

Introduction to the Issue of Palestinian Refugees



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Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations



The Academy of Refugee Studies

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English Version

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Translator's Introduction

As a refugee, I always remember my family's words about the Nakbah. But it was the tears falling from their eyes that spoke louder than their words, especially when they remember the days of pain and suffering. Many of those refugees took their house keys with them, expecting to return after the war. Those keys have become a symbol of the refugees' aspiration to return.

Palestinian refugees constitute the largest group of refugees on the planet. Their plight is unique in its longevity and intractability. The refugee crisis was created in 1948 when the Zionist gangs (Stern, Haganah, Irgun and others) launched their murderous offensive against the Palestinians. People were scattered and forced to leave their land and properties. There were systematic and bloody operations by way of air strikes and horrible massacres to terrify people, contrary to the Zionist claim that the Palestinians left their lands voluntarily.

There are thousands of books and studies that deal with the plight of the Palestinian refugees from different perspectives. When I read this book, I was impressed by the author's erudite and academic approach. Although he was dealing with very delicate and sensitive issues, he approached them in a non-polemical, non-rhetorical and non-provocative manner.

The book in hand is written in a simple academic style, with documented data to fit readers' different concerns. Moreover, it relies on the most recent statistics issued about the Palestinian refugees. I selected this book, "Introduction to the Palestinian Refugees" as a subject for translation after profound deliberation over many topics. The book sheds light on my grandparents and great grandparents, who have suffered as refugees, scattered and displaced, forced to live in tents, cantons, camps and shacks. This study by Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, The Manager of Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations in Beirut since 2004, compiles



the Arabic version, and succeeds in revealing all the facts about the refugees' plight. Dr. Saleh discusses the Palestine issue, from before the onset of the Nakbah up to the present day.

The book has two chapters: the first chapter is entitled “Historical Backgrounds of The Palestine Issue and the Emergence of the Palestinian Refugee Issue” and it has 10 sections. The second chapter, entitled “The Palestinian Refugees (A General Overview)” has four sections. It summarizes the refugee issue from its birth and in its historical context.

This translation aims to reach those in the world who remain ignorant of Palestinian pain and suffering and the realities of the Palestinian problem. This work is addressed to international human rights and civil society organizations in order to help support, effectuate and implement the right of return of refugees. Additionally, it is an open message to all English language speakers who want to understand this issue. Finally, I decided to translate this book to increase the chances of the Palestinian voice being heard. Moreover, the book outlines the Israeli occupation's crimes against the Palestinians refugees.

Abdalrahman Mohammed Eldirawi



Author's Introduction* Introduction to the Issue of Palestinian Refugees

This book is a general introduction to the issue of Palestinian refugees; it is required reading for the Refugee Studies Diploma, offered by the Academy of Refugee Studies. The book is divided into two parts. In the first part, we discuss the historical backgrounds of Palestine and its people, and the birth of the Palestinian refugee issue. In the second part, we define the Palestinian refugee and present a general survey of Palestinian refugees, their numbers and their locations globally.

Ultimately, we hope this book will be effective in promoting understanding of the crucial issue of Palestinian refugees and will have practical and positive effects on the way students deal with this issue, and also on the ways and methods of working in the service of the Palestine issue.

Mohsen Mohammad Saleh

* I offer my warmest gratitude to the researcher Iqbal Omeish for her considerable help, especially in updating statistics and preparing refugee-related tables and graphs.

Chapter One

Historical Backgrounds of the Palestine Issue and the Emergence of the Palestinian Refugee Issue





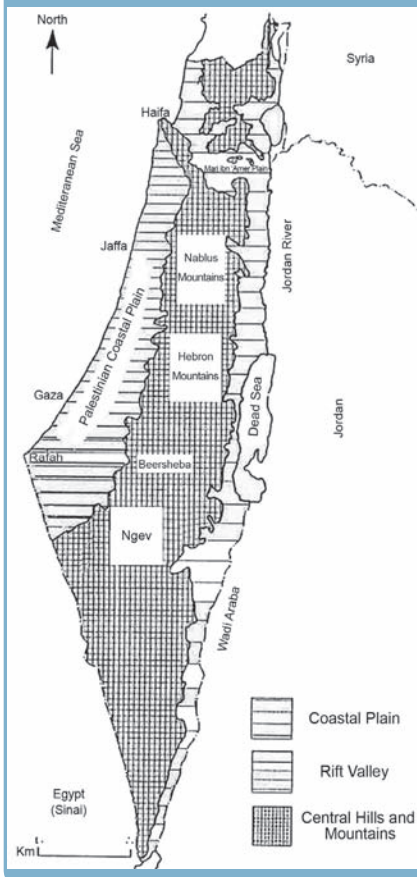
Historical Backgrounds of the Palestine Issue and the Emergence of the Palestinian Refugee Issue¹

First: The Land of Palestine

The term “Palestine” refers to the area located in the southwest of *Bilad al-Sham* (i.e, Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon) and it lies on the Mediterranean in the western part of Asia. It is considered the meeting point of Asia and Africa and is characterized by its proximity to Europe. It is bound to the north by Lebanon, to the northeast by Syria, to the east by Jordan, and to the south and southwest by Egypt. Palestine enjoys a moderate climate (the Mediterranean climate).

The current geographic boundaries of Palestine were set accurately during the time of British occupation of Palestine, especially during the period 1920–1923. The total surface area of Palestine is 27,009 km². Throughout history, the boundaries of Palestine have expanded and narrowed. However, it generally represented the area between the Mediterranean Sea to the west and the Dead Sea and Jordan River to the east. Whatever the divisions in the various Islamic eras were, Palestine remained part of *Bilad al-Sham*. These divisions, whether expanded or narrowed, were never able to change the true feelings of its people that they belong to one Islamic nation and their loyalty to the rule would not be shaken so long as it was an Islamic rule.

Map (1): Geography of Palestine



¹ This part is mainly based on info and data withdrawn from studies and book by the lecturer, especially:

- Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, *Filastin: Dirasat Manhajiyah fi al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah* (Palestine: Textual Studies in the Palestine Issue) (Cairo: Arabic Media Centre, 2003).
- Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, *Al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah: Khalfiyatuha al-Tarikhiyyah wa Tatawwuratuha al-Mu'asirah* (The Palestinian Issue: Historical Background & Contemporary Developments) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2012).
- Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, *Haqa'iq wa Thawabit fi al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah: Ru'yah Islamiyyah* (Facts on the Palestinian Issue: An Islamic Perspective) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations and Palestine Foundation for Culture, 2010).



The oldest known name of this land is “the land of Canaan”; while the name Palestine was derived from the name of naval peoples, who probably came from the west of Asia Minor and the Aegean Sea regions in the twelfth century BC. Its name was mentioned in old Egyptian inscriptions, and was referred to as P.L.S.T. The N was added later possibly to pluralize the noun. These peoples lived in the coastal areas between Jaffa and Gaza, and settled in the cities of Gaza, ‘Asqalan, Acre, Jet and Ashdod and they founded the city of Lod. They also mixed quickly with the Canaanites and left no distinctive trace except giving the land their name.



Map (2): The Administrative Divisions of Palestine in the Early Islamic Period





Second: The People of Palestine

Map (3): Archaeological Sites of Palestine



Relics found in Palestine show that it has been inhabited since the Early Stone Age (500 thousand–14 thousand BC), while the relics of the Middle Stone Age (14 thousand–8 thousand BC) indicate the presence of some forms of a civilized life, represented by what is known as the Natufian Civilization, as found in Shaqba northwest of Ramallah. The land of Palestine witnessed the first stages of human development represented in turning from grazing to agriculture, about 11 thousand years ago (9,000 BC). In 8,000 BC, they established Jericho (in the northeast of Palestine), which was the first city in history, according to archeologists. And when the Canaanites came from the Arabian Peninsula (about 2,500 BC) their migration was so vast that they became the principal population of the country. They built more than 200 cities and villages in Palestine, such as Bisan, 'Asqalan, Acre, Haifa, Hebron, Ashdod, Beersheba and Bethlehem, which are still thriving to the present day.

Highly credible historians believe that most of the people of present-day Palestine, especially the villagers, are descendants of Canaanite, Amorite and Palestinian tribes, and from Arabian tribes that settled in Palestine before and after the Islamic

conquest, all of whom integrated into something of a melting pot. The people of Palestine are those whose overwhelming majority converted to Islam and whose language became Arabized with the advent of Islam. The Islamic identity of Palestine was confirmed for the longest period in history, starting with the Islamic *Futuh* (openings) 15 AH/636 CE until now. In this context, the forced expulsion of part of its population by the Israeli occupation since 1948, is relatively small consequence.





Third: The Jews' Alleged Historical Claims to Palestine

The Jews' alleged historical claims to Palestine disintegrate in the presence of the right of Arab Muslims to their land. This land was inhabited and ruled by the people of Palestine about 1,500 years before the Israelites established their state (The Kingdom of David). They continued to rule it during the Kingdom's era, during the following period when Jews had practically no ties with the land, and until now. The Israelites ruled parts of Palestine (and not all of it) for about four centuries (1000–586 BC). Their rule ended in the same way as the rules of others, such as the Assyrians, Persians, Pharaohs, Greeks, and Romans; through all these eras, the people of Palestine remained rooted firmly in their land. The Islamic period was the longest, as it continued for about 1,200 years (636–1917) with an interruption during the Crusader period (which lasted for 90 years).

The Jews lost the ability to affect events in Palestine for about 1,800 years (since 135 CE–up to the 20th Century), during which they had no political, civilizational



The Haganah Gang displacing Palestinians

or pioneering role in Palestine. Indeed, their religious teachings prohibited going back to Palestine. Moreover, more than 80% of contemporary Jews, according to a number of studies by Jewish scholars, such as that of the well-known writer Arthur Koestler, have no historical ties with Palestine and are unrelated to the Israelite nation. On the contrary, the overwhelming majority of today's Jews are descendants of the Khazar Jews, known as Ashkenazim, ancient Tartar-Turkish tribes that used to live in the northern Caucasus. They converted to Judaism in the 8th century CE. So, if most Jews today have “a right of return,” it is possible to argue that this return should be to southern Russia, and not to Palestine.

The claim that Jews have an attachment to Palestine does not sit easily with the fact that most of the children of Israel refused to join Moses in his journey to the holy land; and most of them refused to return to it from Babylon when the Persian Emperor Cyrus allowed them to leave. Furthermore, throughout history and until today, the number of Jews in Palestine has not exceeded 40% of world Jewry, with the exception of the last few years (since about 2007).



Fourth: The Emergence of the Zionist Project

Napoleon Bonaparte's military campaigns in Egypt, which he conquered easily in July 1798, and Palestine in 1799, drew attention to the weakness of the Ottoman State and whetted the appetite of European Colonialism to share in the partitioning of the State. And although the Bonaparte's campaign ended in failure on the walls of Acre in 1799 CE, it opened the way for European involvement in Palestine.



Palestinian Refugees streamed out of Palestine to Lebanon 1948



The echoes of the calls made by Jewish and the non-Jewish Zionists to return to Palestine did not take serious dimensions until the end of the 19th century. However, Jewish interest in Palestine remained connected with traditional religious emotional motivations to visit holy places or to live near them. It was also connected to charity settlement projects, without taking the form of an open, organized political program; for the number of Jews in Palestine in 1799 was about five thousand and had reached just 13,920 in 1876.

From 1882, Jewish immigration began to have a more organized and intensive character following the emergence of the “Jewish Question” in Russia. The Ottoman State took several measures to prevent Jewish settlement in Palestine; and in 1887 it separated the district (*Sanjak*) of Jerusalem from the state (*Vilayet*) of Syria and placed it directly under the supervision of the central government (Sublime Porte or *Topkapi*) to take care of and give more attention to the region. Although the number of Jews who left their native countries, notably Russia and Eastern Europe, reached 2 million and 367 thousands during the period 1881–1914, the number of those who managed to migrate to Palestine was just 55 thousand (2.32% of the total) while the vast majority migrated to the United States (US), Western Europe, and South America. This shows both the relative success of the Ottoman authorities in limiting Jewish immigration to Palestine and the prevailing disinterest in Palestine among Jews in the nineteenth century.



Old photo of Jewish immigrants to Palestine

The reasons for the emergence of the Zionist movement, which sought to establish a Jewish entity in Palestine, are found in the emergence, starting in the 16th century, of Zionist tendencies among the Christians of Europe, especially Protestants, some of whom supported the gathering of Jews in Palestine.

Another key factor was the failure of the “Jewish Enlightenment” movement, known as “Haskalah,” that sought to integrate Jews in the communities in which they lived. These reasons were factored alongside nationalist ideologies, the birth of the nation-state in Europe especially in the 19th Century, and the wish of many Jews to have a land that they could rule, and under which they could live with a Jewish nationality. Added to the above was the emergence of the “Jewish question,” especially in Eastern Europe, and the Russian persecution of the Jews, which led many of them to ask for a safe haven and their own Jewish state. In order to achieve all of the above, the Jews benefited greatly from the fact that some of them were able to reach influence and decision-making circles in Europe and America. Moreover, a number of countries in Western Europe and America did not want to absorb the waves of Jewish immigration coming from Eastern Europe and preferred to divert these waves away from their own countries.

The establishment of the World Zionist Organization (WZO) and the convening of its first conference in Basel in Switzerland during the period from 29–31/8/1897 under the leadership of Theodor Herzl was the start of Zionist political, institutional and organized work to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. The Zionist Movement is a racist movement based on Jewish religious,



World Zionist Organization at the 13th Congress

traditional and national texts. Its success is conditional on the cancellation of the rights of Palestinian Arabs in their land and replacing them with a Jewish population. According to the essence of the Zionist idea, there is no difference between secular, socialist, religious, cultural or political movements; ultimately, all Zionists are conciliatory Zionists striving for the same high-level objectives.

Herzl was keen to achieve the Zionist project through diplomatic contacts and by trying to encourage the big powers, especially Britain, to adopt this project in light of the benefits and interests that the colonial west could enjoy. Herzl tried in vain to convince the Ottoman State to

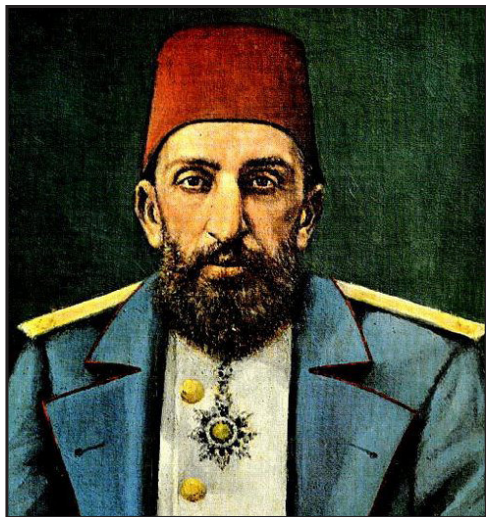


Theodor Herzl



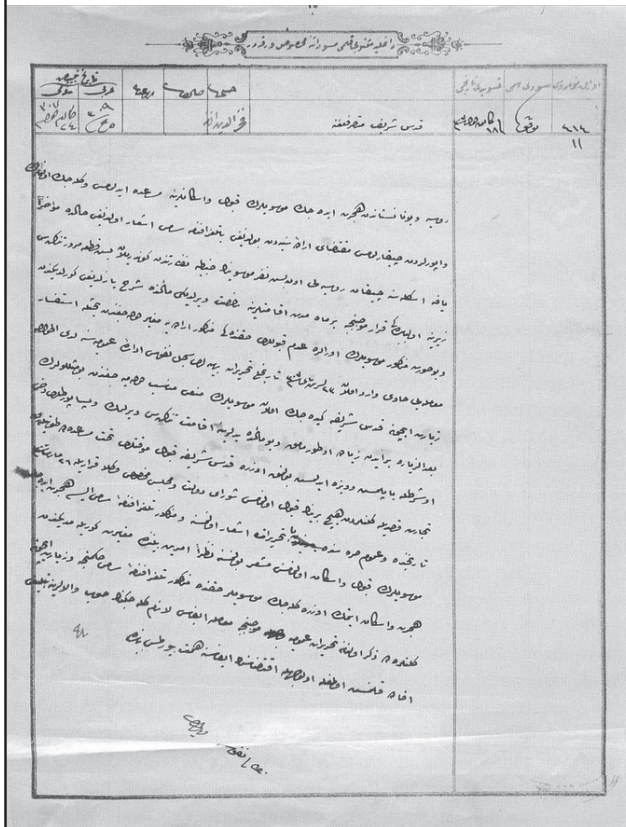


sell him Palestine, to give the Jews autonomy in it under Ottoman sovereignty, and open the door for Jewish immigration, in return for enticing offers that the Ottoman State was in urgent need of. But Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1876–1909) stood firm against the wishes of the Zionists. Generally speaking, and on a global scale, the Zionist movement failed to gain anything of value until the end of the First World War.



Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1876–1909)

Palestine in Ottoman Archives



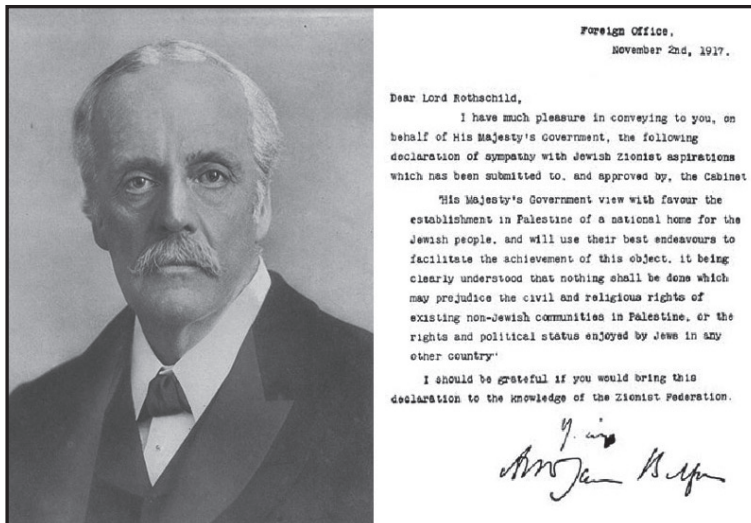
Not giving settlement permission to the jews coming with the aim to reside in Jerusalem and not prolonging the stay of the visitors more than a month 5 January 1892
(Copyright: Turkey General Directorate of State Archives, Istanbul)

Early on, the Palestinians were very active in confronting the Zionist project. The first clashes between Palestinian farmers and Zionist settlers took place in 1886. As a result, the Palestinians presented petitions to the Ottoman authorities; while Palestinian newspapers, such as al-Karmel and Palestine, were assiduous in bringing to light the Zionist threat. Furthermore, there existed prominent Palestinians who warned of the Zionist threat, among them, Yusuf Diya al-Khalidi, Suleiman al-Taji al-Farouqi, and Is‘af al-Nashashibi.



Fifth: British Occupation of Palestine

Britain adopted the Zionist project and issued the Balfour Declaration on 2/11/1917, promising to establish a national home for Jews in Palestine. It completed its occupation of Palestine in September 1918 and reneged on its promises of freedom and independence to the Arabs, who at the time were led by Sharif Hussein. Furthermore, *Bilad al-Sham* and Iraq were divided into French and British spheres of influence according to the Sykes-Picot agreements (May 1916), which sought to make Palestine an international zone. Then, under the San Remo Agreement of April 1920, Britain took hold of Palestine and managed to include the full text of the Balfour Declaration in the charter for its mandate over Palestine, approved by the League of Nations on 24/7/1922. However, idea principle of the mandate, which was devised by the League of Nations, was to offer help to the mandated people and ready them for independence. This charter of the mandate over Palestine included the responsibility of the mandate state



Balfour Declaration: The Original letter from Balfour to Rothschild

(Britain) to promote local government institutions and preserve the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine. This meant that, ultimately, the Balfour Declaration would not be a hindrance to Palestinians in developing their institutions and establish their state.

The implementation of the Balfour Declaration meant, in practice, harming the interests and rights of Palestinians and disrupting the development of their constitutional institutions towards statehood. Britain always preferred to commit itself to the part related to the Balfour Declaration, while neglecting the part related to the rights of Palestinian Arabs.





In 1918, when the British occupied Palestine, its total population was about 665 thousand, around 610 thousand of them (91.7%) were Arabs (550 thousand Muslims and 60 thousand Christians), whereas Jews numbered around 55 thousand (8.3%). The majority of those were foreign Jewish immigrants who came from Russia and Eastern Europe during the previous forty years.

Under British occupation, which had pledged to establish a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, the doors were flung open to Jewish immigration and settlement. As a result, 483 thousand Jews immigrated during the period 1919–1948, a 13-fold rise, as their total rose from 55 thousand to 650 thousand. Therefore, the substantial increase in the number of Jews in Palestine during this period was not due to a natural population increase, but because of Jewish immigration to Palestine; whereas the increase in the Arab population was natural, reaching one million, 40 thousand in 1948, which means that then the Arabs constituted 68.3% of the population of Palestine, while the Jewish immigrants constituted 31.7%. Thus, the Palestinians continued to make up more than two-thirds of the population of Palestine when Israel was created.

Map (4) : Regions of Jewish Settlement in Palestine in 1947



Table (1): Population Growth in Palestine Under British Occupation

Year	Arabs		Jews	
	Number (thousands)	%	Number (thousands)	%
1918	610	91.7	55	8.3
1948	1,400	68.3	650	31.7

Regarding Palestinian land, Jews used to own 2% of it, whereas Arabs owned around 98%. Still, under British protection and pressure, the Jews could not increase the area of Palestinian land they owned to more than 6%. In summary, we see that the area of land owned by Arabs amounted to 94%, compared to 6% owned by Jews.

Table (2): Development in Land Ownership in Palestine Under British Occupation

Year	Arabs (%)	Jews (%)
1918	98	2
1948	94	6

At the time that the British authorities were striving to disarm Palestinians, sometimes killing those in possession of firearms and imprisoning those who owned bullets, a dagger or a long knife for years, they turned a blind eye, and even secretly encouraged Zionist Jews to arm themselves and form military forces and train them. With the outbreak of the 1948 War, the number of Jewish



British occupation of Palestine

fighters exceeded 70 thousand (64 thousands of them Haganah, five thousand Irgun, and two thousand Stern, as well as others). This number was more than three times that of the Arab armies when they entered the 1948 war. In 1929, the Zionist movement founded the Jewish Agency that took over care of Jewish affairs in Palestine and became more like a state within a state because of the broad powers it enjoyed. The Zionist Jews also established large economic, social, and educational institutions, which constituted a solid infrastructure for the coming Jewish state. Thus, they established the General Federation of Labour in Israel (Histadrut), opened the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1925 and so on. The British colonization of Palestine was characterized injustice, subjugation and favoritism.



A Palestinian being searched by British occupation forces in Jaffa



Haganah Gang



Histadrut



Training of Haganah Gang



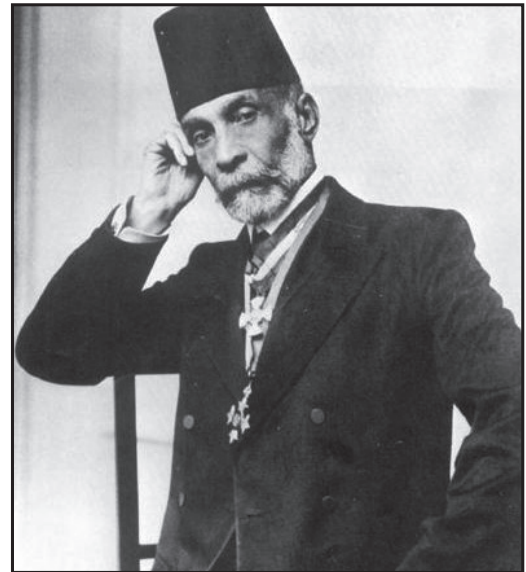
Sixth: The Emergence of the Palestinian National Movement

Palestinians came out of WWI in a state of enfeeblement, with Arab countries and the Muslim world in general under the sway of colonization. Their weak material capabilities and their lack of influence at the highest political levels, in contrast to the widespread support for the world's Jewry and the patronage of the great powers that the Zionist project enjoyed. Despite this disparity, the most prominent feature of the Palestinians' political and resistance activities during the British mandate was their adherence to their full right to Palestine and insistence on their independence whatever the cost. Palestinian political activism centered on a number of specific demands, namely:

- Abolishing the Balfour Declaration given the injustice and prejudice it brought on the overwhelming majority of the population.
- Stopping Jewish immigration.
- Prohibiting the sale of lands to Jews.
- Setting up a Palestinian national government, elected by a parliament (a legislative council) that represented the true free will of the people.
- Negotiations with the British to conclude a treaty that, in the end, would lead to Palestinian independence.

Based on these principles, the Palestinian National Movement was established. And, thus, the Palestinians held the First Palestinian Arab Congress (27/1–10/2/1919) in Jerusalem.

Musa Kazim al-Husseini, who was the head of the Executive Committee of the Congress, emerged as the leading figure in the Palestinian National Movement. He continued as the official leader of the National Movement until he passed



Musa Kazim al-Husseini





away in March 1934. However, it was Haj Amin al-Husseini who emerged to become the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem in 1921, the president of the Supreme Muslim Council from its establishment in 1922, and the most important supporter of the National Movement and its driving force. After Musa Kazim al-Husseini passed away, Haj Amin became the undisputed leader of Palestine until the end of the British Mandate in 1948.

During the same period, 1918–1928, there were three revolts that expressed the overwhelming popular anger towards the Zionist project. The people directed their rage against the Jews and tried to avoid clashing with the British. However, the main suppression of these revolts was carried out by the British. Al-Nabi Musa Uprising, 4–10/4/1920, in Jerusalem, which led to the killing of five Jews and wounding 211 others; while on the Arab side, four Arabs were killed and 24 injured. Between 1–15/5/1921, an uprising broke out in Jaffa, in which parts of northern Palestine also participated.

Consequently, 47 Jews were killed and 146 injured, while 48 Arabs were killed and 73 injured. Al-Buraq revolution broke out on August 15 and continued until 2/9/1929. The Muslims waged this revolt in order to defend al-Buraq Wall (the Western Wall of *al-Aqsa* Mosque) from attacks by the Jews. This revolution spread throughout Palestine and led to the killing of 133 Jews and the injury of 339. On the Arab side, 116 were killed, and 232 were injured. In the three uprisings, Arabs caused most of the Jewish fatalities and casualties,



Haj Amin al-Husseini



Al-Nabi Musa Uprising

whereas the British forces and police caused most of the Arab casualties.

Al-Buraq revolution of 1929 was the beginning of a decade that witnessed an escalation in violent resistance against both the Zionist project and British colonialism. It reached its peak in the Great Palestinian Revolution (1936–1939); when the gravity of the Zionist project became more apparent with the immigration of 152 thousand Jews to Palestine from 1930–1935, thus doubling their total, which was 156 thousand in the mid-1929. After the Ha'avara (Transfer) Agreement between Germany and the Zionist movement was signed in 1933 between Nazi Germany and the Zionist movement, a large number of new immigrants came from Germany. These were businessmen, wealthy merchants, and specialized scientists. During this same period (1930–1935), the Jews were able to seize more than 229 thousand donum of Palestinian land and smuggle huge amounts of arms, two cases of which were uncovered on 15/3/1930 and on 16/10/1935.

The first half of the thirties was characterized by an increase in political activity, broad popular interaction with events and enmity against the British authorities, who were considered “The origin of the disease and the basis of every scourge.” Many secret military jihadist organizations were founded and developed, such as Al-Jihadiyyah Movement led by



Jews fleeing from Jerusalem at Jaffa Gate during revolution 1929



British troops protecting Jews at Jaffa Gate during a Jewish ceremony

Ezzedeen al-Qassam, and the Al-Jihad al-Muqaddas organization (Army of the Holy War) led by 'Abdul Qadir al-Husseini (and secretly supervised by Haj Amin.)

The Great Palestinian Revolution was one of the greatest revolutions in the modern and contemporary history of Palestine. It was started by one of al-Qassam's groups, led by Sheikh Farhan al-Sa'dy on 15/4/1936. Then, events intensified and there were angry reactions on both sides, the Jews and the Arabs. The Palestinians announced a general strike on the 20th of April. This strike continued for 178 days (nearly six months) to become **the longest general strike in history carried out by a whole nation**. This strike was accompanied by an uprising and protests throughout Palestine. The first stage of the revolution did not stop until 12/10/1936. The second stage started when al-Qassam's men assassinated the British District Commissioner for the Galilee, Lewis Yelland Andrews on 26/9/1937. The revolution reached its peak in summer 1938. The rebels succeeded in controlling the Palestinian countryside and its villages; and were able to occupy many cities for limited periods of time. This caused the collapse of British Civil Authority. Had the matter been limited to a confrontation between an occupied people and a colonial authority it could have led to the withdrawal of this authority and to giving the people their rights. But the existence of the Jewish-Zionist side with its influence and the nature of its project always pushed



**Burning and destruction of Har-Tuv colony
14/8/1929**



Palestinians strike against British policy

for more arrogance and stubbornness on the part of the British in order for them to retain control. The British authorities were compelled to send huge reinforcements, led by the best British military leaders such as Dill, Wavell, Haining and Montgomery. They reoccupied Palestine village by village, using all means of destruction and torment and the latest weaponry developed by the greatest power of that time. Many of the revolution's leaders were killed, such as Farhan al-Sa'dy, Mohammad Saleh al-Hamad, 'Abd al-Rahim al-Hajj Muhammad and Yusuf Abu Durra.

In an effort by the British to reach a political solution, **the mid-1939 Peel Commission** recommended the partition of Palestine between Arabs and Jews, but that suggestion was rejected by the Palestinians in the second stage of the great Palestinian revolution. As a result, the British announced what was called the "White Paper" in which Britain abandoned the Balfour Declaration and confirmed that:

1. The British authorities "declare unequivocally that it is not part of their policy that Palestine should become a Jewish State."

2. Its objective is the "establishment within 10 years of an independent Palestine State" where the "Arabs and Jews share government in such a way as to ensure that the essential interests of each community are safeguarded."



Palestinian men and women fighters against British occupation and Jewish immigrants



Palestinian fighters marching in 1936



Train derailed by Palestinian resistance 1936



3. “For each of the next five years a quota of 10,000 Jewish immigrants will be allowed” and now “as a contribution towards the solution of the Jewish refugee problem, 25,000 refugees will be admitted.” Furthermore, and “after the period of five years, no further Jewish immigration will be permitted unless the Arabs of Palestine are prepared to acquiesce in it.” That meant a limit of 75 thousand Jewish immigrants was set for the five-year period 1940–1944.

4. “There is now in certain areas no room for further transfers of Arab land, whilst in some other areas such transfers of land must be restricted if Arab cultivators are to maintain their existing standard of life and a considerable landless Arab population is not soon to be created. In these circumstances, the High Commissioner will be given general powers to prohibit and regulate transfers of land.”

This policy paper was in itself a political victory for the Palestinians because it paved the way for the establishment of a Palestinian state on the land of Palestine regardless of prevailing conditions. All of the above British concessions were the fruit of the Palestinian revolutions that changed the British perception of the situation and made them abandon many of their projects and schemes.



However, the Second World War brought new changes on the ground, among them:

1. The weakening of the British and French empires, the ascendancy of the US and Soviet Union, and the Zionist project taking strength from its alliance with the US.
2. The Holocaust, the massacres committed by Nazi Germany against the Jews. Nazi Germany attempted to eradicate Jews from Europe.
3. Arab weakness, as some Arab countries had recently gained their independence, while others were still living under colonialism.

Map (5): Peel Commission Partition Plan 1937



Furthermore, the Zionist movement took advantage of what happened to the Jews during World War II with the hope of gaining sympathy, new supporters and enlisting Western support for their cause. They stressed the belief that there was no safe place for Jews to take refuge, and that the only way to save them would be by establishing a national homeland for them in Palestine. The Zionist movement shifted its focus to the emerging post-war power of the US, especially after the Biltmore Conference in 1942. There, they got the support of both parties, Republicans and Democrats, to cancel the British White Paper of May 1939. When Harry Truman became president, he showed more sympathy for Zionism. On 31/8/1945, he asked the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Clement Attlee, to allow one hundred thousand Jews to enter Palestine.

The Jews endeavored to equip themselves militarily, since 26 thousand of Palestine's Jews were part of the Jewish units in the British army during World War II. Most of these were members of the Haganah and they gained military experience that made them the military core of the future Jewish state. In addition, about 92 thousand Jews immigrated to Palestine in the period 1939–1945 and some 61 thousand others managed to immigrate during the years 1946–1948. This massive immigration from 1939 to 1947 resulted in the capture of about 270 thousand donums of land; while during the years 1940–1948, 73 new colonies were established.

It was in this atmosphere of US-Jewish pressure and Arab weakness that the British officially abolished the White Paper in a statement made on 14/11/1945 by the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin. This statement called for forming an Anglo-American Committee for Inquiry into the Palestine issue and for it to present its recommendations. This resulted in the American government having direct intervention in the case. In 1946, the Committee recommended the admission of 100 thousand Jewish immigrants into Palestine and the free transfer and sale of Palestinian land to Jews.



Ernest Bevin



Seventh: The Partition Resolution

The Palestine issue took on an international dimension when Britain called upon the United Nations (UN) to include this issue in its agenda on 2/4/1947. A UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was formed to examine the issue and present a report on it. On 31/8/1947, the committee finished its report and came up with the following two recommendations:

- The termination of the British mandate in Palestine.
- The partition of Palestine into two states: Arab and Jewish, and the placement of the City of Jerusalem under a special international regime with the Trusteeship Council as its Administering Authority.



UNSCOP reporting to the UN

On 3/9/1947, the UN created a special committee for discussing the future of Palestine. Meanwhile, The General Assembly rejected a proposal calling for the International Court of Justice to evaluate the validity of UN in discussing the issue of Partitioning Palestine. The vote was “21 for and 20 against.”

The major powers did not have the two-thirds majority necessary for passing the motion of the partitioning resolution that enjoyed strong American and Russian support. On November 26, the vote almost took place. Had the vote been taken on that day, the partition proposal would have been defeated. However, the chairman of the UN General Assembly, the Brazilian delegate, postponed the session. The US government and its pro-partition and Jewish allies launched an aggressive campaign that succeeded in increasing the votes in favor. The Latin American representatives' wives received many gifts, including diamonds and expensive fur coats. After the US Promised Haiti financial aid, the Haiti government changed its position and voted for the proposal. Robert Nathan, an American businessman, used his economic clout to buy Guatemala's vote. The Firestone Company threatened Liberia financially if it did not change its abstention stand and vote for the proposal. The Philippines delegation was subjected to extreme pressure until finally its president ordered his deputy to vote in favor of the resolution. This dirty politics had a huge impact on one of the holiest and most immaculate spots on earth.

Where was the logic in deciding the fate of a people and a land based on the gifting of a Latin American leader's wife with diamonds or a fur coat! Or a weak African nation, such as Liberia, fearing the clout of an American company!!

On 29/11/1947, the UN General Assembly issued its fateful decision: Resolution 181, in favor of partitioning Palestine into two states; Arab and Jewish. The partition resolution won by a majority of 33 votes in favor, 13 against, and 10 abstentions. The resolution gave 54.7% of Palestinian land to the "Jewish state" (14,400 km²), 44.8% to the Arab state (11,780 km²) and approximately 0.5% to the Jerusalem area.

Map (6): Palestine Partition Resolution 1947



The UN Partition Resolution 181 is, in its core, illegal and immoral for the reasons cited below:

1 It violates one of the main goals of the international organization: namely, to give people the right to their self-determination. In addition, the Palestinians, who are the concerned party, were not consulted nor were they given the chance to vote on it in a referendum.

2 It lacks any legal basis, as the UN General Assembly did not have the authority to handle the affairs of regions under mandate, including Palestine. The UN had created the “trusteeship” system and had to enter into negotiations to place Palestine under this system and to decide to terminate the mandate over Palestine, if the mandate had achieved its goals of paving the way for independence. The UN’s role was to protect Palestine from being controlled by any groups of foreigners or settlers.

3 Neither the UN charter, nor any of its institutions had the authority to divide a region with defined boundaries against the wishes of its inhabitants.

4 According to international law—prevalent at the time—this resolution was a non-binding recommendation drafted according to Article 10 of the UN Charter and thus does not affect the inalienable rights of the Palestinians.

5 The partition resolution was clearly contrary to the idea of international justice, as its distribution did not take into consideration the ratio of land ownership (Jews did not own more than 6% of the land) or the ratio of the population (the Jews made up 31.7% of it).



60% of the Palestinian people were displaced by the Zionists

Looking at this strange and unjust distribution may help understand the background of Palestinian expulsion. This resolution gave the Jews 54% of Palestinian land: home to about 510 thousand Jews against 500 thousand Palestinian Arabs. Suppose this statistic is right, is it logical to establish a Jewish state, where the difference in numbers between Jews and Palestinians does not exceed 1%? (Even according to the most optimistic Israeli estimates, the number of Jews was about 500 thousand against 440 thousand Arabs, which means that the ratio of Jews was only 53.2%). Logically, if such an entity was established, it would not be a Jewish state, but a **bi-national state** in which Jews form about half the population. In addition, with natural population

growth, which is higher among Palestinians, the Palestinian ratio would quickly surpass that of the Jews (about 3.4% versus 2.5%). Thus, the number of Palestinians would surpass that of Jews in a short period of time. Consequently, the Zionist project of a Jewish state would probably come to an end. As for the proposed Palestinian state, there was a huge difference in population in favor of the Palestinian people: nearly 900 thousand Palestinians against 10 thousand Jews.

Is it possible for Zionist Jews to accept a situation of having an equal number of Arabs in their Jewish state?

Of course, Zionist Jews agreed to set up this state, although they hid something else: the Palestinians should not be present in large numbers in the area designated by the UN for Jews. So, they decided that it was not possible for them to effectively set up a state in this land, except after expelling its native inhabitants. That mission was accomplished by Jews according using “**Plan Dalet**,” which aimed to uproot the Palestinians from their land, starting in 1948. The Jews and their gangs prepared for war, with approval and support from Britain, the US and the West more generally. Thus, the Palestinians found themselves facing disaster; in the face of their own dispossession, they decided to resist, fight and persevere.





Eighth: Palestine's War of 1948

The Arab Higher Executive for Palestine was formed by an Arab League resolution on 12/6/1946. And when Haj Amin al-Husseini returned, he became its chairman; and thus the Committee became the official representative of the Palestinians. However, the problems that Haj Amin had with the governments of Jordan and Iraq, as well as the fact that he was stationed in British-influenced Egypt weakened his capabilities to maneuver.

In the Sofar conference on 6/9/1947, and the Aley conference on 7–15/10/1947, the Arab countries decided to resist the International Committee decisions, provide Palestinians with soldiers and weapons, take “military measures” and organize military work.

The 1948 Palestine war broke out upon the issuance of resolution on the partitioning of Palestine. In the first six months, the Palestinians took on the responsibility of the war with the support of a limited number of volunteers; for Arab countries refused to send their armies to fight with the Palestinians before the end of the British Mandate for Palestine on the 15/5/1948. The Palestinians formed Al-Jihad al-Muqaddas organization led by ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni. Simultaneously, the Arab League formed the “Arab Salvation Army” made up of volunteers



Jordanian troops participating in the fighting in Jerusalem 1948

from Arab and Islamic countries. The Palestinians suffered tragically from the meager military support given to them by the Arab countries, yet they succeeded in raising the anxiety of Jews and terrifying them for a prolonged period. This situation caused the US to seriously reconsider its support for the Partition Plan of March 1948. Until the entry of the Arab armies, the Palestinians had succeeded in keeping 80% of their land despite a severe shortage of weapons compared with the Jews, and despite the British collaboration with the Jews during their withdrawal from Palestine.

Another dismal fact was that the total number of Arab troops who traveled to Palestine did not exceed 24 thousand soldiers, whereas Jewish fighters numbered more than 70 thousand. Arab forces suffered from unfamiliarity with the terrain, bad organization, the absence of reliable intelligence about their enemy, poor communication and coordination, inferior military supplies, and old, ineffective weapons. Some of these forces worked to disarm the Palestinian fighters instead of providing them with weapons. The Arab forces also suffered from poor leadership; of 50 senior officers in one Arab army, 45 were British. In addition to the fact that some Arab countries had recently become independent and so had inexperienced armies, some of them were still practically under British colonial influence.

On the eve of May 14/5/1948, the Zionists declared the establishment of their state, "Israel." They succeeded in defeating the Arab armies that represented a model of bad leadership, weak coordination, and lack of experience; while some of them were still under colonial influence. The Zionists seized about 77% of the land of Palestine (20,770 km²). They expelled about 800 thousand Palestinians by force from the area where they established their state, out of a total of about 925 thousand Palestinians, who used to live there. (The total number of Palestinians was about 1.4 million at the end of 1948,); which means that the Zionists expelled about 57% of the Palestinian people from the land they occupied in 1948. They also expelled another 30 thousand to other areas within the 1948 occupied territories. By the time the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established in 1951, the number of Palestinians refugees had grown to 900 thousand.



Haifa at the time of Israel's establishment declaration 1948



Ben Gurion declaring the establishment of Israel in Tel Aviv 1948



Israeli air force 1948

The Zionists destroyed about 400 Palestinian villages out of 585, which were in the occupied area, and staged 34 massacres against Palestinian civilians during the expulsion process in 1948. The most infamous among the massacres was at Deir Yasin on 9/4/1948, one of the most horrifying Zionist massacres, in which they admitted to slaughtering 254 men, women and children. For the remaining parts of Palestine, Jordan officially annexed the West Bank (WB) (5,876 km²) and Egypt placed the Gaza Strip (GS) (363 km²) under its administration.

The UN accepted Israel as a member, on condition that it allowed the Palestinian refugees to return to their land, which it never did. Israel thus became an entity based on injustice and on racist and religious grounds. It is an entity with no defined borders or

written constitution, thus it lacks some of the most notable characteristics of a modern civilized state.

The 1948 war tore up the social and economic fabric of the Palestinian people who found themselves displaced having inhabited Palestine for the previous 4,500 years. Moshe Dayan, who was the Israeli army Chief of Staff, Defense Minister, Foreign Minister and also an archaeologist, admitted that “Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages. You do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I do not blame you because geography books no longer exist.”

On the Palestinian side, the Arab Higher Executive decided to establish a Palestinian government to fill the vacuum left by the British withdrawal, and strove in vain to persuade the Arab governments

of this in March, April, and the first half of May 1948. However, on 23/9/1948, it announced the “**All-Palestine Government**” in Gaza headed by Ahmad Hilmi ‘Abdul Baqi. All Arab governments (except Jordan) recognized this new Palestinian government. As a confirmation of its legitimacy, the All-Palestine Government and the Arab Higher Executive called for the convening of a Palestine National Council in Gaza, under the chairmanship of Haj Amin, on 1/10/1948. The first resolution of this conference was a declaration of independence over the whole of Palestine, the establishment of a free, democratic and sovereign state within the borders that were internationally recognized during the British occupation. The council gave a vote of confidence to the All-Palestine Government, which consisted of 10 ministers headed by Ahmad Hilmi ‘Abdul Baqi.

When the All-Palestine Government tried to exercise its authority over GS, Egypt intervened and forced Haj Amin al-Husseini to leave Gaza and move to Egypt. Later it forced the Palestinian government’s chairman and ministers to do the same. Arab countries refused to recognize the passports issued by the All-Palestine Government. They disarmed the forces of Al-Jihad al-Muqaddas organization. Egyptian authorities appointed an administrative governor to rule over the “regions under the control of Egyptian forces,” i.e., the GS.

Map (7): the UN Partition Plan of Palestine on 29/11/1947





Ninth: The Emergence of the Palestinian Refugees Problem

The problem of the Palestinian refugees started in 1948, and in the following section we will refer to several points in this regard:

First: The ratio of Palestinian refugees to their population is the highest ratio of refugees of any country when compared to its total population. Thus, there were 800 thousand Palestinian refugees out of a 1.4 million Palestinian population in 1948, a ratio of 57%. Which meant they faced the largest case of displacement of any people, including compared to the displacement in Bosnia Afghanistan and other countries that had suffered in this way.



Palestinian displacement 1948

Second: Palestinians are facing the longest and biggest refugee problem in modern history. This problem has persisted for 65 years; while most or all refugee problems have been or are about to be solved; such as the cases of the refugees from Afghanistan, Bosnia, Somalia, Armenia and others. Those people are free to return to their original countries and practice their political and civil rights.

Third: The Palestinian refugees' right of return is not only a Palestinian wish, it has the support of an international consensus. The number of resolutions were issued in support of Palestinian refugees far exceeds the number of resolutions issued for other refugees in other parts of the world. For example, there is the repeated (over 120 times) reaffirmation of UN Resolution 194 relating to the Palestinian refugees' right of return to their land and homes (The 1948 occupied territories).



Tenth: Did the Palestinians Leave Their Homeland Willingly?

It is alleged by the Israelis and their supporters that the Palestinians left their homeland willingly during the 1948 war in response to a broadcasted Arab call to do so. It is even claimed that the Zionists asked them to remain there but the Palestinians themselves chose to leave; and as a result, they lost their right to their land and they must bear the consequences!

Discussing the obvious and documented facts with Israelis and their supporters has proved more difficult over the decades than discussing trivial issues that have more than one viewpoint. The result of this has been the popular proliferation of myths such as the Arab “decision” to leave Palestine.

1. Who can deny that it is natural for civilians to flee their homes in times of war, especially in the face of massacres and ethnic cleansing. This was the experience of the Jews in Europe, more recently of people in East Timor and in many other countries.





2. Suppose the inhabitants of any country left their homes in the case of war for special reasons and regardless of who encouraged them to do so. Would that deny them the right to return to their homes when the war ended? Why then were the Bosnians, Afghans, Chechens, East Timorese and others permitted to return to their homelands, while the Palestinians are still prohibited to do the same? Why did the international community compel the governments in those countries to allow the refugees to return whereas Israel was not obligated to do the same?



3. If the Zionists had really asked the Palestinians to remain in their homeland, why did they prevent them from returning to it at the end of the war; especially when these civilians were no longer a threat to them? Why did the Israelis confiscate Palestinian land and give them to Jewish settlers who came from 90 different countries? Why did they not prove their good intentions if they had any?

4. The Israelis claimed that the Palestinians left their homes of their own free will. Why are not they generous enough to ask the Palestinians what they really want? Instead they speak in their name and against their will. Are they ready to open the door for Palestinians to return, if it is proven that they left against their will and they wish to return? Are not tens of statements, declarations and referendums enough? Have they not been living for more than 50 years in refugee camps (RCs), refusing the citizenship of any country other than Palestine? How about all the revolts and uprisings and the tens of UN resolutions they procured...

5. If the Jews allege that they have the right to return to Palestine after leaving it for 2000 years! Why then do they deny the Palestinians their right to return to their homeland after “leaving” it for only a few months or years? The Jews themselves did not show serious intentions and did not offer any practical programs to return to Palestine for 1,800 years and over tens of generations; this means, according to the same logic, that they had lost their right to return a long time ago.

In any case, the reality is that historical evidence and the confessions of the Israelis themselves refute their claims and their attempts to falsify history. The Palestinians did not leave willingly, neither did the Arab leaders order them to leave, nor did the Zionist leaders plan to let them stay and coexist with them.

Childers' Research

In 1961, the Irish journalist Erskine Childers spent several months in search of the real reasons for the Palestinian exodus. He asked the Zionist leaders to show him a single piece of evidence that would prove their claims. They failed to do so. He did not find anything to prove that Arabic broadcasts prompted Arabs to leave. Moreover, Childers researched British and American radio stations to examine their broadcast records for the year 1948. He concluded that: "There was not a single order, or appeal, or suggestion about evacuation from Palestine from any Arab radio station, inside or outside Palestine in 1948. There is a repeated, monitored record of Arab appeal, even flat orders to the civilians of Palestine to stay put." While on the contrary, Israeli broadcasts prompted them to leave through Arabic programs.



The Arab Higher Executive did not issue orders for the Palestinians to leave "to pave the way for the Arab armies" as it was alleged by Israeli propaganda. On the contrary, there were many official letters issued by the committee, one of them dated 8/3/1948, asking the Arab governments to cooperate in stopping the Palestinians' flight.

The truth was that, early on, the Zionists, planned to make Palestine a Jewish state, free from other religions. The founding President of the World Zionist Organization Theodor Herzl mentioned in his memoirs that the expropriation and the removal of the Palestinians had to be carried out discreetly and circumspectly.



In 1940, Yosef Weitz, the Director of the Land and Afforestation Department of the Jewish National Fund, wrote, “Among ourselves it must be clear that there is no place in the country for both peoples together... The only solution is *Eretz* Israel, at least the west part of *Eretz* Israel without Arabs... and there is no other way but to transfer the Arabs from here to the neighboring countries...”

Plan Dalet

The Zionists admitted—afterwards—that they had implemented expulsion under “**Plan Dalet**” to force the Palestinians to leave. As mentioned in the official Zionist history; the Palestinian villages that resisted this plan were to be destroyed and their people were to be expelled outside the borders of the “Jewish state.” This policy was also applied to Palestinian cities. Yitzhak Rabin, who was one of the Jewish military leaders in the 1948 war (he later became Prime Minister), wrote, “We walked outside, Ben Gurion accompanying us, Allon repeated his question ‘What is to be done with the Palestinian population?’ Ben Gurion waved his hand in a gesture which suggested ‘drive them out!’” *The New York Times* magazine managed to publish this speech on 23/10/1979. Benny Morris, a Jewish researcher, pointed out a document, which was prepared by the Intelligence Section of the Israeli army, dated 30/6/1948. He explained that the exodus of Palestinians was because of direct aggressive Jewish operations against Arab communities and their impact on other Arab populations. It was also the result of what other Zionist terrorist gangs, including the Irgun gang headed by Menachem Begin. This document stated that one of the factors that precipitated the exodus was the direct, hostile Haganah operations against Arabs. It also acknowledged that Arab institutions and broadcasts tried to confront the Palestinian immigration and to stop it.

The first Israeli Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, wrote in his memoirs dated 18/7/1948, “We must do everything to insure they (the Palestinians) never do return.”

The Zionist forces used massacres to strike terror and fear into the fleeing people. They committed about 34 massacres throughout the 1948 war against Palestinian civilians during such transfer operations. The most well known of these was the Deir Yasin massacre, in which 254 men, women and children were murdered.

Ultimately, the emigration of Palestinians was a well-planned matter, approved and supervised by the highest levels of the Zionist leadership.



Chapter Two

The Palestinian Refugees (A General Overview)





The Palestinian Refugees (A General Overview)¹

First: Definition of the Palestinian Refugee

1 The Palestinian Refugee is:

“Every Palestinian expelled from his normal place of residence in Palestine in 1948 and afterwards, or had left it for whatever reason, and Israel did not allow him to return to his former homeland. The refugee continues to hold this attribution until he or his descendants return to their country of origin, no matter how many generations will live their lives as refugees.”

This definition means that anyone forced out of his home is considered a refugee and this includes the Palestinians who left their homes after the 1948 and 1967 wars, and it applies to all Palestinians who left between or after these two dates because part of the Palestinian population was expelled in the aftermath of the 1967 war.



2 The Refugee Convention of 1951, defines the refugee as a person who:

“As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”

¹ This section was based on a number of references:

- May Subhi al-Khansa', *Al-'Awdah Haqq* (The Return is a Right) (Beirut: Baheth Center for Palestinian and Strategic Studies, 2004).
- Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, *Filastin: Dirasat Manhajiyah fi al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah* (Palestine: Textual Studies in the Palestine Issue) (Cairo: Arabic Media Centre, 2003).
- Site of Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/default.aspx>
- Site of Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), <http://www1.cbs.gov.il/>



This Convention was developed primarily for Europe as there were eight million refugees after the Second World War. This convention was enacted to put their minds somewhat at ease and solve their problems. It did not address the displacement issue, genocide, or massacres. The 1967 Protocol removed geographical and temporal restrictions from the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees.

3 The Refugee in Regional Conventions

The regional organizations' definition of a refugee is more comprehensive. Article I in the Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, adopted on 10/9/1969 stated:

“The term ‘refugee’ shall also apply to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside their country of origin or nationality.”

The European Union (EU) Charters presented a more accurate and comprehensive description of the refugee than those specified in the above-mentioned agreements. Article (14) of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.” The 1980 European Agreement on Transfer of Responsibility for Refugees, also stated that the new country of lawful residence will gain responsibility for the refugee. The 1990 Dublin Convention stated that “Member States undertake to examine the application of any alien who applies at the border or in their territory to any one of them for asylum.”



Vietnamese Refugees





4 **The Palestinian Refugees According to the Palestinian National Charter**

The Palestinian National Charter issued in the first session of the Palestine National Council, which was held in Jerusalem 28/5–2/6/1964, gave in Article 5 a definition which is literally consistent with the definition contained in the Palestinian National Charter (Article 5) issued by the Palestine National Council in its fourth session in Cairo 10–17/7/1968, which states:

“The Palestinians are those Arab nationals who, until 1947, normally resided in Palestine regardless of whether they were evicted from it or have stayed there. Anyone born, after that date, of a Palestinian father—whether inside Palestine or outside it—is also a Palestinian.”



5 **UNRWA's definition of the Palestinian refugee**

UNRWA defines Palestinian refugees as “People whose normal place of residence was Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948, who lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict.” The patrilineal descendants of the original Palestine refugees “are eligible to register for UNRWA services.” UNRWA aids all “those living in its area of operations who meet this definition, who are registered with the Agency and who need assistance.” The five operation areas of UNRWA are: Syria, Jordan, WB, GS, and Lebanon.



Notes about UNRWA's Definition of Palestinian Refugees:



a. It requires a person to be registered in UNRWA's five areas of operation to meet this definition. Consequently, Palestinian refugees who reside in Iraq, the Gulf States, Europe and other countries in the world are not considered refugees.

b. People who did not register themselves with UNRWA as refugees after 1948, even though they reside in UNRWA areas of operation, are not considered refugees by UNRWA.

c. The definition does not include the refugees in the 1948 Palestinian occupied territories.

d. All Palestinians who were outside Palestine before the war and those who were forced to leave after 1952, which is considered the last year of refuge by UNRWA, do not meet this definition. The same goes for the Palestinians who became refugees after the 1967 War, for in that war, about 330 thousand Palestinians were expelled from their land; some Palestinians were forced to leave Palestine under other conditions, not related to war, and were also prevented from returning.

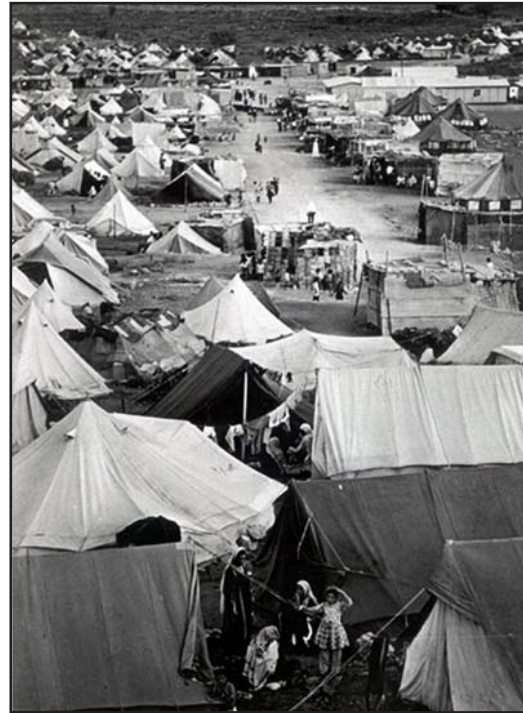
Subsequently, it should be stated that UNRWA's statistics on Palestinian refugees are not accurate, and its numbers cannot be considered as valid numbers for the 1948 refugees (Except in the case of Syria and Lebanon to a certain extent), as they represent only those who registered themselves and may receive assistance and services from UNRWA, and not all Palestinian refugees.



6

Notes on the Geographical Specification of Palestinian Refugees

- a. Palestinian refugees are not limited to those exiled outside Palestine, as there are also refugees inside Palestine.
- b. There are many refugees who were expelled in 1967 or who left for various other reasons and were not allowed to return.
- c. The Palestinian refugees are not only those who live in the WB and GS or outside Palestine, for there are Palestinian refugees residing within the borders of Palestine occupied in 1948.
- d. The Palestinian refugees who live outside Palestine are considered to be a mix of the 1948 and 1967 refugees and not only the 1948 refugees.



Beersheba Refugee Camp



Note: The “displaced” is a term that refers to Palestinian refugees who were forced to leave the territories of Palestine that were occupied in 1967 (GS and WB). However, this term doesn’t negate their refugee status, for they are all refugees, who were expelled from their homes and were deprived of their rights.



Second: The Palestinian Refugees in International Resolutions

1 Resolution 194: The Return of the Palestinian refugees should be allowed

On 11/12/1948, the British delegation to the UN General Assembly adopted Count Folke Bernadotte's proposal for refugees by a vote of 35 yeas, 15 nays and 8 abstentions. After this vote, the UN General Assembly issued resolution 194 which stated in paragraph 11 that the General Assembly:

“Resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law, or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.”

This resolution affirms that the refugee's decision to return is up to him, for he has the sole right, and no one has the right either to decide on his behalf or prevent him from returning. If he was prevented by force, this action would be considered an act of aggression. In addition, the resolution called for the establishment of a UN Conciliation Commission and it “Instructs the Conciliation Commission to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment of compensation.”



This resolution means:

- a The right of return must be implemented.
- b The return depends upon the free choice of the refugee, meaning that the refugee has the choice to return whenever he wants and in whatever manner he or she chooses.
- c The right of return is a normal right and not a favor.
- d It is forbidden to deny the Palestinians their right of return or to withhold it from them.
- e The return of Palestinians to their homeland will be as full citizens, enjoying all their civil and political rights.

This resolution has been confirmed more than 120 times by the UN, though Israel has refused to implement it. Yet, the UN has not taken any steps to oblige the Israelis to comply. It is important to mention that Israel was a “would-be member” of the UN on the condition that it implements the right of return, and Israel had agreed to this condition. However, when Israel became a UN member state, it did not honor its word and the UN failed to oblige it to do so.

2 Resolution to Establish UNRWA:

UNRWA was established on 8/12/1949 with the aim of assisting those Palestinians who faced hardships in the countries in which they took refuge. It took a humanitarian direction and did not make either political or practical moves toward the right of return.



3 The UN and the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People:

Until 1969, the UN continued to deal with the Palestine issue as an issue of refugees who needed assistance. In 1969, the UN mentioned for the first time in its resolutions “**the inalienable rights of the Palestinians.**”

At the end of 1970, the UN recognized, for the first time, the right of self-determination for the Palestinians. This right was considered an indispensable condition to establish a just and durable peace in the Middle East.

Resolution 3210, issued by the UN General Assembly on 14/10/1974, was considered a very important development as the Palestinian people were finally recognized as the main party concerned with the resolution of the Palestine issue. On 22/11/1974, the historic Resolution 3236 was issued, and it talked about “**the rights of the Palestinians**” and reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people including:

- a The right to self-determination without external interference.
- b The right to national independence and sovereignty.
- c The right of refugees to return to their homes and property.
- d The full respect for, and the realization of, these inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are indispensable for the solution of the question of Palestine.
- e The Palestinian people is a principal party in the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.
- f The right of the Palestinian people to regain its rights by all means in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.





Third: The Peace Process and the Issue of Refugees

Developments during the past 25 years have weakened the Palestinian position due to displacement, bad performance, and various pressures. The 19th conference of the Palestinian National Council, held in mid-November of 1988, was considered a turning point when the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) announced the independence of Palestine. At the same time, the PLO based its decision on the partition resolution, and agreed to UN



Left to right: Sadat, Carter and Begin signing the Camp David Accords 1978

resolution 232, which was a serious retraction. Another serious retraction took place in the Oslo Accords that recognized Israel and its right to capture 77% of the Palestinian territories. This severely limited Palestinian territorial demands to the WB and the GS.

In the Oslo Accords, it was agreed to postpone the refugee issue to the final status talks. In the Camp David negotiations in 2000, it was mentioned that there were informal talks about the return of only 100 thousand Palestinians out of more than five million of the 1948 Palestinian refugees. No constraints were set for the return of the 1967 refugees to the WB and GS.

The **Geneva Accord**, also referred to as the Geneva Initiative (2003), was a serious indicator of the direction that solving the refugees' issue had taken. This accord is considered among the most serious documents since it was signed by a number of Palestinian leaders, who were close to the head of the Palestinian decision making, whether Yasir 'Arafat or Mahmud 'Abbas (such as Yasir 'Abd Rabbo, Hisham 'Abd al-Razeq, Nabil Qassis, Raed al-'Umari, Qaddura Fares, Muhammad al-Hurani and Zuhair Manasra) According to this initiative, the Palestinians agreed on the waiver of the right to return and they linked it to Israeli approval of the return of some refugees, based on "maintenance of family unity." This indicated to Israel that the right of return could be abandoned by the Palestinians later on.

Yet, officially at least, the Arab Initiative and the formal Palestinian position still revolve around the refugees' right of return. However, there are fears that, to establish a Palestinian state, the right of refugees to return to their homes could be waived, as previously happened in the Geneva Accord.



UN Security Council Resolution 242



Fourth: The Palestinian Refugees (Comprehensive Statistical Review)

1 Palestinian Population Worldwide

At the end of 2017, the number of Palestinians was 13 million. 6.4 million of them, representing 49.4%, resided abroad; while 6.6 million of them, representing 50.6%, lived in Historic Palestine (see table 3).

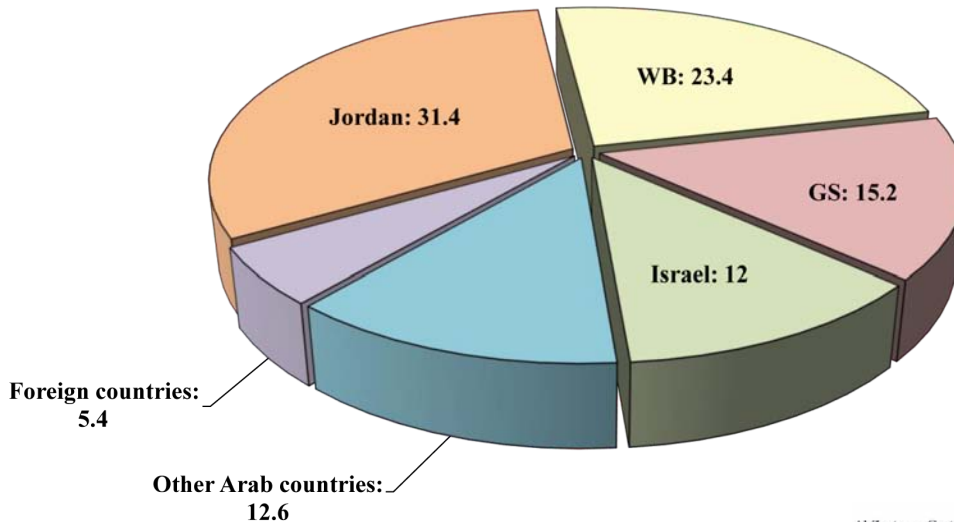
Table (3): Palestinian Population Worldwide by Place of Residence at the end of 2016 and 2017 (thousands)

Place of residence		2016		2017	
		Population estimates	Percentage (%)	Population estimates	Percentage (%)
Palestinian territories occupied in 1967	WB	2,972.1	23.4	3,046.4	23.4
	GS	1,912.2	15	1,975.3	15.2
Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel)		1,531.7	12.1	1,565.4	12
Jordan		3,988	31.4	4,086.5	31.4
Other Arab countries		1,606.7	12.6	1,646.4	12.6
Foreign countries		695.7	5.5	706.1	5.4
Total		12,706.4	100	13,026.1	100

In Table (3) the following must be noted:

1. Palestinian population in 2017 are estimated, with 2.8% increase in WB and GS (2.5% in WB and 3.3% in GS), 2.2% in Palestinian territories occupied in 1948, 2.47% in other Arab countries and 1.5% in foreign countries.
2. For the Palestinian population in the 1948 occupied territories; the number does neither include the Palestinians in the 1967 occupied territories, including Jerusalem governorate, nor does it include Arab Syrians, Lebanese or non-Arab Christians or those classified as “Others.” In contrast, Israeli statistics have shown figures different from those of the PCBS, as the Israeli CBS estimated the number of Arab Palestinians in the 1948 occupied territories at around 1.838 million in 2017. If we deduct the number of citizens in East Jerusalem, that is 342 thousand (based on 2016 statistics) and the number of citizens in the Golan Heights, which is about 25 thousands, then the number of 1948 Palestinians totals 1.47 million.
3. The number of Palestinians in Jordan is based on PCBS statistics in 2009 which were 3,240,473, and on the 2.47% annual growth rates during the period 2009–2016, issued by the Jordanian Department of Statistics (DoS), <http://dosweb.dos.gov.jo/>

Palestinian Population Worldwide by Place of Residence at the end of 2017 (%)



2 Palestinian Refugees

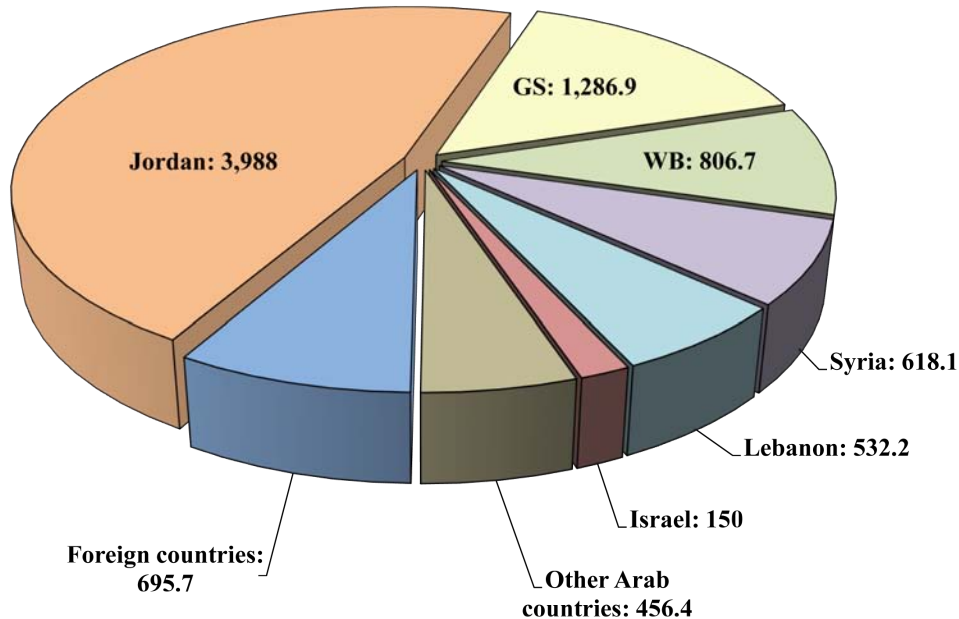
According to 2017 estimates, the number of Palestinian refugees who live abroad added to the number of refugees who live in Palestine was 8.534 million. About 26.4% of them live in Historic Palestine, while the remaining 73.6% reside abroad.

We notice that 65.5% of Palestinian people are refugees, and this is the highest percentage of refugees from a single people in the world.

Table (4): Palestinian Refugees Worldwide; Population Estimates in 2017

Region	Refugee population	Percentage (%)
WB	806,735	9.5
GS	1,286,907	15.1
Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel)*	150,000	1.8
Jordan	3,988,030	46.7
Lebanon	532,173	6.2
Syria	618,128	7.2
Other Arab countries	456,399	5.3
Foreign countries	695,700	8.2
Total	8,534,072	100

Palestinian Refugees Worldwide; Population Estimates in 2017 (thousands)



3 Palestinian refugees in the WB and GS

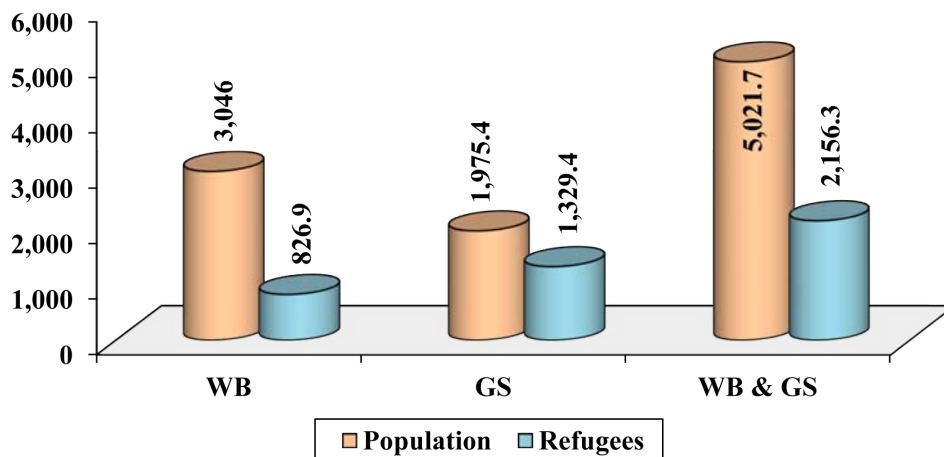
Estimates for 2017 show that 42.9% of Palestinians in the WB and GS were refugees descending from the territories occupied in 1948, a total of 2.156 million refugees. 827 thousand refugees were found to be living in the WB, constituting 27.1% of WB Palestinians, while in GS their number reached 1.329 million refugees, 67.3% of the total Gazan population. It is noticeable that there is a difference between PCBS statistics and UNRWA's statistics regarding the number of Palestinian refugees in GS and WB (this will be covered later). This difference might be because a number of the Registered Refugees (RR) in UNRWA records had moved abroad (see table 5).



Table (5): Palestinian Total and 1948 Refugee Population in the WB and GS 2016–2017

Year	Place of residence	Total population		1948 Palestinian refugees	
		Estimates	Percentage (%)	Estimates	Percentage (%)
2016	WB	2,972,069	60.8	806,735	27.1
	GS	1,912,267	39.2	1,286,907	67.3
	WB and GS	4,884,336	100	2,093,642	42.9
2017	WB	3,046,371	60.7	826,903	27.1
	GS	1,975,372	39.3	1,329,375	67.3
	WB and GS	5,021,743	100	2,156,278	42.9

Palestinian Total and Refugee Population in the WB and GS at the end of 2017 (thousands)

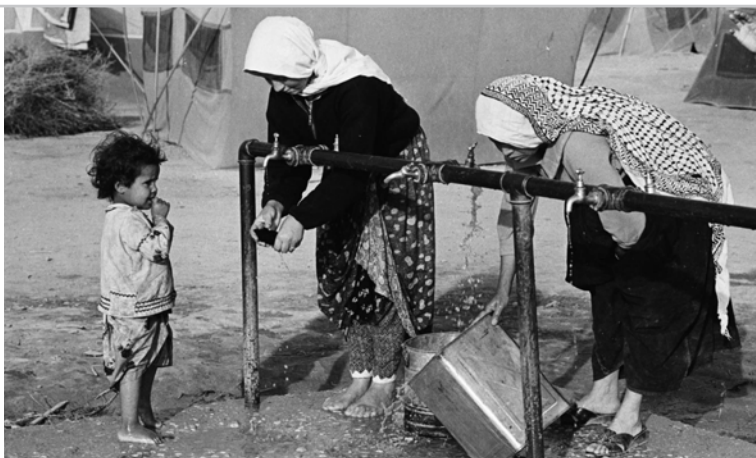


4 Palestinian Refugees according to UNRWA Records

By 1/1/2017, UNRWA records indicated that there were 5,869,733 Registered Persons (RPs). As we mentioned earlier, this statistic does not represent all Palestinian refugees. UNRWA recently added a new category: “Other Registered Persons”. UNRWA defined this category as people who are eligible to receive UNRWA services, without explaining precisely what that means. It might include beneficiaries who do not qualify for UNRWA’s definition of the Palestinian refugee, reflecting the fact that it is a limited definition that does not cover all categories of refugees.

The highest number of RPs with UNRWA are in Jordan, GS, WB, Syria and Lebanon respectively.

Regarding the conditions of Palestinian refugees in Syria, they continue to suffer from the ongoing humanitarian crisis there, the same as the Syrians. According to UNRWA, the number of Palestinian refugees who remained in Syria was estimated at 438 thousand at the end of 2017, out of the 560 thousand registered



Palestinian refugees in Syria. Over 95% (418 thousand) are in critical need of sustained humanitarian assistance. UNRWA stated that, of the estimated 400 thousand Palestine refugees remaining inside Syria, almost 254 thousand are internally displaced, and an estimated 56,600 are trapped in hard-to-reach or inaccessible locations. Whereas, of the 120 thousand Palestinian refugees who fled Syria, there around 32,500 in Lebanon and 17 thousand in Jordan.

A total of 3,614 Palestinian refugees had lost their lives due to the Syrian crisis from its outbreak until 1/12/2017, while the number of detainees reached 1,643.

It is also worth mentioning that many Palestinian refugees left Lebanon, where some went to the Gulf countries, and others went to Western Europe. They kept their UNRWA ration cards, and they remained registered in UNRWA records. Several studies and estimations indicate that the actual number of Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon is about 200 thousand refugees.

Table (6) shows that the number of official refugee camps (RCs) that benefit from UNRWA is 58; 19 in WB, 8 in GS, 10 in Jordan, 9 in Syria and 12 in Lebanon. In January 2017, only 28.5% RPs reside in the RCs (RPCs), with the highest being in Lebanon 50.6%, and the lowest in Jordan 17.4%.

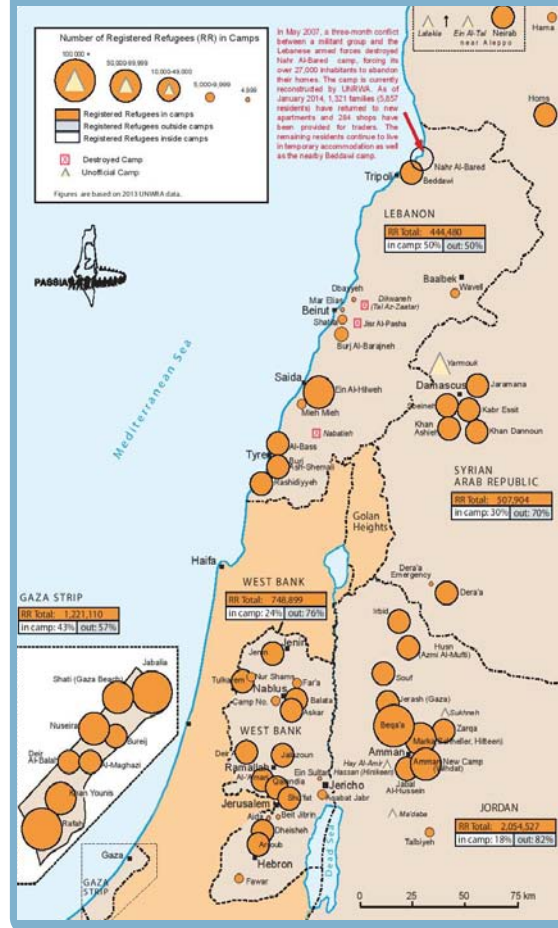


Nahr al-Bared RC



Nuseirat RC

Map (8): The Five UNRWA areas of operation 2014



Note: Al-Nayrab and Latakia RCs are located to the north of the map

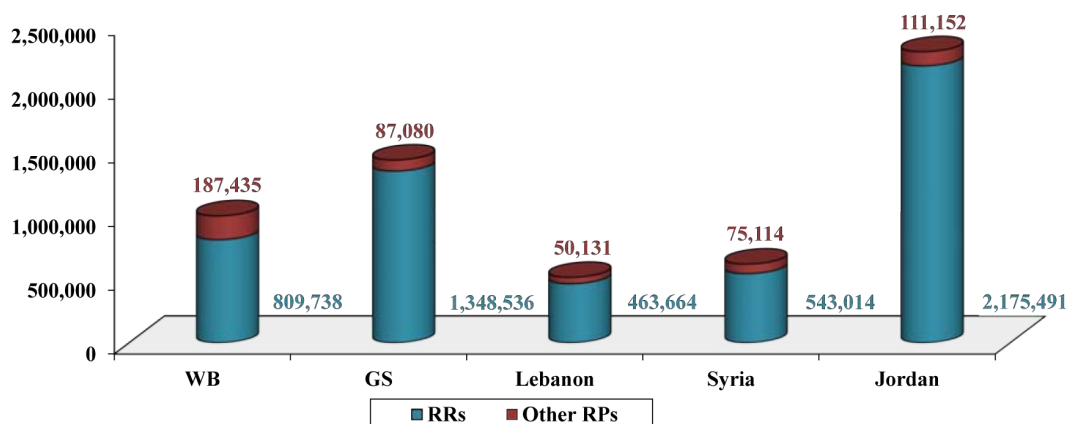
Site of the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA), <http://www.passia.org/>

Table (6): UNRWA-RPs According to Their Area of Operation as of 1/1/2017

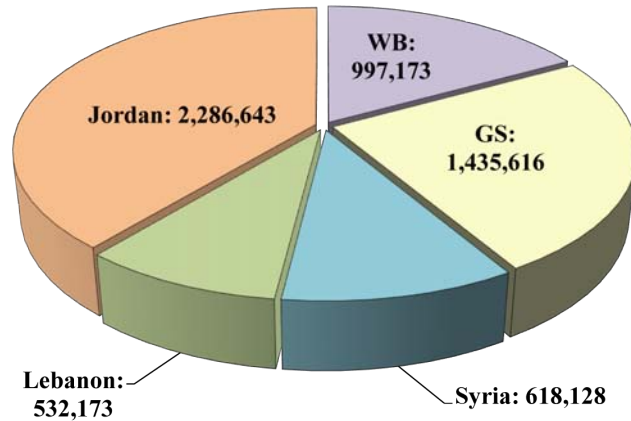
Area	RRs	Other RPs	Total RPs	Official RCs	RPCs	RPCs as % RPs
WB	809,738	187,435	997,173	19	242,257	24.3
GS	1,348,536	87,080	1,435,616	8	578,694	40.3
Lebanon	463,664	50,131	532,173	12	260,106	48.9
Syria*	543,014	75,114	618,128	9	186,858	30.2
Jordan	2,175,491	111,152	2,286,643	10	397,739	17.4
Total	5,340,443	510,912	5,869,733	58	1,665,654	28.4

*All Syria figures represent a working estimate as the situation in Syria remains volatile.

UNRWA-RPs According to Their Area of Operation as of 1/1/2017



UNRWA Total RPs by Region as of 1/1/2017



5 Demographic Trends among Palestinians and Jews in Occupied Palestine

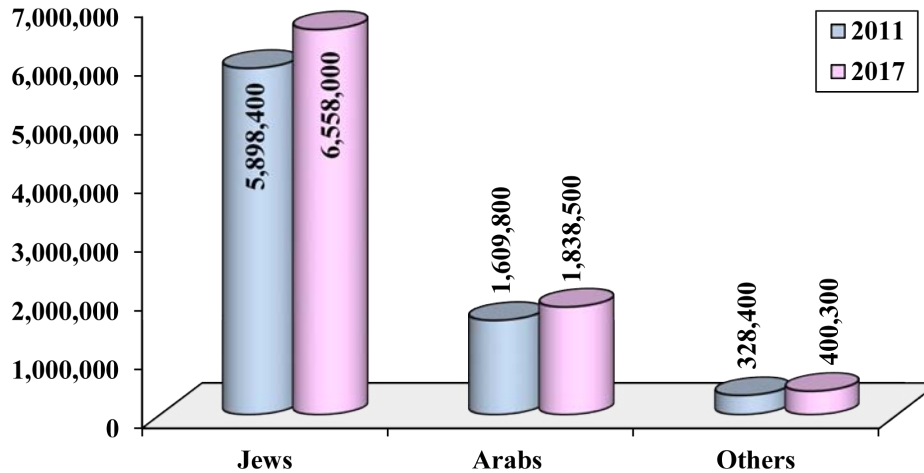
Official Israeli statistics indicate that the number of Jews living in historic Palestine at the end of 2017 had reached 6.56 million, while the number of Palestinians who reside in the 1948 occupied Palestine was 1,838,500. However, Israel adds the residents of East Jerusalem and Golan to its population, believing that it has officially annexed these areas; although no country in the world has recognized these annexations, even the US. If the number of the residents of East Jerusalem and Golan is deducted from the total population, about 1.47 million Palestinians who are called “1948 Arabs” will remain (out of 8,796,800); their percentage would become about 16.7% of the population.



Table (7): Estimated Population Count in Israel 2011–2017

Year	Total	Jews		Arabs (incl. those in East Jerusalem & Golan Heights)		Others	
		Population	Percentage (%)	Population	Percentage (%)	Population	Percentage (%)
2011	7,836,600	5,898,400	75.3	1,609,800	20.5	328,400	4.2
2012	7,984,500	5,999,600	75.1	1,647,200	20.7	337,700	4.2
2013	8,134,500	6,104,500	75	1,683,200	20.7	346,800	4.3
2014	8,296,900	6,219,200	75	1,720,300	20.7	357,400	4.3
2015	8,463,400	6,334,500	74.8	1,757,800	20.8	371,100	4.4
2016	8,628,600	6,446,100	74.7	1,797,300	20.8	385,200	4.5
2017	8,796,800	6,558,000	74.5	1,838,500	21	400,300	4.5

Estimated Population Count in Israel 2011 and 2017



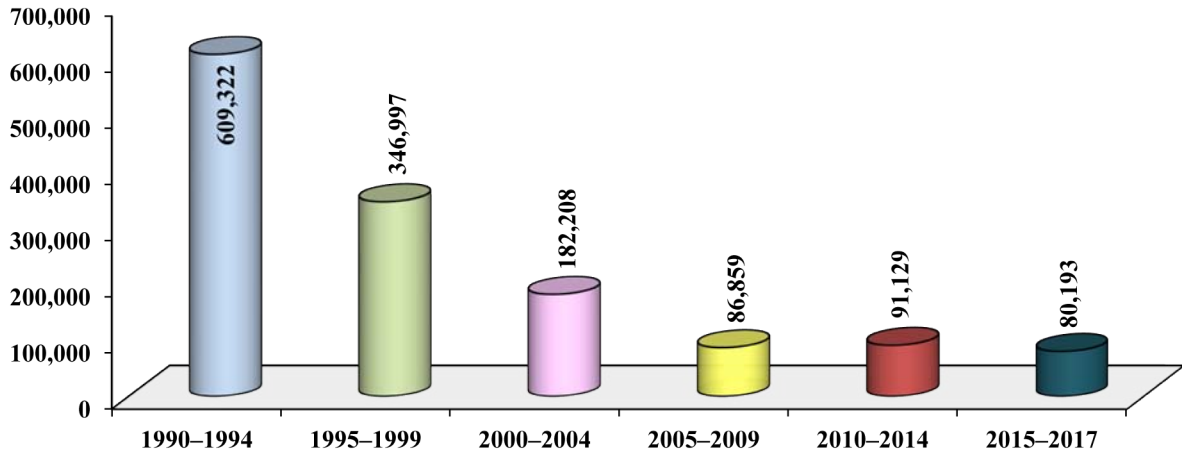
During the 52 years following its establishment (1948–2000), Israel was able to attract about 2.9 million Jewish immigrants. There were large waves of Jewish immigration following both the 1948 war and the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Socialist countries in Eastern Europe. However, in the last few years, the flow of Jewish immigration has been decreasing; and its annual rate for 2003–2017 varied between 14 and 28 thousand immigrants. It should be noted that immigration to Israel coincided with a continued emigration flow. According to CBS, 16,700 holders of Israeli passports left Israel in 2015, while 8,500 returned. This means that the emigration rate was about 8,200 people. According to CBS, 554–589 thousand Israeli residents were traveling outside Israel up to the end of 2014, not counting their children born abroad. As for the Israelis who left Israel and never returned during the 1948–2015 period, Israeli estimates indicate that they number about 720 thousand, which does not include their children born abroad.

Table (8): Number of Jewish Immigrants to Israel 1990–2017

Year	1990–1994	1995–1999	2000–2004	2005–2009	2010–2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
No. of immigrants	609,322	346,997	182,208	86,859	91,129	27,908	25,977	26,308	1,396,708

The following chart shows the evolution of the number of Jewish immigrants to Israel for every five years during 1990–2014, excluding the 2015–2017 period.

Number of Jewish Immigrants to Israel 1990–2017



As for the world Jewish population, Sergio Della Pergola, the renowned demographer and statistician, indicated that it was estimated to be 14.511 million at the beginning of 2017, an increase of 103,500 (0.72%) over the 2016 revised estimate.

The following table shows that about 84% of the world's Jews reside in Israel and the US. It is worth mentioning that the number of Jews in the world has not increased for more than 40 years, as Jews have low birth rates, family disintegration, blending into the societies outside Israel and other issues associated with Western culture.





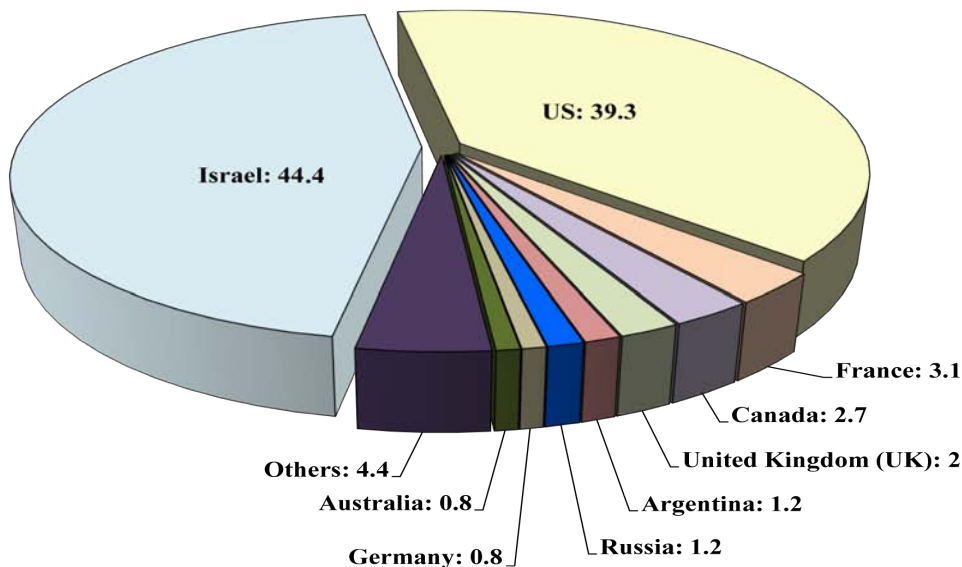
Table (9): World Jewish Population by Country 2017

Country	Estimates (thousands)	Percentage (%)
Israel	6,451	44.4
US	5,700	39.3
France	456	3.1
Canada	390	2.7
United Kingdom (UK)	289.5	2
Argentina	180.5	1.2
Russia	176	1.2
Germany	116.5	0.8
Australia	113.2	0.8
Others	638.4	4.4
Total	14,511.1	100





World Jewish Population by Country 2017 (%)



Despite the relative decrease in the natural growth rate among the Palestinian population, this rate remains high when compared to other populations including the Israeli rate. Based on PCBS estimates, Palestinians in historic Palestine numbered 6.587 million at the end of 2017, while Jews reached 6.558 million according to Israel's CBS estimates. Based on annual growth rates which amount to 2.8% for Palestinians in the WB and GS, 2.2% for Palestinians in territories occupied in 1948 (Israel), and 1.9% for Jews, the number of Palestinians exceeded that of Jews in 2017, by 30 thousand. Jews living in Palestine will comprise an estimated 49% of the population in 2022, where they will amount to 7.205 million compared to 7.511 million Palestinians.

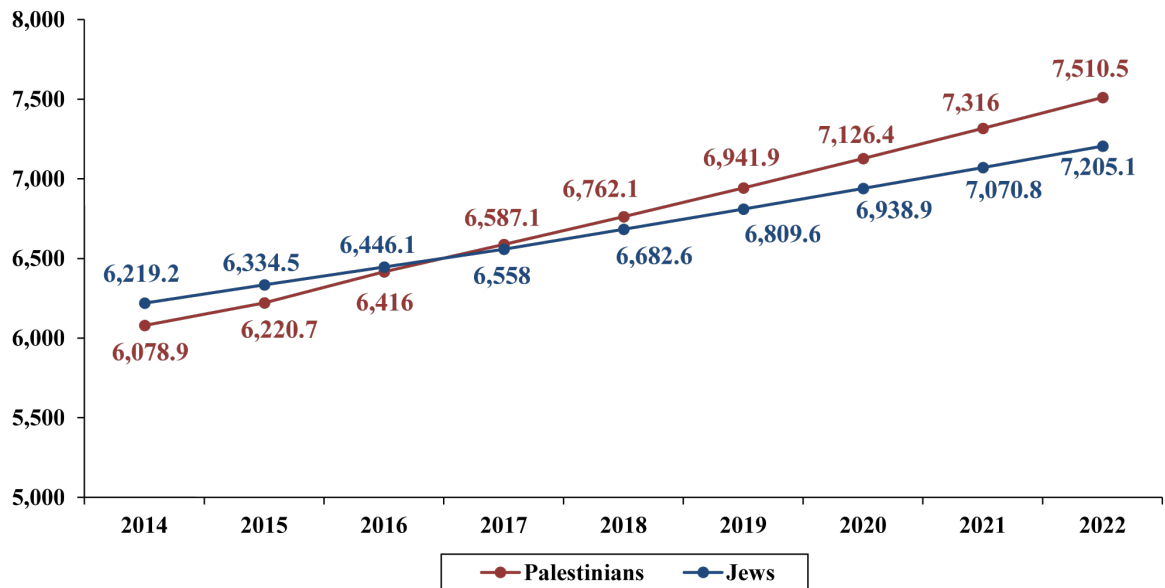
This indicates the extent of the steadfastness of the Palestinian people in their land, and the failure of the expulsion policies that Israel has been pursuing against them. It is also worth mentioning that the Israelis feel the imminence of what they call the Palestinian "Demographic Time Bomb," where Israeli movements push for a new ethnic cleansing of Palestinians.

Table (10): Estimated Population Count of Palestinians and Jews in Historic Palestine 2014–2022 (thousands)

Year	Palestinians			Jews
	WB & GS	Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel)	Historic Palestine	
2014	4,616.4	1,462.5	6,078.9	6,219.2
2015	4,749.5	1,471.2	6,220.7	6,334.5
2016	4,884.3	1,531.7	6,416	6,446.1
2017	5,021.7	1,565.4	6,587.1	6,558
2018	5,162.3	1,599.8	6,762.1	6,682.6
2019	5,306.9	1,635	6,941.9	6,809.6
2020	5,455.4	1,671	7,126.4	6,938.9
2021	5,608.2	1,707.8	7,316	7,070.8
2022	5,765.2	1,745.3	7,510.5	7,205.1



Estimated Population Count of Palestinians and Jews in Historic Palestine 2014–2022 (thousands)



Conclusion

This study tried to present a historical introduction to the emergence of the Palestinian refugee issue and provide a general statistical survey of the refugees. It did not address the details of the conditions and suffering of the refugees in their places of refuge, and their political and legal status, as this will be discussed in more detail in other publications.

In General, the Palestinian refugee issue is considered one of the clearest examples of the terrible injustice to which the Palestinians have been subjected. It indicates that apparently limitless western support for Israel has led to the ignoring the refugees' plight and their most basic rights. It was also an obstacle to implementing the dozens of international resolutions that call for the refugees' right of return to their homeland.

Adherence to the right of return as a natural, legitimate, legal, individual, and collective right, and as one of the Palestine issue's fundamentals will remain the primary criterion in asserting the support and commitment of any side towards Palestine. Sooner or later, there must be a return. A right is never lost, if there is someone striving to claim it. People who fight for their rights and for justice will eventually win, *Allah* willing.







The Author in Brief

Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Modern and Contemporary Arab History (Palestine Studies), the General Manager of al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations since 2004, former head of Department of History and Civilization at the International Islamic University (IIUM), Malaysia, and former executive manager of Middle East Studies Centre in Amman. He was granted the *Bait al-Maqdis* (Jerusalem) Award for Young Muslims Scholars in 1997 and the Excellent Teaching Award (College level), given by IIUM in 2002.

He is the author of 13 books, including *The Palestinian Issue: Historical Background and Contemporary Developments*, *Methodical Study in the Palestinian Issue*, *Armed Forces and Police in Palestine 1917–1939*, *The Road to Jerusalem and The Islamic Political Trend in Palestine 1917–1948*. He is the editor of the annual series of “*The Palestinian Strategic Report*” (10 volumes), “*The Palestine Documents*” (7 volumes), “*The Palestine Daily Chronicle*” (4 volumes); and the Strategic Assessment series (103 assessments), as well as editing more than 80 books. He has published many articles in refereed scholarly journals and magazines. He has presented papers at innumerable academic local and international conferences and seminars. He is a frequent commentator on current issues in the media.

This Book

This book is mainly based on two lectures delivered by Dr. Mohsen Saleh, as an introduction to the Palestinian refugee issue. It offers a clear definition of the land and people of Palestine, and refutes the Jews' alleged historical claims to Palestine. It discusses the emergence of Zionism, the role of Britain in consolidating the Zionist project, partition of Palestine, the emergence of the Palestinian National Movement, and Palestine's war of 1948. It responds to the allegation that the Palestinians left their homeland willingly.

This book defines the Palestinian refugee and explains his/her legal rights, and displays the most important resolutions that were issued in support of Palestinian refugees, which far exceed the number of resolutions issued for any other refugee issue in other parts of the world. It also discusses the peace process and the issue of refugees, and provides the readers with a comprehensive statistical review of the Palestinian Refugees.

