

Summary
of
The Palestine Strategic Report
2022 – 2023



Editor

Prof. Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh



Al-Zaytouna Centre For Studies & Consultations

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**Al-Zaytouna Centre
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Introduction

Since 2005, the Palestine Strategic Report has been published regularly by al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations in Beirut. The center is an independent think-tank focused on strategic studies and forecasts, centered on the Palestine issue. This is the thirteenth volume of the Palestine Strategic Report (PSR) series. It covers all aspects of the Palestine issue 2022–2023, while envisioning future tracks.

The PSR, edited by Prof. Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh (Professor of Palestine Studies and al-Zaytouna General Manager), tackles, interprets, and analyzes the internal Palestinian situation, Palestinian demographic and economic indicators, the status of the Land and the holy sites, and discusses Palestinian Arab, Islamic and international relations, as well as the Israeli situation, resistance operations, and the peace process. The report is scientifically documented and supported by dozens of tables, statistics, and charts. The PSR was authored by a group of 12 specialists, and reviewed by a specialized advisory body.

Preparation of this report faced challenges as Dr. Ashraf Badr, author of the chapter “The Palestine Issue and the Arab World,” was administratively detained by Israeli forces after Operation al-Aqsa Flood. Similarly, Prof. Dr. Mohammad Meqdad couldn’t submit the “Economic Indicators” chapter due to the war on Gaza, as he lives there. We pray for their and all Palestinians’ well-being.

The following is a summary of the report, whose original size is more than 400 pages. You may note that some statistical data are inconclusive, or have not yet been issued by the relevant official and specialized authorities. Therefore, when they become available, they will be included in the final version of the Report.

The Editor

First: The Palestinian Internal Situation

The Palestinian internal scene in 2022–2023 was marked by stagnation, within the context of a general impasse that the Palestine issue had endured since the so-called Palestinian schism in 2007, until Operation al-Aqsa Flood on 7/10/2023. Despite the exceptional nature of that operation and the subsequent Israeli genocidal war against the Palestinians in Gaza Strip (GS), it had its own repercussions in the West Bank (WB). However, even throughout the months of war, there were no significant positive changes in internal national relations or in pushing the official Palestinian leadership (The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leadership, which is the same leadership of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the leadership of the Fatah movement) to formulate a new position regarding the conflict with the occupation. This new stance should have capitalized on the moment of war to build national unity and strengthen Palestinian steadfastness.

The PA, along with Fatah leadership, persist in pursuing the peace process despite its long-standing failure and stagnation. They have yet to explore alternative avenues, whether in confronting the occupation or uniting the national front. Under the PA, economic crises persist, transparency and legislative oversight are lacking, exacerbated by the Palestine Legislative Council's (PLC) paralysis since the “schism” and its subsequent dissolution. There's an increasing dependence on security measures, judicial restructuring to serve the executive authority, and the exclusive use of presidential decrees for legislation.

President ‘Abbas issued a series of decisions reinforcing his control over the judiciary in 2019 and 2022, reshaping the Supreme Judicial Council and granting him more authority. He empowered the head of the council to dismiss judges and gave himself the right to appoint the head of the Supreme Court/Court of Cassation and accept his resignation. These decisions also affected public unions, with the judiciary often employed against them, including nursing, medical, and legal unions.

In 2022–2023, PA Security Forces escalated security measures against Palestinian opposition, especially resistance activities. This included arrests of pursued activists from groups like the “Lion's Den” in Jenin, and the

suppression of protests against these arrests. Additionally, there was an attempted assassination of Dr. Nasser al-Din al-Sha‘er, a prominent figure close to Hamas and former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, known for his flexible stance towards the PA. Despite these incidents, perpetrators remained at large. This period also witnessed increased political detentions, attempts to control student activities at universities, and explicit delegation of security authority, such as at An-Najah University.

The Palestinian Central Council (PCC) convened twice in 2022: once in February for a regular session, and again in May for a consultative session restricted to individuals within WB. In February, the Council filled vacancies in the Executive Committee, appointing Hussein al-Sheikh, Mohammed Mustafa, and Fareed Sorrow to replace the late Saeb Erekat, Hanan Ashrawi, and Taysir Khalid (resigned), respectively. Ramzi Khoury was elected chairperson of the Palestine National Fund (PNF). Rawhi Fattouh was elected speaker of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), in accordance with the mandate granted to the PCC in the 23rd PNC session, in 2018. In May 2022, President Mahmud ‘Abbas appointed Hussein al-Sheikh as Secretary-General of the PLO Executive Committee.

Fatah failed to hold its eighth conference, despite being scheduled for 21/3/2022. It was postponed multiple times, and internal disagreements within the movement persisted throughout 2023, intertwined with the crisis of ‘Abbas’s succession.

A poll conducted between 22/11/2023 and 2/12/2023, during the GS war, showed a significant increase in support for Hamas. It indicated that Hamas could win elections by an absolute majority alone. Conversely, support for Fatah declined, with 90% of respondents calling for President Mahmud ‘Abbas’s resignation and 60% advocating for the dissolution of the PA. Several Hamas political and military leaders were killed during Operation al-Aqsa Flood, including Saleh al-‘Arouri, Deputy Head of the Movement and Head of the WB region, Ahmad Bahar, Deputy PLC Speaker, and former Chairman of the Hamas General *Shura* Council.

The PA faced criticism for inadequate response to the Israeli genocidal war on the Palestinians in GS, which also affected areas under its control in WB. This included increased military actions such as raids, assassinations, arrests,

bombings, and the bulldozing of camp entrances, as well as tightening city and village closures. Over 360 killed were recorded in WB from 7/10/2023 to 17/1/2024, with nearly 6,500 Palestinians detained during that period. The PA was accused not only of passivity but also of suppressing demonstrations supporting resistance in GS, resulting in the killing of five Palestinians. Political arrests continued during the war.

The reconciliation efforts between Fatah and Hamas have seen limited progress, primarily through Algerian mediation. Despite the release of the “Algeria Declaration” in October 2022, which outlines plans for PNC elections, general presidential and legislative elections, and activating the mechanism for the general secretaries of Palestinian factions. While Hamas has shown willingness to accept these principles, Fatah insists on the recognition of what it terms “international legitimacy resolutions” in any future government. This demand appears paradoxical given Fatah’s past decisions to withdraw from agreements with Israel that are part of these resolutions. Such contradictions raise questions about Fatah’s sincerity in dealing with Hamas and its actual stance on settlement issues. Furthermore, ongoing security coordination between the PA and Israel remains a significant obstacle to reconciliation efforts.

This examination of the events of the aforementioned two years illustrates that they are an extension of the preceding years. It explains the significant stagnation evident in internal national relations, as well as the unfavorable stance and performance of the Tripartite (Fatah movement, PLO and PA) during the war on GS since 7/10/2023, following two previous GS wars in August 2022 and May 2023. As for Hamas and the other factions, they haven’t developed a unified strategy to counterbalance Fatah’s dominance over the PLO and PA, and compel it to earnestly reform Palestinian official institutions, and unite efforts under a coherent Palestinian national project based on fundamentals.

Second: Palestinian Demographic Indicators

Available estimates by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) indicate that the number of Palestinians in the world at the end of 2023 (early 2024) was about 14.6 million; about half of them 7.297 million (49.9%) live inside historic Palestine, and the other half 7.337 million (50.1%) live in the diaspora. Inside the 1967 Palestinian territories lives 5.548 million, who are distributed into 3.291 million (59.3%) living in WB, 2.257 million (40.7%) in GS, and 1.749 million in the territories occupied in 1948. By the end of 2023, the Palestinians in the Arab world are estimated at 6.565 million.

According to the data available to Al-Zaytouna Centre researchers, Palestinians in Jordan, at the end of 2023, are estimated at 4.697 million, i.e. 32% of Palestinians worldwide (about 64% of the Palestinian diaspora), most of them carry the Jordanian nationality. The number of Palestinians in the rest of the Arab world is estimated at 1.867 million (12.8% of Palestinians worldwide), where most of them live in neighboring Arab countries, such as Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and the Arab Gulf states.

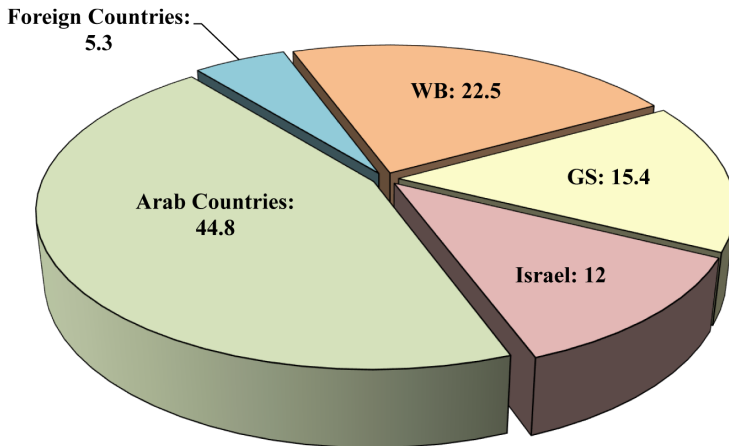
According to PCBS, 772 thousand Palestinians live in the rest of the world (5.3% of Palestinians worldwide), where most of them live in the US, Latin America, Canada, Britain, and the rest of the European Union. It should be noted that these are estimates, especially outside Palestine, where it is difficult to conduct accurate statistics. Some estimates indicate, for example, that the number of Palestinians in South America is no less than 600 thousand, more than half of whom live in Chile.

Palestinian Population Worldwide Estimate According to Place of Residence at the End of 2022 and 2023 (thousands)

| Place of residence | | 2022 | | 2023 | |
|---|----|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------|
| | | Population estimates | Percentage (%) | Population estimates | Percentage (%) |
| Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 | WB | 3,222.6 | 22.5 | 3,291.4 | 22.5 |
| | GS | 2,196.4 | 15.3 | 2,257 | 15.4 |
| Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel) | | 1,709.8 | 11.9 | 1,748.8 | 12 |
| 1948 Palestinians | | 7,128.8 | 49.8 | 7,297.2 | 49.9 |
| Jordan* | | 4,596.3 | 32.1 | 4,697.4 | 32 |
| Other Arab Countries | | 1,834.5 | 12.8 | 1,867.5 | 12.8 |
| Foreign Countries | | 760.7 | 5.3 | 772.1 | 5.3 |
| Palestinians Abroad | | 7,191.5 | 50.2 | 7,337 | 50.1 |
| Total | | 14,320.3 | 100 | 14,634.2 | 100 |

*The number of Palestinians in Jordan is based on the PCBS statistics in 2009, when their number was 3,240,473, and on the annual growth rates ranging between 3.1% and 2.2% during the period 2009–2022, issued by the Jordanian Department of Statistics (DoS).

Palestinian Population Worldwide Estimate According to Place of Residence at the End 2023 (%)



More than two-thirds of the world’s Palestinians are refugees. For in addition to some 7.337 million Palestinians abroad, there are some 2.358 million refugees from the 1948 occupied territories living in WB and GS, as well as some 150 thousand refugees who have been expelled from their land, but still reside in the territories occupied in 1948; therefore the total number of Palestinian refugees is estimated at 9.845 million, or about 67.3% of the total Palestinian population at the end of 2023. Although this number is likely to have some duplication, as there are Palestinians abroad who carry the identity documents of interior Palestine, the margin remains limited. In the mid of 2023, the number of refugees registered in the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reached 6.718 million. This is while noting that there are many refugees who have not registered with UNRWA, because they do not need their services or because they do not reside in its area of operation, such as the Gulf countries, Europe and America.

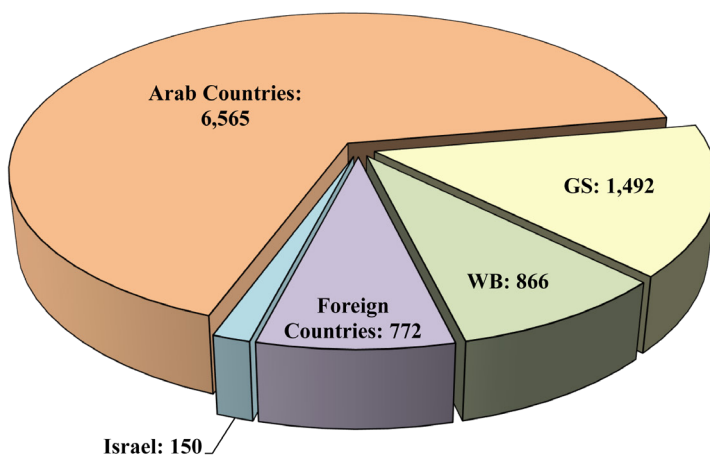
Palestinian Refugees Worldwide; Population Estimates at the end 2023
(thousands)

| Region | WB | GS | Israel* | Arab countries | Foreign countries | Total |
|-----------|-----|-------|---------|----------------|-------------------|-------|
| Estimates | 866 | 1,492 | 150 | 6,565 | 772 | 9,845 |

Note: The estimates of WB and GS are based on the percentages published by PCBS (26.3% of the WB population and 66.1% of the GS population are refugees)

*Approximate numbers

Palestinian Refugees Worldwide; Population Estimates at the end 2023
(thousands)

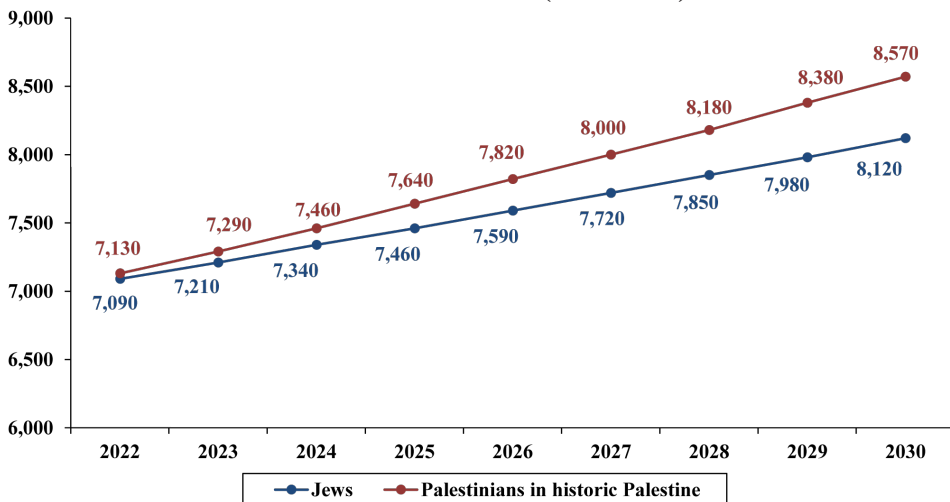


According to PCBS statistics, the Palestinian population surpassed the Jewish population in historic Palestine by the end of 2023, with estimates indicating that the Palestinian population in historic Palestine reached approximately 7.3 million, while the Jewish population reached 7.1 million according to Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) estimates at the end of 2022.

Estimated Population Count of Palestinians and Jews in Historic Palestine 2022–2030 (thousands)

| Year | Palestinians in historic Palestine | Jews |
|------|------------------------------------|-------|
| 2022 | 7,130 | 7,090 |
| 2023 | 7,290 | 7,210 |
| 2024 | 7,460 | 7,340 |
| 2025 | 7,640 | 7,460 |
| 2026 | 7,820 | 7,590 |
| 2027 | 8,000 | 7,720 |
| 2028 | 8,180 | 7,850 |
| 2029 | 8,380 | 7,980 |
| 2030 | 8,570 | 8,120 |

Estimated Population Count of Palestinians and Jews in Historic Palestine 2022–2030 (thousands)



Third: Jerusalem

In previous years, Jerusalem has been central in the attempt to end the Palestine issue, notably highlighted by Trump’s 2017 decision to recognize it as the capital of Israel.

In 2022, Israel advanced on three fronts: Imposing Jewish rituals at *al-Aqsa* Mosque, aiming to control it, and undermining the Jordanian Waqf’s role. Progress was also seen in eviction efforts in Silwan and sparsely populated areas in Sheikh Jarrah. However, the occupation faced three setbacks: retracting attempts to evacuate Land of Naqa‘, west of Sheikh Jarrah Neighborhood, in March 2022; experiencing relative setbacks in the Flag March battle in May 2022; and unconditionally retreating in the face of civil disobedience in Shu‘afat refugee camp and its surroundings in October 2022. This ongoing fluctuation underscores Israel’s failure to override popular will.

The endeavors to end the Palestine issue intensified with the formation of the thirty-seventh Israeli government in December 2022, which included Likud, Religious Zionism, and traditional religious factions. This made Bezalel Smotrich’s “Decisive Plan” the political fait accompli of that government. Jerusalem and *al-Aqsa* Mosque emerged as focal points, amplifying tensions and making the city the epicenter of various popular and military confrontations. Over the preceding decade until 7/10/2023, Palestine experienced ten significant uprising and confrontations, with Jerusalem at the forefront.

Al-Aqsa Mosque witnessed an intensified religious replacement project aiming to enforce both spatial and temporal divisions. This involved imposing Jewish rituals to establish the spiritual significance of the Temple Mount. Zionist aggression, often peaked during Jewish religious and nationalist holidays, aimed to alter *al-Aqsa*’s identity. Most of the ten preceding milestones coincided with these holidays. Operation al-Aqsa Flood marked one of the strongest attempts at religious replacement, prompting Zionists to engage with *al-Aqsa* on three fronts during the war:

1. Using it as an entry point to strip the battle of its significance by allowing Temple groups to escalate their rituals and public presence despite limited numbers.

2. Explicitly invoking the Temple through the banners of the Israeli forces and the actions of soldiers.
3. Besieging *al-Aqsa* mosque and restricting entry to residents of the Old City for 11 weeks, effectively attempting to redefine it as if it is the “neighborhood mosque.”

This impulsive behavior paves the way for a popular struggle characterized by mere prayers and pilgrimages to *al-Aqsa* Mosque from Jerusalem neighborhoods, WB and the 1948 occupied territories. It also signals a continuation of the previous confrontational pattern with greater convergence.

Given the vengeful and reinforcing Israeli mentality post 7/10/2023, the final displacement attempt in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood and the seven threatened neighborhoods of Silwan are expected to resurface as central issues. Additionally, the Wadi al-Joz area north of the Old City, where the New Silicon Valley project is being implemented, is likely to come into focus anew.

As for the settlement building in Jerusalem, efforts are underway to solidify Jerusalem’s identity by deepening settlement presence in its core and deciding the fate of its eastern borders. Settlement expansion is anticipated to target three areas: infiltrating the Old City through Christian properties, aiming to erase the Armenian Quarter and merge it with the Jewish settlement above the Sharaf and Moroccan Quarters; asserting control over remaining major real estate blocks, particularly in Beit Hanina and Shu‘afat; and addressing the crisis at the Industrial Secondary School (JISS)/ Arab Orphan Committee (AOC), where the administration in Amman struggles to respond, thus it may escalate into a major issue. Additionally, there may be renewed efforts to decide the fate of the Jerusalem outskirts towards Ma‘ale Adumim, including a new attempt to relocate Khan al-Ahmar.

Fourth: Economic Indicators in WB and GS

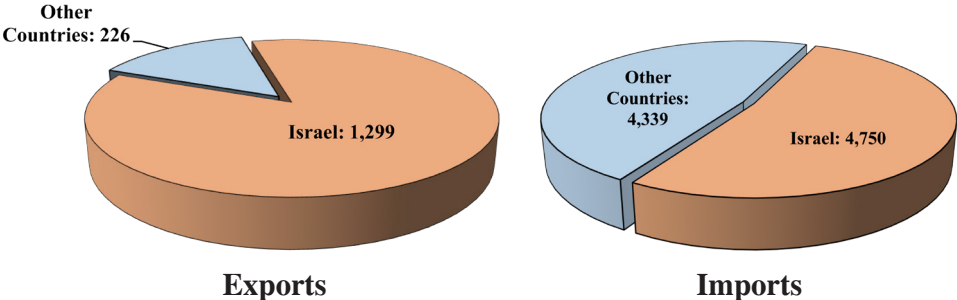
Based on the Oslo Accords and the Paris Protocol, the Israeli occupation succeeded in rendering the PA’s economy dependent. This dependency is characterized by land seizures, resource exploitation, control over the PA’s exports and imports, infrastructure destruction and hindrance of genuine developmental processes, all while imposing a suffocating blockade on GS.

The atrocious Israeli war on GS, inflicting massive casualties, injuries, and destruction, coupled with Israel’s aggressive and retaliatory actions in WB, has caused severe damage to the Palestinian economy and incurred significant losses. As the conflict persists, it is challenging to accurately assess the complete impact at the time of drafting this report. Hence, several of these statistics are preliminary and await the publication of finalized figures.

Trade

The volume of trade in 2022 with Israel amounted to \$6,049 million, or about 57% of the total foreign trade volume of the PA, amounting to \$10,614 million. The volume of imports from Israel amounted to \$4,750 million, representing 52% of the PA’s total imports of \$9,089 million, while exports to Israel amounted to \$1,299 million, representing 85% of the PA’s total exports of \$1,525 million. This severely harms the Palestinian economy and leaves the trade balance severely and continuously skewed in favor of the occupation.

Palestinian Trade with Israel in 2022 in Comparison with the Rest of the World (\$ million)



GDP

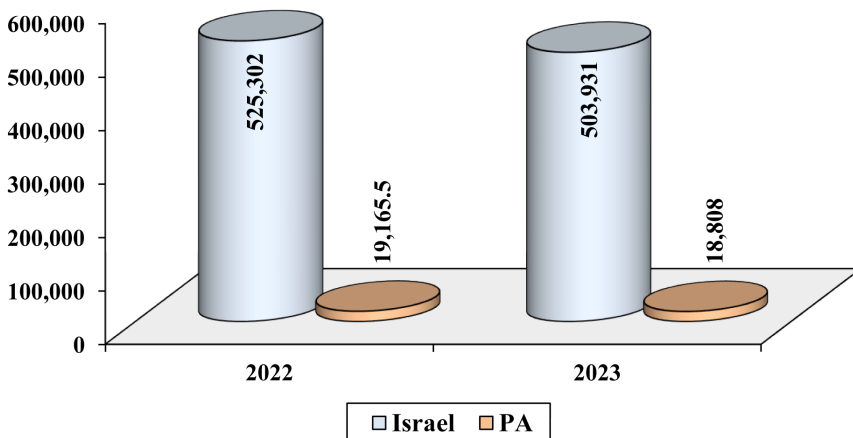
In WB and GS, the GDP (current prices) reached \$19,166 million in 2022 from \$18,109 million in 2019, an averaged positive growth of 5.8%. According to available figures for Q1, Q2, and Q3 2023, it is expected that the GDP would reach \$18,808 million during 2023, i.e., 1.9% decrease. Palestinian GDP remains very low compared to the Israeli GDP, which was more than 26-fold (2,680%) in 2023, which highlights the impact of the occupation on Palestinian economy. PCBS has predicted a further GDP decline by 5% in 2024, and if the war persists until the end of Q1 2024, it is expected that the GDP will decrease by 10%.

GDP in PA Territories and Israel 2019–2023 at Current Prices (\$ million)

| Year | PA | Israel |
|------|----------|---------|
| 2019 | 17,133.5 | 399,678 |
| 2020 | 15,531.7 | 412,414 |
| 2021 | 18,109 | 489,846 |
| 2022 | 19,165.5 | 525,302 |
| 2023 | 18,808* | 503,931 |

* Preliminary figures based on Q1, Q2, and Q3 2023 estimates, which are expected to decline further due to the Israeli war on GS.

GDP in PA Territories and Israel 2022–2023 at Current Prices (\$ million)



GDP per Capita

GDP per capita was \$3,679 and \$3,800 for the years 2021 and 2022, respectively at current prices, that is, the per capita income increased by 13.8% in 2021 and then decreased by 3.3% in 2022. According to the figures available for Q1, Q2, and Q3 2023, GDP per capita is expected to slightly decrease to \$3,640, a 4.2% decrease. PCBS has projected decrease in GDP per capita in 2024 by 6.8%, and if the war persists until the end of Q1 2024, it is expected to decrease by 12%. Nevertheless, the substantial losses in GS, coupled with the widespread disruption of human resources and the extensive destruction of factories and infrastructure, pave the way for further economic decline.

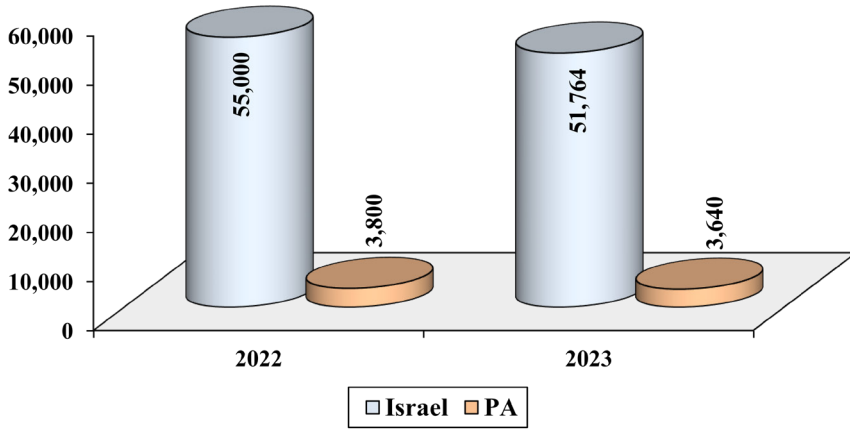
The decline and fluctuation of per capita GDP during 2019–2023 had a negative impact on the consumption volume, for the developments of world prices have decreased the income levels. In addition, in 2023, there was a stark difference in the GDP per capita between WB and GS (4 folds), which, based on Q1, Q2, and Q3 2023, has reached \$5,384 and \$1,325 respectively, whereas it reached \$5,525 and \$1,508 respectively in 2022. This reflects the impact of the GS siege and the repercussions of the Israeli destruction during the Sword of Jerusalem battle. It appears that the final figures for the GDP per capita in GS will be significantly lower as a result of the recent Israeli aggression following Operation al-Aqsa Flood. It appears that the final figures for per capita income in the Strip will be significantly lower as a result of the Israeli aggression following Operation al-Aqsa Flood.

GDP per Capita in PA Territories and Israel 2019–2023 at Current Prices (\$)

| Year | PA | Israel |
|------|---------|--------|
| 2019 | 3,656.7 | 44,158 |
| 2020 | 3,233.6 | 44,758 |
| 2021 | 3,678.6 | 52,293 |
| 2022 | 3,800 | 55,000 |
| 2023 | 3,640* | 51,764 |

*Preliminary figures based on Q1, Q2, and Q3 2023 estimates, which are expected to decline further due to the Israeli war on GS.

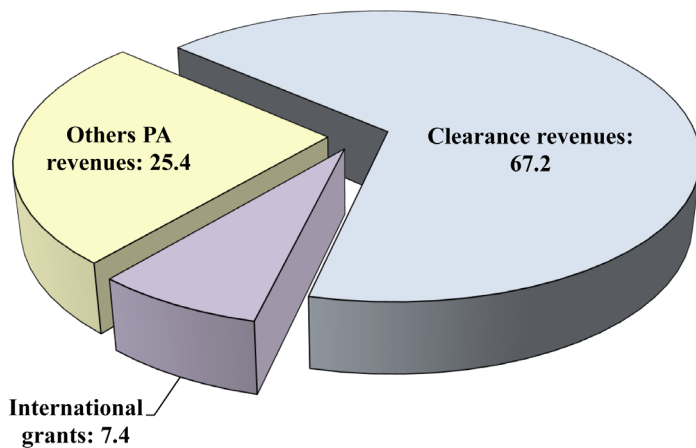
GDP per Capita in PA Territories and Israel 2022–2023 at Current Prices (\$)



Revenues and Expenditures

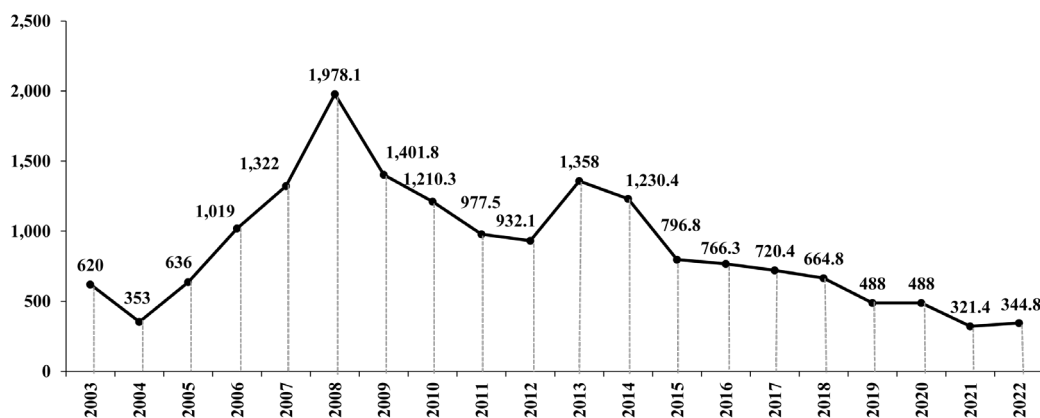
Preliminary estimates indicate that the PA total net revenues in 2023, based on Q1, Q2, and Q3 data, increased slightly by 1.8% compared to 2022 and by 12.9% compared to 2021, and is expected to reach \$4,771 million in 2023, compared with \$4,685 million in 2022 and with \$4,225 million in 2021. Total general expenditures of the PA, including development expenditures, are expected to reach about \$4,196 million for 2023, compared with \$4,336 million in 2022, a decrease of 3.2%.

PA Revenues 2022 (%)



The PA revenues depend mainly on sources it does not control, where about 74.6% of the 2022 revenues were from the clearance taxes collected by Israel and from international grants. These constitute enormous pressure tools in the hands of Israel and the international community, and are delivered on the condition of some political and security requirements that affect the independence of the Palestinian decision-making. The total revenues of 2022 were about \$4,685 million, including \$3,146 million clearance revenues (67.2%), and \$344.8 million external financing (grants and external aid) (7.4%). In general, international support has shown a declining trend from 2009 to 2023.

PA External Budgetary Support 2003–2022 (\$ million)



In light of the Oslo Accords, the Paris Protocol, and Israeli practices aimed at limiting the size of the Palestinian economy and perpetuating its dependence on the Israeli occupation, the prospects for real economic growth or a fundamental correction to this growth trend in the next phase appears to be low. Actually, any true growth process is inherently tied to liberation and the end of occupation, rather than merely coexisting with and adapting to it.

The Impact of Israeli Aggression on GS during Operation al-Aqsa Flood

The Israeli war on GS by land, sea and air has continued since 7/10/2023, resulting on its 116th day (30/1/2024) in 2,269 massacres and the dropping of 66 thousand tons of explosives, killing 26,751 Palestinians, the majority of whom were women and children (11,500 children and 8 thousand women). Additionally, around 65,636 others were injured, and approximately 7 thousand Palestinians were reported missing under the rubble and on the roads, with 70% of them being children and women. The aggression also killed 339 medical personnel, 46 civil defense personnel and 122 journalists.

This war has led to the displacement of 2 million Palestinians and the destruction of 140 government buildings, 99 schools and universities completely, 295 schools and universities partially, 161 mosques completely, 253 mosques partially, 3 churches, 70 thousand residential units completely, and 290 thousand residential units partially but uninhabitable, along with 200 archaeological and heritage sites.

The Israeli aggression rendered 30 hospitals and 53 health centers out of service, targeted 150 health facilities partially, and destroyed 122 ambulances.

On 30/12/2023, PCBS report on the economic repercussions of the Israeli war on Gaza, which led to a sharp contraction in the GDP in GS in Q4 2023 by over 80%, accompanied by a rise in the unemployment rate to 74%. It also affected the WB economy with a decline of 22%, along with a 29% increase in unemployment rate. This also resulted in a decline in the overall GDP in Palestine in Q4 2023 by 33%, and a sharp decrease in consumption levels in Palestine during the same period by more than 33%, with a significant increase in prices by more than 30%, leading to an unprecedented rise in poverty levels in Palestine. The direct losses incurred by GS in the first two months of the war on GS are estimated to be over \$12 billion.

Fifth: The Courses of Israeli Aggression, Palestinian Resistance and the Peace Process

Israeli Aggression and Palestinian Resistance

Operation al-Aqsa Flood, referred to by Israelis as Operation Swords of Iron, commenced on 7/10/2023, marking the most notable resistance operation within the report's timeframe and since the establishment of Israel. Its repercussions were profound, impacting Palestinians, Israelis, Arabs, and the international community. In 2022–2023, Israel persisted in its occupation and aggression against the Palestinian people, who steadfastly maintained their resistance. Notably, Palestinian resistance in WB reached an unprecedented escalation over the past 17 years, despite the security coordination between the PA security forces and Israeli army, individual resistance operations increased, while daily confrontations, and forms of popular resistance continued.

In GS, Palestinian resistance witnessed development in its defensive strategy in response to the attacks on Jerusalem and *al-Aqsa* Mosque. This was exemplified by Operation al-Aqsa Flood (dubbed by the Israelis Operation Swords of Iron), preceded by two major Israeli offensives against GS, in which it allegedly targeted the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Movement (PIJ) and its military wing, Al-Quds Brigades. The first was called Operation Unity of the Arenas (dubbed by the Israelis Operation Breaking Dawn), on 5–7/8/2022. The second was Operation Revenge of the Free (dubbed by the Israelis Operation Shield and Arrow), on 9–13/5/2023.

As a result of these three operations, GS saw, in 2022 and 2023, a sharp increase in Palestinian rocket launches towards Israeli communities in the 1948 occupied territories, where 1,245 rockets were launched in 2022, most of which were during Operation Unity of the Arenas (1,233 rockets). In 2023, and by the end of August 1,671 rockets were launched, with the majority launched during Operation Revenge of the Free (1,582 rockets), while after that, during Operation al-Aqsa Flood, over 12 thousand missiles were launched from the besieged Strip, as per the Israel Security Agency—ISA (*Shabak*) and the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This latter operation, in which Al-Qassam Brigades breached the GS envelope, killing more than 1,200 Israelis and capturing over 240 others, was a historic and qualitative blow to Israel, unprecedented since its

establishment 75 years ago, as its security doctrine failed, while the resistance combined the elements of military surprise and strategic security. Moreover, Israel continued its closure of Gaza crossings and tightened the blockade in 2022 and 2023, completely sealing them off during Operation al-Aqsa Flood.

The pace of resistance operations remained high throughout 2022 and 2023. In 2022, the *Shabak* recorded 3,825 attacks in WB, including East Jerusalem, GS and the 1948 occupied territories. This number increased to 4,578 in 2023, excluding the attacks during Operation al-Aqsa Flood. The uptick in qualitative resistance operations in WB signals a growing spirit of defiance, despite the challenging security landscape. These operations have been systematically and meticulously pursued for many years, with full coordination between the PA and Israel.

Geographical Distribution of Palestinian Resistance Operations 2022–2023

| Year | WB (Jerusalem excluded) | East Jerusalem | The 1948 occupied territories | GS | Total |
|--------------|----------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|---------|----------|
| 2022 | 2,152 | 392 | 30 | 1,251 | 3,825 |
| 2023 | 2,657 | 305* | 18* | 1,598** | 4,578*** |
| Total | 4,809 | 697** | 48* | 2,849** | 8,403*** |

* After August 2023, the *Shabak* has reported the attacks of East Jerusalem and the 1948 occupied territories with those of WB.

** No statistics were issued by the *Shabak* for GS attacks after August 2023.

*** Excluding the attacks of Operation al-Aqsa Flood.

The annual reports of the Palestine Information Center—Mo3ta have mentioned that the popular and armed Palestinian resistance in WB, including East Jerusalem, have significantly developed both quantitatively and qualitatively. In 2022, Palestinians carried out 12,188 resistance operations in WB, including East Jerusalem, of which 1,380 were impactful (armed, stabbings, vehicular attacks). The report stated that the impactful attacks in 2022 more than quadrupled compared to 2021. In 2023, Palestinians carried out across WB, a total of 14,183 resistance acts, among them 3,258 impactful attacks. This marks a more than twofold increase in the number of impactful attacks compared to 2022.

The Development of Resistance Action in WB 2020–2023

| Year | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|------------------------------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| Popular Resistance Actions* | 5,433 | 10,189 | 10,808 | 10,925 |
| Impactful Attacks** | 97 | 404 | 1,380 | 3,258 |
| Total | 5,530 | 10,593 | 12,188 | 14,183 |

*Includes clashes, stone throwing, Molotov cocktails, strikes, protests, etc.

**Includes shooting, stabbing, and run-over...

In 2022, a total of 224 Palestinians were killed by the Israelis, 53 in GS and 171 in WB. The Palestine Ministry of Health annual report stated that 53 children were among the killed. In 2023, a total of 22,404 Palestinians were killed, including 22,141 since 7/10/2023 and until 31/12/2023, with 98% of them in GS (21,822 killed), including about 9 thousand children and 6,450 women. In WB, 319 were killed since 7/10/2023, including 111 children and 4 women. The number of missing persons reported in GS exceeded 7 thousand, including 67% children and women. 10,500 Palestinians were injured in 2022, while more than 60,273 Palestinians were injured in 2023 (56,451 in GS and 3,822 in WB).

The Shabak recorded, as a result of Palestinian attacks, the killing of 31 Israelis in 2022, and 43 in 2023 (excluding those killed in Operation al-Aqsa Flood, reaching about 1,400 Israelis). 281 Israelis were injured in 2022, compared to 181 (excluding those wounded in Operation al-Aqsa Flood, reaching about 7,262 Israelis) in 2023.

The Killed and Wounded Among Palestinians and Israelis in WB and GS 2019–2023

| Year | Killed | | Wounded | |
|-------------|--------------|----------|--------------|----------|
| | Palestinians | Israelis | Palestinians | Israelis |
| 2019 | 149 | 9 | 15,287 | 65 |
| 2020 | 48 | 3 | 2,614 | 46 |
| 2021 | 365 | 18 | 17,042 | 190 |
| 2022 | 224 | 31 | 10,500 | 281 |
| 2023 | 22,404* | 1,443** | 60,273 | 7,443** |

* In addition to more than 7 thousand missing people.

**The numbers Israel permitted for publication until the report's preparation.

Prisoners and Detainees

In 2022 and 2023, significant shifts occurred in the landscape of Israeli arrest operations, fundamentally linked to the escalation of resistance against the occupation. These systematic arrests have long constituted a consistent Israeli policy, serving as its primary means to suppress resistance movements aiming to secure self-determination and freedom for the Palestinian people.

By December 2023, Israeli prisons held around 8,800 prisoners, excluding those from GS after 7/10/2023. Data for imprisoned children, women (only 62 in Damon Prison), and elderly is unavailable. Administrative detainees numbered 3,291, with 661 classified as “unlawful combatants” by Israel. This indicates a total increase of 3,550 prisoners compared to pre-7/10/2023 levels, including a rise of 1,971 administrative detainees.

On 12/12/2022, Israeli prisons held about 4,700 prisoners, including 34 women, 150 children, and 5 PLC members. There were 4,400 prisoners from WB, of whom 400 were from East Jerusalem, 200 from GS and 100 from the 1948 territories, in addition to dozens of Arab detainees of different nationalities. 835 of the prisoners were classified as administrative detainees.

Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Prisons 2019–2023

| Year | Total no. of detainees | WB* | GS | Serving life sentences | Women | Children |
|------|------------------------|-------|-------|------------------------|-------|----------|
| 2019 | 5,000 | 4,634 | 296 | 541 | 41 | 180 |
| 2020 | 4,400 | 4,075 | 255 | 543 | 41 | 170 |
| 2021 | 4,550 | 4,250 | 230 | 544 | 32 | 170 |
| 2022 | 4,700 | 4,400 | 200 | 551 | 34 | 150 |
| 2023 | 7,000** | 6,550 | 300** | 559 | 62 | 200 |

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

** Excluding prisoners from GS after 7/10/2023.

The Peace Process

The period covered by the report did not witness any genuine and serious efforts or initiatives aimed at reviving the so-called “peace process,” but merely statements from US President Joseph Biden, his administration, and

the European Union reaffirming commitment to a two-state solution, albeit implying it won't happen now but later, without specifying the primary party obstructing progress, which is undoubtedly the Israeli side.

The Israeli government formed in late December 2022, considered the most extremist since the establishment of Israel, sought practical decisive actions to assert its control over WB swiftly and forcefully. Meanwhile, the official Palestinian leadership persisted in the peace process and a two-state solution, even after it became a thing of the past for Israelis.

Despite the seismic impact of Operation al-Aqsa Flood and the resurgence of the Palestine issue on the Arab and international stage, and the growing Western discourse on the “two-state solution,” achieving such a solution remains remote. Major powers, led by the US, are unwilling and insincere in imposing any obligations on the Israeli side, seeking merely to diffuse tensions and redirect towards a settlement devoid of horizon, substance or implementation potential, falling far short of the minimal requirements accepted by the Palestinian side adopting the peace process.

The Israeli political environment, across all parties and movements, remains furthest from accepting a fully sovereign Palestinian state in WB and GS, especially given the reality established by Israel in WB, including East Jerusalem, with around million settlers, making withdrawal in the Israeli vision impossible. It is evident that changing the balance of power requires primarily escalating resistance in all its forms, putting the Palestinian political house in order to utilize all potential internally and externally, accompanied by Arab and international support, and making the occupation pay prices that render its cost of remaining much higher than the cost of its departure.

Sixth: The Israeli Scene

The Internal Situation

Operation al-Aqsa Flood have caused a seismic shift in the governing system and the Israeli colonial society, with reverberations expected for years to come. Political leaders have dubbed their war on Gaza “the Second War of Independence,” with experts foreseeing the emergence of post-war “Third Israel” following its establishment in 1948 and the subsequent 1973 conflict.

In 2022, the fragile coalition government under Naftali Bennett, with unprecedented Arab List participation, notably unified in opposition to Likud leader Netanyahu, continued. However, the coalition collapsed in summer 2022, leading to new elections. Right-wing and religious parties, led by Likud, secured a clear majority (64 seats), with a strong ascent of the Religious Zionism led by Smotrich and Ben-Gvir. On 29/12/2022, Netanyahu’s government, the most extreme in Israel’s political history, was formed, aiming to expand Jewish settlements in WB and particularly in Jerusalem, accelerate Judaization of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, resolve the conflict with the Palestinian people, and close the Palestine issue in line with Zionist vision, including abandoning the two-state solution and the annexation of WB or substantial parts of it. It also sought to reinforce Israel’s religious character and bring about fundamental changes in the status and function of the judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court, aiming to enact the “Override Clause,” which allows the Knesset to reenact a law disqualified by the Supreme Court, where the former is considered the highest authority representing “the Israeli people.” Amendments included the removal of the “reasonability” clause granting the Supreme Court the power to overrule governmental administrative procedures and decisions, along with restructuring the Judicial Selection Committee, placing control in the hands of the government. This sparked widespread and intense opposition, particularly from secular Israeli spectrums, the strongest and most enduring in the Israel’s history. In December 2023, the Supreme Court revoked the “reasonability” clause, thereby halting the amendment project, amid the focus on the war against GS and its potential consequences.

Operation al-Aqsa Flood has been a major shock and a colossal Israeli strategic failure. For the first time, Israelis feel the failure of the security

doctrine upon which their state is based, and the shattering of the notion of the “safe haven for Jews” that the Zionist project sought to consecrate, as well as the crumbling of the notion of the “advanced fortress” and “region’s policeman” that guarantees the interests of the US and major Western powers. This strengthened the resistance and the chance of defeating Israel, making it impossible to ignore the Palestinian people and their cause. Therefore, the Israeli response was hysterical and brutal against GS, aiming to reclaim prestige, boost settler confidence in security, prove its functional role to the West, and promote Arab normalization.

An emergency government was formed, with the inclusion of the National Unity Party, led by Gantz, in the ruling coalition. Calls for war on GS, “crushing” Hamas, and recovering captives gained widespread support, ignoring civilian casualties and extensive destruction in GS. Netanyahu aimed for a victory to boost his popularity, even if it meant prolonging the war. However, polls show a decline in his popularity, the popularity of Likud, and the far-right, with rising support for Gantz’s Blue and White party and calls for new elections after the war, likely leading to the end of Netanyahu’s political career and his imprisonment on corruption charges.

Israeli focus would shift to finding militaristic “statesmen” to address the post-war “Third Israel’s” needs, aiming to restore self-confidence, security, stability and sustainability. Netanyahu’s departure may usher in new right-wing leaders like Yossi Cohen and Ron Dermer, while political divisions would deepen over the peace process, the two-state solution and Palestinian security. Militarization and racism would rise within the Israeli society, and the secular-religious divide would worsen, thus negatively impacting the Israeli colonial society.

Demographic Indicators

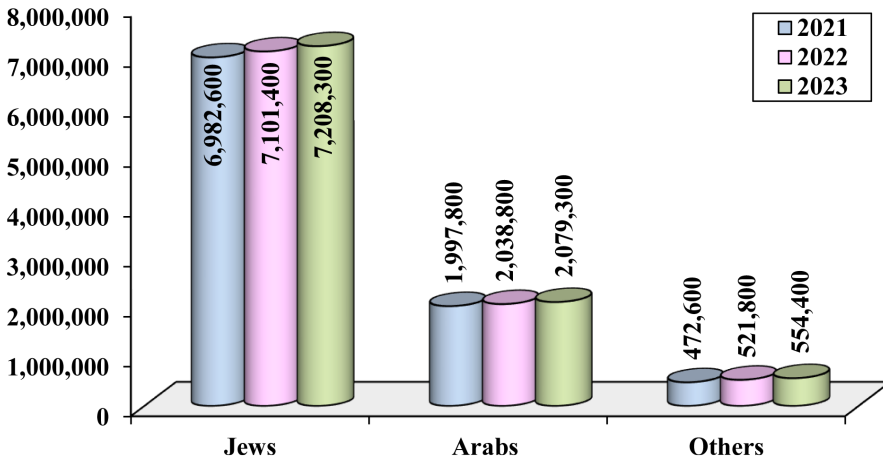
CBS estimated Israel’s population at the end of 2023 at 9.842 million, including 7.208 million Jews, or 73.2% of the population. As for the Arab population, including residents of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, CBS estimated it at 2.08 million, or 21.1% of the population. If we deduct the population of East Jerusalem (approximately 390 thousand) and the Golan

(approximately 25 thousand), the number of Palestinians in the 1948 occupied territories will be about 1.66 million in 2023, or about 16.9% of the population. According to CBS, in 2023, Israel’s population growth rate was 1.5%, while it was among the Arab population 2%.

Population of Israel 2019–2023

| Year | Total population | Jews | Arabs (including the population of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights) | Others |
|------|------------------|-----------|--|---------|
| 2019 | 9,140,500 | 6,773,200 | 1,919,000 | 448,300 |
| 2020 | 9,289,800 | 6,873,900 | 1,957,300 | 458,600 |
| 2021 | 9,453,000 | 6,982,600 | 1,997,800 | 472,600 |
| 2022 | 9,662,000 | 7,101,400 | 2,038,800 | 521,800 |
| 2023 | 9,842,000 | 7,208,300 | 2,079,300 | 554,400 |

Population of Israel 2021–2023



Up to 74,714 and 45,985 immigrants came to Israel in the years 2022 and 2023, respectively. It is a noticeable increase due to the migration of Russian and Ukrainian Jews as a result of the ongoing war there. These numbers show relatively stable migration rates in 2005–2023, but the numbers remain small compared to the last decade of the twentieth century, after the depletion of Jewish populations in the diaspora ready for large-scale immigration, as for

the Jews abroad, they were confined to developed countries in North America and Europe, where they don't have an incentive to migrate on a large scale. The Israel CBS reported a significant decrease in immigration to Israel starting from October due to the events Operation al-Aqsa Flood and the conditions of GS war.

Initial data also indicates a rise in Jewish emigration from Israel due to Operation al-Aqsa Flood, with Israeli community losing a sense of security and stability. In the first two months of the conflict, at least 370 thousand Jews left the country.

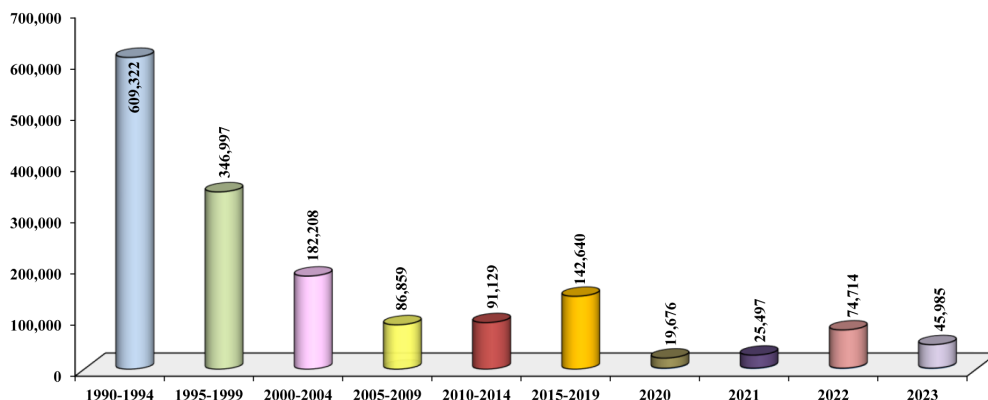
Number of Jewish Immigrants to Israel 1990–2023

| Year | 1990–1994 | 1995–1999 | 2000–2004 | 2005–2009 | 2010–2014 |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| No, of immigrants | 609,322 | 346,997 | 182,208 | 86,859 | 91,129 |

| Year | 2015–2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | Total |
|--------------------------|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------------------|
| No, of immigrants | 142,640 | 19,676 | 25,497 | 74,714 | 45,985 | 1,625,027 |

The following chart shows the evolution of the number of Jewish immigrants to Israel for every five years in the period 1990–2019, except for the period 2020–2023.

Number of Jewish Immigrants to Israel 1990–2023



On the other hand, the number of Jews in the world was estimated at 15.7 million at the end of 2023, most of whom live in the United States and Israel. At the same time, for the past fifty years, the very weak growth in the number of Jews in the world has continued, excluding Israel, and this is due to the low rate of natural growth, the abandonment of the Jewish religion, and the spread of mixed marriages.

Economic Indicators

Israel's economic situation is considered advanced compared to the living levels and the economies in Europe, and if compared to the Middle East. It lives at the expense of the Palestinian people, their land and natural resources, benefits from the US support and the influence of the western world, and takes advantage of the absence of official Arab risks, and of its normalization with many Arab countries.

On the other hand, the escalating Palestinian resistance has caused significant economic losses by destabilizing security and stability, weakening investment opportunities, increasing war expenditures, activating reserves, and more. The Israeli economy lost around \$2.14 billion due to the Sword of Jerusalem, in May 2021. However, it suffered a major shock due to Operation al-Aqsa Flood and the war on Gaza, with approximately 360 thousand reserves called up, many economic interests disrupted, the high-tech sector hit, and tourism depleted. The shekel value dropped to its lowest level since 2012, with the Governor of the Bank of Israel expecting total losses of around \$68 billion from 2023 to 2025.

The Israeli government's budget deficit surged by 397% in October 2023 alone on a monthly basis, according to the Israeli Ministry of Finance, which also noted a 15.2% revenue decline in the same month. The budget was estimated at around 514 billion shekels for 2024 when it was approved in May 2023. Debt-to-GDP ratio is expected to reach 63% in 2023 and 66% in 2024. According to a preliminary CBS report, on 19/2/2024, the economy of Israel contracted by 19.4% on an annual basis in Q4 2023, attributed to the GS war.

Israel's GDP in 2022 increased by 11.5%, compared to 11.6% increase in 2021. The Israeli GDP per capita was \$52,300 in 2021, and about \$55 thousand in 2022.

The public expenditure of the Israeli government in 2022 amounted to 674.3 billion shekels (\$200.8 billion), compared to 665.9 billion shekels (\$206.2 billion) in 2021. According to the approved budget for 2023, expenditures were expected to reach around 698 billion shekels (\$183 billion) according to CBS figures in September 2023. However, the final figures, not yet released, are expected to show a significant increase due to Operation al-Aqsa Flood and GS war expenditures.

The conditions of Operation al-Aqsa Flood reflected on exports and imports, with Israeli exports decreasing by 12.1% in 2023, compared to a 20.6% increase in 2022, and Israeli imports decreasing by 14.8% in 2023, compared to a 16.9% increase in 2022.

Total Israeli Exports and Imports 2018–2023 at Current Prices (\$ million)

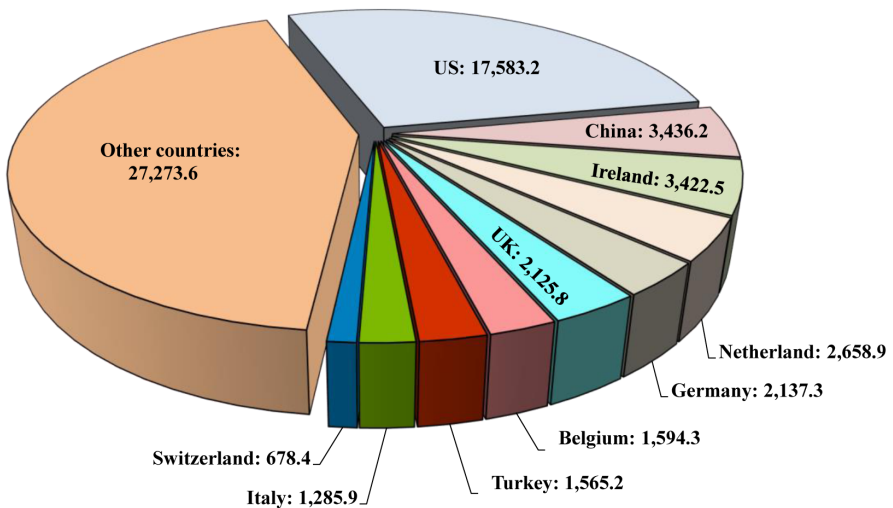
| Year | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Exports | 61,951.4 | 58,508.1 | 50,154.1 | 60,158.4 | 72,565.1 | 63,761.3 |
| Imports | 76,610.7 | 76,784.9 | 70,326.2 | 92,158.8 | 107,755.6 | 91,787.1 |

The US still maintains its status as the primary trading partner of Israel. In 2023, Israeli exports to US amounted to \$17.58 billion, (27.6% of total Israeli exports), while Israeli imports from the US reached \$9.06 billion (9.9% of total Israeli imports). In the same year, China ranked the second largest trading partner of Israel, Germany the third, Netherland the fourth and Turkey the fifth after it was the fourth in 2022.

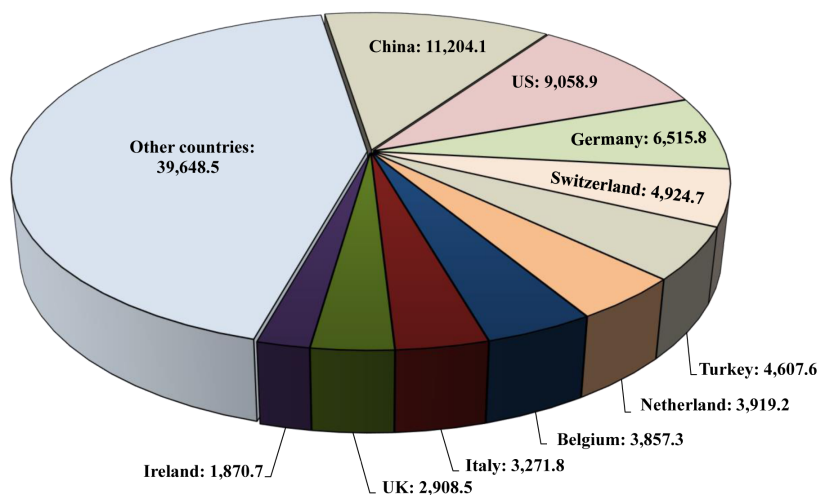
**Volume of Israeli Trade, Exports and Imports With Selected Countries
2022–2023 at Current Prices (\$ million)**

| | Countries | Trade volume | | Israeli exports to: | | Israeli imports from: | |
|----|-----------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| | | 2023 | 2022 | 2023 | 2022 | 2023 | 2022 |
| 1 | US | 26,642.1 | 28,255.8 | 17,583.2 | 18,616.8 | 9,058.9 | 9,639 |
| 2 | China | 14,640.3 | 17,782 | 3,436.2 | 4,631.3 | 11,204.1 | 13,150.7 |
| 3 | Germany | 8,653.1 | 8,956.3 | 2,137.3 | 1,880.6 | 6,515.8 | 7,075.7 |
| 4 | Netherland | 6,578.1 | 6,717.5 | 2,658.9 | 2,439.3 | 3,919.2 | 4,278.2 |
| 5 | Turkey | 6,172.8 | 8,039.2 | 1,565.2 | 2,338.9 | 4,607.6 | 5,700.3 |
| 6 | Switzerland | 5,603.1 | 7,619.5 | 678.4 | 1,530.3 | 4,924.7 | 6,089.2 |
| 7 | Belgium | 5,451.6 | 6,540.3 | 1,594.3 | 1,996.9 | 3,857.3 | 4,543.4 |
| 8 | Ireland | 5,293.2 | 4,496.1 | 3,422.5 | 2,576.1 | 1,870.7 | 1,920 |
| 9 | UK | 5,034.3 | 6,308 | 2,125.8 | 3,121.2 | 2,908.5 | 3,186.8 |
| 10 | Italy | 4,557.7 | 4,994.7 | 1,285.9 | 1,524.4 | 3,271.8 | 3,470.3 |
| | Other countries | 66,922.1 | 80,611.3 | 27,273.6 | 31,909.3 | 39,648.5 | 48,702 |
| | Total | 155,548.4 | 180,320.7 | 63,761.3 | 72,565.1 | 91,787.1 | 107,755.6 |

Israeli Exports to Selected Countries 2023 at Current Prices (\$ million)



Israeli Imports from Selected Countries 2023 at Current Prices (\$ million)



Although Israel is a rich and developed country, it still receives US aid annually, with an annual average of \$3.1 billion (1979–2017). Since 2018, it has increased to reach a total annual of \$3.8 billion, including \$3.3 billion in military grants. Thus, Israel has received US support between 1949 and 2023 of \$153.5 billion.

Following Operation al-Aqsa Flood, US aid to Israel, particularly military assistance, significantly increased. On 20/10/2023, President Biden announced a \$14.3 billion aid package for Israel from the White House.

US Bilateral Aid to Israel 1949–2023 (\$ million)

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

| Period | 1999–2008 | 2009–2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | Total |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------------------|
| Total | 29,374.7 | 30,878.2 | 3,800 | 3,800 | 3,800 | 3,800 | 3,800* | 153,492.6 |

* Excluding the support related to Operation al-Aqsa Flood and war on Gaza.

Military Indicators

The Israeli military faced two major setbacks in 2023; the first was the impact of judicial amendments adopted by the extremist Benjamin Netanyahu government, leading to unprecedented protests within the Israeli army reserves.

The second setback was the blow suffered by the Israeli security and military apparatus during Operation al-Aqsa Flood, on 7/10/2023. This led to a significant failure of the Israeli deterrence system, accompanied by security and military confusion, and substantial losses incurred during the subsequent Israeli war on the Gaza Strip. After mobilizing over 360 thousand reservists and around 170 thousand soldiers from regular forces, the army found itself mired in the quagmire of GS after more than 90 days of battle, facing military attrition due to the exhaustion of most of its military plans prepared in previous years.

Regarding Israel's military budget, it spent over \$23.4 billion in 2022 on the army and armaments, constituting 4.5% of its GDP, ranking it tenth in military expenditure globally.

Following 7/10/2023, several countries began selling combat weapons to Israel, led by the US, which provided over 230 transport aircraft, 20 ammunition-carrying ships for the air force, and thousands of artillery shells and armored vehicles. Germany, Canada, Belgium, Britain, Spain and India also supplied Israel with additional shipments of weapons and ammunition.

According to the Israeli Ministry of Defense, Israeli military exports reached around \$12.5 billion in 2022.

Despite the state of economic and technological progress, military superiority, high national and per capita income, and the existence of a weak, fragmented and normalizing Arab environment, Israel is still facing resistance escalation inside the Palestinian territories, and the rejection of the pro-resistance Arab and Muslim masses to it. It is confronted with an unstable strategic environment, a decline in leadership quality, and internal societal contradictions, collectively placing the country in a precarious position. Operation al-Aqsa Flood struck at the core of the Israel's security theory, shaking its foundations. It served as an inspiration for Palestinians and the *Ummah* (Muslim nation), especially within the strategic environment surrounding occupied Palestine, showcasing the potential for defeat if their energies and capabilities are harnessed effectively through a serious, unified, liberation-oriented revival project.

Seventh: The Palestine Issue and the Arab World

In 2022–2023, Arab disunity persisted alongside deepening normalization with Israel and declining interest in the Palestine issue, despite having the most extreme Israeli government leadership in its history. Netanyahu, before Operation al-Aqsa Flood, sought to isolate and monopolize the Palestine issue, envisioning its elimination after successful Arab normalization.

Israel made significant strides in its relations with the UAE politically, economically, militarily, security-wise, and in tourism, with trade between them rising by 141% during 2022–2023 and over 150 weekly flights. Israel’s relations significantly advanced with Morocco and Bahrain, while also strengthening with Egypt and Jordan. A potential breakthrough in relations with Libya occurred after its Foreign Minister met her Israeli counterpart in Italy, but her government quickly dismissed the minister and denied any relationship amid significant public pressure. Sudan’s relationship appeared turbulent due to internal conflicts. However, all these paths faced a major setback following the Operation al-Aqsa Flood and Israel’s brutal war on GS, triggering widespread Arab public outrage against Israel, leading to the derailment or slowdown of normalization efforts.

The overall Arab official stance continued to support the peace process, the two-state solution, and the Arab initiative put forward since 2002. It also remained supportive of the official Palestinian leadership under Mahmud ‘Abbas, while being cautious or antagonistic towards Hamas and the resistance movement. Some countries, like Qatar, Algeria, Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon and Mauritania, maintained positive relations with Hamas and the resistance line (within the official political line).

Operation al-Aqsa Flood had a sudden and significant impact on countries that hurried to normalize relations with Israel. It disrupted the fast normalization process, leaving proponents of these relations bewildered and angry towards the resistance. Consequently, the UAE openly expressed its anger towards Hamas. State Minister for International Cooperation Reem Al Hashimy condemned Hamas’s attacks as “barbaric and heinous” at the UN Security

Council on 24/10/2023, demanding “that Hamas release hostages immediately and unconditionally.” Similarly, Bahrain’s Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa criticized Hamas’s actions on November 17/11/2023, labeling them as “barbaric” and “horrific.” However, neither Al Hashimi nor Al Khalifa condemned Israeli aggression in the same language.

Western figures meeting Arab leaders post-October 7 revealed that the latter (in closed-door meetings) emphasized the necessity of eliminating Hamas in Gaza. They argued that Hamas’s victory would legitimize their ideology. Consequently, some Arab regimes treated the war on GS as waiting for the Israeli army to “accomplish its mission” in eliminating Hamas rule of GS, viewing it as an opportunity to end the “abnormal and disturbing” situation as they perceived it. There was a sense that the battle was decisively in favor of Israel, hence no practical steps were needed to support the resistance or exert strong pressure using their real weight and capabilities to stop the aggression or provide aid to the Strip.

An emergency Islamic Arab summit on Gaza’s aggression convened on the 36th day of aggression, 11/11/2023, after significant procrastination and nearly 10 thousand were killed, mostly civilians. It aimed to address grievances and mitigate Arab and Islamic public anger. The summit’s final statement departed from traditional behavior, affirming the cessation of aggression, allowing aid into Gaza, lifting the siege, rejecting Palestinian displacement, and emphasizing “peace” as a strategic choice. However, it lacked practical measures like cutting ties with Israel or exerting pressure if aggression persisted or the Rafah crossing remained closed. There were no explicit decisions to support the resistance, nor any praise for its performance, acknowledgment of popular resilience, or any serious stance on the Judaization of Jerusalem and *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

In contrast, Arab public support for Palestinian resistance was extensive, exceeding official Arab positions. According to a survey by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies between 12/12/2023, and 5/1/2024, 86% of Arabs considered Operation al-Aqsa Flood a “legitimate resistance operation.” There was a consensus of 92% in solidarity with Palestinians, with 69% expressing support for Hamas. The Palestine issue was unanimously viewed, by 92% of

respondents, that it “concerns all Arabs and not just the Palestinians,” with 95% support in Morocco, 94% in Egypt, and 95% in Saudi Arabia. Simultaneously, 89% of Arabs rejected their countries’ recognition of Israel.

Egypt has been keen on maintaining a pivotal role in the Palestine issue, hosting Palestinian factions multiple times and mediating during Israeli escalations against Gaza. In the Operation al-Aqsa Flood, Egypt condemned Israeli aggression, rejected plans to relocate Palestinians to Sinai, and expressed reservations about Israeli plans to occupy the Philadelphia Corridor on the Egyptian-Palestinian border, and collaborated with Qatar in mediation efforts. Despite this, Egypt maintained its relationship with Israel. Even after over four months of the aggression, with the deaths and injuries of mostly civilians exceeding a hundred thousand, Egypt did not recall its ambassador from Tel Aviv. The Egyptian regime faced significant criticism for closing the Rafah crossing, delaying or obstructing the entry of essential supplies into GS, allowing Israeli inspections of relief trucks entering the territory, and the low number of wounded Palestinians allowed to receive treatment. Egypt’s stance on the war in 2024 is expected to remain largely unchanged, with a significant role in post-war period, particularly in the reconstruction process. The Rafah crossing is unlikely to open without agreements with Israel and the US, as Egypt continues to “monopolize” Palestinian reconciliation efforts.

As for Jordan, despite the aggressive behavior of the extremist Israeli government and attacks on Hashemite jurisdiction over holy sites, it maintained its relationship with Israel. However, it took a decisive stance against the issue of Palestinian displacement, allowing significant popular protests in solidarity with Gaza and Palestine. Jordan withdrew its ambassador from Tel Aviv and froze the signing of the electricity-for-water agreement with Israel. On the other hand, it entered into a partnership to transport goods from the UAE through Saudi Arabia to Israel by road. Relations with Hamas remained strained, particularly after a military operation by Hamas through Jordan towards the occupied land in the summer of 2023, a matter later surpassed.

Syria maintained its traditional stance on the Palestine issue, with a gradual but limited improvement in relations with Hamas highlighted by a meeting

between a Hamas delegation and the Syrian president in October 2022. Lebanese-Palestinian relations remained consistent in 2022–2023. However, Palestinian refugee camps (RCs) witnessed tension and armed clashes between factions affiliated with Fatah and opponents linked to Islamic movements, especially in ‘Ain al-Hilweh RC. However, the atmosphere of Operation al-Aqsa Flood unified Palestinians in Lebanon in supporting their brethren in GS and the rest of Palestine. For the first time, the military involvement of Al-Qassam Brigades in launching rockets from Lebanon was evident, with Saleh al-‘Arouri, Hamas’s deputy leader, and several Hamas military personnel in Lebanon killed in Israeli assassination operations. Hizbullah participated in Operation al-Aqsa Flood, striking numerous Israeli sites and causing the evacuation of many Israeli settlements. However, it maintained “rules of engagement” to avoid a full-scale open war with Israel. Additionally, PIJ-affiliated forces participated in striking Israeli gatherings.

In Iraq, resistance forces supported Operation al-Aqsa Flood by targeting US bases. However, the involvement of the Ansar Allah movement “Houthis” in Yemen in support of GS, through missile launches and the closure of the Red Sea to ships heading to Israel, made a significant qualitative difference and caused major economic damage to Israel and its allies. Despite the US forming an international alliance to secure maritime routes in the Red Sea and conducting airstrikes in Yemen, the Houthis persisted in their role. Overall, the Yemeni people, despite internal divisions, remained unified in their support for and solidarity with Palestinian resistance.

Saudi Arabia continued its traditional policies under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), emphasizing pragmatic elements in dealing with the Palestine issue. There was a quiet advancement in unofficial relations and discussions with Israel, with the Israeli tourism minister participating in a UN tourism conference in Saudi Arabia. In September 2023, when MBS was asked about Saudi normalization with Israel, he said, “every day we get closer.” Earlier, he unveiled the economic corridor between India and Europe passing through Israel. In contrast, there was limited Saudi openness to Hamas, allowing two delegations from Hamas to perform Umrah and Hajj, and releasing several Hamas detainees.

Riyadh’s response to Operation al-Aqsa Flood was weak, as it launched Riyadh Season entertainment events, which continued during the war. The Israeli war on Gaza is expected to slow down the peace process, with Saudi officials being clear about not reaching a peace agreement before ensuring full Israeli commitment to a two-state solution.

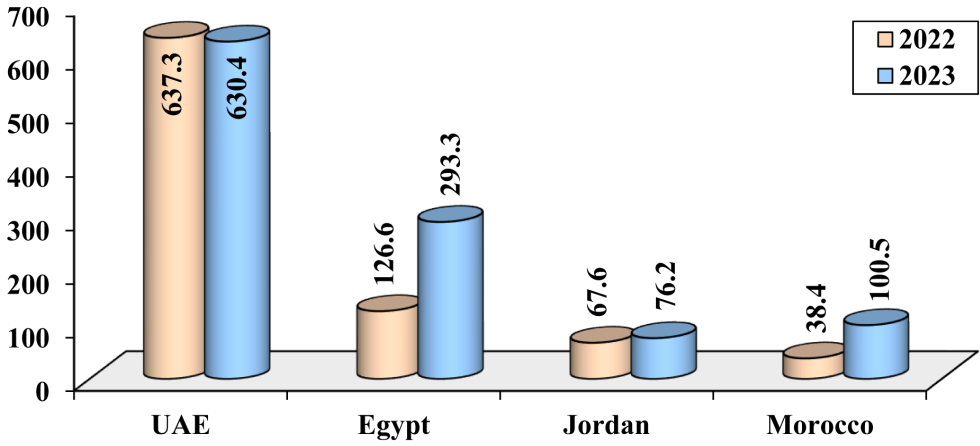
Kuwait rejected normalization with Israel, with significant official and popular support for Palestine, including relief campaigns for GS. Oman appeared stricter than before on the normalization issue. Qatar continued to host Hamas leadership and provide both official and popular support. It led mediation efforts between Israel and Palestinian resistance, resulting in a temporary ceasefire (several days), partnering with Egypt. Qatar has nurtured Al Jazeera’s sympathetic media coverage of the resistance and Arab street sentiments. At the same time, it maintained strong relations with the US and positioned itself as a trusted and effective mediator, leveraging this to play an active role in regional politics.

According to CBS, UAE-Israel trade surged. Israeli exports to UAE amounted to \$630 million in 2023, up from \$74 million in 2020, while Israeli imports from UAE reached \$2.316 billion in 2023, compared to just \$116 million in 2020.

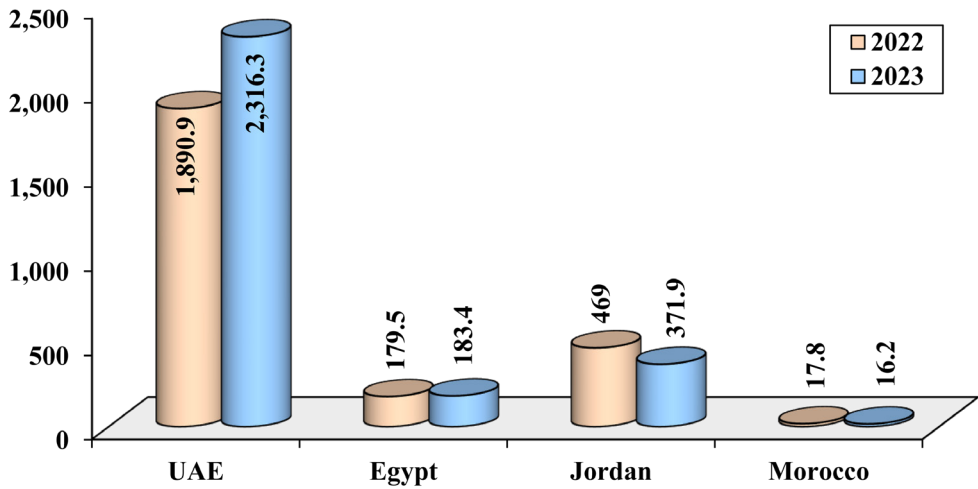
The table below shows Israeli trade volume with a number of Arab countries 2021–2023 (\$ millions):

| Country | Israeli exports to: | | | Israeli imports from: | | |
|----------------|---------------------|-------|-------|-----------------------|---------|-------|
| | 2023 | 2022 | 2021 | 2023 | 2022 | 2021 |
| Egypt | 293.3 | 126.6 | 121.2 | 183.4 | 179.5 | 126.7 |
| Jordan | 76.2 | 67.6 | 64.2 | 371.9 | 469 | 391.5 |
| Morocco | 100.5 | 38.4 | 30.8 | 16.2 | 17.8 | 11 |
| UAE | 630.4 | 637.3 | 384.7 | 2,316.3 | 1,890.9 | 836.9 |

Israeli Exports to Some Arab Countries 2022–2023 (\$ million)



Israeli Imports from Some Arab Countries 2022–2023 (\$ million)



Eighth: The Palestine Issue and the Muslim World

The PSR analyzes the conditions of the Palestine issue and the Muslim world, by focusing on the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and studies the two regional players: Turkey and Iran. It explores the tracks of popular interaction with the Palestine issue and normalization.

Turkey

Unlike previous years, 2022 and 2023 witnessed a significant shift in Turkey's approach to the Palestine issue and its relations with Israel. Diplomatic ties with the latter were restored as part of a broader strategy aimed at de-escalation and fostering relations with various regional actors since the outset of 2021. The two years saw direct meetings, visits and phone calls between the two sides, affirming their desire to overcome previous rifts and establish a stable relationship, culminating in the exchange of ambassadors by the end of 2022. Ankara aimed to calm most of its foreign policy issues to focus on internal matters, especially elections and the economy, while cooperating with Israel on East Mediterranean gas and indirectly improving relations with the US, viewing its relationship with Israel as a key.

This influenced Turkey's stance on the Palestine issue, particularly during Operation al-Aqsa Flood in October 2023, initially characterized by confusion and neutrality; condemning civilian targeting, calling for the release of "hostages," and declaring readiness to mediate between the parties. This seemed to reflect Turkey's vision to restore its relations with Israel. Later, the Turkish stance evolved, especially after the ground war and the revelation of the brutality of the Israeli massacres against civilians. It distinguished itself from major Arab positions with a strong rhetoric, refusing to classify Hamas as a terrorist organization and considering it a national liberation movement. In contrast, Turkey labeled Israel as terrorist, threatening Netanyahu with international prosecution and non-cooperation with Turkey.

Despite the evolution in Turkey's stance during the later weeks of the war, it remained largely rhetorical and lacked practical actions. Exceptions were minimal, hardly noticeable in economic and trade relations with Israel, nor in the trial of Netanyahu and other Israeli leaders, as Ankara repeatedly threatened, nor even in imposing the entry of humanitarian aid into GS.

All the above confirms Turkey's new approach to engagement with Israel, distinct from previous instances. It arises from Ankara's evaluation of the past decade's developments, opting against high-profile stances on regional

matters, including Palestine, unlike influential Arab states. This strategy aims to mitigate political and economic repercussions, as perceived by Ankara from past experiences.

Therefore, Turkey’s stance on Israeli aggression in GS is unlikely to undergo a radical change, as long as the Arab and regional stances remain unchanged.

Iran

Iran continued its policy of rejecting recognition of Israel, supporting resistance in Palestine, and condemning Israeli aggressive practices, settlement building and Judaization of holy sites. The most significant event that captured the world’s attention was Operation al-Aqsa Flood, on 7/10/2023. This operation shifted the priorities of regional and international powers, focusing their attention and strategic calculations on the outcomes of this unprecedented operation, which many Israeli commentators considered a threat to the existential foundations of the Israel itself.

Iran endorsed and supported the operation from its early hours, considering it a legitimate right of resistance in Palestine. However, Iran’s support came with a clear statement from top levels affirming that Iran was not involved and that the operation was solely a Palestinian endeavor in planning, execution, courage and bravery. Iran refuted Israeli and US accusations of its involvement.

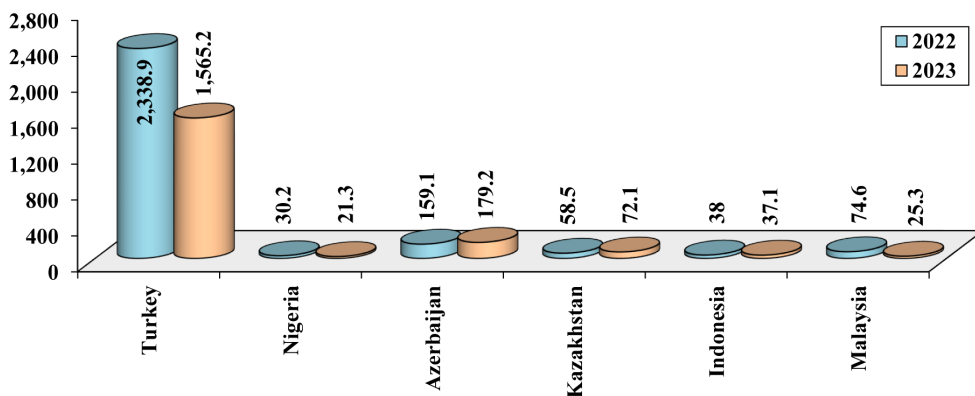
Iran, particularly through its Foreign Ministry, sought Arab and Islamic support for the resistance and applied economic and political pressure on Israel by halting exports or severing ties, yet yielded no tangible outcomes. In the second stage, it demanded an end to the aggression on Gaza. These diplomatic efforts were accompanied by a “threat” that continued aggression would lead to an expansion of conflict in the Middle East. Meanwhile, Iran backed its allies in the “Axis of Resistance” in targeting Israel and its regional allies, evident in resistance groups in Iraq targeting US bases, and the Ansar Allah movement “Houthis” in Yemen obstructing ships destined for Israel from passing through the Red Sea or Bab al-Mandab...; Additionally, tensions escalated in southern Lebanon following the second day of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, leading to a new front with Israel.

Simultaneously, Iran avoids widening the conflict and engaging in a regional war, opting for a measured escalation through its allies. It sees this phase as unsuitable for such engagements unless Iran itself is directly attacked.

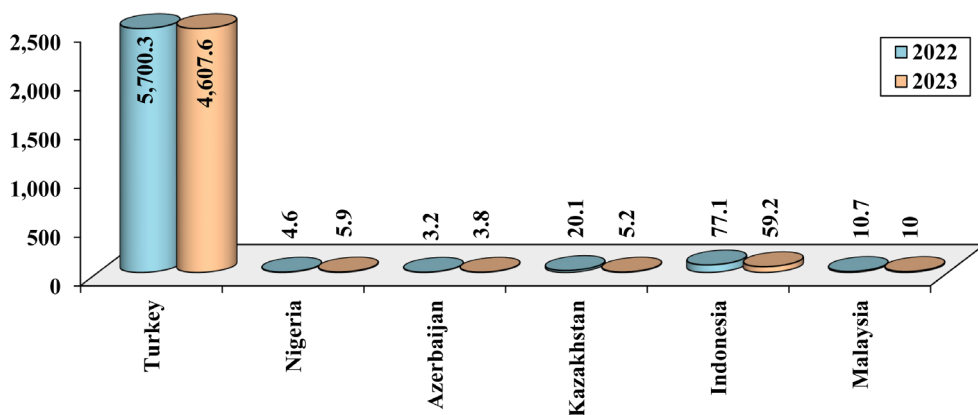
The table below shows Israeli trade volume with a number of Muslim countries 2021–2023 (\$ millions):

| Countries | Israeli exports to: | | | Israeli imports from: | | |
|------------|---------------------|---------|---------|-----------------------|---------|---------|
| | 2023 | 2022 | 2021 | 2023 | 2022 | 2021 |
| Turkey | 1,565.2 | 2,338.9 | 1,919.1 | 4,607.6 | 5,700.3 | 4,764.3 |
| Nigeria | 21.3 | 30.2 | 89.5 | 5.9 | 4.6 | 4.9 |
| Azerbaijan | 179.2 | 159.1 | 119.7 | 3.8 | 3.2 | 1.8 |
| Kazakhstan | 72.1 | 58.5 | 32.7 | 5.2 | 20.1 | 1 |
| Indonesia | 37.1 | 38 | 26.1 | 59.2 | 77.1 | 70.7 |
| Malaysia | 25.3 | 74.6 | 9 | 10 | 10.7 | 10.4 |

Israeli Exports to Some Muslim Countries 2022–2023 (\$ million)



Israeli Imports from Some Muslim Countries 2022–2023 (\$ million)



Ninth: The Palestine Issue and the International Situation

The chapter on the Palestinian issue at the international level was divided into two parts:

Section One: Operation al-Aqsa Flood.

Section Two: Pre-Operation al-Aqsa Flood.

The first section tracks international reactions to Operation al-Aqsa Flood through UN resolutions, especially those of the General Assembly and the Security Council. It noted a noticeable increase in support for resolutions backing Palestinian rights, focusing on two key aspects: First, military, including ceasefire, cessation of hostilities and ceasefire lines; and second, humanitarian, addressing civilian protection, aid provision, and displacement consequences, particularly in northern GS.

Furthermore, the chapter analyzed military operations and their effects on Israeli decision-making, emphasizing internal disagreements within Israeli circles and their influence on major powers and the international community. It also noted Israeli tension towards criticism from UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

The chapter monitored the US stance, characterized by sustained support for Israeli positions, encompassing financial, military aid and political backing, often through pressure tactics or the use or threats of veto in the Security Council. A shift in European positions was observed, initially it was critical of Palestinian resistance but later, after almost three months, aligning with international consensus, emphasizing ceasefire and prioritizing civilian safety and humanitarian aid. China and Russia's positions were observed, demonstrating greater understanding compared to Western states. They criticized Israel's broad use of self-defense and labeled certain actions as war crimes. They backed resolutions approved by Arab countries, but in the Security Council resolution on 22/12/2023, Russia opposed it. However, its delegate refrained from using the veto, aligning with the Arab group's direction, and opted to abstain from voting.

India strongly supported Israel, echoing the core positions of the US and Israel. Conversely, African Union member states predominantly backed the Palestinian stance, particularly in UN votes. Some African nations went further than certain Arab states, recalling ambassadors, severing ties, or intensifying media criticism of Israel, demonstrating more progressive political stances.

The chapter highlighted a significant and swift international shift towards supporting the Palestinian side in the conflict. It demonstrated this shift through global protests, analysis of 1,080 journalistic articles from non-Arab or Muslim countries, and public opinion polls in Europe and the US, particularly among democratic circles and American youth.

The chapter's second section detailed international developments on the Palestine issue from 2022 to 2023. Notably, the Quartet on the Middle East, comprising the UN, US, Russia and EU, was notably paralyzed during this period. Tasked with overseeing the Arab-Israeli conflict settlement, the Quartet issued no statements on its efforts from 2021 to 2023, instead primarily focusing on reports addressing service aspects for the Palestinian people.

The international scene was largely overshadowed by the Ukrainian war crisis, global efforts to pressure Russia, and tensions between China and the US, especially concerning Taiwan's independence. Consequently, these pressing international concerns sidelined the Palestine issue on the global agenda.

The study confirmed in the pre-Operation al-Aqsa Flood phase a previous conclusion: that armed resistance boosts international support for the Palestine issue, contrasting with decreased support during peace processes.

This chapter concluded with some important findings that could have future implications for the Arab-Israeli conflict, including:

1. A secondary trend in conflict management surfaced, highlighting the rising influence of armed popular movements over Arab states in confronting Israel. This shift is backed by widespread rejection within Arab societies, evident in both Western and Arab public opinion polls.
2. It was noted that the nations offering the greatest political backing to Palestine provide the least financial aid. Conversely, those providing the highest financial assistance show less political support. This implies that politically supportive countries such as Russia and China offset financial shortcomings,

while economically supportive nations like the US, Europe and Japan attach economic aid to politically unfavorable conditions, restricting it to official Palestinian institutions backing the peace process or relevant international bodies and UN agencies.

3. International opinion polls indicate that youth are the most supportive of Palestinian rights worldwide. This trend could have significant future ramifications, especially considering that this demographic represents the future leaders and elite of their societies, potentially further bolstering support for Palestine.
4. The report highlighted the major challenge that resistance will face post-Operation al-Aqsa Flood in terms of funding for Gaza's reconstruction. The costs could exceed \$50 billion for infrastructure rehabilitation alone, not to mention supporting thousands of orphans, widows, wounded and displaced individuals. This issue may be tied to political conditions from donor countries seeking to pressure Palestinian resistance.

Summary
of
The Palestine Strategic Report
2022 - 2023



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