

# The Palestinian Strategic Report 2007



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# Chapter Seven

## *The Palestinian Demographic Indicators*



# The Palestinian Demographic Indicators

## *Introduction*

The year 2007 witnessed the completion of the second national census of the Palestinian people in all territories, which are under occupation by Israel since 1967 except for the settlements. The Palestinian people, both inside and outside Palestine with all their diverse backgrounds, are still firmly resolved to defend their right of complete independence, and complete sovereignty over their land, resources and borders. They are also determined to achieve their right of return to their homeland, despite oppressive Israeli policies of expulsion, besiegement and starvation. Day after day, their belief grows stronger that regional peace will not become a reality as long as the Palestinians are deprived of their national rights and their legitimate demand to return to their homeland.

## *First: The Palestinian Population Worldwide*

In 2007, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) conducted its second national population census in the WB and the GS, including Jerusalem governorate. The results showed that the total population of Palestinians in these areas until 31/12/2007 was about 3.77 million. This figure is 244 thousand less than the estimated figure for the same year of about 4.02 million, and about 179 thousand less than the estimates for 2006. The PCBS was expecting a rise in the Palestinian population by the end of 2006 to bring the total number to about 3.95 million.<sup>1</sup> A number of factors explain the difference between the expected and the de facto figures of the Palestinian population. There are forced migration of Palestinians from the WB and GS due to Israeli policy; the continuous Israeli mass aggression against all Palestinians; the Palestinians' suffering under the unjust besiegement of the Separation Wall, especially in Jerusalem governorate; depriving the Palestinians from work opportunities; the systematic economic harassment and the deliberate indiscriminate acts of starvation, particularly in the GS.

The migration of Palestinians from one country to another would not lead to an increase in the number of Palestinians living abroad. Nevertheless, it is a fact that Palestinians are migrating to other countries because of repressive Israeli policy. However, Palestinians are also returning to Palestine as well. Hence, we notice that despite the rise in the number of Palestinians over that of the Jews, the Israeli policy of aggression and humiliation achieves its racial objectives and de-balances the demographic structure of Palestinians. The situation will force more Palestinians to leave their homeland for Arab and non-Arab countries. The result is that despite the initial plan to reside in these countries on a temporary basis; many Palestinians opt to choose their host country as their permanent home. Therefore, they, instead of demanding to return to their original homeland (Palestine), opt for procedures of seeking citizenship and permanent residency in their host countries. The following table shows the estimates of the number of Palestinians in the world, according to their places of residence at the end of the year 2007.

**Table 1/7: Palestinian Population Estimate according to their Place of Residence until 31/12/2007<sup>2</sup>**

Place of Residence	Population estimate	Percentage (%)
<b>WB &amp; GS</b>	3,770,606	36.5
<b>Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel)</b>	1,184,468	11.5
<b>Jordan</b>	3,102,463	30
<b>Other Arab countries</b>	1,690,709	16.3
<b>Other foreign countries</b>	593,580	5.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,341,824</b>	<b>100</b>

Palestinians in historical Palestine are divided into two parts. Those who live in the territories occupied in 1948, i.e., Israel, and they are about 1.18 million. And those who live in the territories occupied in 1967, which are composed of the WB and the GS, as well as the part of Jerusalem governorate that Israel compellingly annexed, and they amount to about 3.77 million. It is worth mentioning, here,

that Israel illegally counts the number of Syrians who live in the occupied Golan Heights as among its citizens.

Most of the Palestinians in the Diaspora live in neighboring Arab countries, especially Jordan. The number of Palestinians in Jordan alone amounts to about 3.1 million. They constitute nearly a quarter of the total number of Palestinians in the world. The majority of Palestinians in Jordan have become Jordanian citizens. Yet, some statistics show that the number of Palestinians in Jordan is higher than the figure mentioned above.

The remaining Palestinians residing in Arab countries and in the Diaspora constitute 22% of the total number of Palestinians in the world. Most of them live in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, the Arab Gulf countries and in non-Arab countries, particularly the USA, Latin America, Canada and Britain.

## *Second: Demographic Features of the Palestinians*

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

Preliminary estimates for the year 2007 indicated that the number of Palestinians in the WB and GS on 1/12/2007 is about 3.76 million, with about 2.35 million living in the WB (i.e., 62%) and about 1.42 million in the GS (i.e., 38%).

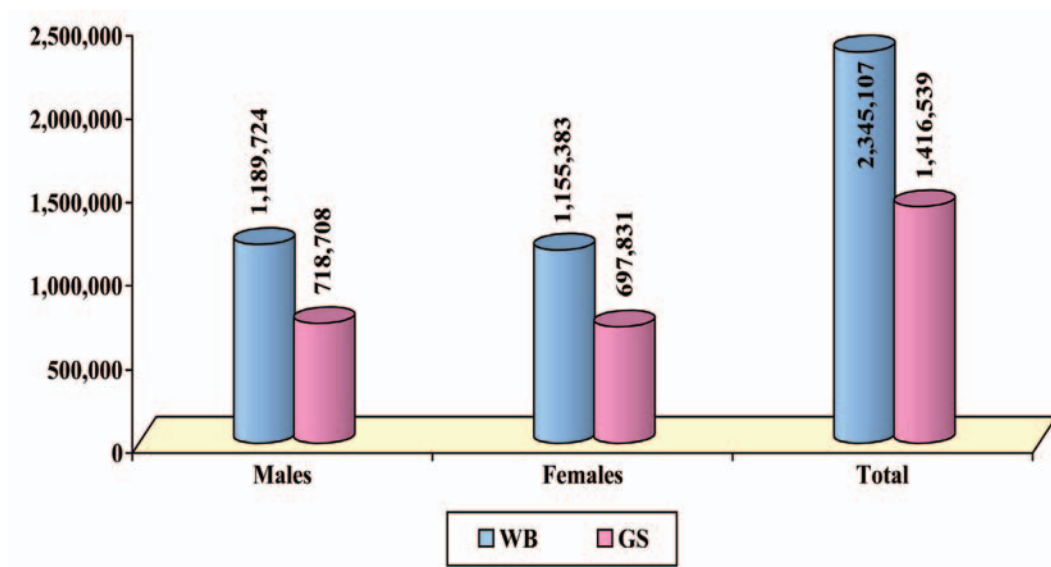
Primary findings also showed that the number of Palestinian males totaled 1.91 million while the number of females is 1.85 million; hence, the gender ratio—number of males per 100 females—is 103. This ratio is no different for Palestinians in the WB and GS.

Statistics also showed that the average Palestinian family size is 5.8 members, with a small variation between Palestinians living in the WB (5.5 members) and those who live in the GS (6.5 members). The total number of Palestinian families is 647 thousand; 428 thousand of whom live in the WB and 219 thousand live in the GS. The average Palestinian family size in 1997 was 6.4 members. Despite the drop in the fertility rate among Palestinians, the growth in the number of Palestinian families is still increasing.

**Table 2/7: Population and Family Count in WB and GS until 1/12/2007<sup>3</sup>**

Region	Population count			No. of families	Average family size
	Males	Females	Total		
<b>WB</b>	1,189,724	1,155,383	2,345,107	427,533	5.5
<b>GS</b>	718,708	697,831	1,416,539	219,222	6.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,908,432</b>	<b>1,853,214</b>	<b>3,761,646</b>	<b>646,755</b>	<b>5.8</b>

**Population Count in WB and GS until 1/12/2007**



Palestinians live in 16 governorates, five of them are in the GS and the other 11 are in the WB. Hebron is the largest governorate in terms of population. Nearly 551 thousand Palestinians lived there at the end of 2007. Gaza comes next with a population of 496 thousands. Jerusalem is the third largest governorate with an estimated population of 363 thousand. The smallest populated governorates are Jericho (42 thousands), Tubas (49 thousands) and Salfit (59 thousands).

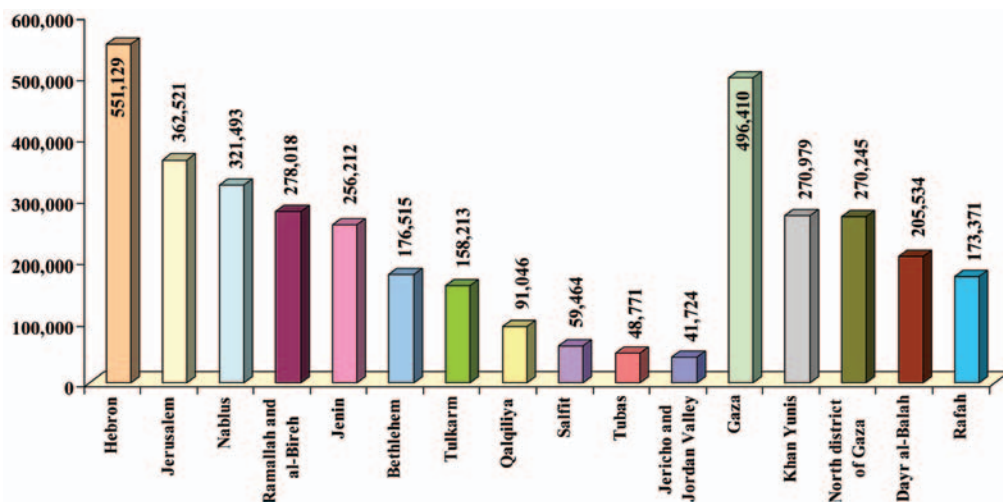


**Table 3/7: Population Count, Average Family Size and Gender Ratio for the Years 1997 and 2007 in the Governorates of WB and GS<sup>4</sup>**

Governorate	Population count		Average family size		Gender ratio	
	1997	2007	1997	2007	1997	2007
<b>WB</b>	<b>1,873,476</b>	<b>2,345,107</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>103.2</b>	<b>103</b>
Jenin	203,026	256,212	5.9	5.3	103.8	103
Tubas	36,609	48,771	6.1	5.3	103.1	102.8
Tulkarm	134,110	158,213	5.8	5.3	102.2	101.5
Qalqiliya	72,007	91,046	6.1	5.6	105.7	104.7
Salfit	48,538	59,464	6	5.4	103.6	103.2
Nablus	261,340	321,493	5.9	5.4	103.3	102.3
Ramallah and al-Bireh	213,582	278,018	5.9	5.3	100.4	101.2
Jerusalem	328,601*	362,521	5.4	5.2	102.1	103.3
Jericho and Jordan Valley	32,713	41,724	6.2	5.5	101.7	100.2
Bethlehem	137,286	176,515	5.8	5.3	104.8	103.9
Hebron	405,664	551,129	6.7	6.1	104.9	104.1
<b>GS</b>	<b>1,022,207</b>	<b>1,416,539</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>103.1</b>	<b>103</b>
North district of Gaza	183,373	270,245	7.2	6.7	103.7	103.7
Gaza	367,388	496,410	6.9	6.5	103.6	103.5
Dayr al-Balah	147,877	205,534	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	173,371	6.9	6.5	102	101.8
<b>Total (WB &amp; GS)</b>	<b>2,895,683</b>	<b>3,761,646</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>103.2</b>	<b>103</b>

\* The number in this division of Jerusalem governorate, which Israel forcibly annexed, is an estimate.

## Number of Population according to the Governorate 2007



The Palestinian society is very young. The surveys of the PCBS indicate that 52.2% of Palestinians in the WB and GS are young, under the age of 18. This means that more than half of the Palestinian community is under the age of 18.

Therefore, the number of Palestinians, for many years to come, will continue to increase despite the regression in the fertility rate in the last few years. Palestinians, under the age of 15 represent 45.5% of the total population, while the elderly constitute only 3%. This is not different from that in 2006, when people under the age of 15 constituted 45.7% of the population. This will ensure a relative growth in the ratio of dependency. The ratio of dependency is an indicator of the economic burdens that the productive sector of the society has to bear, i.e., the ratio of people in the age of dependency (less than 15 and more than 64) to the people in working age (15–64) multiplied by 100.

The average fertility rate of Palestinians in general is 4.6 children per woman. In the WB, the rate is 4.2 children per woman, and it is 5.4 children per woman in the GS. This rate is not likely to drop significantly in the coming few years.

The average rate of normal delivery of babies by Palestinian women between the age of 15 and 54 is 4.7 babies, and this rate varies slightly between the WB women (4.6 babies) and GS women (five babies). However, there are no significant differences on the governorate level in the WB and GS.

**Table 4/7: Registered Living Babies in WB and GS 1999–2006<sup>5</sup>**

Region	1999		2001		2003		2005		2006	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>WB</b>	60,546	60.3	62,535	60.3	61,488	57.7	61,194	55.8	52,265	51.8
<b>GS</b>	39,695	39.7	41,245	39.7	44,867	42.3	48,245	44.2	48,588	48.2
<b>WB &amp; GS</b>	<b>100,241</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>103,780</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>106,355</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>109,439</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100,853</b>	<b>100</b>

The mortality rate of nurslings in the WB and GS reached 25.3 per thousand babies. The rate in the GS reached its peak (28.8 babies) when compared to its counterpart in the WB (22.9 babies). The mortality rate of Palestinian children under the age of five reached 28.2 per thousand children; in the WB, the rate is 25.7 children, and in the GS, it is 31.7 children.

It is important to note that the Palestinian boys under the age of five have a lesser chance to live in comparison to baby girls. In the Palestinian (PCBS) issued in May 2008, Lu'ay Shabaneh noted that in the past decade no significant efforts whatsoever were made to tackle the problem of mortality among nurslings and children less than five years of age.<sup>6</sup>

The rate of school dropouts among youth between 15 and 29 years of age in the WB and GS is 29.4% for males and 12.6% for females. Statistics showed that 29.5% of the males in this age group have poor educational learning attainment as the main reason for them to stop learning. While 25.1% of the females drop out of school because their families are unable to pay tuition fees.

More than half of the Palestinian women are married, only 1.3% is widowed, 1.1% is divorced, 0.2% is separated, and nearly 39.3% of them are single. There is a proportion between the age of married Palestinian women and the number of marriages; the older the age range the higher the marriage rate. For example, the percentage of married women between the age of 15 and 19 is 8.9%, while 47% of women between the age of 20 and 24 are married.

The stability of marriage depends on its sustainability and continuity without divorce or widowhood. The present situation indeed reflects the coherence and solidarity of social relations, the good upbringing of children and familial unity

in Palestinian society. In general, the institution of marriage in Palestinian society is both successful and secure. Only a small ratio of marital relationships ends in divorce, separation or widowhood. It is normal that the percentage of widowhood rises with the advancement of age. The ratio of widows between the age of 45 and 49 is 6.8%. In general, the ratios of married and single women are the same in the WB and GS.<sup>7</sup>

With regard to the actual number of cases of marriage and divorce in the WB and GS, the survey of the PCBS indicated that the number of marriages rose from 23,492 in 1997 to 28,233 in 2006. However, the Crude Marriage Rate (CMR) dropped from 8.4 per thousand people in 1997 to 7.3 per thousand people in 2006. During the *Intifadah*, the number of marriages noticeably had a severe drop reaching its lowest in 2002, with only a total number of 22,611 marriages.

The recorded cases of divorce numbered 3,449 in 1997 and 3,756 in 2006, though the index reached 4,211 cases in 2005. The Crude Divorce Rate (CDR) hit 1.2 cases per thousand people in 1997, and dropped to one case per thousand people in 2006.<sup>8</sup>

With regard to the structure of the Palestinian family, statistics reveal that the percentage of the nuclear family (consists of only the couples or of a couple with one or more children) is continually on the rise when compared to extended families. In 1997, the number of nuclear families reached 73.2% families, and in 2006, it reached 78.1%. In 2004, the demographic health survey showed that the number rose to 83%. The percentage of extended families in 1997 was 23%, and it dropped to 12.6% in 2004. The difference between the two figures in each year represents families consisting of one person or compound families, which were not significantly affected by social changes.<sup>9</sup>

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

The estimated figure of Palestinians in Israel at the end of 2007 was about 1.18 million. This was based on the rate of annual growth of 2.6% as calculated by the PCBS. This figure does not include the Arabs in the Syrian Golan Heights or the citizens in Zone J1 in Jerusalem governorate (i.e., East Jerusalem that Israel annexed). The figure also does not include the Arab Lebanese who moved

temporarily to live in Israel; as Israel counts these categories of people as its nationals under the generic term “Arab Israelis.”

Available statistics about Palestinians living in Israel<sup>10</sup> show that gender ratio is 103.6 males per 100 females; 40.6% of those Palestinians are under the age of 15. The percentage of 65 years old or above is 3.1%. The overall fertility rate is 3.68 births per woman in 2006, and the crude birth rate is 27.9 newborns per thousand inhabitants in the same year. The average size of the Palestinian family in Israel is 5.09 people.

The crude mortality rate was 2.8 deaths per one thousand inhabitants in 2006. The mortality rate among nurslings was 7.6 deaths per thousand newborns in 2006, while it was 8 deaths in 2005. The rate of illiteracy among Palestinians of 15 years of age or above in Israel in 2006 was 6.1%. The rate of Palestinians having bachelor degree or higher was 7.9%.

### **3. Jordan**

According to a PCBS survey estimate made in 2007, Palestinian residents in Jordan number 3.1 million. Nearly 1.9 million Palestinians are registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) on 31/12/2007 in Jordan. They constitute 377,300 families and 17.5% of them live in refugee camps.<sup>11</sup>

However, a significant number of Palestinians living in Jordan are unregistered as official refugees for various reasons. In fact, 13% of the residents of Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan are not registered with the UNRWA; Moreover, about 95% of Palestinians living in Jordan has a Jordanian nationality.

Nearly 41.7% of Palestinian residents in Jordan are under the age of 15 years. However, those who are 65 years of age or above constitute only 4.2%. The total fertility rate of Palestinians in Jordan is 4.6 births per woman, and the percentage of Palestinian dependency in Jordan was 85.4% in 2000.

### **4. Syria**

The number of Palestinians in Syria registered as refugees by the UNRWA on 31/12/2007 is 451,467, composed of 109,565 families.<sup>12</sup> As much as 26.9% of

them live in camps. According to statistical figures of the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics, 68.8% of them live in the capital, Damascus and its suburbs. However, it should be noted that the above figures do not include the Palestinians who fled to Syria in 1967 and 1970, as the majority of them are not registered with the UNRWA.<sup>13</sup>

According to the Palestinian statistics, the UNRWA registers 95.6% of Palestinians living in the refugee camps as official refugees. They also showed that 33.1% of the Palestinians are under the age of 15, and those who are 65 years of age or above constitute 4.3% of the population. The crude birth rate was 18 births per one thousand Palestinian residents, and the total fertility rate of Palestinian women in general was 2.4 births per woman in 2006, dropping from 3.5 in 2001. These sources also mentioned that the average size of the Palestinian family in Syria is about 4.9 members.

## **5. Lebanon**

The number of Palestinians registered by the UNRWA as official refugees in Lebanon on 31/12/2007 is about 413,962, composed of 108,676 families. Nearly 53% of Palestinians in Lebanon live in refugee camps. The average size of the Palestinian family in Lebanon is 3.8 members, and it is lower than its counterparts in Palestine, Jordan and Syria.

The total fertility rate of women is 2.3 children per woman in 2006, compared with 3.5 children per woman in 1999. As for the other features, there are not any available data yet for the year 2007. For every 100 females, there are 98.5 males. The percentage of people under the age of 15 is 33%, while those who are 65 years of age or above constitute 5.5% of the total population. The ratio of the elderly is comparatively high when compared with the number of Palestinians in other places. The crude birth rate in 2006 is 16.3 babies per one thousand people.

## **6. Iraq**

The conditions of Palestinians living in Iraq witnessed a lot of changes and developments since 1948. Statistics showed that the number of Palestinians seeking asylum in Iraq totaled 4,300 refugees in 1948.<sup>14</sup> Iraqi authorities at that time refused

to register them as refugees in the records of the UNRWA, and undertook caring of them, which put them under the political influence in Iraq.

In the beginning, Iraqi authorities entrusted the task of looking after the affairs of Palestinian refugees to the Ministry of Defense. Then, the Ministry of Social Affairs in Iraq established the Department of Palestinian Refugees' Affairs in Iraq to take care of them. The department defined a "refugee" as "a Palestinian who was forced to leave his occupied homeland in 1948 and came to live in Iraq before 25/9/1958." This definition left out the Palestinians who had gone to Iraq after this date from Iraqi official records in Iraq. The large number of Palestinians who came to Iraq from Kuwait at the time of the first Gulf War were not registered either. According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates, the number of Palestinian refugees in Iraq in 2003 after the American invasion was between 35–40 thousand Palestinians.<sup>15</sup>

Iraq, under American occupation, forcibly evicted Palestinian refugees. They were the victims of kidnapping, murder and intimidation forcing them to leave Iraq at the hands of the Iraqi militia. As a result, thousands of Palestinians had to leave the country and seek refuge in a number of Arab and foreign countries, who offered them asylum. The Palestinians who fled Iraq were housed in four camps, three of them at the Iraqi–Syrian borders: al-Waleed camp, hosting 500 refugees; al-Tanf camp, with 356 refugees; and al-Hawl camp, with 305 refugees. The fourth camp was Al-Ruwayshid on the Iraqi–Jordanian border. This camp received 1,200 refugees. Later on, 500 returned to Baghdad, while Jordanian authorities permitted 350 Palestinian refugees who are married to Jordanian women to enter Jordan. The remaining 350 Palestinian refugees stayed in the camp. Yemen received around five thousand Palestinian refugees, while Sudan received about 1,700 refugees. Palestinians also gained asylum in a number of Western countries. Canada granted asylum to 46 Palestinians;<sup>16</sup> Chile received 117 Palestinians living between the Iraqi–Syrian borders;<sup>17</sup> Brazil received 120 Palestinian refugees; and some Scandinavian countries agreed to receive some humanitarian cases. In a statement made in March 2008, the Director of the Department of Palestinian Refugees' Affairs in the PLO, Usama al-Shinnar, the number of Palestinians remaining in Iraq was estimated around 15 thousands.<sup>18</sup>

It is worth mentioning that the actual number of Palestinians who are fleeing from Iraq is increasing due to acts of kidnapping, torturing and murder that aim at intimidating them and pushing them to leave Iraq. For example, official records in Iraq listed 45 cases of murder among Palestinians in 2007, compared with 101 Palestinians killed and another 1,200 expelled in 2006. The following table shows the number of Palestinians who were killed in Iraq since its occupation.<sup>19</sup>

**Table 5/7: Number of Palestinians Killed in Iraq during 2003–2007**

Year	No. of killed
2003	11
2004	20
2005	25
2006	101
2007	45

Recent years have witnessed one of the most miserable situations for Palestinians in Iraq. They are the weakest part in a country dominated by anarchy, and they have become the victims of regional, political and sectarian conflict, which has nothing to do with them; yet, they paid a great price. The closure of borders to the Palestinians living in Iraq by Arab countries helped deteriorate their already desperate conditions. It showed the indifference and narrow mindedness of the Arab countries. In spite of the fact that the Arab countries had always taken pride in being the defenders and protectors of the Palestinian cause, they did neglect the minimum demands for humanitarian aid to improve the conditions of Palestinian refugees in Iraq who are both fellow Arabs and Muslims.

## **7. General Comparison between Palestinians**

The following table provides a summary of the most significant comparisons for some of the demographic indicators between Palestinians in 2006 (unless mentioned otherwise between brackets):



**Table 6/7: Selected Demographic Indicators for the Palestinians according to Their Place of Residence 2006<sup>20</sup>**

Indicator	WB	GS	Total (WB and GS)	Israel	Jordan	Syria	Lebanon
% of individuals 15 years or less	43.9	48.7	45.7	40.6	41.7 (2000)	33.1	33
% of individuals 65 years or more	3.3	2.6	3	3.1	4.2 (2000)	4.3	5.5
Dependency rate (per 100 individuals 15–64 years)	89.4	104.9	94.9	77.6	85.4 (2000)	59.7	62.6
Gender ratio (male per 100 females)	103 (2007)	103 (2007)	103 (2007)	103.6	-	102.3 (2005)	98.5
Crude birth rate (newborn per 1,000 inhabitants)	33.7	41.7	36.7	27.9	-	18	16.3
Crude death rate (death per 1,000 inhabitants)	4	3.8	3.9	2.8	-	3.3 (2001)	-
Total fertility rate (birth per woman)	4.2	5.4	4.6	3.68	4.6 (2000)	2.4	2.3
Natural population growth	3	3.8	3.3	2.51	-	2 (2002)	-
Average family size (individual per each family)	5.5 (2007)	6.5 (2007)	5.8 (2007)	5.09	6.2 (2000)	4.9	3.8

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

An analysis of the above table demonstrates that the key demographic indicators of the Palestinians have not registered much basic changes. In fact, these have remained the same as those registered in 2006. The following are some key changes:

- The crude birth rate is at its peak in the WB and GS and the lowest rates are in Lebanon and Syria. Such a situation places more demographic pressure on Palestinians in particular, in the GS, which is considered as one of the most densely populated area in the world.
- The Palestinian society is a very young. Nonetheless, its age distribution exhibits some remarkable differences depending on the area of residence/ refuge. For instance, Palestinians aged 15 years or under in the GS, constitutes the largest sector of the population. However, the same age group is second in the WB. This situation increases the economic burdens on the family providers in the occupied Palestinian territories since 1967. Palestinians in Syria and Lebanon have the lowest rate of dependency. In addition, the highest percentage of elderly (65 years and above) exists in Lebanon, and the lowest is in the GS.
- The gender ratio of Palestinians at their places of residence is more than 100 males for every 100 females, with the exception of Lebanon. This is perhaps due to the immigration of more males than females and the rise in the mortality rate among males in the last few decades.
- The rise in the birth rate among Palestinians in the GS has contributed to an increase in the population in this area. The decision-makers and planners of the area should pay much attention to this fact. In 1997, the percentage of Palestinians in the GS was 35.7%, while in the end of 2007 it rose to 37.7% according to the preliminary figures available in 2007.
- The crude birth rate in Syria in 2001 was 23.3 births per thousand people, but it dropped to 18 births per thousand in 2006.
- The crude death rates were nearly stable, and remained the same in 2006. The highest rate was in the WB and GS and the lowest rate was in Israel. This was mainly due to the Israeli occupation and its suppressive policies including that of systematic assassinations. The improvement of health conditions in Israel compared to other areas, and the continued negligence

of health conditions for Palestinians in the WB and GS, had contributed to the worsening of the crude death rates. There is concrete evidence that Israel followed certain methods of racial cleansing of the Arabs in Palestine. These include, among others, the “transfer” system and other oppressive procedures that compel Palestinians to leave their country, and Israel’s refusal to the return of the Palestinians. Israel made certain medical procedures to weaken the physiological capability of fertility among Palestinian women.<sup>21</sup>

- The average size of the Palestinian family remained high in the WB with 5.5 people per family and in the GS with 6.5 people per family. The average smallest Palestinian family exists in Lebanon, Syria and Israel.
- The natural population growth rates will remain high in Palestinian society compared to neighboring countries, and will stay higher than 2.5% for the next decade.

### *Third: The Palestinian Refugees*

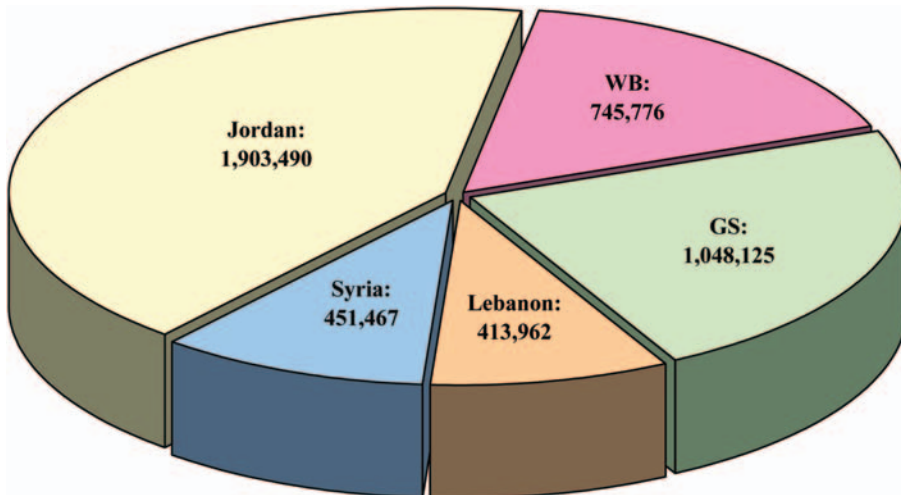
As far as the Palestinians are concerned, the concept of asylum and its criteria are very difficult to define;<sup>22</sup> this is due to lots of reasons. The first reason is the various wars and conflicts that the region has witnessed in the last century, particularly the 1948 and 1967 wars and the consequential effects of the occupation of Palestine. The second reason is the first *Intifadah* (1987–1990) and the third reason is the second *Intifadah* or *al-Aqsa Intifadah* (2000–2005). While the fourth reason is the occupation of the Palestinian territories by several occupiers, since the time of British mandate. The fifth is the subordination of the WB to Jordan during 1948–1967; and sixth, the Diaspora of Palestinians in different parts of the world.

If we presume that the number of Palestinian refugees in the world corresponds exactly to the figures of Palestinians registered with the UNRWA, the numbers of officially registered Palestinian refugees till the date 31/12/2007 is about 4.56 million, as shown in table 7/7. However, this number may not be the exact figure as the UNRWA itself states that the figures are based on data as provided in the records of personnel that are updated regularly. However, registration at the Agency is optional, and these figures do not precisely correspond to the actual number of population.<sup>23</sup>

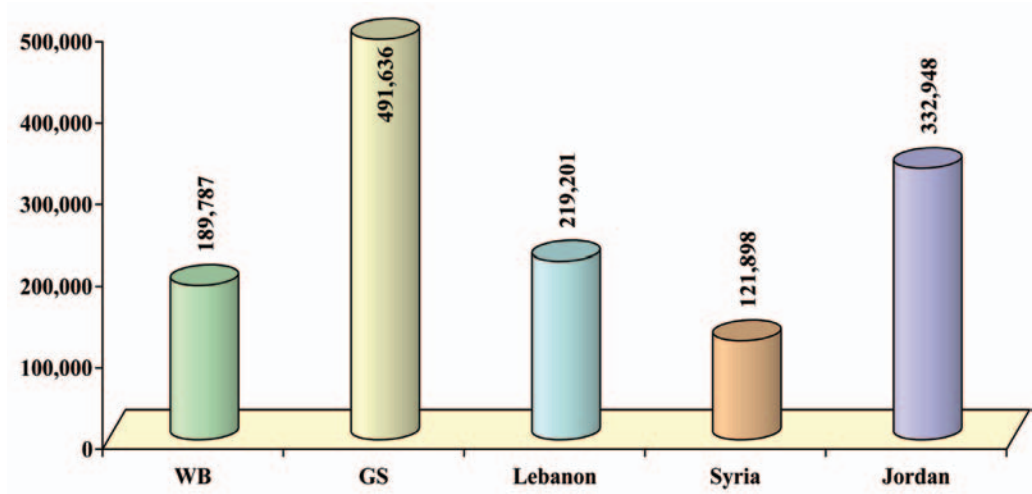
**Table 7/7: Number of Individuals, Births and Families of the Palestinian Refugees Registered with UNRWA in its Areas of Operations as of 31/12/2007<sup>24</sup>**

Region	Individuals	Average family size	Families	Camps	Individuals living in camps	% of individuals living in camps
<b>WB</b>	745,776	3.86	193,091	19	189,787	25.45
<b>GS</b>	1,048,125	4.57	229,108	8	491,636	46.9
<b>Lebanon</b>	413,962	3.81	108,676	12	219,201	52.95
<b>Syria</b>	451,467	4.12	109,565	9	121,898	27
<b>Jordan</b>	1,903,490	5.05	377,300	10	332,948	17.49
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,562,820</b>	<b>4.48</b>	<b>1,017,740</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>1,355,470</b>	<b>29.7</b>

**Number of Palestinian Refugees Registered with UNRWA in its Areas of Operation as of 31/12/2007**



### Number of Individuals in Camps Registered by UNRWA in its Areas of Operation as of 31/12/2007



According to the above table, the number of Palestinian refugees registered in the five areas where the UNRWA maintains its presence, is around 4.6 million. About 41.72% of these refugees live in Jordan; 39.31% live in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (22.97% in the GS and 16.34% in WB) and 18.97% live and are registered in Syria and Lebanon.

It is noteworthy that the process of collecting data about the estimate of Palestinian residents in different countries of the world is susceptible to many factors of impairment and other considerations. These difficulties would definitely vitiate the precision and credibility of the gathered information and render it unreliable. Therefore, the exact number of Palestinians living in different parts of the world cannot be figured out correctly.

For the aim of drawing attention to the issues and challenges facing Palestinian refugees and those who were displaced, BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugees Rights conducted a comprehensive survey for the years 2006–2007. The results stated that there were nearly seven million Palestinian refugees in the world in mid 2007, in addition to 450 thousand displaced Palestinians. This constitutes nearly 70% of the total number of Palestinians in the world, estimated as 10.1 million people. However, the legal status of another 400 thousand Palestinians is not yet clear, and it is possible that they are refugees too.<sup>25</sup>

When we look at the number of Palestinians registered during the period 1970–2007, we observe that their number totaled about 1.43 million as refugees in 1970. This number rose to 4.5 million in mid 2007. Thus, the rate of annual steady increase of registered refugees during the mentioned period can be calculated, and it is 3.16% per year. Based on this rate, the number of Palestinian refugees will double in a period of 22 years.

#### *Fourth: Population Growth Trends*

With the publication of preliminary results of the statistics in the WB and GS, two figures are now available about the Palestinian population growth rate. Hence, it is possible to calculate the population growth rate more accurately, with the exception of the Jerusalem governorate part that Israel had annexed immediately after the occupation of the WB in 1967.

Accordingly, the Palestinian population growth rate in the WB and GS is 2.85% per year during the period 1997–2007. This rate is relatively high when compared with the population growth rate of other nations. However, it has slightly slowed down with time due to interrelated political, social, economic and demographic factors. However, this rate differs from the past projections of the PCBS. The population growth rate in 1997 rose to approximately 4%, and it was expected to drop to 3.3% in 2006 and to 2.8% in 2015. However, during 1997–2007, the population growth rate dropped to 2.85%. Therefore, Palestinian population growth rate during the past decade dropped by 1.15%. This drop is explainable by the reasons mentioned earlier. However, a principal reason remains to be the departure and immigration of the Palestinians from their land.

Presuming that the net immigration ratio is nil, the annual increase in the population rate dropped in the period between 1997 and 2007 in the WB from 3.6% to 2.53%, and in the GS from 4.1% to 3.32%.

This information points out that despite a decrease in the expected annual increase in the population rate, there is a constant rise of the population in the GS with a relatively higher rate than that in the WB (giving the presumption that the immigration net rate is nil).

However, if we presume that this rate was only nil before 2000 and that the number of those who left the WB and GS during the period 2000–2007 (who were not included in the 2007 figures) was approximately 230 thousand people, then the actual drop in the increasing population rate will be different. Based on this presumption, if we count the number of those who departed or migrated from the WB and GS (230 thousand people) as part of the overall number of the 2007 figures (about 3.77 million), then the total number will be four million. Knowing that the total number of population according to the 1997 statistics was about 2.9 million, we realize that the actual increase in the population growth rate would be 3.285%. This is an estimated rate, yet it is significantly useful in determining the actual rate of population increase, the fertility rate and other rates. This means that Palestinian authorities must raise the awareness of Palestinians to be firmly rooted to their land and must keep the population growth rate increasing.

The rates of fertility, death and immigration are fundamental factors contributing to the increase in population in any country or region. Immigration does not have an immediate impact on the estimates of the overall number of Palestinians in the world. However, it affects their geographical distribution and places of residence. Therefore, factors affecting the directions of the de facto indicators of the growth in Palestinian population throughout the world are limited to the fertility and death rates.

Reports issued by the PBCS indicate that the fertility rate in the WB and GS dropped in the past decade (1997–2007) from 6.04 babies in 1997 to 4.6 babies in 2006.<sup>26</sup> There is a remarkable difference in the fertility rates between the WB and GS. Reports revealed that the fertility rate in the WB dropped from 5.6 births in 1997 to 4.2 births in 2005. Likewise, it dropped in the GS from 6.9 births to 5.4 births for the same period. The overall annual Palestinian population rate in the WB and GS has also dropped from 3.8% to 3.3% during the period 1997–2006. The crude birth rate also dropped from 42.7 births per thousand to 36.7 births per thousand, during the same period.

The number of Palestinians in the world was estimated at 10.35 million at the end of 2007, while their number at the end of 2006 was 10.1 million. The annual Palestinian population growth rate in the world is 2.5%. Therefore, the number of Palestinians is expected to continue to grow higher than that of the Jews. However, despite this annual increase, its rate is slightly slowing down compared with the

expected figures in the coming two decades (i.e., there is an overall rise in the population, but with an annual decreasing rate). Accordingly, the best estimate of the number of Palestinians in the world for the coming two decades is based on the assumption that the population growth rate of Palestinians (including those who live in historical Palestine) is 2.5%. However, in historical Palestine, the growth rate will be 2.8% per annum. Based on this estimate, the overall number of Palestinians in the world at the end of 2015 will be 12.6 million, and at the end of 2020, it will be 14.3 million. These figures are slightly lower than the estimate of the previous year.<sup>27</sup> Based on this assumption, it is also likely that the number of Palestinians in the world will double in 2034 and will increase to 20 million people.

The results of a study conducted by The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies (JIIS), celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the occupation of Jerusalem, showed that the rate of the increase in Arab population in the occupied city is four times that of the Jews. Consequently, it is expected that the number of Arab citizens will be the same as that of the Jews by 2035, if the Arabs retain their current growth rate.

Since its occupation in 1967, East Jerusalem has been witnessing a systematic process of Judaization being carried out by Israeli and American Jewish businessmen. They purchase buildings owned by Arabs and sometimes force their owners to sell them. Permits to build new houses for Arabs are usually rejected.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Fifth: Argumentation Regarding the Estimates of Palestinians within Historical Palestine, Particularly in the WB and GS***

The debates and controversies regarding the demographic danger to Israel, which have dominated Israeli society since the first half of 2005, have hardly abated. Fresh debates in the beginning of 2008 flared up after the issuing of the preliminary 2007 census. These debates, which were widely covered by the media, focused on the number of Palestinians in the WB and GS. Some Israeli sources claimed that the estimated number of Palestinians for the year 2004 by the PCBS to be 3.8 million people was, in fact, no more than 2.4 million people, i.e., 1.4 million people less than the declared figure.<sup>29</sup>



The present debate reopened the controversy and forced the same organizations to reassess the initial results of the 2007 data, whose figures indicate that the number of Palestinians in occupied Palestinian territories is about 3.77 million. In the meantime, various contesting views, presumptions and policies are probing the issue depending on the stage, proclaimed objective and hidden agendas at each juncture of the history of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. This conflict constitutes a double–edged sword for both the Right and Left political wings in Israel. Both sides think and operate from the same Jewish standpoint of establishing the Greater State of Israel from the sea to the river.

Debates in Israel about the growth of Palestinian population are still futile and unreliable, as the Israelis mix politics with statistics; between illusion and facts. However, these debates reflect two main trends: they both mirror a racist disposition and aim to achieve political objectives on the ground.

The first trend is lead by Yoram Ettinger who seeks to cast doubt on the above–mentioned Palestinian data. In his article, entitled “The Palestinian Census–Smoke & Mirrors,” which included a considerable number of fallacies and technical errors. He said:

The Feb. 9, 2008 Palestinian census is not a cause for fatalism. In contrast with the census, the accurate number of Judea & Samaria Arabs is 1.5 million, and not 2.3 million, and the number of Gaza Arabs is 1.1 million, and not 1.5 million. The Palestinian census is refuted by Palestinian, Israeli and international documentation of birth, death, migration, first–graders and eligible voter registration in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. (.....) The 1997 census included 210,000 Israeli Arabs, bearing Israeli I.D. cards, who were doubly–counted: as Israeli Arabs by Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics and as West Bank Arabs by the PCBS. The 2007 census for Judea & Samaria was inflated by 53%. (.....) There is a demographic problem, but it is not lethal, there is no demographic machete at Israel’s throat, and the demographic tailwind is Jewish, not Arab. In fact, documented births, deaths and migration clarify that Jewish demography has become a strategic asset and not a liability. Hence, awareness of demographic reality could enhance the security political, strategic, diplomatic and economic options of Israeli doves and hawks alike.<sup>30</sup>

However, *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2006* responded to most of these allegations. With regard to the counting of the Arabs of Jerusalem twice, it was the mistake of Israel in counting them because Israel occupied Jerusalem in 1967.

Hence, the Israeli Statistics Bureau should subtract them from its declared figure of the residents of Jerusalem and not count them twice.

Concerning the Israeli allegation that there is an extra 1.1 million people in the WB and GS, it is unfounded. In fact, primary census indicate a drop in the number of the population in 2007 by 244 thousand people, lower than the expected figures of the statistics for the period between 1997 and 2007. The estimates of the PCBS assumed the existence of some pull factors, because of the stability of the society at that time. The net immigration rate was expected to be nil but not minus, as it used to be during the *Intifadah*, which could be accounted for the temporary departure of some Palestinians seeking safety, which they are denied of under the Israeli occupation. In addition, there are the usual reasons for immigration such as studying or finding a job, especially after the freezing of the Palestinians' salaries for long time and the imposition of an economic embargo on the GS, which is a crime against humanity. It is surprisingly odd to consider that the Palestinians who temporarily left their land for some reason, such as study, are automatically immigrants, while all the Jews abroad who carry Israeli IDs are calculated and counted, no matter how long they stay outside the country.

Even when considering the new census, by the beginning of 2020 and assuming a lower population growth rate for the Palestinians (2.5%), the number of Palestinians in historical Palestine is 6.7 million compared to 6.4 million Jews. This indicates that the percentage of the Palestinians living in historical Palestine will be 51% (presuming the invariability of the other factors). These figures are proximate to previous expectations, bearing in mind that the Jewish Agency anticipates that the number of Jews in Israel in 2020 will rise to nearly 6.23 million.<sup>31</sup>

Rand Corporation, based in California, which is known for its conservative rightist stance that supports Israel, forecasts a drop in the Palestinian population growth rates in the WB and GS from 4% to 2.2% in a period of 25 years (till 2030). It also expects that the number of Palestinians in the WB and GS will be five million people in five years time. This nearly corresponds to the figure published by the PCBS.<sup>32</sup>

The second trend of debate in Israel considers the Arabs as a real demographic threat to the Jewishness of Israel. Consequently, Israeli authorities have only limited options in dealing with this problem, the easiest of which is expulsion or what is conventionally known as the policy of "transfer."

In his article “A Demographic Threat on the Wane,” Meron Benvenisti stated the data (along with other figures published earlier this year by the CBS) shows that the number of Jews and Arabs living between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean is close to parity. If we subtract the 200 thousand East Jerusalem residents, who were counted twice, the number of Jews stands at about 5.4 million and the number of Arabs—both Israeli citizens and those living in the territories—at approximately 5.2 million. He went on to say:

These figures indicate that the ‘demographic revolution’—the Arabs becoming the majority in the area west of the Jordan River—will happen in a year or two. Such a dramatic development cries for a comment by those politicians and analysts who continuously nourish the idea of a ‘demographic threat,’ which they believe threatens the existence of the Jewish Zionist state.

Thereupon, The pullout from the GS improved the demographic balance, 1.5 million Palestinians were removed from the count.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Sixth: The Israeli Pressures and Measures to Affect the Palestinian Demographics across the Green Line, and in the WB and GS***

It has been a constant theme in the international and Israeli media circles concerned with the peace process, to probe the issues of the “final status.” the Jewishness of Israel and the role of the Arab minority in Israel and the constant attempts to expel them and confiscate their land or ban them from building on it. The media also focuses on Israel’s oppressive policy of demolishing the houses of Arabs allegedly for not having building permits. The media highlights Israel’s policy of marginalization of its Arab citizens and detaching them from their people and the Arab and Muslim nations as well as all forms of pressure and procedures to dominate the Palestinian demographic situation across the Green Line.

This subject begins from where Meron Benvenisti, who depicted the demographic conflict as demographic convergence, left off. He concluded his article by blaming the skeptics of the first trend who break down Palestinian communities into smaller groups (the WB, GS, the Palestinians of 1948) through statements like, “They deal separately with them as if they were different peoples and part of one, single, threatening, mass.”<sup>34</sup>

Such statements demonstrate the central role that the issue of demographic conflict plays among the Right and the Left political streams in Israel. This is done though their contrasting agendas and adoption of old and new methods of driving the Palestinians away from their land and reshaping the presumed borderlines on both sides of the Green Line in order to dominate the demographic situation of the Palestinians. These procedures coincided with probing particular issues, pertaining to the re-distribution of Arab citizens on the sides of the Green Line in a way that affects their economic, cultural and social fabric, and restrained their mobility in order to constrict their living and ambition for an honorable life in their homeland.

With regard to the index of unemployment, the official report issued by the Department of Labor revealed that the unemployment rate in August 2007 was 7.7%. However, this rate is not the same for all Palestinian sectors; it is nearly double this rate for the Palestinians of 1948, while it is only 5.5% for the Jews. The same report indicated that as many as 34 Israeli towns suffer unemployment, i.e., the index of unemployment in these towns is 9% and above. However, in reality, 32 of them are Palestinian towns where unemployment is between 13–14% compared to only two Israeli towns where the rate is between 9–10%.

We detect the same pessimistic situation, perhaps even worse, in the annual report of poverty issued in September 2007. Israel's Social Security Institute announced a very slight reduction in the poverty rate in Israel in general, estimated in 2006 at 1.65 million. However, a thorough investigation of the estimates discloses a greater amount of human misery. The poverty rate has notably receded among the Jews, but has risen among the Palestinians of 1948. The general poverty index in Israel records 24.5%, while poverty among Palestinians of 1948 strikes as much as 50% of the population. Despite the fact that Palestinian families constitute only 14% of the total families in Israel, this ratio represents 45% of poor families in the country, with a 2% rise that is higher than 2005. In general, the poverty rate of underprivileged families in Israel is within 20%, yet it is 52% among the Palestinians of 1948.

The tragedy also appears in the poverty data of children. The general poverty index among children in Israel is 35%, and of course, this ratio mainly represents the condition of the Palestinian children of 1948. The poverty rate among them is as high as 63%. This rate was 60% in 2005, recording a 3% rise. Despite the fact that the proportion of the children of 1948 against the total number of children in Israel is 24%, their ratio against the ratio of the total underprivileged children in

Israel is 50%. This means that the Palestinians of 1948 are always present in the lowest and the worst indices, but they are absent from Israeli political concerns and consideration.<sup>35</sup>

The economic social survey of the Palestinians of 1948 conducted by Rikaz Data Bank of the Galilee Society, which included samples of 3,250 Palestinian families inside the Green Line, indicated that Palestinians in Israel suffer severe shortage of lands. Palestinians also lack lands for construction of homes. Figures revealed that 60.6% of Palestinian families expressed a pressing need for at least one flat in the coming 10 years. This percentage hit 72.9% in the South, and as much as 43.7% of these families are not able to build a place of residence.<sup>36</sup>

The former British Secretary of State for International Development, Clare Short, during the opening session of the UN conference, warned that Israel's apartheid in the WB and GS is worse than what was practiced in South Africa. She also pointed out that Israel has actually destroyed all the potentials of establishing a Palestinian state with its oppressive policies and settlements.<sup>37</sup>

The Regional Council for the Unrecognized Villages in the Negev has called upon the countries of the world, the UN and International Human rights organizations to put pressure on Israel to stop its scheme for demolishing as many as 3,600 Arab houses in the Negev in the near future. Israel exerts all kinds of pressure on Palestinians to get their consent, given against their will, to Israeli plans. The techniques of pressure, among others, would include demolition of their houses so that they give up their right to lands, which are about 800 thousand donums and consent to Israel's plans for their life and future.<sup>38</sup>

Israeli figures published by The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies (JIIS) and Jerusalem Municipality reveal that the poverty rate in the town is the highest in Israel. As much as nearly 33% of families and 56% of minors in Jerusalem live below the poverty line, and Palestinian citizens there are poorer than the Jews are. The figures also revealed that 62% of Palestinian families live under the poverty line against only 23% of Jewish families who share the same circumstances. In addition, around 76% of Arab minors live below the poverty line against 44% of Jewish minors.<sup>39</sup>

The above mentioned sources affirmed that the Palestinian population growth rate in Jerusalem is three times that of the Jewish population. The percentage of Arabs in the city increased from 26% in 1967 to 34% in 2006, despite the

relocation of Jews to the town and the expulsion of Palestinians from Jerusalem. Israeli politicians view these figures as obstacles to push Palestinians out of their homeland.

The initial results of the Palestinian census in 2007 indicated that Jerusalem governorate had the lowest population growth rate during the period 1997–2007. The population of Arab residents in the city increased by only 11.3%, yet the general growth rate in the WB and GS for the same period was 30%. This, of course, reveals the extent of the Israeli attack against Jerusalem, its land, people and resources.

### *Seventh: The Palestinian Immigration and Brain Drain*

The preliminary results of the census revealed that there was a 244 thousand drop in the Palestinian population while considering the expectations for the period 1997–2007. The results raise a question regarding the reasons for this drop. Despite the fact that the drop does not constitute more than 6.5% of the total Palestinian population and that it was recorded at a time of extreme instability due to the continuous Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, it deserves careful investigation to find its cause.

Estimating the difference between the departing and the returning Palestinians in a given period, does not reflect the actual permanent immigration. Usually, the departure of Palestinians is from a certain temporary cause, and the majority of them return to live permanently in their homeland.

The UNs' report dated 16/2/2008 stated that UN organizations currently provide food supplies to more than 650,790 Palestinians in the WB. According to the reports of the World Bank, these appropriations are not provisional, and "undermine the existing economic infrastructure and will cause a severe disruption that can hardly be fixed." The report added that in January 2008, there were as many as 563 barriers and closures in different forms in the WB in addition to restrictions made on the age of Palestinians allowed to cross the checkpoints. This led to obstructing the flow of goods and laborers and caused a rise in the cost of transportation and obstructions for a long period.<sup>40</sup>

The reports summarized the reasons for the Palestinians' departure from the Palestinian territories, which vividly represent the magnitude of the

troubles and hardships that the Palestinians encounter all the time and in all aspects of life.

In a report entitled, “Misery Tempts Palestinian Christians to Flee,” Alistair Lyon said:

Despairing of life under Israeli occupation, many Palestinian Christians are moving abroad, threatening their ancient links to Bethlehem and the land where Jesus was born. ‘There is a real fear that 50 years down the road, the Holy Land will be without Christians,’ said Mitri Raheb, 45 years old pastor of the Lutheran Church in Bethlehem. ...Christians have migrated from Bethlehem and nearby Beit Jala and Beit Sahour for over a century, mainly to Latin America, the United States and Canada, to escape successive wars and crises.

In the same context, it is estimated that as many as 50 thousand Christians live in the territories that Israel occupied in 1967, while a further 110 thousands live in Israel. On the economic level in general, the conditions of Palestinian Christians, despite their suffering, are relatively better than other categories in the society. However, the Christians do not suffer any religious persecution, whether from the Muslims or from Israeli authorities. Bernard Sabella, a Palestinian sociologist at Bethlehem University, estimates that 50 to 70 Christian families are leaving Jerusalem or the WB yearly for new lives abroad.<sup>41</sup>

Approximately one third of Palestinian youth consider immigration (45% of them are males and 18% are females). Some are due to the miserable economic conditions (according to 96% of males compared to 66% of females), others the lack of security (according to 80% of males compared to 73% of females) and some are due to political reasons (according to 62% of males compared to 33% of females).<sup>42</sup>

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

It is obvious that the international community’s slackness in proposing and carrying out fair solutions guaranteeing the full Palestinian right of return, and the Palestinian people’s right of regaining their land, holy sites and potentials would lead the entire region to anarchy, instability, and more warfare. Palestinians living

abroad are still suffering under bad conditions and helplessness, especially in the camps established in Arab countries. For example, the Palestinians in Iraq are facing persecution, and others remained stuck at the Syrian and Jordanian borders till some of them were finally admitted to Brazil and others were sent to some Arab countries.

In *al-Quds* newspaper, As‘ad ‘Abd al-Rahman wrote an article entitled “Shedding Lights on the Dark Situation of the Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon” and said that the Palestinian people have been the victims of a multi-faceted conspiracy of annihilation. They lost all potentials of life, such as their land and possessions. Palestinian refugees (especially in the refugee camps) have suffered dispersion that no people have ever seen. They are even unaware of what the future holds for them and when their suffering will end. The international community has long considered them an obstacle toward achieving any potential reconciliation. Therefore, we can see as many as 243 naturalization plans that were all rejected by the Palestinian refugees who expressed a sincere and firm position to retain their right of return no matter when. He added that recently, in the Nahr al-Barid camp, more than 200 people were killed and hundreds more were wounded. In addition, 35 thousand Palestinian refugees decamped during the fight between the Lebanese army and Fatah al-Islam militia, which left behind massive destruction in the camp.<sup>43</sup>

‘Abd al-Mun‘im Fu‘ad authored a report regarding the economic social survey of the Palestinians of 1948, which was undertaken by the Rikaz Data Bank of the Galilee Society. This survey included a sample of 3,250 Palestinian families who immigrated in or before the year of the 1967 catastrophe (*Naksah*). It indicated that the ratio of Palestinians of the inside, who reported that they had been displaced from their birthplaces, was 15.1%. The highest rate of displaced Palestinians is 77.2% and it was in the South after 1967. The proportion of Palestinians who stated that they were relocated in the midland was 20.5%, while in the north it was 12.8%. Jewish institutions during the time of the establishment of Israel relocated the majority of north and midland displaced Palestinians. They were compulsorily settled in already-existing Arab communities, in pre-built communities dedicated for this particular purpose, or in the suburbs of heterogeneous communities, of which as many as 28% of their residents are displaced people.<sup>44</sup>



In a pilot study conducted by Mada al-Carmel, the Arab Center for Applied Social Research, the majority of the Palestinians of 1948 are inclined to solve the problem of displaced Palestinians through fair methods and not via the wielding of power. Around 70% of those who participated in the study expressed that the least acceptable solution to the existing dilemma of displaced Palestinians is to give them the right of return and live inside Israel or to give them the right to choose between the return or compensation. The results of the pilot study revealed that 75% of them believe that the responsibility of solving the problem of displaced Palestinians lies on Israel, and 86% asserted that Israel is the party that should compensate them. The solution of the displaced Palestinians inside Palestine, in the view of 51% must be settled by allowing them to return to their home villages. 81% of displaced Palestinians called on Arab leaderships in Israel to include the issue of displaced Palestinians among the top priorities of their agendas. In addition, 57% emphasized that a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue will not be feasible without a permanent solution to the crisis facing displaced Palestinians.<sup>45</sup>

### **Activities of Palestinians Outside Palestine to Support the Right of Return:**

Despite the great suffering and torment of Palestinian refugees over the past 60 years and the birth of new Palestinian generations outside their homeland, efforts to support the Palestinians' right of return never waned. Every day witnesses more wide-ranging organized, collaborated and growing activities proving that the Palestinians are growing stronger and more resolute to retain their natural and uncompromising right of return. The Palestinians expressed their insistence on this stance, regardless of the variation in their economic or social position in their host countries. This stance was clearly expressed through the activities of Palestinians in Europe, the US and anywhere they live.

The year 2007 witnessed a range of Palestinian refugees' activities to defend their right of return. The Austrian NGO "Dar al-Janub—Union for Antiracism and Peace Policy" convened a symposium in Vienna on 25–26/3/2007 under the title: "Bridges to Palestine." In this symposium, the participants emphasized the unity of the Palestinian people inside and outside Palestine and called for the end of the occupation, the allowance of Palestinians to return to their homeland and the application of UN resolutions.

The patriotic activities of Palestinians in Europe have falsified the allegation that the Palestinians would abandon their homeland, relinquish their right of return and merge with the societies of their host countries. Palestinians in Europe held their fifth annual conference on the “Right of Return” in Rotterdam, Holland, on 5/5/2007 under the slogan: “Despite the Distance and Pain ... We are a United People with a Permanent Right.” which attracted more than five thousand participants. The spirit of the conference underscored the fact that being far away from their homeland did not weaken the Palestinians’ will or make them give up their right of return to Palestine. The conference also reflected its success in rallying all Palestinians from diverse political and religious backgrounds around this unwavering right. Many Palestinian institutions, societies, unions and confederations from different parts of Europe, in addition to Arab and Muslim communities in Europe allying with the Palestinian issue, took part in this conference. They adamantly called for the unity of the Palestinian people and its fate, and invited all people to stand behind their right of return.

Palestinians in the US were no less fervent and determined in defending their right of return. On the 59<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the catastrophic Israeli occupation of Palestine, The Palestine Right to Return Coalition in the States convened its fifth conference in California during 25–27/5/2007. The conference organized a number of workshops in order to reach feasible decisions to defend the right of Palestinians to return to their homeland. The program of the conference included some live statements by Palestinian survivors from the massacres of the Israeli occupation, which revived the scenes of the eviction of Palestinians from their homeland. Coinciding with the time of this conference, a foundational conference for Palestinian communities was held in Barcelona, Spain, under the auspices of Farouk Kaddoumi. 250 representatives of Palestinian communities from 17 European countries attended this conference. The participants of the conference urged the reactivation of the PLO and the preparation for holding a national assembly with the participation of all Palestinian Muslim and national factions.

On 16–18/10/2007, the Palestinian civil society in Cyprus held a conference that hosted NGOs under the title, “Towards the Construction of a United Strategy for the Palestinian Civil Society.” The conference aimed to pool together the efforts of NGOs to defend the Palestinians’ right of return.

In Lebanon, the Palestinian Organization for The Right of Return (Thabit) held its first conference on 25/10/2007 under the title: “Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon: Reality and Horizons of the Future.” In addition, the Middle East Studies Center in Amman, Jordan, organized a meeting on 10/12/2007 that discussed the Palestinian right of return in the political thought during 2007, the political plans that aim to jeopardize this right, and the Palestinian struggle for the protection of the right of return and its implementation during the period 2000–2007.

It is important to note that such activities and conferences that shed light on the right of return are not limited to Palestinians living outside. Palestinians living inside also held several conferences and similar activities. In Acre, “The Third Conference for the Right of Return and Fair Peace” was held on 29–30/11/2007. In parallel to this, a conference entitled “The Catastrophe in its Sixtieth Year” was held in Nazareth on 13/5/2007, and another one was held in Gaza during the period 31/10–1/11/2007 entitled “The Second Intellectual and Political Conference in Defense of the Right of Return.”

Those who observe the Palestinian situation in the world cannot miss the fact that the issue of the return is deeply rooted in the hearts of Palestinians, and any political differences between the Palestinians melt away when faced with any plans to take their right to return away from them.

## *Conclusion*

The Palestinian issue plays a central role in the conflicts of the Middle East, in particular, and the international problems and conflicts, in general. As long as the international community is unable to find and execute fair solutions that ensure the Palestinians’ obtainment of their legal rights, including the right of return, and to exercise their full authority on their land without procrastination, stability will not return to the entire region and peace will not be achieved. This is a right that they inherited from their ancestors who were expelled from their land. Hence, solving the Middle East conflicts and most of the world’s conflicts begins by solving the Palestinian issue, which will not be resolved without ensuring the Palestinians’ right of return.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> See Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), *Filastin fi Arqam 2007* (Palestine in Figures 2007) (Ramallah: PCBS, 2008), p. 11.  
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- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> PCBS, *Kitab Filastin al-Ihsa'i al-Sanawi Raqam "8"* (The Palestinian Statistical Yearbook Number "8") (Ramallah: PCBS, November 2007).
- <sup>6</sup> See Wafa, 14/5/2008.
- <sup>7</sup> PCBS, *al-Mash al-Filastini li Sihhat al-Usrah–2006: al-Taqrir al-Niha'i* (Palestinian Family Health Survey, 2006: Final Report) (Ramallah: PCBS, December 2007),  
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- <sup>8</sup> See <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/>
- <sup>9</sup> PCBS, *Kitab Filastin al-Ihsa'i al-Sanawi–1999* (The Palestinian Statistical Yearbook–1999) (Ramallah: PCBS, 2000), p. 146; and see also PCBS, *al-Mash al-Filastini li Sihhat al-Usrah–2006: al-Taqrir al-Niha'i*.
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- <sup>11</sup> <http://www.un.org/unwra/arabic/Refugees/pdf/TABLE1.PDF>.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> Site of Aljalia, <http://www.aljalia.org/index.php?action=show&type=news&id=3500>
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## This Report

Al-Zaytouna Centre is glad to present to its reader The Palestinian Strategic Report 2007, the third in an annual series. The Report aims at monitoring the Palestinian issue through an informative and analytical approach. The Report covers the Palestinian internal political situation, issues concerning the Land and the holy sites, the economy, the Palestinian demographic indicators, the Israeli scene and the Israeli-Palestinian relations. It focuses on the Arab, Islamic, and international stances towards the Palestinian issue.

This Report is distinguished for its updated information till the end of 2007 and for its outstanding team of academics and experts.

Despite the unfortunate state of schism that characterized the Palestinian arena, and despite the hot and sensitive issues discussed, the Report did its best to be professional, scientific and objective. Thus, this Report is a distinguished addition to the Palestinian studies.

## The Palestinian Strategic Report 2007



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