

The Palestinian Strategic Report

2008



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Chapter Seven

The Palestinian Demographic Indicators

The Palestinian Demographic Indicators

Introduction

The year 2008 has passed while the Israeli Occupation and the international community were still forcing on the Palestinians a de facto policy, in an attempt to pressure the latter to accept partial solutions in favor of the Israelis; at a time when the Arab regime, the international community, and human rights organizations have failed to provide the Palestinians with their simplest and most basic human rights including freedom, independence, and their right to establish a state on their own land. This issue basically aims for negatively impacting the demographics in Palestine, which are in favor of the Palestinians, in order to make the state of Israel a Jewish state. This reveals the discriminatory and racist foundation on which basis the Israeli state has been established. The danger of the Jewish State concept lies in the fact that it may imply depriving the Palestinians, who hold the Israeli citizenship, from their citizenship rights, or yet worse expelling them from their lands; the threat seems more serious as the USA and some EU countries might recognize this concept.

The conditions of the Palestinians in Diaspora were not better than their fellow Palestinians inside. Hardships and sufferings faced by the former were sometimes more, especially when related to mobility, finding a job, living with dignity, or even securing their own selves in areas of conflict and insecurity like Iraq; this is the reason why many of the Palestinian individuals and families were forced to immigrate to Arab or Foreign countries, that opened their doors and gave a chance to some Palestinian categories to become citizens.

First: The Palestinian Population Worldwide

PCBS released that the number of Palestinians in the world at the end of the year 2008 was estimated to be around 10.6 million Palestinians; more than half of them (51.9%) live in Diaspora, while the rest are distributed between the territories occupied in 1948 i.e. Israel (around 1.22 million) and the occupied Palestinian territories i.e. WB and GS (around 3.88 millions) which includes the Palestinians

living in the East Jerusalem that was forcefully annexed by the Israeli occupation in 1967, and excludes the Arab Syrian population living in the occupied Golan Heights.

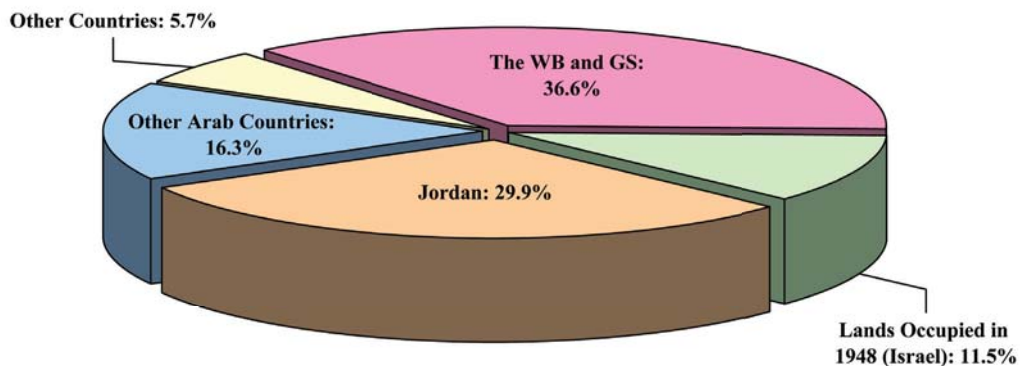
Table 1/7 presents the estimates of the Palestinian population at the end of the year 2008, according to the Place of residence.

Table 1/7: Palestinian Population Estimate According to their Place of Residence at the End of the Year 2008¹

Place of Residence	Population Estimate (thousands)	% of Palestinian Population
The WB and GS*	3,878	36.6
Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel)	1,215	11.5
Jordan	3,171	29.9
Other arab countries	1,733	16.3
Other countries	605	5.7
Total	10,602	100

* Includes the lands occupied in 1967 and Jerusalem Governorate.

Palestinian Population Distribution in Percentages According to Their Place of Residence at the End of the Year 2008



Palestinians in Diaspora are concentrated in the neighboring Arab countries, especially in Jordan where the Palestinian population was estimated by 3.17 millions at the end of 2008, i.e. approximately 29.9% of the total Palestinian

population. The majority of the Palestinians in Jordan hold Jordanian citizenship, unlike Palestinians in other Arab countries who were estimated by 1.73 million (16.3% of the total Palestinian population) at the end of 2008. The latter are concentrated in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and Gulf countries. As for the remaining Palestinians living in foreign countries, their number was estimated to be about 605 thousands (5.7% of the total Palestinian population), most of whom live in the USA, Latin America, Canada, Britain, and other EU countries.

Second: General Demographic Indicators

1. The WB and GS

The population of the WB and GS was estimated, at the end of 2008, to be 3.88 millions, distributed by 2.42 million people in the WB, i.e. 62.3%, and 1.46 million in GS, i.e. 37.7%; the percentage of people living in Jerusalem Governorate borders, among the above mentioned population of the WB and GS, is estimated by around 9.6%, i.e. 372 thousand people.

Available statistics from the year 2006 indicate that 44.8% of the WB and GS population are refugees (registered and non-registered);² given that this percentage is relatively fixed, projections to the end of 2008 indicate an estimate of 1.737 million refugees among the 3.88 million population, 747 thousands of whom reside in the WB (30.9% of the WB population), and 990 thousands in GS (67.7% of GS population).³

Table 2/7: Comparing the Palestinian Total and Refugee Population in WB and GS as Estimated by the End of 2008

Place of Residence	Total Population		Refugee Population	
	Estimate (thousands)	Percentage %	Estimate (thousands)	Percentage %
WB	2,416	62.3	747	30.9
GS	1,462	37.7	990	67.7
Total	3,878	100	1,737	44.8

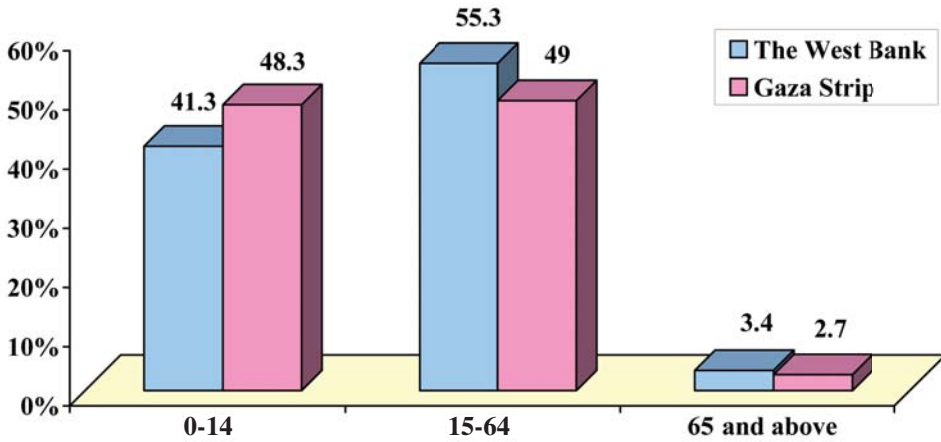
The age distribution within the Palestinian population reveals a wide-based population pyramid with a pointed narrow tip. The Palestinians will be influenced in the upcoming years by the relatively high natural population growth, despite the decrease in the fertility rate and the population growth rate in the past few years. According to 2007 statistics, 44.1% of the Palestinian population in the WB and GS is under 15 years of age, i.e. 1.71 million; among the remaining, 2.05 millions (52.9%) are in the working (15-64 years) age category; and 116 thousands are elderly, i.e. only 3%. These numbers do not show a significant difference from those of 2006, when the percentage of the population under 15 years of age was estimated by 45.7%; thus, age dependency rates remain relatively high.⁴

When observing the population age structure according to the place of residency, the available data indicates that the Palestinian society in the WB is still young. Compared to 1997, the last decade has witnessed a decrease in the percentage of children between 0-14 years of age from 45.1% in 1997 to 41.3% in 2007, i.e. a decrease by 3.8%. In return, the percentage of the population in working (15-64 years) age category has witnessed a significant increase by 4.2% during the same period, from 51.1% in 1997 to 55.3% in 2007. Thus, while the Palestinian society is still young compared to other societies, the percentage of children and youth is decreasing with time due to the decrease in fertility rates; the total fertility rate in the WB in 2007 was estimated by 4.6 births per woman, while in 1997 it was estimated by 5.6 births.

The elderly (above 65 years of age) population category was estimated by 3.4% of the WB 2007 population, whereas in 1997 they constituted 3.8%. Unlike what would have been expected since the fertility rate has decreased, the elderly percentage among the population did not increase but rather decreased slightly, indicating that the phase of demographic transformation, which was reflected in the increase of the percentage of the 15-64 age group, has not yet reflected on the elderly.⁵

As for GS, estimates of 2007 indicate that the Palestinian community there is young, and even more youthful than that of the WB. Around 48.3% of the GS population is under 14 years of age; 49% are between 15 and 64 years of age; and only 2.7% of the population is elderly (above 65 years of age).

The Percentage of the Palestinian Population in WB and GS According to Age Category 2007



Comparing the estimates of 1997 and 2007, it could be observed that the last decade have witnessed a decrease in the percentage of children aged between 0-14 in GS, where their percentage dropped from 50.2% to 48.3%, i.e. a decrease by 3.8%. Accordingly, the percentage of population aged between 15-64 has increased significantly from 46.9% of the total GS population in 1997 to 49% in 2007, i.e. an increase by 4.5%. This indicates that although the Palestinian society is young compared to other societies, the percentage of children and youth is decreasing with time due to the decrease in fertility rates.⁶

Statistics indicate that the total fertility rate for the year 2006 in the WB and GS has decreased to 4.6 births per woman, from a 4.9 births in 1999; this was not the same in the WB and GS, where in the latter the total fertility rate was estimated by 5.4 and in the former 4.2. But despite the decrease in fertility rates, the average natural population growth in the WB and GS has remained high, estimated by 3% in the year 2007.

The data also points out that there is a decrease in the average family size in the WB and GS. The average family size has dropped to 5.8 members in 2007, compared to 6.4 in 1997. More specifically, the average family size in the WB has dropped from 6.1 members in 1997 to 5.5 in 2007; in the GS, the average family size has dropped from 6.9 members in 1997 to 6.5 in 2007.

The crude birth rate (CBR) in the WB and GS has dropped from 42.7 births per one thousand inhabitants in 1997 to 33.6 births in 2007. This is due to the decrease

in the fertility rates in both the WB and GS. However, if we were to consider the birth rate of each area independently, we would notice the contrast of CBR in each of the WB and GS. In the WB, CBR has decreased from 41.2 births in 1997 to 31 births in 2007; whereas in GS, the decrease was notably less, from 45.4 births in 1997 to 38 births in 2007.

The crude death rate (CDR) in the WB and GS has dropped from 4.9 deaths per one thousand inhabitants in 1997, to 4.1 deaths in 2007. However, when considering each area separately, we find that there is a slight difference between the WB and GS; since in the WB, the CDR has dropped from 5.1 deaths in 1997 to 4.1 deaths in 2007, whereas in GS it has dropped from 4.7 deaths in 1997 to 4 deaths in 2007.⁷

The gender ratio in the WB and GS has both witnessed a tiny decrease between 1997 and 2007. In the WB, the gender ratio has dropped from an estimated 103.2 males per one hundred females in 1997 to 103.1 in 2007. Similarly, in GS the gender ratio has dropped from 103.1 males one hundred females in 1997 to 103 in 2007.⁸

The final results of the WB population census indicate that the number of families in the WB in the year 2007 was 427,097, and based on this, the average family size in the WB has been estimated by 5.5 members; with a significant decrease from the estimated average family size of 6.1 members in 1997, when the number of families in the WB was estimated by 307,624 families. This indicates on one hand the decrease in fertility rates, and, on the other hand, the tendency to prefer nuclear families on extended families.

The results also revealed an increase in the percentage of nuclear families with private household among the families in the WB, from 74% in 1997 to 83.2% in 2007. The percentage of the Palestinian extended families with private households, in the WB, has dropped from 21.7% in 1997 to 12.4% in 2007. This confirms with the earlier mentioned tendency to prefer nuclear families on extended families. On the other hand, there is a slight increase in the percentage of private households with a single individual from 3.8% in 1997 to 4.2% in 2007. The remaining households were compound families that made up a diminishing 0.2% percentage in 2007, compared to a yet small 0.6% in 1997.

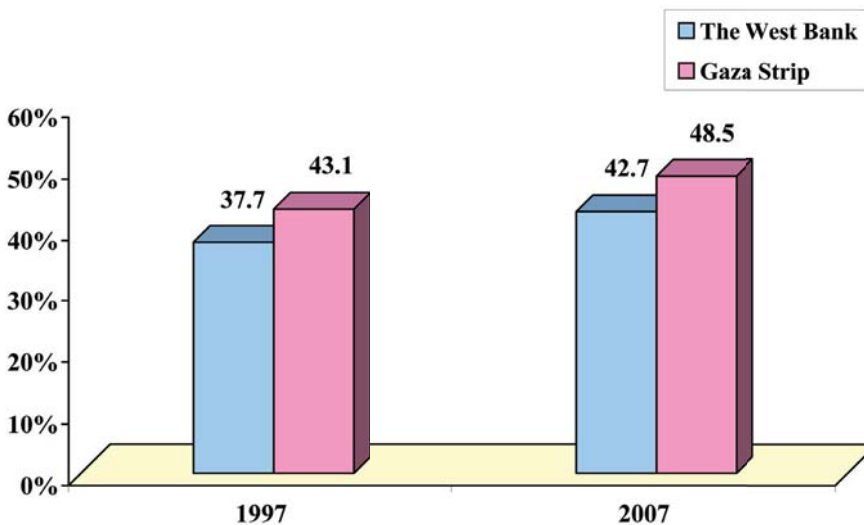
As for GS, preliminary results of the population census estimated the number of families in GS to be about 219,220 families in 2007; and based on this, estimated the

average family size in GS by 6.5 members. Of the above families, approximately 73% (160,111 families) are nuclear families; which is not significantly different from the estimated 71.8% in 1997. Similarly, the percentage of Palestinian extended families with private households has slightly decreased between 1997 and 2007 from 25.3% to 24.5%. This confirms the tendency towards an increase in nuclear families at the expense of extended families. As for the private households of single individuals, their percentage slightly dropped from 2.6% in 1997 to 2.4% in 2007. The remaining percentage, i.e. that of compound families, made up a miniature 0.1% in 2007 and 0.3% in 1997.⁹

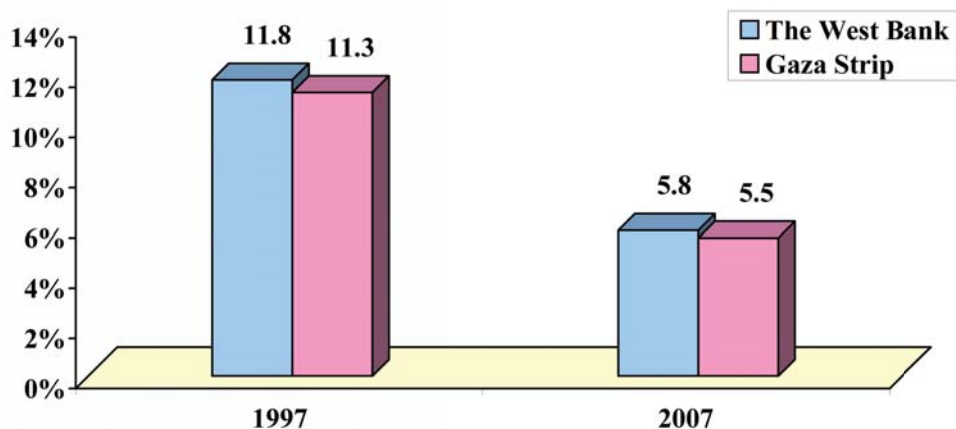
Statistics regarding the education of the WB and GS populations, indicated an increase in the school/ university enrollment rates among the total population above 5 years of age. In the WB, the percentage of those enrolled among the total population above 5 years of age, has increased from 37.7% in 1997 to 42.7% in 2007;¹⁰ and in GS from 43.1% in 1997 to 48.5% in 2007.

In accordance, illiteracy rates among the population above 10 years of age have dropped; in the WB, from 11.8% in 1997 to 5.8% in 2007, and in GS from 11.3% in 1997 to 5.5% in 2007.¹¹

The Percentage of Palestinians Enrolled in School/ University in WB and GS in 1997 and 2007



Illiteracy Rates Among the Palestinians in WB and GS in 1997 and 2007



Continuing with social indicators, and comparing the marital status of individuals in 1997 and 2007, statistics indicate that the percentage of married individuals in the WB has dropped from 56.5% in 1997 to 51.5% in 2007; in terms of gender, the percentage of married males in the WB was 52.5% in 1997 and dropped to 50.3% in 2007; for females, it dropped from 55.2% in 1997 to 52.7% in 2007. This indicates a decrease in marriage rates in the WB, which might be a result of the Israeli assaults during and after *al-Aqsa Intifadah* (28/9/2000), and the accompanying economical hardships. On the other hand, divorce rates in the WB remained unchanged at 0.6% in 1997 and 2007.

Similarly in GS, the percentage of married individuals dropped from 53.8% in 1997 to 49.6% in 2007; in terms of gender, from 54.1% in 1997 to 48.7% in 2007 for males, and from 57.2% in 1997 to 50.5% in 2007 for females. Divorce rates dropped as well from 0.8% in 1997 to 0.6% in 2007.

The average number of individuals per room in the WB has decreased from 1.9 in 1997 to 1.55 in 2007, indicating an increase in the individual's space in rooms. As for GS, the average number of individuals per room has slightly decreased from 2.1 in 1997 to 2 in 2007. This increase could be attributed to the decrease in the average size of families, mentioned earlier, and to the increase in the average number of rooms in housing units.

When comparing the patterns and types of housing units between 1997 and 2007, statistics indicate an increase in apartments. Figures of 2007 indicated that apartments constituted 53.3% of housing units in the WB and 51.2% in GS, compared to 44.5% and 46.5% respectively in 1997. On the other hand, percentage of traditional houses [*Dar*] decreased between 1997 and 2007 from 52.2% in the WB and 51.6% in GS to 43.2% and 47.4% respectively. This goes in accordance with increased urbanization trends and tendency towards nuclear family structures. In addition, a slight increase was observed in the percentage of villas in the WB from 0.9% in 1997 to 1.7% in 2007; unlike in GS where it slightly dropped from 0.6% in 1997 to 0.5% in 2007.¹²

As for the public networks in the WB, when comparing the availability of these networks to inhabited residences, it was shown that the percentage of residences connected to the public electricity network has increased from 94.1% in 1997 to 98.4% in 2007. Also, the percentage of inhabited residences connected to the public sanitation network has increased from 24.4% in 1997 to 35.8% in 2007. However, the percentage of residences connected to the public water network hasn't witnessed an as remarkable change, increasing from 79.1% in 1997 to 81.4% in 2007.¹³

As for marriage and divorce in the WB and GS, statistics released by PCBS point out that the number of marriages has increased from 23,492 in 1997 to 32,685 in 2007. The crude marriage rates have raised from 8.4 marriages per one thousand inhabitants in 1997 to 8.7 marriages per one thousand inhabitants in 2007, noting however the dramatic decrease of marriages during the *Intifadah's* years, where it reached in 2002 its minimum of 22,611 marriages.

On the other hand, the number of divorces has also increased from 3,449 in 1997 to 4,043 divorces in 2007; noting however that during this decade, this figure has reached its maxima of 4,211 in 2005. The crude divorce rate was estimated in 2007 by one divorce per one thousand inhabitants while in 1997 it was estimated by 1.2 divorces per one thousand inhabitants.¹⁴

Table 3/7 summarizes the main population indicators, in each of the WB and GS in 2007; while table 4/7 compares these indicators in the governorates of the WB and GS, for the years 1997 and 2007.

Table 3/7: Population and Family Count in WB and GS 2007¹⁵

Region	Population count			Number of families	Average family size
	Males	Females	Both		
WB	1,193,244	1,157,339	2,350,583	427,097	5.5
GS	718,711	697,832	1,416,543	219,220	6.5
Total	1,911,955	1,855,171	3,767,126	646,317	5.8

Population Count in the WB and GS 2007

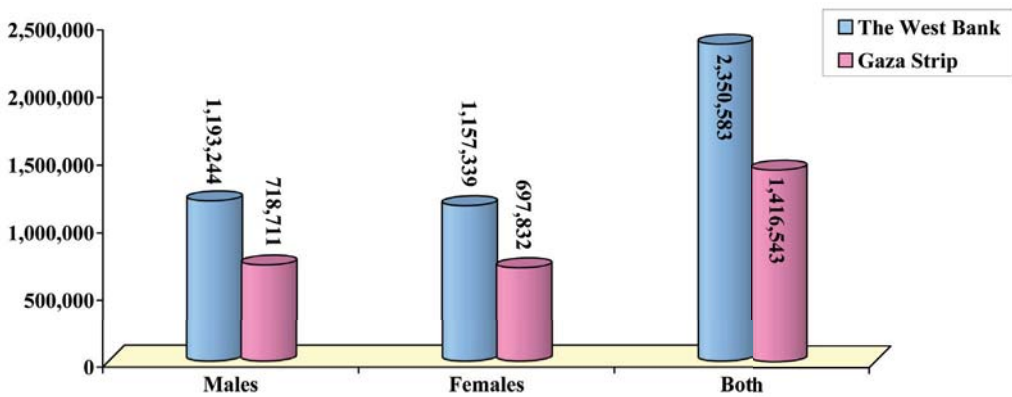


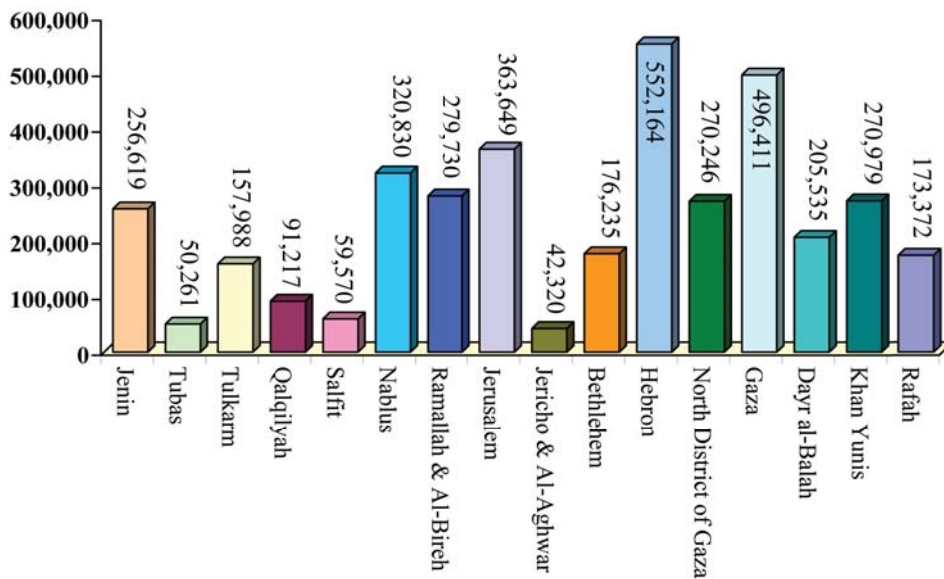
Table 4/7: Population Count, Average Family Size and Gender Ratio for the Years 1997 and 2007 in Governorates in WB and GS¹⁶

Region	Population count		Average family size		Gender ratio	
	1997	2007	1997	2007	1997	2007
WB	1,873,476	2,350,583	6.1	5.5	103.2	103.1
Jenin	203,026	256,619	5.9	5.4	103.8	103.2
Tubas	36,609	50,261	6.1	5.6	103.1	103.3
Tulkarm	134,110	157,988	5.8	5.3	102.2	102.1
Qalqilyah	72,007	91,217	6.1	5.5	105.7	105.2
Salfit	48,538	59,570	6	5.4	103.6	103.3
Nablus	261,340	320,830	5.9	5.4	103.3	102.3
Ramallah & al-Bireh	213,582	279,730	5.9	5.3	100.4	101.4
Jerusalem	328,601*	363,649	5.4	5.2	102.1	103.5
Jericho & al-Aghwar	32,713	42,320	6	5.6	101.7	100.3
Bethlehem	137,286	176,235	5.8	5.4	104.8	103.8
Hebron	405,664	552,164	6.7	6.1	104.9	104.1
GS	1,022,207	1,416,543	6.9	6.5	103.1	103
North district of Gaza	183,373	270,246	7.2	6.7	103.7	103.7
Gaza	367,388	496,411	6.9	6.5	103.6	103.5
Dayr al-Balah	147,877	205,535	6.9	6.4	102.4	101.6
Khan Yunis	200,704	270,979	6.9	6.3	102.5	103.1
Rafah	122,865	173,372	6.9	6.5	102	101.8
Total population (WB & GS)	2,895,683	3,767,126	6.4	5.8	103.2	103.1

N.B. The population count includes individuals who were living in the WB and GS during the study period 1-16/12/2007 and was estimated for those who were not counted, through a projection study.

* Estimates for the population living in East Jerusalem, in the areas forcefully annexed by the Israeli occupation in 1967. Figures related to this region are estimates and not actual population count.

Population by Governorates 2007



According to 2007 census, the average family size in the WB and GS reached 5.8, distributed between 5.5 in the WB and 6.5 in GS. While in 1997 the average family size in the WB and GS was 6.4 individuals. Although fertility rates have dropped, rates of structuring in families stayed relatively high and within the expected range, due to the decrease in the average number of members per family.

The population distribution according to governorates, at the end of 2007, was as follows: Hebron is the governorate with the largest population among the 16 total governorates (11 in the WB and 5 in GS). Hebron's population was estimated by 552 thousands at the end of 2007. The next largest governorate is Gaza governorate, where the population was estimated by 496 thousands. The third was Jerusalem governorate with an estimated population of 364 thousands. On the other hand, the governorates with the smallest populations were Jericho, Tubas, and Salfit, with estimated populations of 42 thousands, 50 thousands and 60 thousands respectively.

As for the governorates in terms of the average family size, it was observed that all GS governorates, in addition to Hebron (South of the WB), have the highest average family size estimated by 6.5 members.

2. Palestinian Territories Occupied in 1948 (Israel)

The estimated number of Palestinians living in Israel by the end of 2008 was estimated by 1.22 million Palestinians. Their society is significantly young, as revealed by the demographic statistics available; 40% of their population is aged 15 years or below, and 3.1% are aged 65 years or above. The gender ratio in 2008 was estimated by 103.6 males per one hundred females. These figures however don't include the Arab population in the Syrian Golan Heights; neither it does include the residents of the J1 area in Jerusalem governorate, nor the Arab Lebanese who moved temporarily to the Israeli areas, whereas the Israeli authorities do count them among its population and among the more general Arab population in Israel.¹⁷

The total fertility rate among the Palestinians in Israel was estimated by 3.62 births per woman in 2007, which is considered relatively high compared to the Israeli fertility rate. The crude birth rate in 2007 was about 27.3 newborns per one thousand inhabitants, whereas the crude death rate was 2.8 deaths per one thousand inhabitants. Figures also indicated that the average Palestinian family size was five members in 2007. As for the neonatal mortality rate for the same year, it was estimated by 7.2 deaths per one thousand live newborns, taking into consideration the fact that this rate reached eight neonatal deaths per one thousand live newborns in 2005. 26.2% of Palestinian families live in densely populated residences (two members or more). Illiteracy rate among the Palestinian population aged 15 years and above was about 6.1%.¹⁸

3. Jordan

At the end of 2008, the Palestinian population in Jordan was estimated to be about 3.17 millions, according to PCBS estimates. Available data indicates that the Palestinians living in Jordan in 2007 constitute a relatively young community, where 35.9% are aged 15 years or below. The total fertility rate among the Palestinians in Jordan in 2007 was estimated by 3.3 births per woman.

But comparing the above figures to those of the year 2000, we observe that the percentage of population aged 15 years or below has actually dropped from 41.7% in 2000 to 35.9% in 2007; similarly, the total fertility rate has dropped from 4.6 births per woman in 2000 to 3.3 in 2007. This reveals a general tendency within the Palestinian population in Jordan, towards lower fertility rates and less paced

population growth; a trend that has been observed among the majority of the world nations. The average family size among the Palestinians in Jordan in 2007 was estimated by 5.1 members.¹⁹

According to the statistics of UNRWA, there was, as of 31/12/2008, one million and 951,490 UNRWA registered Palestinian refugees in Jordan; while for the same date of 2007, the number of UNRWA registered Palestinian refugees in Jordan was one million and 903,490 refugees. Thus, the population growth rate among the registered refugees is estimated by 2.5% annually.

By mid 2008, the UNRWA registered Palestinian refugees in Jordan made up 387,992 families, of whom 17.3% live in refugee camps.²⁰

Besides the above estimates, it should be mentioned that the Palestinian population in Jordan include a great number of refugees who are unregistered for different reasons, where around 13% of the refugee camp residents in Jordan are not registered with UNRWA; Moreover, about 95% of the Palestinians living in Jordan hold the Jordanian citizenship.

4. Syria

The number of UNRWA registered Palestinian refugees in Syria, as of 31/12/2008, was about 461,897; while for the same date in 2007, the figure was 451,467 refugees. Thus the population growth rate is estimated by 2.3%. By mid 2008, the UNRWA registered Palestinian refugees in Syria make up around 111,419 families, of whom 27.1% live in refugee camps; noting that the aforementioned estimates don't include the Palestinians who were displaced to Syria in 1967 and 1970, since the majority of them is not registered at UNRWA.²¹

The Palestinian population in Syria is mostly concentrated in Damascus, where 67% of the total registered Palestinian population in Syria resides. Statistics of the year 2007 indicate that 33.1% of the registered refugee population in Syria is aged 15 years or below, and 4.3% of the population is aged 65 years or above.

The gender ratio was estimated by 100.4 males per one hundred females.

As for the marital status; among the males aged 15 years or above, 48.3% have not been married; among females in the same age category, 40.8% have never been married (both figures are for the year 2007). The lowest marriage rates were in the age category 15-19 years, where 100% of males and 92.7% of females have never

been married. We also notice a relatively high percentage of Palestinian female widows in Syria, being 4.2%, as opposed to 0.5% male widowers.

The total fertility rate among Palestinian women in Syria was 3.64 births per woman in 2007, compared to 3.5 births per woman in 2001. The crude birth rate was estimated by 29.3 births per one thousand Palestinian residents in 2007. Sources also indicate that the average Palestinian family size in Syria was 4.9 members according to 2007 estimates.²²

5. Lebanon

The Palestinian refugee population registered with the UNRWA in Lebanon, as of 31/12/2008, was estimated by 422,188 refugees, who formed up 110,026 families by mid 2008. About 52.8% of this population lives in refugee camps. As for the average family size of Palestinians living in Lebanon, it was about 3.8 members in 2008.²³

The gender ratio of Palestinians living in Lebanon was about 98.4 males per one hundred females in 2007.

The total fertility rate was three births per woman in 2007, as opposed to 3.5 births per woman in 1999. The crude birth rate was estimated by 21.8 births per one thousand inhabitants in 2007. When observing the detailed fertility rates by age categories of women, we find that these rates peak in the 30-34 age group where the average birth rate was 158 birth per one thousand women.

The percentage of population under 15 years of age was estimated by 32.9%; whereas the percentage aged 65 years or over was about 5.4%, which is considered high compared to other Palestinian communities outside Lebanon. But generally speaking, the age structure of the Palestinians in Lebanon doesn't differ from other Palestinian communities in refuge (Jordan, Syria and Iraq), in being young.

As for marital status, 44.1% of the Palestinians in Lebanon who are aged 15 years or above, have never been married; as per sex group, 47.9% of males and 40.5% of females. As for the percentage of married individuals, it was about 48.7% (49.6% males and 47.9% females); the percentage of divorced was 1.4% (0.8% males and 2% females); and the percentage of widows was about 5.7% (1.7% male widowers and 9.6% female widows); all figures are for the year 2006.

As for the classification of women in the 15-49 age group based on their level of education, 76.5% have completed elementary or preparatory school, 19.1% have high school diplomas or higher, while less than 4.5% were uneducated.

The 2007 statistics also indicate that 0.5% of families of six and seven members.²⁴

As for the condition of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, the book “Conditions of the Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon” released by al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, noted the demographic, legal, educational, and social conditions of these Palestinians, pointing out that the Palestinians in Lebanon are being deprived of many civil rights, including the right to work in many occupations and the right of ownership. Add to this, the political and legal Lebanese environment that is anti-Palestinian and pressuring against their presence, on the claim of the need to prohibit permanent settlement; while, the truth is, the Palestinians don’t want to be Lebanese citizens, but merely they ask for their just rights and humane indiscriminating treatment. Moreover, the argument that keeping the Palestinians in suffering and depriving them of their rights to a dignified life will keep them focused on their issue, is just an excuse with no true foundations, since their suffering is causing them to immigrate to Western countries thus pushing them further away from their centre of concern.

6. Iraq

The Palestinians residing in Iraq were subject to many threats, murder, kidnappings, and forcible displacement by some militias, after the American occupation of Iraq. The result of this was that many families fled from their homes to different areas, inside or outside of Iraq, or to temporary refugee camps set up on the borders shared by Iraq and its neighboring countries. The condition of the Palestinians in Iraq is unmatched by the condition of any other Palestinian community worldwide, in terms of suffering. Moreover, the situation is made worse with the absence of any reliable data or records (official or unofficial) on their detailed numbers and conditions, at the same time there is a difference between the number of Palestinians and the number of Palestinian Refugees; all of which makes it difficult to find reliable data and statistics on their numbers, geographical distribution, demographic indicators and social conditions.

The latest available detailed statistics about the number of Palestinians in Iraq was that released by the PCBS for the year 1989. Then, it was estimated that the number of Palestinians in Iraq was about 35 thousands. Their age distribution was as follows: 39.7% under 15 years of age (37.8% of the males and 41.6% of the females); 3.4% above 65 years of age (3.2% of the males and 3.7% of the females). The total fertility rate of the Palestinians in Iraq was 5.3 births per woman, whereas the highest fertility rate was observed among women in the 30-34 age group, and that was 346.8 births per one thousand women.²⁵

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has estimated in 2003, shortly after the American occupation of Iraq that the total number of Palestinian refugees there is between 35-40 thousand refugees. Later, in March 2008, the PLO Department of Refugee Affairs estimated the number of Palestinian refugees who stayed in Iraq till then, by 15 thousands.

Within this context, on 7/12/2008, Alhourriah arabic online magazine published what it claimed to be “the latest statistical data about the Palestinians in Iraq”. Entitled “This is How the Palestinians in Iraq were Displaced Again”, the statistical report mentioned more than 15 Arab and European countries to where the Palestinians of Iraq have been displaced as a result of the various assaults they faced by the local militias. These destinations were, according to the same report: al-Waleed refugee camp (2,000 refugees), al-Tanaf refugee camp (800 refugees), al-Houl refugee camp (450 refugees), Cyprus (1,600 refugees), Sweden (800 refugees), Brazil (140 refugees), Chile (130 refugees), Iceland (50 refugees), Australia (150 refugees), Switzerland (25 refugees), India (80 refugees), Malaysia (30 refugees), and France (one family). In addition, unknown numbers of Palestinian refugees have fled Iraq to Norway, Denmark, Canada, and Holland. The number of those who remained in Baghdad was, according to the latest statistics, estimated by 10,750 refugees.

But if the above was true, the number of Palestinian refugees who are still residing in Iraq would be estimated by around 14 thousand refugees.

The same source has also noted its documentation of at least 300 deaths among the Palestinian refugees in Iraq, who were killed by some local Iraqi militia;²⁶ whereas other sources estimated the death of about 500-850 Palestinians.²⁷ The Palestinian government has decided to consider the Palestinians killed in Iraq among the “national martyrs of Palestine”.

The year 2008 has witnessed some developments regarding the Palestinians refugees who were formerly in Iraq and fled to the Iraqi-Syrian borders but were stuck there. In 2008, 116 of them immigrated to Chile. Similarly, 157 were accepted to Sweden, in four groups, during the same year, whereby the last group reached Sweden on 3/11/2008.²⁸ Iceland has also agreed to accept thirty refugees from al-Waleed refugee camp; in addition to the agreement signed by the PLO and the Sudanese government, by which the latter will host two thousand Palestinian refugees from the camps on the Iraqi-Syrian border.

Here it is necessary to point out that these procedures concerning the movement of a limited number of Palestinians, fleeing from the misery of killing and torture in Iraq, to countries such as Chile, Iceland, Sweden, and other western countries that sympathized with the humanitarian conditions of the Palestinian refugees, have aroused fears and suspicion among many concerned with the Palestinian issue and especially the refugees issue, that such attempts are being made to disperse the Palestinian refugees over western and foreign countries, with the Iraq case mentioned above being adopted as an example that would possibly be carried out on a larger scale to solve or “dissolve” the refugee problem eventually; while on the other hand, neighboring Arab countries of Palestine have closed their doors in the refugees’ faces.

Internally within Iraq, the Iraqi government issued on 4/11/2008 a resolution entailing the application of the 1971 Political Refugee Act (Law no. 51) to the Palestinian refugees, which means the Palestinian refugees are under the surveillance of the security and military intelligence departments, and entitles the minister of Interior to assign the refugees’ place of residence, approve their leave, and he may order their exodus if they have breached the national security or obstructed the national political interests. Moreover, if a refugee’s leave lasted more than a month, he must get the approval of the Iraqi president, all according to the above mentioned law.²⁹ On the other hand, the Iraqi government issued on 26/11/2008 a resolution that granted Iraqi citizenship to the children of Iraqi women who are married to Palestinians.

Concluding, it seems as though the conditions of the Palestinians in Iraq are heading towards some stability. It is predicted that their numbers will remain in range, albeit with few exceptions for cases of immigration attempts to western countries; especially after the noticeable calm down of violence in Iraq.

7. General Comparisons between the Palestinian Populations

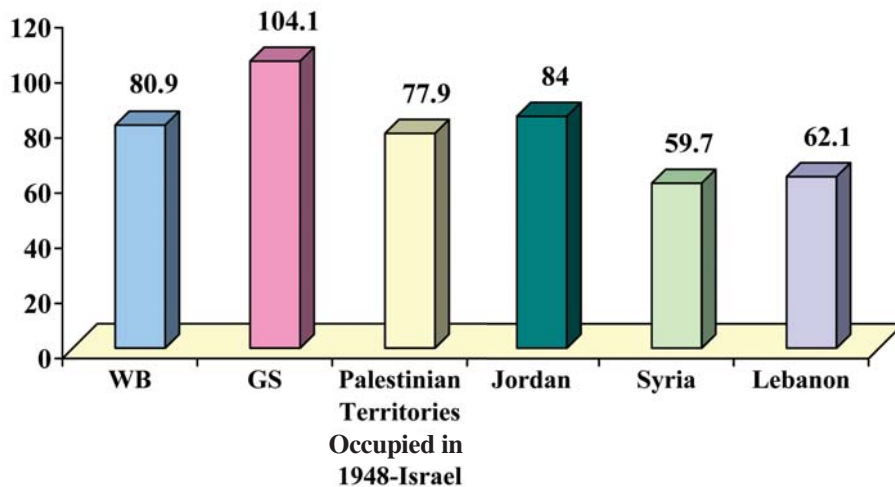
Table 5/7 presents and compares the main demographic indicators for the Palestinians in the year 2007 (unless otherwise, the year is stated in brackets).

**Table 5/7: Selected Demographic Indicators for the Palestinians
According to their Place of Residence 2007³⁰**

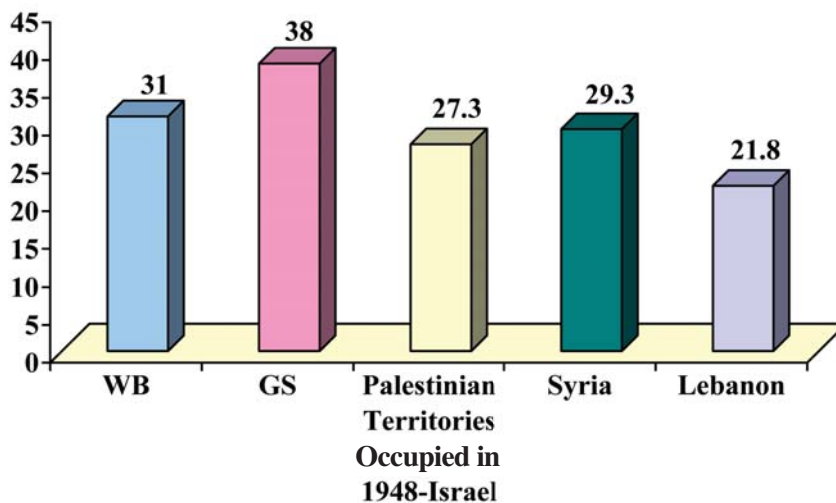
Indicator	WB	GS	WB and GS	Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel)	Jordan	Syria	Lebanon
Percentage of individuals aged 15 years or less	41.3	48.3	44.1	40 (2008)	35.9	33.1	32.9
Percentage of individuals aged 65 years or more	3.4	2.7	3	3.1 (2008)	5.2	4.3	5.4
Dependency rate (per 100 individuals 15-64 years of age category)	80.9	104.1	89.1	77.9	84	59.7	62.1
Gender ratio (males per 100 females)	103.1	103	103	103.6 (2008)	-	100.4	98.4
Crude birth rate (newborn per 1000 inhabitants)	31	38	33.6	27.3	-	29.3	21.8
Crude death rate (death per 1000 inhabitants)	4.1	4	4.1	2.8	-	2.8 (2006)	-
Total fertility rate (births per woman)	4.2 (2006)	5.4 (2006)	4.6 (2006)	3.62	3.3	3.64	3
Natural population growth	2.7	3.4	3	2.51	-	2.65	-
Average family size	5.5	6.5	5.8	5	5.1	4.9	3.8 (2008)

N.B. (-) means data is not available

Dependency Rate in Major Palestinian Communities 2007



Crude Birth Rate in Major Palestinian Communities 2007



Using the above statistical data (table 5/7), the following should be remarked:

- The crude birth rates are the highest among the Palestinians in GS and the WB, and the lowest among the Palestinians in Lebanon and Israel. This, in particular, constitutes additional demographic pressure on the Strip, which

already suffers from the highest population density in the world, of 3,881 individuals per one km².

- The crude death rates not only remained high in the WB and GS, but increased compared to 2006 rates. This is mainly a result of the Israeli occupation and its continuous assaults and measures, and its racist discriminatory policies that have lasted decades, especially the murders it commits.
- The natural population growth rates (the difference between the birth and death rates) has dropped in the WB and GS. Yet, they are still considered high especially in GS.
- The Palestinian society is a young society. Nonetheless, its age distribution exhibits some remarkable differences depending on the area of residence/refuge. The percentage of population under 15 years of age is the highest in GS, followed by the WB, where the dependency rates remain high; and this adds huge economical burdens on the family providers in the WB and GS. The dependency rates observed were the lowest in Syria and Lebanon. The highest percentage of elderly (65 years of age or older) was observed in Lebanon, and the lowest was observed in GS.
- The crude birth rate in Syria and Lebanon has changed significantly, increasing from 2006 estimates as indicated by the more recent survey carried out. In Syria, the crude birth rate increased from an estimated 18 births per one thousand inhabitants in 2006 to 29.3 in 2007; while in Lebanon it increased from an estimated 16.3 births per one thousand inhabitants in 2006 to 21.8 in 2007.
- There is an obvious and continuous decrease in the average family size in the WB and GS compared to previous years. Despite this, GS has maintained the highest average, estimated in 2007 by 6.5 members per family, whereby the average in the WB was 5.5 members. The smallest averages were observed among the Palestinian families in Lebanon and Syria.
- The total fertility rate is witnessing a slow decrease in comparison to previous years, especially in the WB and GS; knowing that this rate apparently has increased in Lebanon and Syria, compared to previous years, but this is most probably attributed to reasons concerning the statistical methodology of the source of the data.

Third: The Palestinian Refugees

The task of precisely determining the number of Palestinian refugees continues to be amongst the hardest challenges faced by researchers, research centres, and survey institutions. This is attributed to many reasons mentioned earlier in the Palestinian Strategic Report, the most important among these reasons being: the dispersion of the Palestinians across the globe, and consequently living under the rule of different governments that deal with them in contrasting ways, whether it be statistically, politically, socially, or economically; the common mistake of limiting the definition of refugees to those who were forced to leave Palestine in 1948, and thus excluding other Palestinians who were also forced to leave Palestine and prohibited the right of return to their land, including Palestinians from the WB and GS; estimating refugees based on the number of refugees living outside Palestine, thus excluding the immense refugee population in GS and the WB, and as well the refugees (technically internally displaced) who still live within the Israeli geographic borders. In addition, registering in the UNRWA records is optional, so there are many Palestinian refugees who haven't registered their names, either because they don't need the agency's assistance, or because they live in areas where the agency's services are not provided, or for political reasons, or other reasons.

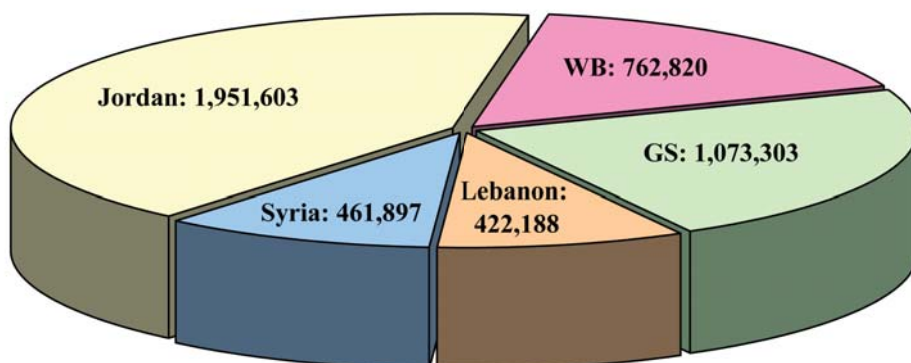
Regardless of the UNRWA statistics, estimates of Palestinian refugee population worldwide indicate it to be approximately 7.4 million Palestinians, i.e. around 70% of the total Palestinian population that was estimated by 10.6 millions by the end of 2008. The Palestinian refugee population is distributed by 5.5 millions living outside historical Palestine, 1.73 million refugees living in the WB and GS, and about 150 thousand displaced Palestinians living in the territories occupied in 1948. Although these figures are rough estimates that might include some statistical overlapping especially with regards to the refugees in the WB and GS who have left for various reasons but maintained their permits that allow them to return to the WB and GS; these estimates are more reliable than the figures provided by the UNRWA, in being nearer to the actual figures and more precise. Therefore, we refer to the UNRWA figures with much reservation when it comes to refugees, although it sometimes presents an important source of information in specific places such as GS, WB, and Syria.

Table 6/7 presents estimates of UNRWA registered refugees at its areas of operation, as provided by the agency:

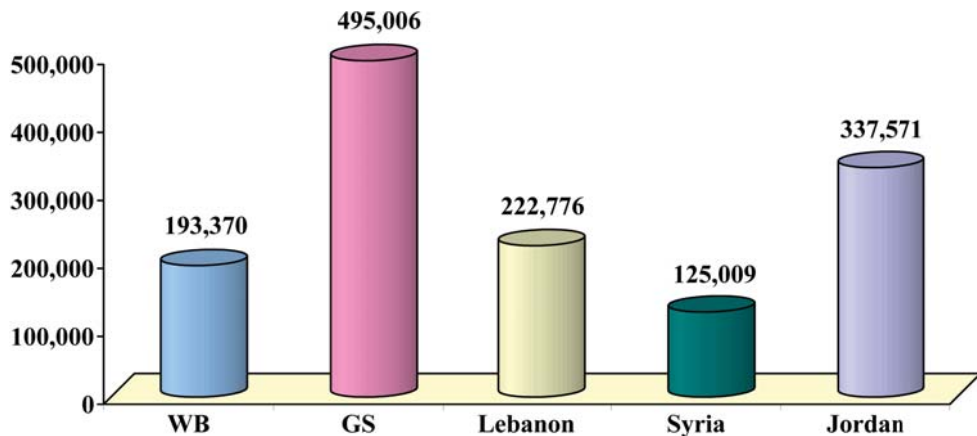
Table 6/7: Numbers of Individuals, Births, and Families of the Palestinian Refugees Registered with UNRWA in its Regions of Operation as of 31/12/2008³¹

Region	Individuals	Births (30/6/2008)	Average family size (2006)	Average family size (30/6/2008)	Families (30/6/2008)	Camps	Individuals in camps	% of individuals living in camps (2006)	% of individuals living in camps (2008)
WB	762,820	8,510	4	3.8	196,894	19	193,370	25.8	25.3
GS	1,073,303	24,972	4.6	4.5	233,825	8	495,006	47	46.1
Lebanon	422,188	3,524	3.9	3.8	110,026	12	222,776	52.9	52.8
Syria	461,897	8,371	4.2	4.1	111,419	9	125,009	26.6	27.1
Jordan	1,951,603	26,389	5.1	5	387,992	10	337,571	17.7	17.3
Total	4,671,811	71,766	4.6	4.4	1,040,156	58	1,373,732	29.8	29.4

Estimates of Palestinian Refugees Registered with UNRWA in its Areas of Operation as of 31/12/2008



Estimates of Palestinian Refugees Living in Camps and Registered with UNRWA in its Areas of Operation as of 31/12/2008



Referring to the previous table, we notice that the number of refugees registered in the five areas where the UNRWA operates, as of 31/12/2008, is about 4.67 million refugees. Of these 4.67 millions, about 41.8% live in Jordan, 39.3% live in the Occupied Palestinian Territories of 1967 (divided into 23% in GS and 16.3% in the WB), and the remaining 19% are registered in Syria and Lebanon.

We also notice that in 2008 the percentage of those living in Palestinian refugee camps is about 29.4% among the total UNRWA registered refugee population, which is slightly less than that of 2006. Moreover, the percentage of those living in refugee camps in Lebanon and GS is higher than that of any other region.

We also take note that the average family size here doesn't actually represent the extended families that live together in one house, but rather identifies the family as the unit to which an independent UNRWA family card is given. Therefore, it isn't strange that the average family size is smaller than the average household. And we notice that the average family size has been slightly decreasing with time, consistently across all regions of UNRWA's operation, where the total average has decreased from 4.6 members in 2006 to 4.4 members in 2008.

When considering the number of registered refugees in the past 37 year, i.e. between the years 1970 and 2007, we find that the UNRWA registered refugee population has increased from one million and 425,219 refugees in mid 1970, to four million and 618,141 refugees by mid 2008. Thus, calculating the stable average annual population growth rate for the registered refugee population in the

mentioned period, it is found to be around 3.2% annually; and by using this rate and assuming it to be stable for the future coming years, as it remained so over a long period of time, it is predicted that the number of registered refugees will double in about 22 years. Due to the stability in the annual population growth rate, it is possible to be confident in the 3.2% annual population growth rate estimate for the Palestinian refugee population worldwide.

Fourth: Population Growth Trends

The provided demographic indicators haven't changed from what was published in the 2007 Strategic Report, where the fertility, death, and immigration are considered the essential elements of change and population growth for any country or region. As for immigration, it doesn't affect the estimates concerning the total Palestinian population in the world, but it does affect their distribution in the world and the place in which they reside. Therefore, the factors affecting the population growth trends are actually the fertility and death rates and trends of the Palestinian communities in the world.

Statistics published by the PCBS point out that the fertility rates in GS and the WB have dropped during 1997-2007, from an average of 6.04 births per woman in 1997 to an estimated 4.6 births per woman in 2006.³²

When comparing the fertility rates of the WB and GS, remarkable differences are observed; where the aforementioned statistical source indicates that the total fertility rate in the WB has dropped from 5.6 births in 1997 to 4.2 births in 2006, whereas in GS it dropped from 6.9 births to 5.4 births during the same period.

The annual population growth rate of the Palestinians in the WB and GS has dropped from 3.8% in 1997 to 3% in 2007. This was accompanied by a decrease in crude birth rates from 42.7 births per one thousand inhabitants in 1997, to 33.6 births per one thousand inhabitants in 2007.

As for the Palestinian population in the world, who were estimated by 10.6 millions at the end of 2008, in comparison to 10.35 millions at the end of 2007; their annual population growth rate has been estimated by 2.5%. Therefore, the annual average growth rate of 2.5% can be used to estimate the number of Palestinians in the world, keeping in mind that this rate differs between one area

and another. And based on this assumption, it is predicted that the Palestinian population in the world will double by 2036, and become 21.2 million people.

As for the WB and GS, assuming that the net immigration is zero, the annual growth rate has dropped between 1997 and 2007 from 3.6% in the WB to 2.53%, and in GS from 4.1% to 3.32%. Thus keeping with our assumption of zero net immigration, we could conclude that despite the decrease in the predicted annual growth rate, there is a continuous increase in inhabitants and the population density in GS, at a relatively larger rate than the WB; which will eventually lead to having a larger percentage of the Palestinian population living in the Strip.

Fifth: Argumentation Regarding the Estimates of the Palestinians within Historical Palestine

The demographic struggle in Palestine has never been as serious and intense as it is today. The demographic factor has been, whether implicitly or explicitly, behind all the Israeli practices and measures, of waging wars or constructing the apartheid wall, or destroying houses or confiscating lands; and in internal Israeli policies and laws. And there are no lodges exist, whether secret or public, which do not interweave demographic conspiracies against the Palestinian people by all available means, known ones or hidden. Earlier Strategic Reports of 2005, 2006, and 2007 have shed lights on some Israeli plans and conspiracies against the “Palestinian Demographic Threat”. This label is employed by the Israelis in two senses; first, to emphasize that the Palestinians are a minority, therefore they must either accept what the Jewish majority imposes or should be subject to transfer or genocide. The second sense is saying that the Palestinians form a demographic bomb that would explode if left “untreated”, and thus all means should be taken to displace the Palestinians by making their lives in Israel worse off economically and socially; and both senses have the same objective.

Some data published on the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) website, mentions that the population statistics confirm that the Palestinians living in historical Palestine have actually exceeded the Israelis demographically; where at the beginning of May 2008, the population of Israel was estimated by seven million and 112,359, among whom five million and 433,842 are Jews, one

million and 137,977 are Muslims, 149,360 are Christians, and 113,798 are Druze. The site also points out that the actual number of Jews in historical Palestine, including the number of settlers in the WB, Eastern Jerusalem, and Golan Heights, doesn't exceed four million and 733,842 Jews. While estimates of the Palestinian population residing in the WB and GS estimate it by around four million and 149,173 people, divided by one million and 537,269 in GS and two million and 611,904 in the WB including Jerusalem. Thus when adding the number of Arabs, i.e. Muslims, Christians, and Druze, inside Israel (a total of one million and 401,135) to the Palestinians in the WB and GS, the total number of Palestinians in historical Palestine would be estimated by five million and 550,308 people, which means the Palestinian population does exceed the Jewish population.³³

Being very important to Israel, the demographic issue was brought up for discussion at the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee in the Israeli Knesset, both secretly and in public in 2001. It was also discussed at the Herzliya Conference more than once, where many suggestions were made to deal with it.³⁴ With time, it is becoming more obvious that the issue of increase in the Arab population in the Hebrew state has become an obsession to Israeli politicians, where the idea of transforming Israel into a binational state has dominated the negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis during the peace talks in 2008. The Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, has warned against the growing calls within the international community for a binational state if no agreement was reached; making it clear that “an agreement would lead to international recognition of Israel's borders in the context of a two-state solution”;³⁵ In the same context, President Shimon Peres, regarded the right of return of the Palestinian refugees as demographic suicide, and that will mean also that Israel will not be a Jewish state.³⁶

By observing the Israeli political discourse,³⁷ academic statements,³⁸ and practical measures to deal with the Arab population increase in historical Palestine in general, or specifically in the Hebrew state, the issue of decreasing the Arab existence in Israel surfaces as a top priority Israeli concern on the political level. This has led all Israelis, regardless of their political or religious ideology, to seriously call for exchanging lands of Arab majority currently under their rule, with some lands in the WB where there are settlements and Jewish populations;³⁹ and this is what the Israel is doing by building the separation wall.

Moreover now, it is expected that the issue of “Jewish identity of the Israeli state” will continue to take additional space on the list of Israeli priorities, after the formation of a government headed by Benjamin Netanyahu, and the participation of right-wing extremist parties such as Yisrael Beiteinu, led by Avigdor Lieberman who calls for the exodus of the Arab Palestinians from their homeland currently Israel. It is expected that the Israeli measures to further assert the “Jewish identity of Israel” will increase on a political level by trying to get a Palestinian recognition of the “Jewish identity of Israel”, and on a social and geographical level by increasing the Jewish immigration to Israel, or by tightening the grip on the Arabs under their authority, to worsen off their conditions through various discriminatory and racist citizenship laws, many of which had already been passed by the Israeli Knesset. Such laws are considered a clear breach of the minority rights, which are provided for in the International and Humanitarian law.

Sixth: The Israeli Pressures and Measures to Affect the Palestinian Demographics

The year 2008 has witnessed increased discussion of what is called the “Jewish identity of the Israeli State”, where it became a common topic in the Israeli and global media especially in context of the peaceful settlement, and in the statements of some major international players like the USA and France; in relation to issues like the final status agreement, the role of the Arab minority in Israel, the implicit calls by some Israeli leaders to expel them from their lands to the WB and GS, and in addition to the continued policies of confiscating their lands or preventing them from building on their lands, demolishing houses on the claim that there are no building permits, and marginalizing them and tearing them away from their Palestinian people and the wider Arab and Muslim nation. Israelis have been exerting all sorts of pressure and taking all possible measures to affect the Palestinian demographics within the green line.

Affecting the demographics is not restricted to the Palestinians in Israel. The Palestinians in the WB and GS have suffered also from similar Israeli policies. Closures and movement restriction policy, according to OCHA, have been increasingly adopted by the Israeli occupation authorities in the WB and GS, to prevent the Palestinians from entering Israel to work daily, and to restrict the

Palestinian imports and exports; thus in both cases and since the beginning of the second *Intifadah* in 2000, the unemployment rates of the Palestinians have increased; but more importantly the humanitarian conditions have deteriorated especially that the food insecurity rates that reached 34% (1.3 million Palestinians), with additional 12% at risk of suffering from food insecurity.⁴⁰

It is also clear, based on the new study carried out by Nadav Shragai, that around 50 thousand Palestinians have moved to the west side of the separation wall in Jerusalem. These Palestinians moved to Palestinian neighborhoods such as Shu‘fat, Beit Hanina, al-Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan, and the Old City of Jerusalem; which increased the population density and accordingly housing rents. Some Palestinians also have resided near Jewish neighborhoods, where they bought or rented houses from Jews, because they feared losing some rights or privileges, and the ease of access to reach their jobs in Israel (only Palestinians in Jerusalem city can work in Israel since they are given the status of “permanent residents” in the city). The study also explores the possibility of the transformation of some Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem into border neighborhoods if the city is divided, thus leading to the departure of thousands of Jews from the city.⁴¹

The Christian Science Monitor newspaper revealed in a report dated 10/6/2008 that Israel is expelling Arabs from their homes in Jaffa to settle Jewish immigrants in their places. It added that the Arab neighborhood in the city have turned into Jewish neighborhoods over the past few decades, as well as al-‘Ajami neighborhood, since both neighborhoods have a sea view; which makes them tempting to the new Jewish immigrants. The report points out that Israel had ignored and marginalized Arab neighborhoods in Jaffa for forty years, but have just begun to show great interest in these neighborhoods, which are witnessing today many renovations and building projects; whereby in the same context, the Israeli Authorities have expelled more than 500 Arab families in the past few months.⁴²

Another report, issued by two Israeli rights advocate organizations B’Tselem and HaMoked-Center for the Defence of the Individual, stated that Israel is taking unilateral measures to institutionalize and perpetuate a new factual and legal reality of separation between residents of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The report warned that the Israeli Authorities are infringing the residents’ rights and impeding the possibility that the Palestinian people will realize their right to self determination. It also emphasized that “Israel is turning Palestinian residents of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) into ‘illegal aliens’ in their own homes.”

The report also added that:

Since the beginning of the current intifada, Israel has taken various measures designed to separate the WB and the GS, to split the Palestinian population into two separate entities and to cut those off from each other. This policy escalated in the past year with a new requirement imposed on Palestinians whose registered address is in the GS, to hold a permit in order to be present in the WB, and with the removal of such persons from the WB and defining them 'illegal aliens'.

Concluding that "the new permit regime is an unprecedented, legally baseless move, by which Israel is turning Palestinian residents of the OPT into 'illegal aliens' in their own homes"; pointing out that since November 2007, the Israeli Authorities has demanded that a resident of the Gaza Strip who is present in the West Bank is required to hold a permit known by Israelis as "permit to remain in Judea and Samaria".⁴³

The Research and Documentation unit in the Jerusalem Center for Social and Economic Rights (JCSER) stated that the survey teams, employed by the Israeli Ministry of Interior for carrying out a population census, have finished their theoretical and practical training and are expected to begin the actual census procedure as soon as the Jewish holidays end, with the planned finishing date being maximum by early 2009. The city of Jerusalem has recently witnessed a state of confusion and chaos amongst Palestinian Jerusalemites after the Interior Ministry's teams raided citizens' houses in different parts of the city to conduct a random census for the Palestinian residents of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem center however ruled out the possibility that the survey will diverge from the Israeli policy line of more land and less Arabs, noting that Israeli authorities might employ statistics to serve Israeli policies of judaizing Jerusalem and occupying what remained in the city, counterfeiting its history and culture, and denying the rooted Palestinian rights in the city although they have owned all the city and although not a single Jewish individual was residing in East Jerusalem before 1967, when the Israeli occupation forcefully confiscated 86% of their lands where 180 thousand Jewish settlers reside today; all statistics according to the 2007 Statistical Yearbook of Jerusalem by PCBS.⁴⁴

Seventh: The Palestinian Immigration and Brain-Drain

The preliminary results of the survey of the immigration of the Palestinian workforce in Ramallah, al-Bireh, and Petunia for 2008 indicate that the Palestinians living in these areas tend to immigrate abroad, and this somehow generally reflects the wider immigration trends for the WB and GS populations. It indicates that 7.3% of those aged 15 years or above do consider immigration outside the WB and GS; these were divided as 63.8% males and 36.2% females; 53.8% married, and 43.7% have never been married; and 55.7% of them are employed while only 15.9% are unemployed.

As for the countries most preferable as destination, approximately half of those considering immigration among the surveyed population mentioned the USA, while the Arab Gulf countries came second being preferred by 14.1%, then Europe by 13.1%.

The reasons mentioned for considering immigration were primarily related to improving the personal/family financial status (mentioned by 72.9% of those considering immigration), followed by the prevailing political and the security conditions (21.1%).⁴⁵

On the other hand, statistics for emigration among the Palestinians from the WB and GS indicate that: in 10% of families, at least one family member has emigrated in the indicated period from the WB and GS. These emigrants were distributed according to their gender as 80.4% males and 19.6% females; and mainly youth, where 48.6% of the emigrants were aged between 15-29 years.

Around two thirds of the aforementioned emigrants (65.9%) did emigrate in the past eight years (between 2000 and 2008).

The majority of the immigrants (71%) immigrated to the USA; second destination preference was Jordan, to where 6.5% of the immigrant population immigrated. The reasons mentioned for immigration were not different than the above mentioned, where 52.9% of those who immigrated did so to improve their financial situation, and the second reason was to study and to conduct scientific research (23.2%).

Although the size of this phenomenon hasn't yet constituted a serious threat to the Palestinian internal demographics, emigration from the WB and GS should not

be overlooked; awareness should be raised about its risks to limit its future negative impact on the region. The Palestinian policy maker should consider all possible measures that help eliminate this phenomenon or at the very least limit its effects and analyze then tackle its reasons; Although the majority of the Palestinians who leave return back later and settle down in their homeland.

The most obvious reasons behind this phenomenon is the Israeli occupation and suppression, especially in the past seven years since *al-Aqsa Intifadah*; in addition to what happened during the last two years 2006-2007; the siege imposed on the Palestinians since Hamas electoral victory, and the internal political schism between Fatah and Hamas; that eventually led to the current situation of almost complete isolation between the WB and GS, and heightened the imposed siege on GS; added to the factors of seeking security and suitable employment opportunities, impossible under the strict and inhumane occupation measures; all in an atmosphere of international pressures attempting at keeping the flame of internal Palestinian strife alive, to the favor of the Israeli interests of continued occupation, land confiscation and expulsion of Palestinians; and to cover up for the failure of global powers in finding and implementing a just solution to the Palestinian issue, and accordingly the failure of the foreign policies of global powers in the Middle East.

Eighth: The Palestinians Outside Palestine and the Right of Return

A careful reading of the negotiations track in the past ten years, and the numerous meetings and agreements that have been held in this context, reveals a stalemate situation that could be summarized in Annapolis conference and Bush's vision of a two-state solution, without setting any serious timeline commitment on behalf of Israel to end its occupation. With the UN Security Council adopting Annapolis as a reference point in its recent resolution, it is becoming more obvious that the Israeli interests are the only interests considered, i.e. giving Israel a green light to continue with its Judaizing activities in historical Palestine, including the WB and GS; and abandoning any discussion of final status issues related to Jerusalem, the right of return, and removing the WB settlements. On the contrary, settlement projects have expanded and accelerated, especially in Jerusalem, and

the occupation authorities continued with demolishing houses, confiscating lands and building the separation wall; thus misappropriating more Palestinian lands, isolating their inhabitants, and restricting their mobility and freedom of movement even to their very basic daily activities such as work and school.

The year 2008 has witnessed many activities and events held by the Palestinians abroad to emphasize their adherence to the right of return. The most prominent of these events was the Sixth Palestinians in Europe Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark on 3/5/2008 under the slogan “Sixty Years: And the Return is Nearer”, and with the participation of approximately seven thousand Palestinians.⁴⁶ The speeches made during the conference confirmed adherence to the right to return, where Majed al-Zeer, Conference director and the director-general of the Palestinian Return Centre in London, expressed his belief that the Palestinians are “getting closer to achieving their determined goal of returning to Palestine and ridding themselves of the occupation.” Al-Zeer emphasized the need to involve the Palestinian refugees inside and outside of Europe in the Palestinian decision making.⁴⁷ Ameer Makhoul, director of the Union of Arab Community Based Associations (*Ittijah*) stressed that the return is our -the Palestinians everywhere- project, that we will never give up.⁴⁸ The Palestinian Center for Justice in Sweden emphasized that the Palestinians Diaspora in Europe have realized that they are nearer to achieve their right to return to Palestine, as long as they have proved that time is incapable of making them give it up, thus sustaining the test of time, and maintaining their just cause, against all odds and planned conspiracies; according to the director of the Center, Sameer al-Jeraisy.⁴⁹

Later on, during the period 23-24/11/2008, The Arab International Congress for the Right of Return was held in Damascus under the theme “Return is a Right”, and with the participation of more than 4,500 delegates from 54 different countries in five continents. The congress included speeches by prominent Palestinian figures such as Faruq Qaddumi, Khalid Mish'al, and a number of politicians, intellectuals, and scholars; and workshops and discussion panels on the various aspects of the right of return. The forum concluded by issuing “International Declaration in Defence of the Palestinian Right of Return”. The declaration called for the activation of political, legal, economic and media instruments and methods to defend the right of return and disseminate its culture; and called upon all the institutions, organizations, and agencies to coordinate their efforts and contribute

to the mobilization of all available resources and power in order to realize a global consensus to implement the right of return.⁵⁰

In addition, President Mahmud ‘Abbas signed a binding document that provides for the adherence to the Palestinian refugees’ right of return, on a big poster entitled “we must return to our country”, while the document includes, we are determined on behalf of our people and nation, to remain committed to the right to return to our homeland; we know the destination, we walk with firm steps, and we declare that any agreement that doesn’t include our political, material and non-material rights is a void agreement, that can’t be binding to our people and should be resisted and firmly opposed.⁵¹

In a document they released marking six decades since the Palestinian Catastrophe, the Palestinians in Europe have reiterated the aforementioned statement, on believing they are getting nearer to achieve the right of return to their lands occupied in 1948, and their adherence to this right. They requested from the international community to help them achieve this right, i.e. to return to their lands from which they were forcefully expelled, and to receive appropriate compensation on all the material and mental damages and losses they and their following generations have suffered in the past 60 years.⁵²

Aljazeera Satellite Channel (JSC) carried out many polls, two of which were related to the right of return. The first poll showed that 88.3% of the participants do not support the relinquishment of the right of return in exchange for establishing a Palestinian state in the WB and GS; while the second poll indicated that 85.6% of the participants reject the idea of permanently settling in another country (and be given citizenship) and/or financial compensation in exchange for relinquishing the right of return.

Conclusion

It is obvious that the Palestinian population growth is in a state of constant decline compared to what it was in 1997. This is noticed as a drop in the fertility rate of the Palestinian woman and an increase in the percentage of population aged between 15-65, as well as a decrease in the percentage of population aged less than 14 years.

The Palestinian population growth is considered one of the major arenas of the Arab-Israeli conflict, as the Israeli officials can no more hide their serious concern and fear of the Palestinian demographic growth, not only of the Palestinians in Israel but also in the WB and GS. In this context, the year 2008 has witnessed Israeli attempts to promote an “alternative homeland” for the Palestinians. In addition, political and religious figures in Israel have expressed their fear of the drop in the number of Jewish immigrants that also affects the demographic balance in historical Palestine and tips the scale to the favor of the Palestinians.

But as it seems, the Israeli negotiator has realized the size of the threat posed by the Palestinian population growth, and is attempting to tackle the situation by taking various preventive measures to hinder it without affecting the Israeli demographics. The Israelis are more serious now than ever in discussing land exchange to get rid of the Palestinians living inside the Hebrew state. Nonetheless, all indicators affirm that the few coming years will witness a demographic dominance in historical Palestinian, to the favor of the Palestinians.

Endnotes

- ¹ See the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Shibbanah Head of PCBS Presents Statistics for the Year 2008 Closing (in Arabic), 31/12/2008, in: http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/end2008.pdf
- ² Figures of the PCBS indicate that the percentage of refugees among the WB and GS population is 44.6%; the editors of this volume adopted however the different figure (44.8%) because it aligns with the other statistics provided by the same source on the refugee percentage in each of the WB (30.9%) and GS (67.7%).
- ³ PCBS, Shibbanah Head of PCBS Presents Statistics for the Year 2008 Closing.
- ⁴ See PCBS, *Kitab Filastin al-Ihsa'i al-Sanawi Raqm "9"* (Palestine Statistical Yearbook Number "9") (Ramallah, Palestine: PCBS, December 2008), p. 231, in: http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_PCBS/Downloads/book1526.pdf
- ⁵ PCBS, Head of PCBS Presents the Final Results of the 2007 Census in the WB (in Arabic), 1/9/2008, in: http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/census_westbank_2007.pdf
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- ¹⁷ PCBS, Special Statistical Report on the Annual Commemoration of the *Nakba* (in Arabic), 13/5/2009, in: http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/nakba_61.pdf
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- ¹⁹ PCBS, Shibbanah Head of PCBS Presents Statistics for the Year 2008 Closing.
- ²⁰ See: <http://www.un.org/unrwa/arabic/PublicStat/pdf/uif-18.pdf>;
<http://www.un.org/unrwa/arabic/PublicStat/pdf/uif-16.pdf>;
and <http://www.un.org/unrwa/arabic/Refugees/pdf/TABLE1.PDF>
- ²¹ Ibid.
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- ²³ See: <http://www.un.org/unrwa/arabic/PublicStat/pdf/uif-18.pdf>;
<http://www.un.org/unrwa/arabic/PublicStat/pdf/uif-16.pdf>;
 and <http://www.un.org/unrwa/arabic/Refugees/pdf/TABLE1.PDF>
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- ²⁶ Al-Hurriyya electronic magazine, 13/12/2008.
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- ²⁸ *Al-Khaleej*, 4/11/2008.
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- ³⁸ Arnon Sofer, Tel-Aviv State Threatens Israel (in Arabic), Aljazeera.net, 21/6/2008, see: <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/32FF394A-77E4-413E-ACEF-41C6EE950120.htm>
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This Report

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2008 is the fourth in a series of annual resourceful scientific studies. This Report aims at monitoring the Palestinian issue through an informative and analytical approach. The Report covers the Palestinian internal political situation, the Israeli scene and the Israeli-Palestinian relations. It focuses on the Arab, Islamic, and International stances towards the Palestinian issue, in addition to the issues concerning the Land and holy sites. The Report also analyzes the Palestinian demographic and economic indicators. Hence, it provides a comprehensive meticulous reading of the current situation.

This Report is distinguished for its updated information till the end of 2008 and for its outstanding team of academics and experts.

Despite the heat and sensitivity of the issues discussed, the Report did its best endeavors to be professional, scientific and objective. Thus, this Report is an unequivocal addition to the area of the Palestinian studies.

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2008



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