The most prominent manifestation of the suffering was the disaster that befell the Palestinians residing in Syria because of the ongoing conflict there since 2011, a disaster which seems to be far from resolution. Thus, the Palestinians there require concerted efforts to support them and save them from paying the price for local entitlements and political positions.

As for the economic situation in the WB and GS, the most prominent manifestation of suffering is the Israeli occupation and its curbing of genuine economic growth, besides its attempts to transform the Palestinian economy into a dependent consumer economy, while the Palestinians suffer destruction, confiscation, exploitation and siege. The Palestinian economy also suffers dependence on foreign aid, and administrative and financial corruption in addition to political and geographic division between the WB and GS. Thus, the Palestinian economy has to seek to find the necessary infrastructure to disengage from the occupation and to find the necessary environment and elements of steadfastness for a people whose major concern is freedom and independence rather than “luxury” under this occupation.

In this gloomy situation, education remains one of the bright sides that expresses the huge capacities of the Palestinian people, and Palestinian energy for its uniqueness, where it is one of the most advanced cases in the Arab and Muslim world despite the suffering under occupation. Thus, investment in education should continue and increase given that it is the best investment in people. Yet, this investment should focus on quality and sustainability as it is not a mere tool for literacy or distribution of diplomas, thus improving the society and resolving its different problems.

Endnotes

- ¹ See PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of Year 2011* (Ramallah: PCBS, December 2011), http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_PCBS/Downloads/book1815.pdf; PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of Year 2012* (Ramallah: PCBS, December 2012), http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_PCBS/Downloads/book1952.pdf; and PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of Year 2013* (Ramallah: PCBS, December 2013), http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_PCBS/Downloads/book2028.pdf

Note: According to available data, published by PCBS, population growth of Palestinians in the Diaspora was -2.1% in 2011, while in 2012 it became 3.1%, then in 2013 it decreased to 1.6%. These numbers confuse researchers, for it is impossible for the number of Palestinians to decrease in one year by 2.1%, and then in the next year to increase by 3.1%. It seems that the PCBS can be efficient with high precision in the WB and GS, while in the Diaspora numbers are provided by host countries or are estimated by researchers. Discrepancies and confusion are manifested when PCBS re-estimated the numbers of recent years without adapting the estimates for the years that preceded, thus the growth did not take its gradual logical form. As for the Palestinian population in Jordan, their estimation is a dilemma for researchers, and statics vary drastically.

- ² See PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of Year 2012*; and PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of Year 2013*.

- ³ See PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of Year 2012*; and UNRWA in Figures, 1/1/2013, <http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/UNRWA%20in%20Figures-English.pdf>

- ⁴ See PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of Year 2012*; and PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of Year 2013*.

- ⁵ See PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of Year 2013*.

- ⁶ *Ibid.*

- ⁷ *Ibid.*

- ⁸ *Ibid.*

- ⁹ *Ibid.*

- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*

- ¹¹ *Ibid.*

- ¹² *Ibid.*; and PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of Year 2011*.

- ¹³ PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of Year 2013*.

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- ¹⁵ PCBS, *The Population, Housing and Establishment Census–2007, Press Conference on the Preliminary Findings, (Population, Buildings, Housing Units and Establishments)* (Ramallah: PCBS, February 2008), http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/census2007_e.pdf; and PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of Year 2013*.

- ¹⁶ PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of Year 2013*.

- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*

- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*

- ¹⁹ See UNRWA in Figures, 1/1/2012, <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/20120317152850.pdf>; UNRWA in Figures, 1/1/2013; and UNRWA in Figures, 1/7/2013, http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/unrwa_in_figures_new2014_10nov2014.pdf

- ²⁰ *Ibid.*

- ²¹ See UNRWA, Syria Regional Crisis Response, January-December 2014, http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/2014_syria_emergency_appeal.pdf; and UNRWA, Syria Regional Crisis Response Update 74, 4/5/2014, <http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/emergency-reports/syria-regional-crisis-response-update-74>
- ²² See UNRWA, Syria Regional Crisis Response, January-December 2014.
- ²³ PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of Year 2013*.
- ²⁴ See UNRWA in Figures, 1/1/2012, 1/1/2013 and 1/7/2013.
- ²⁵ PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of Year 2013*.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
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- ²⁸ UNRWA in Figures, 1/7/2013.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*; and UNRWA Statistics 2010: Selected Indicators, UNRWA, November 2011, <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2011120434013.pdf>
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- ³¹ See Press Release, Statement at the Conclusion of an IMF Mission to the West Bank and Gaza, site of International Monetary Fund (IMF), 6/2/2014, <https://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pr/2014/pr1444.htm>
- ³² For 2004–2011, see PCBS, http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_Rainbow/Documents/ExpConstantA1994-2011.htm
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- ³⁷ See The World Bank, West Bank and Gaza: Area C and the Future of the Palestinian Economy, 2/10/2013, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSCContentServer/WDSP/IB/2014/01/23/000442464_20140123122135/Rendered/PDF/AUS29220REPLAC0EVISION0January02014.pdf
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- ⁴⁶ See site of Palestine News Network (PNN), 28/3/2013, <http://www.pnn.ps/index.php/pnn-select/49066>
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- ⁵⁴ See “Palestinian Legislative Council Unanimously Approves Budget Bill for Fiscal Year 2014,” *al-Barlaman* newspaper, Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), Gaza, 2/1/2014, http://www.plc.gov.ps/img/Magazine/pdf_file/cb62d9e3-a5cf-4eab-a6bf-6d107fbcaaec.pdf (in Arabic)
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- ⁵⁷ See PCBS, *Labour Force Survey: Annual Report 2013* (Ramallah: PCBS, April 2014), http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_PCBS/Downloads/Book2049.pdf
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- ⁶⁴ See Press Release, Palestinians Access to Area C key to Economic Recovery and Sustainable Growth, The World Bank, 8/10/2013, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2013/10/07/palestinians-access-area-c-economic-recovery-sustainable-growth.print> See also PCBS, *Press Report, Preliminary Estimates of Quarterly National Accounts (Third Quarter 2013)*.
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57. Wael Sa'ad, *al-Hisar: Dirasah Hawla Hisar al-Sha'b al-Filastini wa Muhawalat Isqat Hukumat Hamas* (The Siege: A Study on the Siege of the Palestinian People & Attempts to Overthrow the Government of Hamas), 2006.
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59. Ahmad Said Nufal, *Dawr Israel fi Taftit al-Watan al-'Arabi* (The Role of Israel in the Fragmentation of the Arab World), 2007, 2nd edition, 2010.
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102. ‘Abdullah ‘Ayyash, *Jaysh al-Tahrir al-Filastini wa Quwwat al-Tahrir al-Sha‘biyyah wa Dawruhuma fi Muqawamat al-Ihtilal al-Israeli 1964–1973* (Palestinian Liberation Army & Popular Liberation Forces & Their Role in the Resistance to the Israeli Occupation 1964–1973), 2014.
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107. Mohsen Moh’d Saleh, editor, *Qita’ Ghazzah: al-Tanmiyah wa al-I‘mar fi Muwajahat al-Hisar wa al-Damar* (Gaza Strip: Development and Construction in the Face of Siege and Destruction), 2014.
108. Information Department, al-Zaytouna Centre, *al-Mawqif al-Israeli min al-Ahdath wa al-Taghayyurat fi Misr fi ‘Am: Muntasaf Yunyu 2013–Muntasaf Yulyu 2014* (The Israeli Position on the Events & Changes in Egypt: 15 June 2013–15 July 2014), Information File 21, 2014.
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Second: English Publications

The Palestinian Strategic Report Series

113. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh and Basheer M. Nafi, editors, *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2005*, 2007.
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116. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2008*, 2010.
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119. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2011/12*, 2013.
120. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, editor, *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2012–2013*, 2015.

Am I Not a Human? Series

121. Abbas Ismail, *The Israeli Racism: Palestinians in Israel: A Case Study*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (1), translated by Aladdin Assaiqeli, 2009.
122. Hasan Ibhaïs, Mariam Itani and Sami al-Salahat, *The Suffering of the Palestinian Woman Under the Israeli Occupation*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (2), translated by Iman Itani, 2010.
123. Ahmed el-Helah and Mariam Itani, *The Suffering of the Palestinian Child Under the Israeli Occupation*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (3), translated by Iman Itani, 2010.
124. Firas Abu Hilal, *The Suffering of the Palestinian Prisoners & Detainees Under the Israeli Occupation*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (4), translated by Baraah Darazi, 2011.
125. Mariam Itani and Mo'in Manna', *The Suffering of the Palestinian Refugee*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (6), translated by Salma al-Houry, 2010.
126. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, *The Suffering of Jerusalem and the Holy Sites Under the Israeli Occupation*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (7), translated by Salma al-Houry (published in collaboration with al-Quds International Institution (QII)), 2012.
127. Hasan Ibhaïs and Kahled 'Ayed, *The Separation Wall in the West Bank*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (8), translated by Baraah Darazi, 2013.

128. Mariam Itani, Amin Abu Wardeh and Waddah Eid, *The Suffering of the Palestinian Worker Under the Israeli Occupation*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (10), translated by Salma al-Houry, 2014.
129. Fatima Itani and Atef Daghlas, *The Suffering of the Palestinian Patient Under the Israeli Occupation*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (11), translated by Mohammed Ibrahim El-Jadili and Saja Abed Rabo El-Shami, 2012.

Non-Serial Publications

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131. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh and Ziad al-Hasan, *The Political Views of the Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon as Reflected in May 2006*, 2009.
132. Ishtiaq Hossain and Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, *American Foreign Policy & the Muslim World*, 2009.
133. Karim El-Gendy, *The Process of Israeli Decision Making: Mechanisms, Forces and Influences*, 2010. (electronic book)
134. Ibrahim Ghusheh, *The Red Minaret: Memoirs of Ibrahim Ghusheh (Ex-Spokesman of Hamas)*, 2013.
135. Mohsen M. Saleh, *The Palestinian Issue: Historical Background & Contemporary Developments*, 2014.
136. Muslim Imran Abu Umar, *Egypt, Syria and the War on Gaza: A Study on the Egyptian and Syrian Foreign Policy Responses to the 2008/2009 Gaza War*, 2015.

This Report

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2012–2013 is the eighth in a series of annual resourceful academic studies. It discusses the developments of the Palestinian issue of this period in an objective and comprehensive manner. The meticulous analytical reading of events tries also to foresee the near future. This Report has become a basic reference on Palestinian studies, it is a must read for all those concerned.

An outstanding team of 13 academics and experts contributed to this Report in seven chapters. They covered the internal Palestinian situation, the Israeli scene and the Israeli–Palestinian relations including wars and the peace process. They also discuss the Arab, Muslim and international stances towards the Palestinian issue. This Report focuses, also, on the issue of Jerusalem and the holy sites, and the suffering of man and land under the Israeli occupation. Besides, the demographic, economic and education indicators are, also, studied and analyzed.

Al-Zaytouna Centre, as usual, has surpassed other reports in this superlative work. It is a serious addition to the field of Palestinian studies, and those interested in this field, including specialists, experts, libraries of universities and research centers, should have their copies of this Report.

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2012 – 2013



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