

Palestinian Refugees in Exile

Country Profiles



Campaign for the Defense of Palestinian Refugee Rights



**BADIL Resource Center
for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights**

Editor: Terry Rempel

Layout and Design: Atallah Salem and Terry Rempel

Translation: Sana' Shalalda and Atallah Salem

For more information contact:

BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights

PO Box 728, Bethlehem, Palestine

tel/fax 274-7346; tel. 277-7086

email, info@badil.org; website, www.badil.org

BADIL aims to provide a resource pool of alternative, critical and progressive information and analysis on the question of Palestinian refugees in our quest to achieve a just and lasting solution for exiled Palestinians based on the right of return.

Preface

BADIL's *Country Profiles* detail the political, legal, and socio-economic status of Palestinian refugees in exile. The first set of profiles on the West Bank and Gaza, Lebanon, and Jordan were published in conjunction with BADIL's first information packet for the *Campaign for the Defense of Palestinian Refugee Rights* in 1999. Since that time profiles have been added for Palestinian refugees in Syria, Egypt, and for internally displaced Palestinians in Israel. Additional profiles will be forthcoming.

The profiles are written by BADIL research partners in the region. While efforts have been made to standardize the format, the profiles reflect the format submitted by each researcher. Where applicable, statistical figures have been updated from the first edition of the profiles. The profiles are intended as a supplement for materials prepared for BADIL's *Campaign for the Defense of Palestinian Refugee Rights* entitled *The Right of Return*. More information about the Campaign is available in the materials and from BADIL.

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Overview: *Palestinian Refugees*

In November 1947 the United Nations General Assembly decided to impose a plan for the division of Palestine into two states - one Arab and one Jewish - irrespective of the wishes of the majority of the inhabitants of the country. General Assembly Resolution 181, the "Partition Plan", called for the establishment of a Jewish state in 56% of Palestine. At the time Jews comprised less than one-third of the population and owned not more than 7% of the land.¹ The Arab people - Palestinian Arabs in particular - and their political leadership and some Zionist parties rejected the plan.

The collapse of the UN-sponsored initiative, and the consequent war in 1948 (the *Nakba* or catastrophe) led to the depopulation and destruction of some 530 villages by Zionist/Israeli forces and the displacement/expulsion of more than 80% of the indigenous Palestinian Arab population.² Most refugees, however, remained close to their villages of origin, hoping to return.

Recognizing its direct responsibility for the more than 750,000 Palestinian refugees, the United Nations established a special international regime to provide protection and assistance for Palestine refugees. The UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) was established in December 1948 to provide protection for the refugees with assistance coordinated by the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), established one year later.³ Refugees in the five areas of UNRWA operations - West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria - were registered, according to need and initial flight, with the Agency. Refugees outside the area of UNRWA operations or those who did not meet the definition of a "Palestine Refugee" were not registered with the Agency.⁴

The framework for a durable solution to the Palestinian refugee issue was set down in UN Resolution 194(III) of December 1948.⁵ According to paragraph 11 of the Resolution, Palestinian refugees have the right to return to their homes and compensation should be paid to those not wishing to return as well as for loss of or damage to property. The UNCCP was authorized not only to implement the return of Palestinian refugees, but also to facilitate restitution of refugee properties and compensation for losses and damages.

The Israeli government, however, took numerous measures to prevent the return of refugees, despite a temporary offer in response to American pressure to allow the return of some 100,000 refugees.⁶ In July 1948, Israeli troops were authorized

UN Resolution 194, 11 December 1948 *paragraph 11*

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

to shoot at refugees trying to return.⁷ Palestinian homes and villages were destroyed.⁸ New Jewish immigrants, at the same time, were settled in the tens of thousands of additional homes that belonged to the refugees. Between May of 1948 and April of 1949, for example, around 60% of new Jewish immigrants were settled in the homes of Palestinian refugees.⁹

Refugee lands were placed under the control of the Israeli Custodian of Abandoned Property. In 1950 the Israeli government adopted the Absentees' Property Law, which authorized the government to transfer the property of Palestinian refugees (known as "absentees" under the law) to Jewish state ownership by virtue of a government payment to the Israeli Custodian of Absentees' Property.¹⁰ The government thus claimed by a kind of "legal fiction" that the property had been acquired legally (i.e. by payment) rather than through confiscation.¹¹ The Law also applied to internally displaced Palestinians (known as "present absentees") in the new Jewish state.

The Custodian was subsequently authorized to lease or sell refugee properties to a government Development Authority provided that ownership remain in perpetuity in Jewish hands.¹² Dividends from the sale of the property (less administrative and legal expenses) were to be held in fund until such time as the state of emergency, under which the law was declared operational, came to an end.

As regards the Absentees' Property Law, the state of emergency is still in effect. As stated in a 1954 case by the Supreme Court of Israel, the Custodian was not acting as a trustee of the absentees as implied by the title of the office.¹³ According to the legal ruling, "[the Custodian] had no duty of

Palestinian Refugee Population (1999)

Place of Refugee	Refugees*	Registered Refugees (RR)**	RR in Camps
Israel	250,000	--	--
<i>Gaza Strip</i>	<i>792,938</i>	<i>808,495</i>	<i>442,942</i>
<i>West Bank</i>	<i>675,705</i>	<i>576,160</i>	<i>155,365</i>
<i>Jordan</i>	<i>1,802,759</i>	<i>1,541,405</i>	<i>277,555</i>
<i>Lebanon</i>	<i>422,288</i>	<i>373,440</i>	<i>208,223</i>
<i>Syria</i>	<i>460,493</i>	<i>378,382</i>	<i>110,427</i>
Egypt	41,884	--	--
Saudi Arabia	284,379	--	--
Kuwait	35,573	--	--
Other Gulf	109,273	--	--
Iraq, Libya	76,884	--	--
Other Arab Countries	5,738	--	--
USA	179,107	--	--
Other Countries	228,074	--	--
Grand Total	5,115,095	3,677,882	1,194,512

Sources:

* **Refugees' Figures:** Salman Abu-Sitta, *The Palestinian Nakba. The Register of Depopulated Localities in Palestine*. London, The Palestinian Return Center 1998. Updated from 1998 to 1999 based on 3.5% population growth.

** **Registered Refugees' Figures:** based on UNRWA Registration Statistical Bulletin for the Fourth Quarter (30 November 1999). UNRWA-HQ (Amman), Department of Relief & Social Services, 1999.

care toward the absentees, as they are regarded as foreign enemies who may be deprived of their property by the State." A series of laws were eventually adopted to provide for compensation (considerably less than the real market value of the properties) to those internally displaced Palestinian refugees who became citizens of the state of Israel, but has been rejected. Palestinians continue to demand the return of their properties.¹⁴

Given the failure of the UN Conciliation Commission to effect the return of the refugees, the international community attempted to resettle Palestinian refugees through economic integration in the region under the auspices of UNRWA, despite the fact that Agency programs were not to prejudice the provisions of UN Resolution 194. Small-scale works projects, and later large-scale economic development, based on the model of the Tennessee Valley Authority in the United States, failed however, given the demand by refugees to return to their homes and properties.¹⁵

According to the 1951 Annual report of the Agency, "[t]he desire to go back to their homes is general among all classes [of the Palestine refugees]; it is proclaimed orally at all meetings and organized demonstrations, and, in writing, in all letters addressed to the Agency and all complaints handed in to the area officers."

UNRWA thus transitioned into the provision of education, health, and relief and social services for refugees registered with the Agency. Today, UNRWA is the region's largest public service employer with some 22,000 staff, the majority of who are employed in education. The Agency's mandate

continues to be renewed every several years.

Palestinian refugees are unique in that a special refugee regime was established to provide for protection and assistance. All other refugees fall under the protection and assistance of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), established five days prior to UNRWA in 1949. The separate regime was established given the responsibility of the international community for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem, with the adoption and non-implementation of UN General Assembly Resolution 181 in November 1947.

While the regime established for Palestinian refugees was to provide additional protection, the regime has, in practice, provided less protection. The UNCCP, the protection arm, has been emasculated and limited to updating records of refugee properties, while UNRWA has faced increased difficulty in providing relief and assistance due to stagnating donor contributions resulting in service cutbacks. Since the beginning of the Madrid/Oslo process in 1991, international aid per UNRWA registered refugee has declined by nearly 30 percent.¹⁶ Moreover, the international community has failed to apply the same international standards and principles in finding a durable solution to the Palestinian refugee issue that it has applied to other refugee cases.¹⁷

Today there are around 5 million Palestinian refugees worldwide, comprising about 70% of the total Palestinian population. More than two-thirds of the total number of Palestinian refugees is registered with UNRWA, a third of whom live in 59 camps scattered throughout the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. More than 80% of refu-

gees continue to live within 100 km of their villages and towns of origin.

Fifty-two years after they were displaced/expelled, Palestinian refugees continue to demand implementation of their right of return to their homes and lands. The exclusion of UN Resolution 194 (the right of return) from the framework of the 1993 Oslo Accords led to a deep sense of alienation and marginalization among Palestinian refugees. Refugees in the 1967 occupied territories and internally displaced Palestinians in 1948 Palestine/Israel responded through a series of popular initiatives designed to lobby and pressure the Palestinian Authority/Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel for implementation of the right of return.¹⁸

The right of return is based first and foremost on international law, including both human

rights and humanitarian law. Since the early 1980's, the international community has recognized voluntary repatriation as the preferred option for durable solutions to refugee flows. This principle has also been recognized in a variety of bilateral and regional agreements, most recently in Bosnia and Kosovo, and on a regional level in Central America and Indochina. The demand for repatriation is also based on the principle of refugee choice and the spatial feasibility of return. According to recent research, for example, 78% of the Jewish population of Israel lives in 15% of the area of the country. The remaining area, from which refugees originate, remains largely empty.¹⁹ Finally, implementation of Palestinian refugee rights in accordance with international law, including repatriation, is a necessity for social justice and political stability in the Middle East.

Endnotes

¹ Details on land ownership from Walter Lehn, *The Jewish National Fund*. London: Kegan Paul International, 1988; *A Survey of Palestine*. London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office. Prepared in December 1945 and January 1946. Reprinted by the Institute for Palestine Studies, Washington, DC, 1991; Sami Hadawi, *Palestinian Rights and Losses in 1948*. London: Saqi Books, 1988.

² Details on depopulated villages from Salman Abu Sitta, *The Palestinian Nakba 1948, Register of the Depopulated Localities in Palestine*. London: Palestinian Return Centre, 1998; Walid Khalidi (ed.), *All That Remains, The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*. Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992.

³ Annual reports of the UNCCP and UNRWA are archived on the UN Information System on Palestine (<http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF?OpenDatabase>).

⁴ In 1993, however, the Agency dropped the requirements of needs and initial flight for registration. According to the new definition, a Palestine refugee "shall mean any person whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948 and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict." For a more detailed discussion of the definition of Palestine refugees, see Lex Takkenberg, *The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998, pp. 68-83.

⁵ UNGAR 194(III) 11 December 1948.

⁶ For more details of the 100,000 plan see Benny Morris, *The Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-49*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 266-285.

⁷ Kibbutz Meuhad Archives, Palmah Papers 141-419, Rabin, Operation Dani headquarters to the Harel, Yiftah, Kiryati and 8th Brigades, 19 July 1948; and, 141-250, Allon to the Kiryati, 8th, Yiftah and Harel brigades, 19 July 1948, cited *ibid.*, p. 145.

⁸ The destruction of homes was one of several measures detailed by Zionist officials and presented to Ben-Gurion in a plan called "Retroactive Transfer: A Scheme for the Solution of the Arab Question in the State of Israel". The three page

memorandum was signed by Yosef Weitz, Ezra Danin, and Elias Sasson. Cited *ibid.*, p. 136.

⁹ Israel State Archives, Finance Ministry Papers 10/1/9, "A Consultation about Immigration Absorption (in the [Mapai] party)," 22 April 1949, cited *ibid.*, 195.

¹⁰ Absentees' Property Law, 1950. Laws of the State of Israel. Authorized Translation from the Hebrew. Vol. IV 5710-1949/50, pp. 68-82.

¹¹ Avraham Granott, *Agrarian Reform and the Record of Israel*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1952, p. 102. Granott, who referred to the transfer as a "legal fiction" was a former Chairman of the Jewish National Fund.

¹² Development Authority (Transfer of Property) Law, 1950. Cited *ibid.*, p. 151.

¹³ The State vs. The Custodian of Absentees' Property (1954) 10 P.D. 912. Cited in *Legal Violations of Arab Minority Rights in Israel*. Shfaram: Adalah The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, 1998, p. 50.

¹⁴ For a summary see Terry Rempel, "Dispossession and Restitution in 1948 Jerusalem," *Jerusalem 1948, The Arab Neighborhoods and their Fate in the War*. Salim Tamari (ed.), Jerusalem: BADIL Resource Center and the Institute of Jerusalem Studies, 1999, pp. 208-9.

¹⁵ For more details about these projects see Benjamin Schiff, *Refugees Unto the Third Generation: UN Aid to Palestinians*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995.

¹⁶ For more details see BADIL's booklet for the Campaign for the Defense of Palestinian Refugee Rights, 2nd Edition (2000).

¹⁷ For more details on the special regime established for Palestinian refugees and durable solutions see Susan Akram, *Re-interpreting Palestinian Refugee Rights under International Law, and a Framework for Durable Solutions*. BADIL Information & Discussion Brief, Issue No. 1 (February 2000).

¹⁸ For more details see note 16 above.

¹⁹ Salman Abu Sitta, *Palestinian Right to Return, Sacred, Legal, and Possible*. 2nd Revised Edition. London: Palestinian Return Centre, 1999.

Palestinian Refugees in the Gaza Strip

This profile is based on field research conducted in the summer of 1998 by Gerhard Pulfer (BADIL intern) entitled Palestinian Refugees Five Years after Oslo, and on a research paper prepared by Awni al-Mashni (BADIL Friends Forum) in the winter of 1998-99.

Many Palestinians arrived in the Gaza Strip the way Abu Yusuf did -- a refugee. Abu Yusuf was born in a village near Majdal, now Israeli Ashkelon, in 1938.¹ During the war of 1948, with Majdal under constant bombardment of Zionist planes and the news of the Deir Yassin massacre causing panic and fear, the family fled to Gaza for shelter.² But there was none to be found. The Zionist army continued to chase the refugees to the southern regions of Gaza. "We were bombed even in Khan Younis, the planes came from the sea," Abu Yusuf remembers. In 1952, the family moved to the Shati Beach Camp, next to Gaza City, and there the family remained, until today. At first, the area of the beach camp was covered with trees and plants, "it looked like a jungle," says Abu Yusuf but now the entire northern Strip is covered by shelters and unplastered homes. Refugee camps grew into the suburbs of Gaza City, giving the whole area the appearance of a vast chaos of people and cement buildings.

UNRWA Assistance

Today, more than three-quarters of the Gaza Strip's population are refugees. According to UNRWA statistics from November 1999, approximately 55% of the 800,000 refugees registered in the Gaza Strip live in one of the eight Palestinian refugee camps. Most of the refugees come from the southern areas of pre-1948 Palestine. These numbers make Gaza the largest and most expensive UNRWA operation in any of its areas including Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the West Bank. Gaza receives the largest share

Refugees in Gaza (1999)^a

Camps	Registered Refugees (RR)
Jabalia	97,895
Beach (Shati)	73,675
Nuseirat	59,121
Bureij	28,628
Deir al-Balah	18,829
Maghazi	21,311
Khan Younis	57,495
Rafah	85,988
Total RR (in camps)	442,942
Total RR	808,495
Increase in RR over previous year (%)	3.3 %
RR as % of total estimated population	78.2 %
RR (Gaza) as % of total RR	22.0 %
Total Refugee Population	792,938

of UNRWA's General Fund.³ In 1999, this represented approximately one-third of the General Fund or US\$107.2 million. UNRWA's Peace Implementation Program (PIP), set up October 1993 to support the peace process through special infrastructure and development projects, channels more funds into Gaza than all the other regions combined. In 1998-99, US\$3.6 million were invested in Gaza, or slightly more than 50% of the funds invested in all areas of UNRWA operations under PIP.

Nevertheless, Gaza remains chronically poor and home to the second largest percentage (8.4%) of Palestinian refugees in special need predominantly for health, education, and the aged, just behind the infamous conditions of Lebanon. UNRWA's Special Hardship Program (SHC) provides food support, shelter rehabilitation, access to poverty alleviation initiatives, increased hospitalization subsidies, and preferential access to UNRWA training centers to refugees unable to meet their basic needs. Paradoxically, while UNRWA services continue to decline in the face of growing need, the qualification criteria for Special Hardship Case benefits is becoming stricter and it is increasingly difficult for those in special need to get appropriate supplements. Forty-two per cent of registered refugees residing in camps in Gaza live below the poverty line.

UNRWA operates 168 elementary and preparatory schools in Gaza, second in number only to Jordan, providing educational opportunities to some 160,000 students. Given the combined natural increase in the student population and the lack of suf-



Children from Maghazi Camp (Photo: UNRWA)



Shelter Rehabilitation (Photo: UNRWA)

efficient funds for new school construction, Gaza has the highest classroom occupancy rate of all UNRWA areas with 50 students per class. As of 1999, five new schools were under construction. UNRWA schools in Gaza also have the highest number (25%) of contract teachers. Since 1994 the Agency has been unable to hire new regular staff to meet the needs of the growing student population due to austerity measures. UNRWA also provides health services in 17 primary health care facilities.



Beach Camp (Photo: BADIL)

UNRWA IN FIGURES^b	FIGURES
As of 30 June 1999	
<i>Education - 1998/99 Academic Year</i>	
Schools (elem, prep)	168
Educational Staff (not including support staff)	4,248
Pupil enrolment	159,892
<i>Health</i>	
Primary health care facilities	17
Health Staff	967
<i>Relief and Social services</i>	
Special hardship cases	66,678
SHCs as % of RR	8.4 %
<i>1999 General Fund Budget (millions of US\$)</i>	
Education	56.7
Health	20.3
Relief and Social services	15.6
Operational services	6.2
Common services	4.7
Total General Fund Budget	107.2

Restrictions on Freedom of Movement

The absolute control on Palestinian's freedom of movement, upheld throughout Oslo, has led to an almost complete separation of the 1967 occupied territories - Gaza and the West Bank. Israel has further isolated the Gaza Strip by constructing a "security fence", complete with powerful electrical currents, barbed wire, and watchtowers. This isolation and virtual economic embargo on Gaza has caused a dramatic drop in local service and production price levels, as well as a massive drop in family income. The military closure, in place since March 1993, has denied many Palestinian day laborers, most of who are refugees, the opportunity for regular employment in Israel. In October 1999, Israel finally opened the long-delayed "safe passage" between Gaza and West Bank. In practice, however, the southern passage between Erez checkpoint in Gaza and the West Bank village of Tarkumiya near Hebron is neither safe nor free. Authorization of travel permits is controlled by Israel, while the number of Palestinians able to use the passage is restricted by Israeli security procedures and the limited operational time of the passage. Israel also retains the right to stop, detain, and arrest Palestinians using the passage. It is still too early, however, to ascertain what kind of impact the passage will have on economic and social lives of Gazan refugees in particular and Gazans in general.

Living Conditions

Gaza refugee camps also suffer from tremendous overcrowding. Camps have doubled their population since the 1950s and have not been allowed to expand their area. The 74,000 residents of Beach Camp, for example, are restricted to 0.747 sq. km and in Jabalia Camp 98,000 refugees live on 1.403 sq. km. The majority of the families still live in the small, one or two room concrete shelters constructed by UNRWA in the 1950s and are often shared by nine or ten people. Furniture is practically non-existent in the living quarters, except for the occasional mattress, and kitchens and sanitary facilities are small and insufficient. Many shelters do not have bathrooms. The concrete shelters also offer little protection from the heat in summer and the cold in winter, increasing the risk of disease. In 1998-99 UNRWA assisted in the rehabilitation of more than 1,000 shelters in Gaza camps.

In the past, the construction of multi-floor buildings in the camps was forbidden by the Israeli occupation in order that the soldiers could easily overlook the camps. Refugee shelters were also de-

molished in the 1970s by the Israeli military under the guise of security. In July and August of 1971, for example, nearly 8,000 homes were demolished.⁴ Today, no legal prohibition against building additional floors exists, but most people lack the funds for construction. The only ones able to build new multi-floor homes are either those who earn money outside Gaza, in Israel or in the Gulf States, or those who have obtained a well-paid position in the Palestinian Authority (PA). Interestingly, modern apartment buildings have been erected outside the camps since the arrival of the PA to alleviate the crowded conditions but many remain half-empty as the rent costs far exceed the average Gazan income.

Economic Conditions

Economic imperatives play a large role in dictating housing and family planning. Unemployment remains alarmingly high all over the Gaza Strip, with refugees in the camps enduring additional hardships because of the lack of workable agricultural land and the lack of real estate to serve as collateral for loans. The unemployment rate in Gaza for the first two quarters of 1999 stood at 20.1%, nearly twice the rate of unemployment in the West Bank and a small improvement over 1998.⁵ If one includes the number of discouraged workers who did not seek work due to their belief that no work could be found, the unemployment rate in Gaza rises substantially. The higher unemployment rates in Gaza are due to severely restricted freedom of movement between Gaza and the labor market in Israel and a higher growth in the working-age population. It is not uncommon that an extended family depends on the income of only one or two of its members. There are many nuclear families with five or six children just getting by with 400-500 New Israeli Shekels (NIS) (US\$110-144) per month. The average monthly wage in the Gaza Strip for the first half of 1999 was around 1000 NIS and around 1700 NIS for Palestinian day laborers in Israel.⁶

With the permanent general closure of the Gaza Strip continuing unchanged, the economic situation in the Gaza Strip has deteriorated dramatically during the past five years. While real monthly wages in NIS increased in all areas of employment in 1998, unlike previous years, depreciation of the NIS in the second half of the year meant that real monthly wages in US dollars actually declined once again, with the strongest impact felt in Gaza. The daily wage in Gaza, moreover, is nearly 30% lower than in the West Bank.⁷



Oslo Accords - Gazan Refugee Perspective

Many camp residents recount a feeling of euphoria when they first heard about the agreement signed between Israel and the PLO in September 1993. Finally, an end to the conflict and a return to some kind of normal life were in sight. Unfortunately, this euphoria was short lived and the reality of the agreement was soon realized. The following are personal accounts of Gazan residents' experiences as they came to terms with Oslo.

A 63-year-old refugee from Maghazi Camp hoped that he would finally, after years of being denied an entry permit to Jerusalem, return to pray in the al-Aqsa mosque. Since March of 1993, Israel has imposed a military closure on the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinians who are not residents of Jerusalem and do not have entry permits are not permitted to enter the city.⁸ To pray in this mosque, one of the most important Islamic sites in the world is a duty of every Muslim. But Oslo turned up only empty promises and now he is not even able to visit his daughter in Jericho.

For Jihad Okasha, from Jabalia Camp, a dream came true when the Oslo Accord was signed in Washington. He thought that Palestinian soldiers would come to defend the rights of the people and the new Palestinian borders. Jihad was sure that the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 would be returned. He also was looking forward to praying in al-Aqsa. In the spring of 1994, after having spent all of his life in Jabalia and Gaza City, he visited the southern Gaza Strip for the first time. He went to see the vacated Israeli prisons and remembered how people cried when they saw the cells where their relatives had been held for interrogation and torture. An active member of Fatah since the age of 10, Jihad is now 20 years old and deeply disappointed with the results of the agreement. Oslo has not allowed him

Canada Camp⁹

Year	# of Households Returning
1982-1992	133
1994	70
1997-1998	39
1999	35

Source: UNRWA

With the signing of the Camp David Accords and the establishment of an international border between Egypt and the occupied Gaza Strip, some 6,000 Palestinian refugees were stranded in Egypt. This included some 4,500 Palestinians (496 households) from Rafah Camp who had been transferred to the Sinai when Israel began widening roads in the camp in the 1970s under the pretext of security and 2,000 members of the Malalha Bedouin tribe, originally from the Bir Saba' (Beersheba) area. Under the Camp David Accords Israel agreed to allow the return of refugees from Rafah Camp stranded on the Egyptian side of the border to the Tel as-Sultan quarter of the Gaza Strip. Between 1982 and 1998, 242 households were allowed to return with another 35 households approved in 1999. The Malalha Bedouins have not been permitted to return.

As of 1999, slightly more than half of the total number of refugee households had returned to Gaza. Each household is provided with a total grant of US\$12,000 for relocation and construction costs. While financing was originally provided by the Egyptian government, the majority of the costs after 1994 have been financed by donations from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Economic Development. Approximately 60% of committed funds had been used by the end of 1999, leaving funds available for the relocation of approximately 82 households. Another \$2 million will be necessary to facilitate the return of the remaining households from Canada Camp to Gaza.

On average, approximately 10 households have been permitted to return to Gaza since the Agreement between Israel and Egypt in 1982. At that rate, it will take another two decades for the remaining households to return to Gaza, although an agreement was reached in September 1998 to speed up the return process and allow all the remaining households to return to Gaza by April 2001.

to return to his original land. Even his hope to study at the West Bank University of Birzeit was crushed when the Israeli officials refused to issue him a permit to travel to the West Bank.

For many of the refugees, yesterday's wars were better than today's peace. "They promised us that the economy would improve, but it became worse," comments a refugee from Khan Younis Camp. "The economic situation was better even in the hard years of the intifada, when more Gazans were able to work outside the Strip and trade was easier", states a merchant at Jabalia's market. The desperate economic situation, the absence of progress in the negotiations, together with the feeling of living in a prison have added to the disappointment in the "peace process" among Gaza Strip refugees. "Our expectations about peace were destroyed. We want to live in peace and security, but we feel like we are in a war. Israel just wants the Palestinians to shoot first," Jihad Okasha comments.

Refugees are aware of the current unequal balance of power: "Neither Arafat nor any other Palestinian leader can bring me back now because they are too weak, but maybe in the future my children or grandchildren will be able to return. Anyway, no matter what they sign, the PA has no right to give up my land," explains a teacher from Beach Camp. Moreover, refugees clearly perceive that their issue is not a priority of Palestinian Authority politics at this stage. "Arafat has a minimalist approach. He thinks only about the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, he does not even think about Jerusalem. The PA does not fight for the rights of the refugees," summarizes a refugee from Canada Camp. Four years of experience with the PA have also caused people to doubt its commitment to the principles of democracy and equality, and its ability to revive the economy. Criticism of corruption, nepotism, and bribery are widespread.

Among the few positive developments mentioned by refugees is the improved security situation in the Strip. This holds true especially for Jabalia Camp, which suffered from heavy Israeli military presence during the intifada. Now, there are no more Israeli soldiers and no more curfews. People enjoy the freedom to stay out at night and have all night wedding parties in the streets of Jabalia. Some streets are paved, small parks have been set up, a new market place replaced the overcrowded old market, and people are allowed to add additional floors to their homes.

Youth clubs and camp institutions are no longer forced to work underground. However, most people hardly recognize these improvements, as they cannot outweigh the serious decline in their personal standard of living. What is a newly paved street, a new park, or some new classrooms compared to rising unemployment, the spread of poverty, and the inability to leave the Gaza Strip? For the refugees in Gaza, there is no substitute for freedom.

Endnotes:

¹ For more details about this framework see *The Right of Return: Campaign for the Defense of Palestinian Refugee Rights*. Bethlehem: BADIL Resource Center, 2000.

² Majdal was home to some 11,000 Palestinians prior to the 1948 war. Unlike many other towns and villages in Palestine, not all the people of Majdal fled or were expelled during the 1948 war. More than 1,500 residents remained steadfast until 1950, when they were finally evicted by a combination of Israeli military force and bureaucratic measures.

³ On 9 April 1948 Zionist forces led by the Irgun and Stern Gang (Lehi) with rifles and hand grenades provided by the Haganah massacred over 100 men, women, and children in the western Jerusalem village of Deir Yassin. The massacre, one of over two-dozen report massacres during the 1948 war, created widespread fear among Palestinians, motivating many to flee their homes for safer areas until after the war.

⁴ The General Fund is the principal budget that includes coverage of recurrent costs in education, health, and social services.

⁵ Figures from UN General Assembly Resolution 35/473 (8 October 1980).

⁶ Figures from *Report on the Palestinian Economy*. Office of the United Nations Special Co-ordinator, UNSCO (Autumn 1999).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Tables

a. UNRWA (June and November 1999). Figure for total number of refugees is from Salman Abu Sitta, *The Palestinian Nakba, Register of the Depopulated Localities in Palestine*. London: Palestinian Return Centre, 1998.

b. UNRWA (June 1999)

Palestinian Refugees in the West Bank

This profile is based on field research conducted in the summer of 1998 by Gerhard Pulfer (BADIL intern) entitled Palestinian Refugees Five Years after Oslo, and on a research paper prepared by Awni al-Mashni (BADIL Friends Forum) in the winter of 1998-99.

In the West Bank, refugees comprise some 30% of the population. Most refugees living in the West Bank come from the central areas of pre-1948 Palestine. Out of the 576,000 registered refugees, approximately 27% live in 19 UNRWA refugee camps scattered all over the West Bank. There are an additional five camps not recognized by UNRWA. Problems resulting from the Israeli occupation continue to define the lives of the refugees in the West Bank. While direct contact with the Israeli occupation forces has decreased drastically in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian self-ruled clusters are disconnected and surrounded by areas under Israeli control and encounters with the Israeli occupation are frequent. As a result of the Oslo map, refugee camps are found in areas A, B, and C, as well as in occupied East Jerusalem, meaning that while some refugee camps are located in areas fully controlled by the Palestinian Authority (PA), other camps are still directly exposed to Israeli military rule.

UNRWA Assistance

In the West Bank, UNRWA operates 98 elementary and preparatory schools with a total enrollment as of June 1999 of 51,944 students. The West Bank has the highest number of female students in all areas of UNRWA operations. Fifty-six percent of all students in the UNRWA schools in the West Bank are females. The West Bank has the second highest number of contract teachers

Refugees in West Bank (1999)^a

Camps	Registered Refugees (RR)
Aqabat Jaber	4,775
Ein el-Sultan	2,187
Shu'fat	8,995
Am'ari	7,396
Kalandia	8,189
Deir Ammar	2,043
Jalazone	8,372
Fawwar	6,419
Arroub	8,470
Dheisheh	9,812
Aida	3,895
Beit Jibrin	1,727
Far'a	6,312
Camp No.1	5,847
Askar	12,712
Balata	19,196
Tulkarm	14,862
Nur Shams	7,577
Jenin	13,361
Nu'ema uninhabited camp	-----
Total RR (in camps)	155,365
Total RR	576,160
Increase in RR over previous year (%)	2.6 %
RR as % of total estimated population	30.5 %
RR (Gaza) as % of total RR	15.7 %
Total Refugee Population	675,705

(16.2%) behind Gaza due to the chronic shortfall in donor contributions experienced by the Agency since the 1990s. While UNRWA schools in the West Bank have the lowest classroom occupancy rate (38 students per class in June 1999), the low rate is due to the high rate of schools housed in unsatisfactory rented premises. The rate (20.4%) is exceeded only in Lebanon. Two new schools were completed in 1999 with an additional four under construction. UNRWA's education program in the West Bank continues to be disrupted by restrictions imposed by Israeli authorities. West Bank staff, for example, continues to face problems entering Jerusalem due to the military closure in place since March 1993. Eight UNRWA schools are located in Jerusalem. Similar problems are faced in the delivery of health services and referrals to hospitals in Jerusalem. UNRWA operates 34 primary health care facilities in the West Bank.

Economic Conditions

Although the economic situation has also deteriorated in the West Bank, it is still better than in Gaza. UNRWA's data on Special Hardship Cases (SHC) for the West Bank and Gaza, for example, reveals the disparity in the levels of economic hardship in the two regions. In 1999, UNRWA listed 5.3% of the refugees in the West Bank or about 31,000 individuals under this status as compared to 8.4% in Gaza comprising some 67,000 individuals. The fact that poverty among refugees is less striking in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip is commonly

UNRWA IN FIGURES ^b	FIGURES
As of 30 June 1999	
<i>Education - 1998/99 Academic Year</i>	
Schools (elem, prep)	98
Educational Staff (not including support staff)	1,877
Pupil enrolment	51,944
<i>Health</i>	
Primary health care facilities	34
Health Staff	667
<i>Relief and Social services</i>	
Special hardship cases	30,393
SHCs as % of RR	5.3 %
<i>1999 General Fund Budget (millions of US\$)</i>	
Education	26.3
Health	13.4
Relief and Social services	7.1
Operational services	4.2
Common services	5.0
Total General Fund Budget	58.1

explained by the comparatively stronger and more developed West Bank economy which is able to absorb a larger percentage of refugee workers, and by the fact that, even workers who cannot obtain a permit, have the option of working in Israel "illegally" due to the fact that the closure between the West Bank and Israeli state territory is extremely difficult to enforce. The unofficial labor flow to all Israeli-controlled areas in 1998 was estimated to be 55,000 workers as compared to an average of 44,000 workers holding Israeli permits.¹

Living Conditions

West Bank camps are also overcrowded, but many of the original UNRWA concrete shelters have been replaced by multi-floor private homes with the process beginning in camps adjacent to towns in the 1970s and in other camps at the beginning of the 1980s.² At the beginning of the 1990s, with the continued growth in the refugee population and absence of a durable solution, refugees began to add additional floors to their homes in the camps.

UNRWA refused to grant building permits for more than two stories, but construction continued to accommodate the need for housing. As a result camps have become increasingly closed in and congested. Roads inside the camps have become constricted and green space eliminated. In the Jericho area, however, the three camps of Nueimeh, Ein Sultan, and Aqbat Jaber are less crowded. Many refugees from these camps fled to Jordan during the 1967 war. The Palestinian Authority currently provides housing for military/police personnel in these camps.³

al-'Arroub Camp

Framed by the Bethlehem-Hebron road and shadowed by the illegal Israeli Gush Etzion settlement bloc, al-'Arroub had the misfortune of being placed in Area C during the Oslo Accords and thus Israel still controls all its civil and security affairs for the approximately 8,500 registered refugees in the camp. Israeli soldiers guard the adjacent road, patrol the camp, harass people at its entrance, and continue to chase after stone throwing children.

As in Gaza, the water shortage in 'Arroub Camp has deteriorated in recent years. The summers of 1998 and 1999 were especially harsh. The discriminatory Israeli system of water distribution continues to amply supply the Israeli settlements with water while insufficient amounts are allocated to the growing Palestinian population. Thus, "lucky" residents of 'Arroub Camp, specifically those living in the lower regions of the slope, receive water every one or two months, while the taps of the residents higher up on the hill can remain dry for up to four months at a time due to the low water pressure. The occasional UNRWA water supply does not adequately compensate and residents are often forced to purchase water from private suppliers.

Kalandia Camp

Located north of Jerusalem on the main Jerusalem-Ramallah road, Kalandia Camp is in an area classified as Area B on the Oslo map. Israel is solely responsible for "security affairs" in Area B and has used this power to block the camp's main entrance with a six-meter high wall of concrete blocks to prevent children and youth from throwing stones at Israeli settler cars passing on the main road. Approximately 8,100 camp residents have been living behind the blocked entrance. All people, garbage trucks, UNRWA and commercial traffic are forced to move through the small side entrances of the camp.

Income and Household Expenditure^c				
Decline of 1997 Real Monthly Wages According to Employment Area (as compared to 1996)	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Israel	1997 Average
	- 9.3 %	- 11.0 %	+ 0.8 % - 5.8 %	
Decline of 1998 Real Monthly Wages According to Employment Area (as compared to 1997)	- 0.01 %	- 6.99 %	- 4.10 %	- 3.7 %
Decline of 1997 Real Household Expenditure (as compared to 1996)	Average WBGS Households	Basic expenditures (food, housing, clothing, health, etc.)	Secondary Expenditures (furniture,leisure,etc.)	
(US \$750 as compared to US \$828 in 1996)	- 9.4%	- 7.0%	- 15.0%	
Decline of 1998 Real Household Expenditure (as compared to 1997)				
(NIS 2,579 or approx. USD 676.90 as compared to 2,634 in 1997)	- 2.1 %	- 0.55 %	- 6.25 %	

Shu'fat Camp

Shu'fat is the only Palestinian refugee camp located inside the expanded municipal borders of Israeli-occupied Jerusalem. The camp suffers from tremendous overcrowding and houses are now being constructed literally on top of each other. Some buildings are now six or seven floors high and even some of the narrow alley spaces between buildings are being roofed to create more living space. The camp's main street is now too narrow to allow for two cars to pass. A bad smell lingers over the camp with the collapse of the sanitary system under the pressure of the population. Residents unable to obtain building space in the camp began building outside the borders of the camp. Due to difficulties in acquiring building permits from Israeli authorities, however, shelters constructed in this area, are in danger of being demolished. The area is reserved for the expansion of the nearby Pisgat Ze'ev settlement. In 1997, five such homes were destroyed by Israel. The reason for the enormous overcrowding of Shu'fat Camp is Israel's policy of ID card confiscation in East Jerusalem. In the past, many refugees who wished to improve their standard of living left the camp for the West Bank, where the cost of living is cheaper. However, since Israel began to increase ID card confiscations in 1996 with the requirement that residents provide documents of "permanent domicile" in the city, the stream has been reversed. Thousands of refugees and non-refugees have returned to the camp so as to protect their residency rights in the city. Thus, according to residents' estimates, Shu'fat Camp has become the home of some 20-25,000 people. UNRWA statistics list 9,000 registered refugees residing in the camp.

Closure

In 1967, after Israel occupied the West Bank (including eastern Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip, these areas were declared to be a closed military zone. Palestinian residents of the Occupied Territories were later issued general exit permits, which permitted them to travel into Jerusalem and to Israel, except between the hours of 1am and 5 am. Beginning in 1989, Palestinians began to face increased restrictions on their freedom of movement. In January 1991 the Israel revoked the general exit permits and every Palestinian resident of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip was forced to apply for personal exit permits. Two years later, in March 1993, Israel imposed an overall closure on the occupied Palestinian territories, severely restricting movement between the West Bank and Gaza and between the West Bank and Jerusalem. Gradually, the Israeli government began to construct and develop a series of military check-points at all major entrances from the West Bank to Jerusalem and to Israel. While Israeli citizens are free to travel between the West Bank, Gaza and Israel, Palestinians must have permits, which are difficult to obtain. All Palestinian vehicles are stopped at the checkpoints for document inspection and frequently Palestinians are denied entry. On some days - Israeli holidays in particular - the closure is total and all Palestinians are barred from entering Jerusalem and Israel. The imposition of the closure has severely impacted all aspects of Palestinian life.



Demolition of Palestinian Homes on the Edge of Shu'fat Camp in Jerusalem (Photo: Gerhard Pulfer)



Overcrowding, Shu'fat Camp

Oslo Accords - West Bank Refugee Perspectives

West Bank refugees, although considering themselves a little better off, share the same disillusionment with the current political negotiations experienced by refugees in Gaza. Refugees in the West Bank and Gaza regard these areas as a "host country", the same as Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Pessimism about the possibility of achieving their right of return in the framework of the Oslo negotiations prevails, and calls for fighting corruption and favoritism (*wasta*) in regards to employment in PA institutions are common. Refugees feel discriminated against and excluded from employment in medium and high level jobs created by the Palestinian Authority (PA). Many refugees in the West Bank speak openly about the need for a new political "refugee" party, if the PLO/PA should sign an agreement with Israel that does not provide for the implementation of refugee rights (especially the right of return). So far, the notion of a new refugee party has been rejected by the ranks of the Palestinian leadership.

Popular pressure did result in a new consensus about the need for an independent refugee movement. The first popular refugee conference, organized by the Union of Youth Activity Centres/West Bank (UYAC), was held in Deheishe Refugee Camp in September 1996 directly followed by a similar conference in Gaza. The initiative failed to bring about the desired election of authentic refugee councils, however, mainly due to the intervention of sec-

tarian party politics. Nevertheless, the initiative succeeded in defining the basic agenda and guidelines of the struggle, based on the right of return, for the defense of refugee rights in the 1967 occupied territories. Since then, strategy debates, lobbying and protest activities carried out by activists affiliated with the UYAC, the PLO Popular Service Committees, and local refugee committees have continued.⁴ While the initiative for the new independent refugee movement came from the West Bank (where PA presence and control is weaker than in the Gaza Strip), social and political activism in a special, refugee framework is shared by refugees in both areas and - although only in its beginnings - has become a factor that can influence PLO/PA politics.

Despite all the differences between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, both refugee populations are very disappointed by the "peace process". Very few mention personal freedom, the absence of curfews, or the absence of Israeli soldiers when they speak about life in the post-Oslo era. On the contrary, personal freedom is perceived as even more restricted due to the division of the West Bank into Areas A, B, C, and the Israeli closure policy. The Israeli army is no longer in towns or in the camps for the most part, but it continues to surround the Palestinian communities, and Palestinian refugees feel under siege. West Bank refugees share the frustration of Gaza refugees about UNRWA service cuts, growing unemployment, and the lack of progress on the refugee question in the political negotiations.



Water Distribution in Arroub Camp (Photo: Najib Abu Rukaya)

Opinion polls conducted in the West Bank and Gaza confirm these feelings.⁵ Fifty-six percent of the refugees surveyed by IPCRI in 1997 state that they have not benefited from the Oslo Accords and the Palestinian Authority, while 26.5 percent say that they were hurt by the new situation and have become disillusioned with their leadership.⁶ At the same time, the overwhelming majority (92.2%) insists that the right of return to their homes and lands is the only solution that would satisfy their desires and meet their expectations. Almost 50 percent would be willing to live under and abide by Israeli rule, if they were allowed to return to their homes and lands in Israel. In another poll conducted by the PA State Information Service in summer 1999, 85% of Palestinians surveyed (over 700 of the 1080 persons polled were refugees) felt that the Oslo process would not lead to a just and lasting solution of the refugee question. Ninety-one percent rejected the establishment of a Palestinian state in exchange for the right of return.⁷

Endnotes:

¹UNSCO *Report on the Palestinian Economy* (Spring 1999).

²Khaled Mansour, *The Housing Crisis in the West Bank and Gaza Strip Refugee Camps; Implications and Prospects of Solution*. Ramallah: SHAML The Palestinian Diaspora and Refugee Center, 1998.

³ Ibid.

⁴For more details see BADIL Information & Discussion Brief No. 3, *The Evolution of an Independent, Community-Based Campaign for Palestinian Refugee Rights*. (Spring 2000).

⁵For a summary of more details and references see "Public Opinion Polls and the Palestinian Right of Return," BADIL Press Release (7 October 1999).

⁶ *The Future of the Palestinian Refugees Issue in the Final Status Negotiations*. IPCRI (March 1998).

⁷PA State Information Service, Press Release (Summer 1999).

Tables

a. UNRWA (June and November 1999). Figure for total number of refugees is from Salman Abu Sitta, *The Palestinian Nakba, Register of the Depopulated Localities in Palestine*. London: Palestinian Return Centre, 1998.

b. UNRWA (June 1999)

c. UNSCO *Report on the Palestinian Economy* (Spring 1998 and Autumn 1999).

Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon

This profile, Political and Social Effects of the Oslo Accords, by Ahmad Ali Othman, a Palestinian researcher living in Lebanon, was originally published in ARTICLE 74, Issue No. 26 (December 1998), pp. 8-12 by BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights

The situation of the nearly 400,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is distinct from the situation of other Palestinian refugee communities in Syria, Jordan, or in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Without going into the details of the complicated Lebanese-Palestinian relationship on both the official and community level and its historical development, the uniqueness of the Palestinian experience in Lebanon is a result of life in a steadily deteriorating environment. The initial welcome in 1948 slowly cooled and eventually turned into hostility. The hostility directed against Palestinian refugees in Lebanon today is the outcome of the religious and sectarian forces, which form the current political leadership in Lebanon and their specific positions towards the Palestinian issue. This hostility is aggravated by the unstable political, economic, and social situation, locally, regionally, and at the international level.

Successive Lebanese governments have regarded the Palestinian refugee issue as a "security issue", handling refugee camps as "security islands" standing outside of the law. The presence of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, therefore, continues to worry substantial sectors of the Lebanese population. These worries are expressed politically through discriminatory legislation aimed at the political, economic and social marginalization of Palestinian refugees in order to prevent their integration into the Lebanese social and economic fabric. The cumulative impact of the above factors has resulted in broad public support

Refugees in Lebanon (1999)^a

Camps	Registered Refugees (RR)
Mar Elias	1,397
Burj el-Barajneh	18,385
Dbayeh	4,184
Shatila	11,436
Ein el-Hilweh	42,369
Mieh Mieh	5,018
El-Buss	9,498
Rashidieh	23,705
Burj el-Shamali	17,457
Nahr el-Bared	26,792
Bedawi	15,004
Wavell	7,078
Dikwaneh (distroyed camp)	8,972
Nabatieh (distroyed camp)	6,597
Total RR (in camps)	208,223
Total RR	373,440
Increase in RR over previous year (%)	1.5 %
RR as % of total estimated population	10.6 %
RR (Gaza) as % of total RR	10.2 %
Total Refugee Population	422,288

of the official Lebanese position. Palestinians are considered unwelcome guests. Exceptions exist, but they have not effected a change in the official position.

The role attributed to Palestinians in the Lebanese civil war must be seen in this context. Ignoring their responsibility for starting the civil war, a strong wing inside and outside the Lebanese government argued that the Palestinians were responsible for the civil war and therefore had to suffer the consequences. This argument exacerbated strong feelings of insecurity among Palestinians in Lebanon. Though experienced in different ways by each Palestinian, this sense of insecurity is deeply ingrained into the Palestinian mentality. It stems not only from the individual and collective trauma of the *Nakba* (1948 war), but has also been kept alive by later experiences. The massacres of Sabra and Shatila in 1982 and the War of the Camps in 1985 pushed refugees in Lebanon to the verge of annihilation.¹ Numerous other campaigns of hostility, eviction, and expulsion have uprooted Palestinians and threatened their physical existence. Although it is true that insecurity and fear is found among other Palestinian communities, it is strongest among Palestinians in Lebanon due to the factors described above.



Shatila Camp (Photo: BADIL)

An Environment of Deprivation

Economic and social suffering among Palestinians in Lebanon has reached a level never witnessed before. Various Lebanese and Palestinian factors, regionally and internationally, have contributed to the growth of poverty and deterioration of health and social conditions.

Lebanese policies affecting civil and social life

Lebanese government policy aims to prevent resettlement and encourage emigration by isolating the Palestinian community. This approach has resulted in numerous restrictions on housing, employment, and travel, which directly affect Palestinian daily life in Lebanon. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the natural growth rate of the Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon is 3.3% per annum. The Lebanese government has dealt with the growing refugee population by policies based on three NOs: No to the reconstruction of the three destroyed camps²; no to the construction of new camps; and, no to the expansion of existing camps. Construction materials are not allowed under any conditions to enter the camp in Sur, south Lebanon, and repairs of homes are possible only after receiving special permission which is difficult to obtain. As a result, Palestinian camps in Lebanon lack basic infrastructure and overcrowding has reached extreme dimensions. In 'Ain al-Hilwa camp, for example, medium sized apartments of 100 sq.m. are shared by up to 18 persons.³ The situation is aggravated by the lack of safe water and the absence of sewerage systems.

Palestinian refugee camps are also threatened by official reconstruction plans for the city of Beirut. The Lebanese government has announced several times that it intends to remove the camps of Sabra, Shatila, and Burj al-Barajnah, and to seize parts of other camps for the construction of new roads and highways. These plans have stopped the implementation of UNRWA's *Building and Re-*

building Aid Program in all Palestinian camps in Lebanon.⁴ In addition, thousands of Palestinians are threatened with eviction from their temporary shelters by various discriminatory measures, with dozens of families evicted from their homes without being offered suitable housing alternatives. Compensation payments are too low to purchase even a two-room home and cover less than two years of rent costs.

Under Lebanese law, Palestinians in Lebanon are considered foreigners. Work permits must be obtained from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. Moreover, Palestinians are barred from more than 60 professions, among them medicine, pharmacy, accounting, engineering, secretarial work, arts, and public transportation. The Palestinian work force is also excluded from large sectors of the Lebanese labor market, especially construction and agriculture. Palestinian workers do not receive public social allowances, although a contribution is deducted from their salaries and wages.⁵ Despite these restrictions, the Palestinian work force constitutes a growing force of competition to other Arab and Asian workers employed in Lebanon. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon also face high and rising unemployment rates. The unemployment rate among the Palestinian work force (25.6% of the Palestinian population) is officially estimated at 13.1%.⁶ The actual rate, according to other definitions of unemployment (i.e. including unstable and seasonal unemployment) is much higher. Rising child labor is a result of the bad living conditions, which encourage children and youth to drop out of school, especially at the secondary level, and to join the black labor market. According to a 1996 survey by UNICEF and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 11.6% of Palestinian children aged 10 to 17 years are already working or looking for work.

Distribution of (11.6%) Palestinian Child^b Labor in the Workforce	
Services Sector	39 %
Construction	12.4 %
Agriculture	18 %

Child Labor Among Palestinian Children

While Lebanese policy encourages Palestinians to leave Lebanon, Palestinians wishing to leave are actually confronted with many obstacles, which make it difficult for them to obtain travel documents. High expenses (up to US\$100) prevent many from

filing an application, and, while it is known that Lebanese citizens can obtain travel documents within three days, Palestinians must wait for one month. Moreover, only those Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA can obtain travel documents. This means that the thousands of Palestinians in Lebanon not registered with UNRWA cannot obtain travel documents.

The Lebanese Department for Public Security also cancels the residency documents of those Palestinians who hold citizenship or residency in a second country. Between 1985 and 1995, for example, the Department cancelled some 25,000 residency permits.⁷ In January 1999, however, special travel and re-entry regulations issued in 1996 were lifted. The regulations, which had conditioned re-entry of Palestinians to Lebanon with a special permit issued by the Lebanese Department for Public Security prior to departure, had prevented the return of thousands of Palestinians, residents of Lebanon, who were abroad at the time of its issuance. The cancellation of this policy, which resulted in the separation of Palestinian families, was a major source of bribery and corruption and was one of the major demands raised by Palestinians in Lebanon.

The Retreat of the PLO and its institutions

The 1982 evacuation of Beirut by the PLO marked the beginning of its retreat from responsibilities and commitments for Palestinians in Lebanon. Many PLO institutions and Samed enterprises, which had employed a large portion of the Palestinian work force, were closed. Health and hospital services offered by the Palestinian Red Crescent Association have declined steadily and operate today at the lowest level since their establishment. Salaries and social conditions of its medical and administrative staff also continue to deteriorate.

Matters were further complicated by the signing of the Oslo Accords between Israel and the official PLO leadership, and the consequent establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA). This process resulted in a change of priorities of the Palestinian leadership, with PA affairs ranked at the top of the agenda, and all forms of support for the Palestinian diaspora, including Palestinians in Lebanon, consigned to the bottom. The decline in PLO support for the families of Palestinian martyrs is a strong example of the serious deprivation resulting from the change in PLO priorities. The PLO proceeded to cut other forms of assistance, such as retirement allowances and student scholarships. The new set of priorities is expressed clearly in speeches. According to Nabil Sha'ath, for example, PA Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, "the

Palestinians in Lebanon are not under the responsibility of the PA or the PLO, but part of the responsibility of UNRWA."⁸

The Retreat of UNRWA Aid and Services

Since it was established in 1949, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) has blamed its dependency on donor support for its unstable financial position. There is not a single report by the Agency, which does not include a point referring to the widening gap between actual refugee needs and UNRWA financial capacities. Despite this fact, UNRWA services in the fields of education, health, and welfare have played a vital role in Lebanon, especially after the collapse of the Palestinian social and economic infrastructure. Recent reports by the UNRWA High Commissioner, however, describe a situation of collective disaster.

UNRWA IN FIGURES ^c	FIGURES As of 30 June 1999
<i>Education - 1998/99 Academic Year</i>	
Schools (elem, prep)	76
Educational Staff (not including support staff)	1,424
Pupil enrolment	40,812
<i>Health</i>	
Primary health care facilities	25
Health Staff	532
<i>Relief and Social services</i>	
Special hardship cases	39,258
SHCs as % of RR	10.6 %
<i>1999 General Fund Budget (millions of US\$)</i>	
Education	19.8
Health	12.5
Relief and Social services	7.8
Operational services	3.2
Common services	3.3
Total General Fund Budget	48.3

While the current budget crisis in UNRWA stems from the stagnation of donor contributions towards the Agency's regular and special programs, UNRWA's ability to provide adequate services has been further weakened by the absence of PLO institutions and services along with the withdrawal of many private institutions and international NGOs. Mismanagement of UNRWA resources is an additional factor. Thus, the scope of the announced financial deficit reached US \$22 million in 1997 and \$61.9 million in 1998, with an expected deficit of \$90 million for 1999.⁹ UNRWA responded to the crisis by reducing its services in a wide range of educational, health, and social service programs.

In the field of health, UNRWA reduced its activity to the operation of several small hospitals



Rashidiya Camp (Photo: BADIL)



UNRWA Sibliin Technical School
(Photo: UNRWA)

in the five UNRWA field regions in Lebanon. Agency contributions to hospitalization cover only a part of the actual expenses and are limited to a period of 20 days. Also, financial assistance to persons in need of surgery is partial (open-heart surgery costs US \$10-15,000 of which UNRWA covers no more than US \$2,700) and provided only for three types of surgery (open heart, cancer, and brain tumor). The fact that this kind of limited support is offered only to Palestinian refugees below the age of 59 years raises serious questions about ethics of

Examples of Palestinian families in Lebanon, living on or under the poverty line and confronted with tragic personal choices vis-a-vis unaffordable costs of hospitalization are numerous. Among others, there is 'Ommar Hamza from Shatila camp who died in one of the Beirut hospitals. The hospital administration withheld his body for more than 15 days, until his family covered outstanding hospitalization costs totaling more than 35 million Lebanese Lira (US \$23,000). In another case, Muna al-Zayat, a Palestinian woman, delivered triplets in a hospital, which withheld her babies for more than 40 days, until a wealthy woman offered to pay the hospital bill of 40 million Lebanese Lira (US \$26,000).

UNRWA aid. There are 25 primary health care facilities in Lebanon.

UNRWA cut its previous program for the support of Special Hardship Cases (SHC), which used to provide assistance and relief to the very poor (i.e. more than 10% of the total Palestinian refugee population registered with UNRWA in Lebanon). These cuts also affect sub-programs with development aspects, such as the loan program, women activities program, and the disabled rehabilitation program. UNRWA's total 1998 budget reserved for Special Hardship Cases was no more than \$500,000.

Most of the 76 elementary, preparatory, and 3 secondary UNRWA schools in Lebanon operate in two daily shifts in order to accommodate the steadily growing student population (40,812 as of June 1999) and the lack of classroom space. Lebanon has the highest number of classrooms (42%) of classrooms in unsatisfactory rented premises in all UNRWA areas. Four schools are currently under construction. As in other areas of UNRWA operations, new education staff are hired annually on a contract basis in order to reduce Agency spending. While free distribution of stationary to students was stopped already ten years ago, UNRWA's scholarship program has recently been discontinued.

The Absence of an Address

Palestinians in Lebanon still consider the PLO as their sole representative, because they distinguish between the PLO as the framework of Palestinian unity and national identity, and the Palestinian Authority, the product of the Oslo Accords. The tragedy of Palestinians in Lebanon is aggravated by the fact that, despite their loyalty, they lack a leadership that can serve as an address for their daily economic and social concerns. The current Palestinian leadership (PLO) shows little concern for the problems and the suffering of Palestinians in the diaspora, while it shows much concern and dedication to PA affairs and the problems related to the Oslo negotiations. This also includes the establishment of legitimacy by force through the repression of Palestinian opposition groups.

While the majority of Palestinians in Lebanon reject the Oslo Accords, Palestinian opposition groups have not succeeded in formulating an alternative program, which could offer solutions to the political, economic, and social issues of the Palestinian diaspora in general, and Palestinians in Lebanon in particular. This explains why these groups have failed to become a trusted and respected address for the community. In regards to the existing Popular Committees, the situation is similar, because they duplicate the characteristics of the Palestinian opposition groups and factions they support. Representatives of Popular Committees are not elected in democratic elections, and they are not accountable to their constituency. These Committees thus restrict and inhibit, rather than promote, the development of the Palestinian communities.

Regardless of the divisions within the Palestinian leadership, Lebanese authorities do not recognize any of them nor do they consult them when dealing with the Palestinian issue in Lebanon. The Lebanese government continues to refuse to allow PLO offices to re-open in Beirut. At the same time, it refuses to handle Palestinian issues via the Palestinian opposition factions or their affiliates. The most important point is that the Lebanese government is not ready to deal with Palestinian issues in the framework of civil and social rights, but insists in its traditional approach towards Palestinian affairs as a "security matter" and a bargaining card in Lebanese-Syrian relations. The government deals with Palestinians through the Department of Palestinian Refugee Affairs, which is part of the Lebanese Interior

Ministry. The Department issues refugee ID cards and registers births, deaths, marriages, and divorces among the Palestinian population.

Despite the fact that UNRWA covers a broad sphere of Palestinian life by means of education, health and social services, the Agency has not become an address entrusted for the solution of refugee problems. This is mainly due to Palestinian fears and suspicions in regards to UNRWA's political role and the withdrawal of its aid and services.

Palestinians in Lebanon: No to Resettlement

By excluding the refugees, the Oslo Accords revived the issue of resettlement and increased prospects that resettlement would be imposed by force. The Accords thus engendered fear among both Palestinians and Lebanese. Resettlement scenarios presented by local and international forces, increased these fears and further complicated the situation. While opposition to resettlement among Palestinian refugees is rooted in their demand for the right of return to their homes, opposition among the various Lebanese parties is multi-faceted. Some reject resettlement out of hostility towards the refugees, while others oppose resettlement in solidarity with Palestinians and in support of Palestinian national rights. Unfortunately, the official Lebanese position is motivated primarily by the former.

Palestinians in Lebanon understood spontaneously that the Oslo Accords failed to meet even their minimum hopes and demands. Rather, the Accords represented a step on the road to erasing the Palestinian refugee issue through resettlement, an option they had always resisted and fought. According to a 1994 opinion poll, which included a sample of Palestinians inside and outside the camps, 54% of respondents believed that the Oslo Accords would not lead to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, while 70% believed that a final agreement would not include the Palestinian right of return.¹⁰ Sixty-two percent did not support the Accords and agreements in their current form. The same poll also found that Palestinians in Lebanon support restitution by force, holding that armed struggle, which strengthens the Palestinian position, must accompany the negotiation process. Seventy percent rejected completely any idea of resettlement in Lebanon. Eighty-three percent of refugees surveyed preferred to live in Palestine.

The future of Palestinians in Lebanon can-



Lack of sanitation infrastructure, 'Ein Al-Hilwe camp
(Photo: UNRWA)

not be predicted without recognizing the importance of the political landscape, which affects all aspects of their lives. Political developments, in the past and present, have had and continue to have a strong and immediate impact on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. These developments have inhibited the development of a stable situation. This may explain the expectations of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, their fear of the unknown, and their mistrust of the future.

Endnotes:

¹ For more details on Sabra and Shatila massacre and the War of the Camps see Rosemary Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies, The Palestinian Experience in Lebanon*. London: Zed Books Ltd., 1994.

² Tal al-Za'ater and Jisser al-Basha in the Beirut area, and al-Nabatiya camp in South Lebanon were destroyed.

³ Dr. Ali Zaidan, *Environmental Conditions of Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon, The Case of 'Ain al-Hilwa*. Unpublished Research.

⁴ See also Rosemary Sayigh, "Palestinians in Lebanon," *al-Safir* (24 February 1995).

⁵ Laila Zacharia, Working Paper presented at the Workshop organized by the Nationalist Arab Forum in Beirut (20 January 1996), "Right of Return and the Struggle Against Resettlement".

⁶ Yousef Madi and Hatem Sadiq, *Demographic, Social, and Economic Conditions of Palestinian Children in the Palestinian Refugee Camps and Communities in Lebanon*. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and Natural Resource, and UNICEF Field Survey (June 1996).

⁷ Rosemary Sayigh in *al-Safir* (24 February 1995).

⁸ *al-Safir* (20 April 1995) quoting Rosemary Sayigh, "?" *Journal of Palestine Studies*, No. 3 (Summer 1995).

⁹ UNRWA and Suheil al-Natour, *The Palestinian Conditions in Lebanon*. Beirut: Dar al-Taqqadum, 1993.

¹⁰ Dr. Hussein Sha'aban, "What Palestinians Say about their Future in Lebanon," *al-Safir* (2 June 1994).

Tables

a. UNRWA (June and November 1999). Figure for total number of refugees is from Salman Abu Sitta, *The Palestinian Nakba, Register of the Depopulated Localities in Palestine*. London: Palestinian Return Centre, 1998.

b. Yousef Madi and Hatem Sadiq, *Demographic, Social, and Economic Conditions of Palestinian Children in Palestinian Refugee Camps and Communities in Lebanon*. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and Natural Resources & UNICEF, Field Survey (June 1996).

c. UNRWA (June 1999).

Palestinian Refugees in Jordan

This profile, Integrated and Hoping to Return, based on a report prepared by Samar Hijjawi, a freelance journalist, graduated from Yarmouk University, and working with the Arab Daily Newspaper in Amman, Jordan, was originally published in ARTICLE 74, Issue No. 26 (December 1998), pp. 12-15 by BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights.

Jordan is host to the largest number of Palestinian refugees with some 1.5 million UNRWA registered refugees, 18% of whom reside in 10 camps. Four of the camps were established in 1948 with another 6 camps opened in 1967. Refugees from 1948 are located predominantly in camps close to major urban centers. Most refugees from Jordan come from the central areas of pre-1948 Palestine. Al-Husseini Camp, al-Wehdat Camp, and Baqa'a Camp are the three major Palestinian refugee camps in the central, Amman region. Together they house some 150,000 refugee or 10% of the total Palestinian registered refugee population in Jordan. Most Palestinian refugees in Jordan hold Jordanian citizenship under the 1954 Jordanian Nationality Law.¹ As such they benefit from the same rights and obligations, including military service, as other Jordanian nationals. The Law, however, does not provide automatic citizenship to Palestinians who took up residency in Jordan after 16 February 1954.

The Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA) (since 1998 part of the Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) constitutes the main address for refugee concerns and demands. Refugees address the DPA mainly via the Camp Service Improvement Committees (CSIC) established in the Palestinian refugee camps by the DPA in 1988. Palestinian refugee camps do not participate in municipal or rural council elections in Jordan, due to

Refugees in Jordan (1999)^a

Camps	Registered Refugees (RR)
Amman New camp	47,184
Irbid	22,243
Housn	18,466
Souf	13,967
Jabal el-Husseini	27,870
Baqa'a	75,295
Zarqa	16,138
Marka	38,630
Talbieh	3,463
Jerash	13,852
Total RR (in camps)	277,555
Total RR	1,541,405
Increase in RR over previous year (%)	3.4 %
RR as % of total estimated population	34.4 %
RR (Gaza) as % of total RR	41.7 %
Total Refugee Population	1,802,759

their special political and legal status. The CSIC, a Jordanian government institution, is therefore also the body representing camp residents. Its members are not elected by the refugees, but selected by the DPA's Director General in coordination with the administrative governor of the area in which the camp is located. The CSIC performs its work in each camp in full coordination with and under the supervision of the DPA, which earmarks a portion (some 10-20,000 Jordanian dinars) of its annual budget for the CSIC services in the camps.

Each camp has a local CSIC office run by 7 to 13 members, refugees of the local camp community. The local CSIC offices administer infrastructure maintenance (repairs of streets, pavements, homes, water meters, etc.), projects for infrastructure improvement, social and economic support, as well as childcare and mental health services. The CSIC is also responsible for regulating trade and commerce (i.e., opening and closing regulations for stores). Refugees are eligible for CSIC services upon payment of an application fee of five Jordanian dinars. In addition to the DPA and the CSIC, Palestinian refugees approach Jordanian parliamentarians, especially in cases, which require the intervention of high-ranking officials. Jordanian parliamentarians are addressed via the office of the deputy elected in the district in which the camp is located.



UNRWA Elementary School, Jarash Camp, Jordan
(Photo: UNRWA)



Jarash Rehabilitation Center (Photo: UNRWA)

Unemployment in Jordan (1998 estimate)^b

Average/all citizens (including Palestinian Refugees)	14.7 %
Average/citizens of Jordanian origins	15.2 %
Average/13 refugee camps	20.8 %
Al-Wehdat Camp	19.0 %
Al-Husseini Camp	18.0 %
Baq'a Camp	21.0 %

Registered Labor Force in Jordan^c (Jordanians & Foreigners)

Total Jordanian Citizens	1,060,979
Total Foreign Workers	116,533
<i>Total Foreign Workers from Arab countries</i>	108,123
Egyptians	104,279
Syrians	7,429
Rest Arab Countries	3,274
<i>Foreign Arab Workers / Economic Sector</i>	
Agriculture & Fishing	45,315
Trade / Hotels & Restaurants	17,288
Industry	16,607
Services (Public & Private)	10,707

Economic Conditions

According to a 1997 report by Fafu, refugees living in camps are worse off in almost all aspects of their lives. Refugees in camps in Jordan suffer from poorer housing conditions, more physical and mental problems, higher unemployment levels, and lower income.² More than 40 percent of the refugee population in Jordan is under the age of 15 and therefore not considered to be part of the working age population.³ Of the working age population, less than half are economically active. Refugees tend to be employed as skilled workers and drivers, as well as in the service and sales sector. Approximately 20% are professionals and managers with some 15% employed in elementary occupations. More than 25% of the households in the camps reported a total annual income below 900 Jordanian dinars in 1997 [dollars], as compared to 10% among other refugees and 1967 displaced Palestinians in Jordan.⁴ The difference likely relates to the higher level of unemployment among young men in camps and the lower participation of older men in the work force. It may also relate to the lower paid jobs among refugees in the camps. On the other hand, only 6 percent of refugees in camps report earnings of more than 3600 Jordanian dinars, while 20% of other households report this level of income.⁵

UNRWA IN FIGURES ^b	FIGURES As of 30 June 1999
<i>Education - 1998/99 Academic Year</i>	
Schools (elem, prep)	198
Educational Staff (not including support staff)	4,456
Pupil enrolment	141,214
<i>Health</i>	
Primary health care facilities	23
Health Staff	831
<i>Relief and Social services</i>	
Special hardship cases	38,858
SHCs as % of RR	2.6 %
<i>1999 General Fund Budget (millions of US\$)</i>	
Education	48.9
Health	12.2
Relief and Social services	7.8
Operational services	3.2
Common services	2.9
Total General Fund Budget	78.6

UNRWA Assistance

Jordan hosts the largest number of UNRWA operated elementary and preparatory schools. The 196 schools, however, provide services to fewer students (141,214) than the 168 schools in Gaza, which have an enrollment some 20,000 additional students. Unlike other areas of UNRWA operations, enrollment in Agency schools in Jordan continues to decline, most recently by 1.4% in 1998. The declining enrollment is related in part to the movement of refugee families to the West Bank and Gaza, the construction of new government schools adjacent to the camps, which have a shorter school week and run a single shift, and the continued employed of teachers on a daily contract basis affecting the quality of teacher recruitment. Approximately one-fifth of the UNRWA schools in Jordan are located in unsatisfactory rented premises. An additional 33 schools were built in the 1950s and 1960s and require serious upgrading or replacement.

UNRWA also operates 23 primary health care facilities in Jordan, roughly equal to the number of facilities in other areas of UNRWA operations, despite the significantly larger refugee population in Jordan. Many refugees opt for more easily accessible government primary healthcare services. Jordan continues to have the smallest number of Special Hardship Cases (SHC) as a percentage of the total registered refugee population. In 1998, 2.6% of the registered refugee population were listed as SHCs or about 39,000 persons. The number, however, reflects an increase of 3.4% over the previous year.

Refugee Concerns and Demands

Although the majority of Palestinian refugees in Jordan hold Jordanian citizenship which grants them equal rights and duties in the country, they feel discriminated against by internal Jordanian policies of job recruitment and public service allocation. They also feel oppressed by an international political conspiracy, led by Israel and the United States and shared by the Palestinian leadership, which has obstructed their return to the homeland for fifty years. Lacking a leadership of their own and dependent upon the support and protection of official Jordanian institutions, refugees have made efforts to protect their rights mainly by addressing Jordanian institutions and high ranking politicians. Refugee organizing outside the official institutions is marginal. The Union of Local UNRWA Staff represents the interests of refugee employees versus the international Agency, and the Jordanian Women's Union conducts seminars and workshops related to refugee needs in the camps. Independent refugee organizing on the grass roots level is absent in Jordan.

Although refugees in Jordan raise numerous concerns and sometimes-contradictory viewpoints, all agree on two major demands: the implementation of UN Resolution 194 and the respect for human rights. Addressing their special relationship with the Jordanian Government, refugees express a set of clear-cut demands: 1) to secure employment for the refugees, many of whom are highly qualified, and to stop recruiting foreign workers; 2) to stop the discrimination between Palestinian refugees who are citizens of Jordan, and persons of Jordanian origin, especially in public sector employment; and, 3) the need for ongoing government protection from private land owners who have more than once tried, by means of court procedures, to evict the camps from the lands rented out to UNRWA in the past when real estate prices were low even in urban Jordanian areas.

Refugees demand government support, but not government representation. Jordan must continue hosting its Palestinian refugees until their future is decided. Until then, the Jordanian Government is to provide funding and services for the camps without, however, taking the role of representing them politically. Refugees in Jordan highly appreciate official statements which support this demand: "We have said on more than one occasion that we do not negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians, and we do not pressure the

Palestinians, nor do we represent them," stated former Crown Prince Hassan in 1999. In a letter to former Jordanian Prime Minister Abdul Salam, the late King Hussein wrote, "as for refugees, we must remember that Jordan is the largest host country of Palestinian refugees, most of whom hold Jordanian citizenship, as honorable citizens, who share our rights and duties until their problem is solved with return and/or compensation." Although refugees feel assured by official statements of this kind, they continue to worry about the stability of this official position.

Palestinian refugees are aware of and grateful for the fact that Jordan has hosted them for such a long period under conditions, which are better than those of Palestinian refugees in many other countries. They consider Jordan a stable and peaceful country and do not wish to upset this situation. "I thank the Jordanian government for hosting us all these years", says Umm Mohammad, a refugee who cooks traditional Palestinian food on order for families. Dr. Adel al-Qanneh, a pharmacist and president of the local Camp Services Improvement Committee, adds: "We are very grateful to the Royal Family and the care and support provided by them. We are in a democratic country, we believe in its leadership."

While none of the refugees interviewed in the three camps had actively participated in the strike and protests against UNRWA service cuts, which were held in the summer of 1998, all of them were outspoken in their criticism and protest against current UNRWA policies. Refugees demand that UNRWA provide all refugees, including male family members above the age of 18, with ration cards. They also call for UNRWA to stop the policy of not recruiting replacements for employees who retire. Refugees in Jordan also emphasize that UNRWA must stop cutting services, especially the provision of free medication, but also flour rations, and education services. Refugees want more medical doctors, as UNRWA clinics are overcrowded, one physician having to treat 150 patients daily. In general, Palestinian refugees in Jordan stress that UNRWA must not abandon them until their case is resolved; in the meantime, stable and permanent services should be provided by the Agency. Refugees also criticize UNRWA for its dependence on the United States, which they consider the other face of the Israeli coin. Refugees are concerned about the political conspiracies against them. They hold that UNRWA takes part in these conspiracies by manipulating statistical data.



Jabal el-Hussein Camp (Photo: UNRWA)

Refugees in Jordan on the Oslo Accords

Refugees in the camps talked freely, were warm and welcoming and determined to pass on their message: "Fifty years away from our lands and homes, fifty years have been wasted! We continue to hope and demand our right of return." Only one refugee, a woman employed by UNRWA, appeared to be cautious, anxious to prove that there were no problems and complaints so as to not harm her position in the Agency. For 50 years, refugees have planned their lives from one day to the next, uncertain about the future. "We always hope for the best", they say, "but we are often depressed, because whatever political changes occur, nothing really comes to improve our situation." For a short while, refugees in Jordan had hoped that the Oslo Accords would open the gate for their return to Palestine. This hope, however, has long since been frustrated.

According to Umm Mohammed, the Oslo Accords failed to bring the expected economic improvements to Jordan and the refugee camps. Her camp has been suffering from an economic depression in recent years. Rising unemployment among male refugees compelled women to take up work as cleaners or to start small enterprises in handicrafts, embroidery, and cooking. Umm

Mohammed advised other refugee women to follow her steps and build their own business in order to improve the family income. She also encourages the women to attend cultural lectures and health counseling held in the camp office of the Women's Union. High unemployment, however, has made Umm Muhammad's business slow. Camp residents spend less of their small incomes on food orders than in the past. "Oslo has become a burden for us," says Umm Muhammad, "it is not a solution that serves public interest."

Criticism of the Oslo Accords is a common denominator among Palestinian refugees in Jordan. The owner of a small bookshop in al-Wehdat Camp commented: "Oslo has not affected us directly. We are still waiting to return." Dr. Adel al-Qanneh also points to the negative aspects of the Oslo Accords. According to him, the major drawback is the fact that the Oslo Accords do not relate to the refugees in Jordan; nothing of what has been implemented serves their interests. According to a member of a religious Muslim group in one of the refugee camps: "Everything that happened after Oslo happened at the expense of our dignity. Everybody expected that our needs would be met, that we would return to our homeland and benefit from our lands. However, nothing but stalling is taking place after Oslo, and agreements signed are not implemented. Refugees reacted with bitterness and hatred. They are not with this peace process because it does not benefit them."

Refugees in Jordan have low expectations of the Palestinian leadership, especially the Palestinian Authority (PA). Refugees complain that the only actions of the leadership they have witnessed have been the signing of treaties, which are in interests of the leadership and not the refugees. "The Palestinian leadership does not do anything. We are only familiar with their names, but we never saw any action from them." Many refugees felt that, "Arafat [was] not qualified for his position." Refugees are looking for leadership that does not trust the Israeli government, but is ready to fight for refugee rights and the implementation of UN Resolution 194 as they did until the 1980s. They are looking for leadership that is able to incorporate all factions in a united struggle. As for the PA, Dr. Adel al-Qanneh says that, "Palestinian refugees need a strong and firm PA position in favor of self-determination and the right of return." At the same time, there is little confidence among Palestinian refugees in Jordan that the current leadership can actually implement their wishes and demands.

Endnotes:

¹ Lex Takkenberg, *The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998, pp. 155-156.

² Marie Arneberg, *Living Conditions Among Palestinian Refugees and Displaced in Jordan*. Norway: Fafo Institute for Applied Science, 1997.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

Tables

a. UNRWA (June and November 1999). Figure for total number of refugees is from Salman Abu Sitta, *The Palestinian Nakba, Register of the Depopulated Localities in Palestine*. London: Palestinian Return Centre, 1998.

b. General Statistics Department, 1998 and *Atlas of Palestinian Refugee Camps in Jordan*, Department of Palestinian Affairs.

c. General Statistics Department, Jordan, 1998; It is estimated that more than 50% of the total Jordanian labor force are Palestinian refugees (no official figures are published) and the Annual Report for 1997 of the Ministry of Labor, Jordan.

d. UNRWA (June 1999).

Palestinian Refugees in Syria

This profile is based on several articles published by BADIL in 1999: Dr. Nayef Jarrad, A Political Overview of Palestinian Refugees in Syria (Political Advisor to the PNC-West Bank); Nabil Mahmoud as-Sahly, Development Indicators Among Palestinian Refugees in Syria, 1948-2000 (Researcher for the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in Damascus), and; Salman Abu-Sitta, Exiled After al-Nakba: Palestinian Refugees from the Demilitarized Zones (1949-1956). (Researcher living in Kuwait).

Political Overview

The historical connection between Syria and Palestine ("Greater Syria") eased the adaptation of Palestinian refugees exiled to Syria after 1948. Despite political differences between the two countries after 1920, many Syrians had participated in the defense of Palestine against Zionist colonization, especially during the 1936-39 Arab Revolt. Damascus was a stronghold of Palestinian revolutionaries and, following the defeat in the 1939 revolt, became their shelter. Following the Nakba (1948 war), consecutive Syrian governments, influenced by Arab Nationalism, adopted a supportive position towards the Palestinian people and the right of the refugees to return to their homeland. At the same time, Palestinian refugees in Syria were granted rights equal to those of Syrian citizens in most respects, with some exceptions in regards to the right to own property. The Arab Nationalist climate in Syria, and the Syrian Baath party in particular, had a strong impact on Palestinian political awareness. The Syrian Baath party was one of the first Arab National parties to raise the idea of the Palestinian entity and an army for the liberation of Palestine.

When the PLO was established as a result of an official Arab decision in 1964, the Baath party aligned itself with the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah). The Party encour-

Refugees in Syria (1999)^a

Camps	Registered Refugees (RR)
Khan Esh shieh	15,352
Khan Danoun	7,973
Sbeineh	15,857
Qabr Essit	13,066
Jaraman	8,950
Dera'a	5,805
Dera'a (Emergency)	5,380
Homs	13,349
Hama	7,223
Neirab	16,951
Total RR (in camps)	110,427
Total RR	378,382
Increase in RR over previous year (%)	2.4 %
RR as % of total estimated population	2.6 %
RR (Gaza) as % of total RR	10.3 %
Total Refugee Population	460,493

aged the activities of Palestinian revolutionary organizations formed in Syria (e.g. Palestine Liberation Front, a Palestinian branch of which had previously been established in Palestine by the Arab National Movement). The alignment of the leadership of the Palestinian Resistance represented by Fatah with Syria and al-Sa'iqa, the military wing of the Baath party, remained in force until the beginning of the 1980s even though Palestinian-Syrian relations went through periods of tension in Lebanon, especially between 1976 and 1978.

Palestinian-Syrian relations deteriorated considerably after 1983 when the PLO sided with the Egyptian government, which had just signed a unilateral peace agreement with Israel (Camp David). The Syrian government thus decided to support the separatist forces of Fatah and facilitate their activities in Syria and Lebanon at the expense of the mainstream Palestinian groups. Despite the official Syrian support of the separatist forces, Arab Nationalism, and Syrian recognition of Palestinian civil rights, Palestinians in Syria continued to support the major PLO factions. Due to this fact, and due to the activity of Palestinian political forces in Syria, Palestinians in Syria continue to closely follow and respond to new developments related to Palestinian issues. Recently, the Palestinian left opposition forces,

headquartered in Syria, have played a major role in shaping the Palestinian debate in the country.

Since the launching of the current initiative for a peaceful settlement at the 1991 Madrid Conference, Syria has re-affirmed the Palestinian refugees' right to return to their homeland. Syria refuses to participate in the multilateral negotiations, based on the position that Israeli withdrawal from Arab and Palestinian land is a pre-condition for the opening of talks about regional cooperation. For the same reason, Syria has opposed the transformation of UNRWA from a relief agency into a development organization. The Syrian government is convinced that such a transformation would promote international refugee resettlement schemes.

The Israeli government considers Syria as an ideal country for refugee re-settlement due the civil rights afforded to Palestinian refugees, and the fact that Palestinian refugees in Syria comprise only 2.5% of the total population. On the other hand, there is ample indication that Palestinians in Syria reject the idea of resettlement. The historical struggle and participation in the Palestinian National Movement, and support for an independent Palestinian identity demonstrate Palestinian opposition to resettlement. Syria thus serves as an example, which confirms that secure civil and social rights in the host countries can protect refugees from falling victim to the dangers of resettlement and loss of their national identity. In this sense, the situation of Palestinians in Syria differs strongly from the situation in Lebanon, where frequent talk about the fear of resettlement schemes is predominant, and presentation of such schemes is exaggerated to the degree of causing doubts as to the sincerity of the debate - especially since some Palestinians have been granted Lebanese citizenship.

Irrespective of current speculation about the Syrian position, and despite the fact that the Palestinian refugee question and the right of return is not among its priorities, Syria has taken measures against refugee re-settlement in its territory by issuing entry-restrictions on Palestinians with Egyptian, Jordanian, and Iraqi travel documents. The solution of the Palestinian refugee issue in Syria and in the other regional host countries requires Palestinian-Syrian coordination, as well as Palestinian coordination with the government of each host country. Since these governments are guided by their own interests, interests which might be affected by an agreement on the refugee issue, such coordination is vital for the design of a solution to the refugee question which is just and acceptable for all.

Development Indicators Among Palestinian Refugees in Syria 1948-2000¹

The origin of most Palestinian refugees in Syria is the Palestinian Galilee, predominantly from the Safad District. Palestinian refugees in Syria are clustered in groups according to their origin in the homeland. Al-Teera and Lubia neighborhoods in al-Yarmouk camp are good examples. Refugee communities in camps continue to maintain the traditions and customs, which were used in those villages. In the first half of the 1950s, the majority of Palestinian refugees in Syria were attracted to Damascus due to its mosques and schools (religious and educational opportunities). At the same time, many poor Palestinian families rented houses in the middle of the city; this phenomenon also occurred in other cities such as Halab, Homs, and Dara'a. The favorable economic climate in Damascus, relative to other areas in Syria, and the accessibility of services continues to be the major factor behind the concentration of Palestinians in Damascus.

Several booklets, which describe the situation in Palestinian villages prior to and after the Nakba, up until the present time, were issued between 1994 and 1999. Lubyia in the Tiberias District, al-Tira and al-Tantura in the Haifa District, Nahr and Suhmata in the 'Aka District, and Dallata in the District of Safad, along with many other villages, were among those written about in the booklets. The books emphasize the struggle of Palestinians from these villages. Additional scientific research is necessary, however, to strengthen documentation and analysis. Upcoming booklets will be issued on additional villages, such as Balad Eshaikh where Izzediin al-Qassem is buried.²

Despite the deprivation and misery, which accompanied Palestinians through their eviction and into exile, Palestinian refugees in Syria, as with refugee communities in other areas, have maintained a strong memory of and attachment to their homes, playgrounds, fields, places of marriage, etc. In addition, the refugees have retained various documents relating to property ownership, birth, marriage, etc. Many still possess the keys to their homes. Moreover, refugees are confident that just as the Turks withdrew from Palestine after four centuries of occupation, as did the Crusaders before, so too will the Zionist occupation of Palestine come to an end some day. Palestinian refugees in Syria felt a strong sense of injustice with the signing of the Oslo agreements under which the refugee issue was postponed to so-called final status negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. The refugees continue to uphold their right of return as a basic element of any solution or agreement.



Overcrowded Conditions in Homs Camp
(Photo: Gerhard Pulfer)

Legislation and Palestinian Civil Rights

The administration of Palestinian refugee affairs in Syria is governed Law 450 adopted on 25 January 1949. The Law authorized the establishment of a Palestine Arab Refugee Institution (PARI) under the auspices of the Syrian Social Affairs and Labor Ministry.³ PARI was later replaced by the Syrian General Authority for Palestine Arab Refugee Affairs (GAPAR), also a department of the Social Affairs and Labor Ministry. Half a decade later, the Syrian government adopted Law 260, which granted Palestinian residents equal rights in the areas of labor and employment, trade, and military service.⁴ At the same time, Palestinian refugees were able to maintain the right to their Palestinian nationality.

In the 1960s, Palestinian refugees were granted Syrian travel documents.⁵ Under Law No. 1311, refugees are required to register with the Palestine Arab Refugee Affairs Authority in order to acquire a travel document. One of the most important articles included in Law 1311 is Article 10 which allows Palestinian refugees to return to Syria without a re-entry permit. Travel documents given to Palestinians by the Egyptian government, for example, do not allow its holder to return to Egypt without a re-entry permit. As with Syrian nationals, the travel document can be changed or re-issued by any Syrian representative office abroad. Until recently, however, Palestinians have not been allowed to travel simply on the basis of their personal ID cards. The new changes allow Palestinians to travel between Syrian and Lebanon using their personal ID cards.

Palestinian refugees in Syria have achieved

a wide range of civil rights. This includes the right to own more than one business or commercial enterprise as well as the right to lease properties. These rights extend to trade and commerce. Union membership in Syria is also open to Palestinians. Palestinians are free to travel throughout Syria and have the right to establish residence in Syrian villages and cities. There is, however, a noticeable gap in the home and land ownership laws. Unlike Syrian nationals, Palestinians may not own more than one home nor purchase arable land. Palestinian refugees in Syria cannot vote or candidate for the Syrian National Council or Presidency.

Demographic Situation

Some 90,000 Palestinian refugees came to Syria in 1948. The majority of refugees found shelter in the Syrian capital with the rest distributed in the other Syrian districts. By 1960 the number of Palestinians in Syria reached 126,662, and nearly tripled over the next four decades. UNRWA figures for November 1999, show that the number of registered Palestinian refugees in Syria was 378,382.⁶ The refugee population in Syria is expected to reach 400,000 by the end of 2000.⁷

**Palestinian Refugee Population in Syria^b
1948 - 2000**

Year	Total / Thousands
1948	90
1960	127
1985	270
1998	376
2000	400

Economic opportunities and access to services are some of the most important factors related to the demographic distribution of the Palestinian population in Syria. Overall demographic distribution of Palestinian refugees in Syria is as follows⁸:

**Demographic Distribution^c
of Palestinian Refugees in Syria**

Damascus	67 %	Hama	2 %
al-Latheqiyya	2 %	Dara'a	8 %
al-Qunaitra	8 %	Halab	8 %
Homs	5%		

Thirty percent of registered refugees in Syria (110,427 persons as of 30 November 1999) inhabit the 10 refugee camps recognized by UNRWA. UNRWA does not recognize al-Yarmouk as a refugee camp, although 120,000 Palestinian refugees, or one-third of the total refugee population in Syria, inhabit al-Yarmouk.



Multi-story shelter construction in Homs camp
(Photo: Gerhard Pulfer)



UNRWA Clinic (Photo: UNRWA)

The Palestinian refugee community in Syria is a young society. In 1998, 43.2% of the population was under the age of 15. The birth rate among Palestinian refugees is 43 per one thousand with an average individual fertility rate of five.⁹ According to UNRWA, the average rate of child mortality for Palestinian refugees in Syria is 0.29. The average age of marriage for 1997 was 20 years. Refugees 60 years and older comprise 2.3 % of the total number of refugees in Syria.¹⁰ The average life expectancy rate among refugees in Syria is 66.

Origins of Palestinian Refugees ^d in Syria	
District of Origin	% of total refugees/Syria
Safad	40
Haifa	20
Tiberias	16
Aka	8
Jaffa	5
Nazareth	5
Ramla, Lod	
Beisan, others	4

UNRWA Assistance

UNRWA education, social and health services are distributed to refugee camp neighborhoods, which are classified according to the original village of the inhabitants in Palestine. UNRWA administers 110 schools in Syria, accommodating 64,854 pupils at both elementary and preparatory levels. Approximately two-thirds of the pupils are enrolled at the preparatory level. Half of the total number of students in both levels is female. In the year 1998-99, the Vocational and Technical Training Center (VTTC) in Damascus, a program supported by UNRWA, provided training for 629 males and 166 females in 13 trade and seven technical/semi-professional courses. Palestinian refugees employed by UNRWA in education (1,864 staff) comprise the largest sector of UNRWA staff in Syria.

UNRWA also administers 23 clinics and dispensaries, which provide refugees with basic health care, including dental, laboratory and other health services.¹¹ At the end of December 1998, UNRWA employed 444 staff to provide health services to Palestinian refugees in Syria. Hospitalization for Palestinian refugees is provided on a contractual basis with private hospitals, based on official government rates. UNRWA continues to provide assistance for Special Hardship Cases (SHC) in Syria, predominantly for medical assistance and the aged, with the number of cases increasing by 4.6% between June 1998 and June 1999. The withdrawal of the selective cash assistance program, however, left many refugee families unassisted in emergency situations. UNRWA social workers continued to be overloaded with an estimated 340 cases per year, far above the recommended rate of 250 cases.

In addition to UNRWA, GAPAR, and the Red Crescent have provided services for Palestinian refugees in Syria. Compared to the period between 1975 and 1994, however, these services have been reduced due to the resettlement of many Red Crescent staff in West Bank and Gaza after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. Palestinian refugee camps in Syria lack public parks. This situation forces many children to play in the streets and creates extra expenses for refugee families who are forced to take their children to public parks in the cities. Kindergartens, computer-training centers, and many information centers administered by the Syrian National Information Center are distributed throughout the camps. Sport and music clubs are limited to al-Yarmouk refugee camp.

UNRWA IN FIGURES ^e	FIGURES As of 30 June 1999
<i>Education - 1998/99 Academic Year</i>	
Schools (elem, prep)	110
Educational Staff (not including support staff)	1,864
Pupil enrolment	64,854
<i>Health</i>	
Primary health care facilities	23
Health Staff	441
<i>Relief and Social services</i>	
Special hardship cases	24,891
SHCs as % of RR	6.6 %
<i>1999 General Fund Budget (millions of US\$)</i>	
Education	11.1
Health	4.6
Relief and Social services	4.7
Operational services	1.8
Common services	1.6
Total General Fund Budget	24.5

Socio-Economic Situation of Palestinian Refugees in Syria

One of the most important indicators of the socio-economic situation of Palestinian refugees is education. In Syria, the illiteracy rate has been reduced due to improvements in the quality and delivery of education in Syria. Between 1985 and 1995, the

Educational Attainment ^f of Palestinian Refugees in Syria	
Education Level	% of Refugee Population
Do not attend	23
Elementary School	32
Preparatory School	16
College Degree	7
University Education	3

illiteracy rate among males over the age of 15 fell from 9.9% to 6.5%. Female illiteracy, meanwhile, declined even further from 30% to 15%. The average of illiteracy among Palestinians (male and female) for the year 1998 was 11% of the total refugee population. The policy of mandatory elementary education in Syria is also applied to Palestinian refugees. With the cost of 4 or 5 or even 6 years of university education not exceeding US\$ 200, many Palestinian refugees have the opportunity for post-secondary education. The Syrian government has also provided assistance for Palestinians to study abroad. Access to education has enabled Palestinian refugees in Syria to obtain high positions in government ministries, particularly education.

Regarding the current economic situation among refugees in Syria, statistical data indicates

that the total number of Palestinian refugees employed in Syria reached 108,887 worker in 1998. This means that, on average, only 29% of the total population is part of the workforce. The unemployment rate among Palestinian refugees in Syria, however, is very low. Between 1992 and 1998, unemployment did not exceed 9-13%. The percentage of Palestinians eligible for employment does ex-

Distribution of Palestinian Refugees⁹ in the Workforce	
Sector	% of Workforce
Service Sector	41%
Agriculture	2 %
Industry	15 %
Trade	8 %
Construction	27 %
Electronical, Transportation, Money (etc.)	3 %

ceed 54.5% of the total Palestinian refugee population. Based on an average household of four persons, the number of Palestinians eligible for employment, relative to the size of the total Palestinian refugee population, is unable to cover average household expenses. In other words, the economic burden for each individual worker is 4 persons; in addition to himself, he supports 3 persons who are not members of the workforce.

The percentage of workers in the agricultural sector is low due to the fact that Palestinian refugees are prevented from owning arable land. The average yearly income of Palestinian refugees in Syria is US\$ 1200. Palestinian refugees in Syria fall within the mid-range of the UN Human Development Index.

Palestinian Refugees in Syria and Resettlement Proposals

Since the beginning of the 1950s, several resettlement projects have been proposed for Palestinian refugees in Syria. The first proposal was to resettle refugees in an area between the Turkish, Iraqi, and Syrian borders. This proposal was completely rejected by refugees. Other proposals and scenarios for solutions were brought forward after the signing of the peace agreement between Israel and PLO in 1993. Former IDF General, Shlomo Gazit, in his study on refugees views Syria and Jordan as the two countries where it is most possible to resettle refugees.¹² In Syria, for example, refugees are just 3% of the total population. Other proposals, including some American studies, have also proposed resettling some of the five million Palestinian refugees in Syria.

On the other hand, Palestinian refugees in Syria

consider the right of return (UN Resolution 194 of 1948) as the only basis for a fair solution accepted by refugees themselves. A poll based on a sample of 200 refugees in Syria revealed that 98% of Palestinian refugees in Syria prefer to return back to their homeland in Palestine. One percent would consider resettlement in areas under full Palestinian control in the West Bank and Gaza, while reject any resettlement or transfer proposals.¹³ Nevertheless, it is apparent that there is a lack of organization among Palestinian refugees in Syria who are dealing with refugee issue, evidenced by the absence of grassroots organizations.¹⁴

Exiled After al-Nakba Palestinian Refugees from the Demilitarized Zones (1949-1956)¹⁵

The armistice agreements between Israel and the neighboring Arab states included the establishment of Demilitarized Zones (DMZs) in the north along the cease-fire lines with Syria and in the south along the cease-fire lines with Egypt. Israeli expulsion campaigns, most of them headed by Ariel Sharon, were undertaken mainly in the years 1949 - 1951 and were completed by 1956. The current number of Palestinian refugees from the ten villages in the northern DMZs is 23,100. Relocated by the Israeli government to the village of Sha'ab/Acre, some 20 percent continue to live there as internal refugees, the rest have become refugees in Syria.

History of the Northern DMZ

The 1923 International Boundary between Palestine and Syria was drawn by the British and French governments to divide a homogenous Arab country (Greater Syria) and to establish colonial rule. All major water sources in the area, except the Litani river, were included on the Palestine-side of the boundary, much in accordance with the plans of the Zionist movement interested in access to maximum water resources for the future Jewish state. The new border dissected 22 villages from the Safad district from their lands and livelihood. Consequent unrest gave rise to the 1926 Good Neighborly Agreement between Syria and Mandatory Palestine. This agreement entitled Syria to free water access and use of the railway line to Samakh (southern edge of Lake Tiberias), and provided for the free movement of the local population and local goods.

The 1949 Armistice Line: The Armistice conditions prohibited political or military activity in the DMZs, provided for freedom of movement of the local Arab and Jewish population, and the administration of civil affairs by the UN Truce Supervision. The situation in, and the status of, the DMZs remained the major points of friction between Israel and Syria until

1956.

In April 1951, the Israeli cabinet proclaimed Israeli sovereignty over the DMZs. The Israeli Foreign Ministry argued that the area had been part and parcel of the British Mandate Territory and part of the Jewish state according to the UN Partition Plan (UN Resolution 181). Both arguments are inconsistent with Israeli policy. Israel had frequently denied its obligations as a successor state to pre-1948 Palestine (e.g. citizenship status to the Palestinian people), and treatment of the DMZs on the basis of UN Resolution 181 would have required from Israel the return of 24% of the Palestinian territory conquered and annexed in the war of 1948.

De-facto Division by 4 June 1967: Israeli efforts to assert its sovereignty over the northern DMZs led to a series of Israeli military campaigns and Israeli-Syrian confrontations over the area. The Hula Lake draining project, the Israeli attack on the Syrian police station at al-Hamma and the battle over Tell al-Mutilla in 1951, and especially the 1955 Israeli "Operation Olive Leaves" resulted in US, British, and French protests and the temporary freeze of arms deals with Israel. Despite international condemnations of the Israeli violations of the 1949 Armistice Agreement, Israel's campaigns resulted in the de-facto division of the northern DMZs. Israel took control over the bulk of the southern DMZ (except al-Hamma and its corridor) and the whole of the central DMZ west of the river Jordan. Syria controlled approximately 40 percent of the DMZ area, al-Hamma in the south, the strip of land east of the Jordan River in the central DMZ, and the northern DMZ. The "line of 4 July 1967" is thus not a borderline based on an agreement or treaty, and it lacks a legal basis. It was dictated by the intrusion of Israeli forces into the DMZs in violation of the 1949 Armistice Agreement.

Eviction of the Local Palestinian Population

The ten Palestinian villages in the DMZs were home to 3,770 inhabitants, which Morris notes were considered to be "something of a nuisance, as well as an impediment to the imposition of full Israeli sovereignty".¹⁶ On 30 March 1951, the Israeli government decided to continue the Lake Huleh draining and irrigation project, despite a UN negotiated temporary halt of the Israeli project, and to assert Israeli sovereignty of the DMZs through a variety of measures, including the "transfer of Arab civilians from the area to Israeli territory".¹⁷ That night, Israel forcibly transferred some 800 inhabitants of Krad al-Baqqara and Krad al-Ghannama, two Palestinian villages in the central DMZ, to the village of Sha'ab, near Acre. Also due to Israeli pressure, the villagers of Samra and Nuqeib left the southern DMZ. Despite a consequent UN Security Council resolution (18 May 1951) calling for the return of

the expellees, Israel pressured them to remain in Sha'ab. Many, however, returned to the DMZ. Palestinians remaining in the DMZs were finally expelled by Israel in 1956, the majority crossing over to Syria, and a small number joining their relatives in Sha'ab. Their villages in the DMZ were then destroyed and ploughed over.

In 1999, Palestinians expelled from the northern DMZs and their descendents number 23,100, the majority living in Syria as refugees, some 20 percent as internally displaced persons in the area of Acre in Israel. Their right to return and restitution of property is to be raised and resolved by the Palestinian leadership and Syria in the political negotiations with Israel.

Endnotes

¹This study is based on publications of the Syrian Ministry of Justice, statements from Palestinian refugee institutions, surveys of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PLO) in Damascus, and various other studies on the refugee situation in Syria and the other host countries.

²For a brief overview of these villages in English see, Walid al-Khalidi (ed.), *All That Remains*. Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992.

³Legislation Committee, Chapter 17. Ministry of Justice, Damascus, Syria.

⁴Law No. 26 (7 October 1956).

⁵Law No. 1311 (2 October 1963).

⁶Summarized from UNRWA estimates for 1998.

⁷The total number of Palestinian refugees in Syria between 1998 and 2000 has been estimated according to the current population growth, which is 3.5% per annum. The Palestinian Statistical Bureau, 1998.

⁸All figures taken from the Palestine Arab Refugee Institution, Data, Civil and Statistics Department (2 February 1999).

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰UNRWA Report, 1998.

¹¹Figures from the field survey by the Statistical Bureau in cooperation with UNICEF, 1997-1998 cover samples from the Palestinian community in Syria.

¹²Palestinian Statistical Bureau field survey in cooperation with UNICEF, 1997-1998.

¹³The poll was conducted by the researcher between March and April 1998 at the time of the 50th anniversary of the Nakba, taking into consideration demographic, sex, and age distribution.

¹⁴A committee for the right of return run by several Palestinian journalists is fettered by disagreement between political factions.

¹⁵Salman Abu Sitta, "The Line of June 4, 1967," Unpublished monograph, October 1999. Benny Morris, *Israel's Border Wars 1949-1956: Arab Infiltration, Israeli Retaliation, & the Countdown to the Suez War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

¹⁶Population figures according to Abu-Sitta. Morris used the figure of 2-3,000, p. 377.

¹⁷Morris, p. 378.

Tables

a. UNRWA (June and November 1999). Figure for total number of refugees is from Salman Abu Sitta, *The Palestinian Nakba, Register of the Depopulated Localities in Palestine*. London: Palestinian Return Centre, 1998.

b,c,d,f,g. are based on data from the Palestinian Statistical Bureau.

e. UNRWA (June 1999).

Internally Displaced Palestinians in Israel

This profile was originally prepared and published in BADIL's quarterly newsletter, al Majdal, following a working visit to Palestinian NGOs for the internally displaced in 1948 Palestine/Israel.

At the end of 1947, Mandatory Palestine was the home of some 1,280,000 Palestinian Arabs who owned 93% of the land.¹ The violent confrontations between Zionist forces and local Palestinian militia with the collapse of the UN-sponsored "Partition Plan", and the consequent Israeli-Arab war in 1948 led to the forceful eviction of at least 800,000 Palestinian Arabs. While the large majority of them were eventually pushed across the borders of the new Israeli state, tens of thousands of them remained as internally displaced refugees inside the territory that became Israel. They were part of the some 150,000 Palestinians who had remained in Israel after the Palestinian *Nakba*. Internally displaced Palestinians, forced out of their original homes and villages, found shelter in neighboring Palestinian towns and villages or in makeshift refugee camps not far from their homes. In 1950 some 46,000 internally displaced Palestinians were initially registered as receiving aid from UNRWA. In July 1952 UNRWA discontinued its services to the internally displaced Palestinians, after Israel formally took control of the territory conquered in 1948.

Initially, the Israeli army for alleged security reasons prevented the return of the internally displaced Palestinians to their homes. Using the British Defence (Emergency) Regulations of 1945, areas of high Palestinian population concentration were placed under Israeli military rule until 1966.² During this period, movement outside village and town borders was severely restricted. Freedom of expression, publications, property, and all forms of transportation were tightly controlled by military governors. In 1950, Palestinian refugees were defined as "absentees" under the Absentees' Property Law.³ Internally displaced Palestinians became known as "present absentees" - i.e. absent from their

Internally Displaced Palestinians ^a Facts and Figures	
May 1950*	46,000
1999	250,000
1999**	5.0 % of total Refugees
Palestinians Living in Unrecognized Communities (1999)***	
Galilee	10,000
Naqab	60,000
Total	70,000

ordinary place of residence but within the borders of Israel.

As with the case of exiled Palestinian refugees, Israel refused to implement UN Resolution 194 (1948) in the case of the internally displaced Palestinian Arabs. A number of Israeli Supreme Court rulings in favor of the return of internally displaced communities (Iqrit, Bir'im, Al-Farada, among others) - all of them issued in the 1950s - have been disregarded by the Israeli government. Even though internally displaced Palestinians were eventually accorded Israeli citizenship under the 1952 Nationality Law, they have been prevented from returning to their homes and lands. The process of eviction, house demolition, and land confiscation, moreover, has continued mainly in the Hula valley of northern Israel, the Galilee and in the Naqab (Negev). By 1999, the number of internally displaced Palestinians living within the borders of the Israeli state is estimated to be 250,000 (approximately 20% of the total Palestinian population), most of them living in the Galilee, the central triangle, the mixed cities in the center, and in the Naqab.

Legal Status

As a Jewish state, "[Israel] has been legally defined as resting on three minimum conditions: where Jews form the majority, where Jews are entitled to special treatment and preferential laws, and where a reciprocal relationship exists between Israel and the Jewish people in the diaspora."⁴ As such, internally displaced Palestinians, as well as other Palestinian citizens of the state, are second class citizens in Israel. While the 1948 Declaration of Establishment of the State of Israel recognizes the principle of equality, Israel lacks both a constitution and a bill of rights.⁵ Recent legislation that deals with the right

to dignity, life, freedom, privacy, property and the right to leave and enter the country - the latter two are highly significant for internally displaced and refugees - does not include the right to equality.⁶ On the contrary the legislation emphasizes the character of Israel as a Jewish state.⁷

The second class status accorded to Palestinian citizens in general, and internally displaced in particular, affects all areas of life - political, economic, religious, among others. Palestinian citizens have the right to vote and candidate for elections to the Israeli Knesset (parliament), however, under the 1992 Law of Political Parties, candidates or parties, which deny the existence of the State of Israel as a state of the Jewish people can be disqualified.⁸

Land Ownership

More significantly for internally displaced Palestinians, however, discrimination in Israeli law has deprived them and continues to deprive them, despite being citizens of the state, of their property. While Palestinians owned approximately 93% of the land in Palestine before 1948, today, Israel has expropriated approximately the same amount of land inside the borders of the state for exclusive Jewish use.

More than three dozens laws and regulations have been used to confiscate Palestinian property inside Israel. Under the 1950 Absentees' Property Law, the property of internally displaced Palestinians, just like the property of exiled refugees, was transferred to the Israeli Custodian of Absentee Property. The Law, which former Jewish National Fund (JNF) Chairman Avraham Granott referred to as a "legal fiction", allowed the government to transfer property from Palestinian Arab to Jewish ownership by virtue of a government payment to the Israeli Custodian of Absentee Property who replaced the Custodian of Abandoned Property.⁹

The Israeli government thus claimed that the property had been acquired legally (i.e., by payment) rather than through confiscation. Commenting on the Law, the Israeli Supreme Court noted at the time that "[t]he interests of Arab citizens were ignored and evidence presented by the Custodian to certify them as absent were frequently groundless [...]."¹⁰ Despite this and other objections, however, the Absentees' Property Law remained in force.

Under the Law, the Custodian was permitted to not only lease or hold on to property under his custodianship, but to sell it to a Development Authority established subsequently by the government.¹¹ Dividends from the sale of the property (less administrative and legal expenses) were to be held by the Custodian in fund until such time as the state of emergency, under which the law

was declared operational, came to an end. As regards Absentees' property, the state of emergency is still in existence. Ben-Gurion rejected a plan to sell the land outright to the JNF fearing that the government would be accused of confiscating the property illegally under international law. In September 1953 the Custodian signed over his "rights" to land he was responsible for in return for a price paid by the Development Authority, the sum of which was returned to the Development Authority in the form of a loan.¹²

The Land (Acquisition for Public Purposes) Ordinance of 1943 authorizes the government to confiscate land for public purposes. Up to 40% of the owner's land can be confiscated without compensation. Most land confiscated is for Jewish benefit. Military commanders, moreover, are granted the authority to forcibly declare areas "closed" and thus prevent owners from entering or leaving under the Defense (Emergency) Regulation 125 of 1945.¹³ The regulation has been used to evacuate entire areas and facilitate the transfer of ownership. No compensation is offered. Jewish leaseholders of so-called state lands are further prevented from subleasing them to Palestinians under the Agricultural Settlement (Restrictions on the Use of Agricultural Land and Water) Law (1967).¹⁴

The Israeli government adopted several compensation laws, in lieu of return, for internally displaced Palestinians. The underlying purpose of compensation legislation, which included the Absentees' Property Law of 1950, the Land Acquisition (Validation of Acts and Compensation) Law of 1953, the 1973 Absentees' Property (Compensation) Law and the Absentees' Property (Compensation) (Amendment) Law of 1976, was to validate under Israeli law the transfer of Palestinian Arab property to the state of Israel.¹⁵

Access and development of land retained by Palestinian citizens of Israel is further restricted through limitations on jurisdiction, zoning restrictions, and the transfer of public land adjacent to Palestinian communities to the Jewish National Fund, which can then only be used by Jews.¹⁶ Delays in approving development plans means that nearly two-thirds of all Palestinian local authorities do not have development plans, which are necessary for construction.¹⁷ The lack of development plans and the needs of a growing Palestinian community in Israel has resulted in unlicensed building, much of which is subject to demolition.

In 1998, only 4 Palestinian localities out of a total of 533 were granted Development Area A sta-

tus, which provides special benefits including tax and housing incentives, and educational programs even though Palestinian towns are consistently at the bottom of the socio-economic scale.¹⁸ The 1992 master plan for the Northern (Galilee) district noted, however, that the key problems were related rather to the overwhelming demographic minority of Jewish citizens in many parts of the Galilee and the geographic continuity of Arab communities.¹⁹ The impact of this policy is evident today in the Misgav council region where 7,000 Jewish residents currently have access to 183,000 dunums of land reserves while the 200,000 Palestinians in the area have access to 200,000 dunums all of which is densely populated or farmed resulting in a ratio of 25 dunums per Jew as compared to 1 dunum per Palestinian.²⁰ Since 1948, Israel has neither built nor supported the construction of any Palestinian town, city, or village.

Selected Comparative Statistics^c		
Categories	Jewish	Arabs
Per capital local government budget Shefa Amr (Pal) & Migdal Ha'Emeq (Jew), NIS, 1997	1,495	2,587
Proportion of population living in overcrowded conditions, 1997	31.6 %	5.7 %
Proportion of total welfare budget Received, 1998	12.5 %	87.5 %
Proportion of Families under poverty line, 1996	28.3%	16.0 %
# of patients per doctor (Kupat Hoalim), 1998	1,900	1,400
Infant mortality rate per 1,000 live birth, 1995	9.1	5.5
Average no. pupils per classroom, 1995	31	27
Proportion of schools with psychological services, 1995	33 %	95 %

Demolition Orders^b for Palestinian Homes Inside Israel	
Region	# of Orders
North	1,445+
Haifa	2,428
Central	578
Jerusalem	81
South	5,944
Total	10,476

Socio-Economic Situation

The second class status of internally displaced and Palestinian citizens has engendered a host of additional socio-economic problems related government funding, provision of services, education, employment opportunities, and religious rights including the protection of holy sites, among others. The following data compiled illustrate the gravity of the problem.

Internally Displaced Palestinians / Education^d	
% of Schools	Services
66.0	no counsellor rooms
41.0	no rooms for nurses
80.0	no gyms
82.0	no large lecture halls
33.0	no labs
37.0	no rooms for libraries

Land Day and Committee for the Defense of Arab Lands

Israeli repression, until 1966 under the military government, later via the British Emergency Regulations (1945), effectively stymied organized Palestinian resistance against the massive expropriation of Palestinian land. By the mid-1970s, a new Palestinian leadership, part and parcel of the PLO, had developed despite Israeli repression. Massive confiscation of Palestinian lands in Sakhnin/Galilee (some 100,000 dunums) in 1975 triggered an unprecedented wave of popular protest. At a subsequent meeting of the heads of Arab Local Councils, Tawfiq Zayyad (Communist Party) obtained a majority for a call by the Council heads for public mobilization against land confiscation on Land Day (30 March 30 1976) and for the establishment of a Committee for the Defense of Arab Lands. These decisions opened a new era in the organized Palestinian struggle against land confiscation. The brutal repression of the Palestinian protest on the first Land Day led to its institutionalization as an annual protest event, and the Committee for the Defense of Arab Lands became one of the central coordinating bodies of Palestinian resistance in Israel.

The Committee for the Defense of Arab Lands had some 100 members and a permanent secretariat composed mainly of the Communist Party and Abna' al-Balad. For more than 10 years, the Committee organized Palestinian protest activities, especially around the annual Land Day. As an activist body, it was, however, unable to counter Israeli land confiscation schemes by means of proposals based on alternative maps and planning programs. The result of this deficiency was the establishment of the Committee of the Forty (later Association of the Forty, see below), which as a professional body was to answer the need for alternative planning, especially in the case of unrecognized Palestinian communities in the Galilee and the Naqab. In 1986, the Association of the Forty joined the secretariat of the Committee for the Defense of Arab Lands.

The decline of the role of the Committee for the Defense of Arab Lands was a result of the defeat of the Palestinian struggle in general (Gulf War, Madrid Conference, Oslo Accords), but also an outcome of the Communist Party's preference for the new Arab Monitoring Committee, established in the late 1980s, as the highest decision making body for the Palestinian community in Israel. The Arab Monitoring Committee, composed of all heads of Arab Local Councils - including mayors elected on Labor Party Lists - gradually took on the role of the Land Defense Committee in organizing annual



Other Palestinians who remained within the borders of the new state - either in their original villages or in involuntary alternatives - found themselves living in sites not recognized by Israel as residential communities according to the 1956 Israeli Planning and Construction Law. A countrywide master plan designed on the basis of this law, included only 123 Palestinian communities and excluded hundreds of existing Palestinian villages and localities. The lands of these "unrecognized villages" were consequently considered by the Israeli planners as uninhabited land, subject for division into agricultural land, green land, and land for construction. Moreover, unrecognized communities were excluded from public services (e.g. water, electricity, health, education, and infrastructure development) and became subject to frequent eviction and house demolitions. In 1987, a special Israeli government commission (Markovitch Commission) issued a recommendation for the demolition of 11,000 Arab homes, including entire villages, in communities not included in the Israeli master plan.

According to data compiled by the Association of the Forty, the current number of inhabitants of unrecognized Palestinian communities is about 70,000, with 10,000 in the North and the rest in the South (Naqab) living in more than one hundred localities. The total number of unlicensed homes in the unrecognized communities has reached some 12,000, with 3,000 in the North and 9,000 in the Naqab (75% of which are tents and shanties)

Land Day events, which had little of the militancy of the early years.

The Struggle in the Post-Oslo Era

The Land Defense Committee became inactive in the early 1990. It gave way to new forms of protest and political lobbying in the framework of the National Committee for the Internally Displaced and pressure against discriminatory Israeli land planning schemes upheld by small, professional organizations, such as the Association of the Forty. In March of 1995 some 300 Palestinian activists from community organizations and political parties, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and Palestinian members of the Israeli Knesset attended a popular conference in Nazareth organized by the National Committee for the Defense of the Rights of the Internally Displaced (NCID). The NCID, established in response to the exclusion of 1948 Palestinians from the framework of the Oslo process, and the particular concerns of the estimated 250,000 internally displaced Palestinians, demands implementation of UN Resolution 194 for both the internally displaced and refugees in exile. The NCID has encouraged several displaced Palestinian communities to form local action committees and registered associations. It has succeeded to place the right of return of the internally displaced on the agenda of all Palestinian parties and the Arab Monitoring Committee in Israel.

The task ahead of them is tremendous, because the issue at stake is not only the struggle for the restitution of Palestinian internally displaced and unrecognized communities in Israel. Palestinian organizations working for the rights of the displaced and unrecognized in Israel will have to form the spearhead of the united Palestinian struggle against new Israeli projects which threaten to undermine a just solution of the Palestinian refugee question in the future, i.e. the new Israeli policy aimed at the privatization of "absentee land" (so far implemented mainly via land transfers to Kibbutzim), and a project promoted by MK Abraham Burg (left Labor!) and MK Ariel Sharon (Likud), which aims at the transfer of Israeli state land - mainly refugee property - to the Jewish National Fund (JNF).

Endnotes:

¹For details on land ownership see note 1 in Overview.

²For details see Sabri Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel*. London: Monthly Review Press, 1976, pp. 9-56.

³Absentees' Property Law, 1950. *Laws of the State of Israel*. Authorized Translation from the Hebrew. Vol. IV 5710-1949/50, pp. 68-82.

⁴For more details see, *Legal Violations of Arab Minority Rights in Israel*. Shfaram: Adalah The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, 1998.

⁵For details on Israel's constitutional and legal development see David Kretzmer, *The Legal Status of the Arabs in Israel*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990, pp. 7-16.

⁶The Basic Law: Human Dignity and Freedom (1992). See *The Legal Violations of Arab Minority Rights in Israel*, p. 18-19. According to Section 1(a) of the Law, "The purpose of this Basic Law is to protect human dignity and liberty, in order to anchor in a Basic Law the values of the State of Israel as Jewish and democratic state."

⁷Until a recent case involving the attempted purchase of land in a Jewish Cooperative Society by a Palestinian citizen of Israel, the Supreme Court has dismissed all cases dealing with equal rights. The Court had never included a declaratory statement in its decisions concerning the protection of the rights of Palestinian citizens of the state. While the Court ruled that the state was not permitted to discriminate, either directly or indirectly, in regard to the allocation of so-called state land, it also noted that the decision focused on the particular case at hand and was not directed at past allocations. #21 High Court: Decision on Katzir. Communicated by the Court's Spokeswoman. Jerusalem (8 March 2000).

⁸Ben Shalom vs. Central Election Committee, 43 P.D. IV 221 (1988), in 25 Israel Law Review 219 (1991) cited in *Legal Violations of Arab Minority Rights in Israel*, pp. 44-45.

⁹Avraham Granott, *Agrarian Reform and the Record of Israel*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1952, p. 102.

¹⁰Don Peretz, *Palestinian Refugee Compensation*. Washington, DC: Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine, 1996, p. 5.

¹¹Development Authority (Transfer of Property) Law, 1950. *Laws of the State of Israel*, IV, p. 151.

¹²Jiryis, p. 78.

¹³Article 26, *Land and Planning Policy in Israel*. Factsheet No. 2. Nazareth: The Arab Association for Human Rights.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Sabri Jiryis, "The Legal Structure for the Expropriation and Absorption of Arab Lands in Israel," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, No. 3 (1973), p. 189.

¹⁶For more on the Jewish National Fund see Walter Lehn, *The Jewish National Fund*. London: Kegan Paul International, 1988.

¹⁷Article 26, *Land and Planning Policy in Israel*. First Periodic Report on its Implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (July 1998), para. 713.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰"Land Redemption' in the Galilee," presented at a press conference by HaNitztoz A Sharara Publishing House to mark the publication of their book Misgav and Carmiel: Judaization in the Guise of Co-existence (1997) [Arabic] in *News from Within* vol. xiii, no. 6 (June 1997): 25-26.

Tables

a. * Registered by UNRWA as refugees receiving rations. By May 1951, one year later, this number of internally displaced receiving assistance from UNRWA was reduced to approximately 24,000. Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. UN Document A/1905, 30 June 1951.

**Basis (100%, including UNRWA registered and unregistered refugees) is 804,069 refugees originating from the primary depopulated villages. If refugees from Palestinian 'extra' villages and towns previously excluded using UNRWA records as a guide are included, the total number rises to 935,573. The minimum total number of refugees, registered and unregistered, at the end of 1998 is 4,942,121. The maximum estimate for Palestinian refugees in 1998 is 5,477,745. (Salman Abu Sitta, *The Palestinian Nakba, 1948, Register of Depopulated Localities in Palestine*, The Palestinian Return Center, London: 1998)

***Includes an unknown number of internally displaced persons

b. Markovitch Report (1987).

c. Central Bureau of Statistics, The Advocacy Center for Palestinians Equality in Israel, Galilee Society for Health Research and Services, and The Follow-up Committee on Arab Education. Cited in Article 26, *Discrimination in Israeli Law*. Fact Sheet No. 1. The Arab Association for Human Rights.

d. Follow-Up Committee on Arab Education in Israel (FUCAE). The Committee examined conditions in 90% of Palestinian schools covering 6,300 classrooms in 1995. Cited in *Legal Violations of Arab Minority Rights in Israel*, p. 78.

Palestinian Refugees in Egypt

This profile is based on an article, Palestinian Refugees in Egypt, by Abdel Qader Yasin, a Palestinian journalist living in Egypt, published by BADIL in 1999.

It was only the heavy sound of gunfire that broke the silence, which blanketed the quarantined refugee camp. The Egyptian police guarding the camp took cover by diving into the Suez Canal, which bordered the camp on both its northern and western sides. The eastern and southern ends of the camp were hemmed in by the Sinai desert. As soon as the policemen hit the water, a loud shout came from the camp calling for the downfall of king Farouq. It wasn't long before news of the incident reached Cairo and the social figures of the Palestinian community, mostly from Jaffa¹, trotted to 'Abdeen Palace in order to record their names in a book of honor and apologize for the actions of the Palestinians held under quarantine.

This incident happened in al-Mazarita at the southeast end of Port Said where Egyptian security police had gathered hundreds of Palestinians who had fled Jaffa in late April 1948 as a result of the horrors committed by Zionist groups (Haganah, Stern Gang, etc.) in the city. Zionist forces had besieged the city on three sides, leaving only the Mediterranean Sea as a free passage for the Palestinians to escape. The Palestinians of Jaffa had no alternative but to flee in their boats off the coast. They didn't want to wait for the massacre of Deir Yassin to be repeated, as had happened with many other places in Palestine. The large majority of the boats sailed toward the south. Those who fled to Egypt found themselves in very difficult conditions. The al-Mazarita incident was only the beginning. Egyptian security forces transferred the Palestinian refugees from al-Mazarita to a military camp in a place near al-Kantara on the eastern side of the Sinai desert, which had been abandoned by the British

Palestinian Refugee Population and Age^a
According to Egyptian Government Census

Year	Number
1927	4,522
1937	5,555
1947	7,349
1960	15,493
1976	25,266
<hr/>	
Age	% Total
14 >	29.6
15-64	68.6
65 <	1.8

army.

Al-Kantara was like a prison. Residents of the camp were only allowed to see their relatives through the barbed wire around the camp via permits issued to their relatives. They were not allowed to leave the camp unless they could find an Egyptian guarantor who had to prove to Egyptian security officials that he would be responsible for the Palestinian family, including the provision of food, clothing, and shelter. Under these restrictions, very few families were able to find a guarantor. The majority continued to suffer inside the camp.

After more than a year, residents of the camp began to search for ways to provide for their basic needs. A site for a school was chosen while teachers and a headmaster was elected from among the many that were ready to assume responsibility for the school. Another site was chosen to build a mosque and still another to build a playground for the children of the camp. They also planted the land. The Egyptian government provided the camp with military rations, which were cooked and distributed by young males in the camp. The Egyptian Ministry of Social Affairs, meanwhile, assumed overall responsibility for the affairs of the camp residents.

During the summer of 1949, the Egyptian Minister of Education 'Ali Ayoub visited the camp. Residents, who had become frustrated with the poor living conditions in the camp, demonstrated and demanded that the government transfer them back to Gaza. The signing of the armistice agreement between Egypt and Israel had made this transfer possible for the first time since the refugees left their homes and lands in Palestine. A few days after this event, trucks arrived at the camp. All 7,000 resi-

dents were transferred to a waiting train, which transported them to al-Maghazi camp near Deir al-Balah.

The al-Mazarita incident left Palestinians with many impressions concerning Egyptian attitudes towards the refugees, in particular, and the Palestinians in general. The legal status of Palestinians in the country has been connected, first with the whole political and security situation, and second with the nationalist leanings of the ruling authorities. Since that incident, Egyptian security - in addition to other Egyptian ministries - has assumed responsibility for the Palestinians in Egypt.

Background

From the beginning of the British Mandate in Palestine in the summer of 1922, Egypt had been the most attractive place of refuge for Palestinians. During that time, British Mandate authorities had begun to prepare Palestine for the Zionist project. Laws were drawn up to advance British policy, which called for the establishment of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine. Palestinians² became the victims of these laws, which resulted in economic, social, political, cultural, and cooperative hardships and losses for the Palestinian community.

Those Palestinians who had sufficient financial resources and/or those who were less connected to their homeland left the country due to these conditions. Many Palestinians found Egypt, which had gained some political independence, to be a refuge from the troubles in Palestine. Each new conflict or dispute with Zionist forces or the British Mandate authorities brought a new wave of Palestinians seeking refuge in Egypt. Most of the leading participants in the national rebellions of 1929 and 1936 against British policy in Palestine and the Zionist project, for example, acquired Egyptian citizenship.

A second group of Palestinians found refuge in Egypt during the third rebellion, the period between the introduction of the UN Partition Plan of November 1947 and the establishment of the Jewish State on 15 May 1948. Some Palestinians entered Egypt with visas obtained from the Egyptian Consulate in Jerusalem shortly after the UN decided to partition Palestine, while others fled to Cairo and were arrested by the Egyptian authorities at al-Abasiyah Camp and taken care of by the Mohammad 'Ali Charitable Society.

Another group of refugees reached Egypt as a result of the Suez Crisis in 1956. During the 1967 war, Israeli forces arrested about 1,800 Palestinian men of draft age³ and deported them to Egypt. Others fled to Egypt during the war, with still others arriving in Egypt at the end of the war due to Israeli terrorism and intimidation.

It is almost impossible to determine the exact number of Palestinian refugees in Egypt. There was no census of refugees in 1948, in part because of political sensitivity about refugees in the country. Some estimates placed the number of initial refugees at around 11,600.⁴ By 1960, the number of Palestinian refugees in Egypt had reached about 15,500 and reside in 14 Egyptian districts.⁵ The number of Palestinians climbed to 33,000 in 1969. In 1976, Palestinians comprised the largest number (29.3%) of all non-Egyptian Arabs in Egypt. Iraqis were next at 19.9%. Jordanians at that time formed about 5.65% of all Arabs in Egypt.⁶ A high percentage of Jordanians, however, were Palestinians holding the Jordanian citizenship since they were settled either in the East or West Bank of the Jordan River. In the 1980s the number of Palestinian refugees reached 35,500 with some 8,000 of this total regarded as residing illegally in Egypt.

In spring 1995, the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior announced that the government had conducted a count of Palestinian Gazans who were residents in Egypt and holders of Egyptian travel documents. According to the Interior Ministry there were 89,000 Palestinians in this category. The survey also revealed that there were about 10-20,000 Palestinians residing in Egypt without official permits. Palestinians who entered Egypt in 1948 numbered about 35,000 in spring 1995. The total number of Palestinians residing in Egypt reached 135,000-145,000.⁷ The number of Palestinians holding Egyptian travel permits reached 257,000 in 1996, but this number cannot be regarded as the exact number of Palestinians in Egypt. Many Palestinians who possess Egyptian travel documents are forbidden from entering Egypt and thus find residence and employment elsewhere.

Geographical Distribution

The geographic distribution of Palestinian refugees in Egypt has been dependent upon a number of factors, such as housing, employment, and the availability of services. In the mid-80s about 94% of Palestinians in Egypt were residing in urban areas with the remaining number residing in the countryside.⁸ Cairo itself attracted about half of the Palestinians (52%) followed by Alexandria and al-Giza.⁹ In the countryside¹⁰, al-Sharqiya district attracted the largest number of Palestinians followed by al-Dukaliya. The number of districts in which Palestinians lived decreased from 14 to 10 after the Sinai desert was occupied by Israel and the inhabitants of all cities there were forced to leave. About 25,000 Palestinians resided in the Sinai.

Residency Status

Concerning residency, Palestinian refugees in Egypt were divided into several categories according to the period of entry. Apart from category B, residency status is renewed annually.

- A. Those who entered Egypt before 1948.
- B. Those who entered Egypt between 1948-1953 and who had to renew their residency every five years. Those who were residents for more than ten years had to renew their residency once each three years.
- C. Newcomers.

Until 1960, all Palestinians in Egypt and Gaza held passports issued by the All Palestine Government, but in 1960, the passports were replaced by Egyptian travel documents, which required holders to obtain a visa to enter Egypt.¹¹

In 1984, legislation concerning the development of state income was adopted under which Palestinians were no longer considered to be Egyptian nationals. Under the new regulations Palestinians were required to pay a fee of 42.5 Egyptian pounds for annual residency. Only 2% of all Palestinians in Egypt were able to afford this fee. Those Palestinians who were considered recent arrivals in Egypt were required to spend US\$180 each month.¹² Palestinians who could not provide an "acceptable" reason for residence in Egypt, i.e., employment and study, had to maintain an account in the bank or at the post office of 500 Egyptian pounds. In 1996 this amount was increased to 2,000 Egyptian pounds.

Egypt is the only Arab country that has required Palestinians to regularly renew their residency status. Prior to traveling outside of Egypt, Palestinians must obtain a visa in order to re-enter the country. Egyptian travel documents held by Palestinians contain a list of countries to which travel is valid. This new status created substantial difficulties for Palestinians passing through the Egyptian border, including lengthy waiting periods. Since August 1996, however, these restrictions have been relaxed for Palestinians from Gaza.¹³

Assistance

After the 1952 revolution, which brought Gamal Abdel Nasser to power, "The Higher Committee of Refugee Affairs" initiated relief services according to the refugee profiles derived from a survey of Palestinian passports. Palestinians were divided into five groups according to their living conditions list in the following table. Sufficient information was not available to classify 214 families.¹⁴

Thirty pounds were allocated as a maximum

limit of monthly assistance for each family. Families in Group D received additional financial support (not including emergency allowances) up to a maximum of 5 Egyptian pounds per month.

Average Income ^b Palestinian Refugees In Egypt		
Group	Income (pounds)	# Families
A	High 10 < member/Month	2
B	Sufficient 1.5-10 member	90
C	None	72
D	Disabled >1 member	114
E	Those who were willing to return to Gaza or go to another Arab country and had insufficient income to do so.	

Medication was also covered. Families with more than eight members also received additional support.¹⁵

In October 1954, the Higher Committee responsible for Palestinian refugee affairs held a meeting with representatives of the Egyptian Red Crescent and several international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and agreed that assistance would be provided for 5,000 refugees annually. This number soon reached 7,000 refugees. According to ration cards held by families in groups C and D, each member received basic staples like flour, oil, and milk. Very few families in group B held ration cards. After 1967, assistance for Palestinians with an income of 7,965 Egyptian pounds discontinued affecting about 1,417 families or 8,017 individuals.¹⁶

The circle of disabled families began to increase rapidly as a result of the many obstacles Palestinians faced especially in employment. Only a small number of families (approximately 30) received support from the PLO in response to their deteriorating economic conditions, with the exception of families of Palestinian martyrs who were provided with a monthly income of between 250 and 960 Egyptian pounds. Assistance to Palestinian families of martyrs from the 'Ayn Jaloot Units was not provided by the All Palestine Government in Gaza even though payments had been made into the provident fund.

When PLO support for the Palestinian Charitable Society was cut, the Society began to collect donations and provide assistance to needy Palestinian families. About 420 Palestinian families benefited from monthly assistance distributed by the

Society. Students, the sick, and families of the deceased were also given assistance. The Society also supported income-generating projects and training programs. The Palestinian Red Crescent has provided further assistance for medical treatment and distribution of medications with the help of the Palestine hospital in Cairo.

Employment Status

Initially, Palestinians who fled to Egypt were forbidden to work. This prohibition included voluntary work. The government of Mohammed Fahmi al-Nakrashi, believed that "work [would] make the Palestinians forget their homeland." This attitude resulted in discrimination against the Palestinian refugees in many areas in addition to employment, including residence and travel.

Discrimination against Palestinians was relaxed somewhat with the 1952 revolution. In 1954, a series of laws were drawn up which accorded Palestinians the same employment rights as Egyptian nationals. Professionals, such as doctors, midwives, and dentists were accorded the same rights of employment as Egyptian nationals.¹⁷ Palestinians also received treatment in Egyptian hospitals and medication without charge.¹⁸ In addition, Palestinians, unlike other Arabs residing in Egypt, were granted commercial licenses and were able to import and export goods.

In the early 1960s, Palestinians in Egypt were employed as professionals in industry, economics, construction, and other areas. Palestinians also worked in the service sector in restaurants and hotels etc.¹⁹ During the 1960s, moreover, opportunities abounded for investment by Palestinian capitalists. Approximately 20 Palestinians owned medium sized factories; another 55 owned real estate, including hotels, while 15 owned farms. Many others invested in construction.²⁰ Between 1967 and 1973, Palestinians in Egypt owned about 222 commercial establishments, including 58 restaurants and shops, 74 clothing and jewelry shops, 32 tourist agencies and trading offices, 46 leather factories and many others in manufacturing.²¹

The advent of the Sadat regime with the sudden death of Nasser in 1970, however, brought with it a period in which life became more and more difficult for Palestinians. After the murder of the well-known Egyptian writer Yousef al-Seba'i in Larnaka, Cyprus on 18 February 1978, by Abu Nidal, the persecution of Palestinians increased. Palestinians began to face an increasing number of obstacles and legal restrictions reminiscent of the collective punishment used by British Mandate authorities and Zionist forces in Palestine during the Second World War (1939-1945) and after 1967 in the West Bank and Gaza.

New legislation in 1978 stripped away the status of Palestinians; no longer were Palestinians considered to hold the same employment status as Egyptian nationals.²² The Ministry of Labor decided to bar Palestinians from trade and commerce. Unlike other foreigners, only those who had been married to Egyptian women for more

Distribution of Palestinian Refugees ^c in the Workforce	
Area of Employment	% of Workforce
Social Services	32.1
Commerce (including Restaurants and Hotel)	19.8
Transportation	2.1
Industry	8.7
Agriculture & Fishing	4.5
Others	22.7

than five years were excluded from these two decisions. Palestinians were also denied the right to own cultivated land.²³ Egyptian women married to Palestinians were treated the same way. These new laws drove many Palestinians to the Gulf States.²⁴

According to a 1985 census, 86.5% of all Palestinians (above the age of six) were employed.²⁵ Women comprised only 8.1% of all Palestinian laborers. About a third of the laborers were self-employed, with the remaining employed in the public or private sectors.²⁶ The reason for the small number of workers in agriculture is related to the lack of cultivated land. Additionally, Palestinians themselves preferred to stay in the Egyptian cities rather than the countryside. Most of them directed their efforts, therefore, towards industry, commerce, and other similar sectors. Approximately 2,500 Palestinians are managing investments worth 15-20 million Egyptian pounds in hotels, restaurants, transportation, and many other services.²⁷

Education

In 1955 Palestinian students began to receive assistance from the Egyptian government. In 1965-66 about 1,192 students received 48 Egyptian pounds each (about US\$110). Those who excelled in their studies received 100 Egyptian pounds. Enrollment of Palestinian students in Egyptian universities increased rapidly until it reached 5,642 students (from the Gaza Strip only) in mid fifties and sixties.²⁸ Palestinian and Egyptian students alike were exempt from university fees. The number of

government scholarships to Palestinians at that time reached about 1,030.

Since the early 1960s, many Palestinians who were active in the Palestine Student's Union became active leaders of the resistance including, for example, Yasser Arafat, Salah Khalaf, Farouq al-Kadoumi, Tayseer Koba'a, Amin al-Hindi, Zuhair al-Khateb, Nadim Khoury, Mo'in Basaso, Lutfi Ghantos and Dr. Kamal al-Khalidi.

This situation came to an end, however, with the killing of al-Seba'i. In 1978, the Egyptian Minister of Education announced that Palestinians would not be allowed to study at government schools. Those students whose parents were working with the special 'Ayn Jaloot Units, and those students whose parents worked in public sectors in Gaza were exempt from this new restriction. New laws resulted in significant hardships for Palestinian students.²⁹ Students were required to pay fees (about 600-1200 pounds sterling) and were forbidden from entering certain colleges such as medicine, pharmacology, science, politics, economics, and journalism.³⁰

With the implementation of this legislation, the number of Palestinians students in Egypt was reduced to 10% of that before the signing of the Camp David Accords. Following the signing of the Accords hundreds of Palestinian students were arrested and imprisoned in Cairo, Alexandria, and Asyut. A number of Palestinian writers and journalists were also arrested and deported to Baghdad at their own expense.

Political Situation

In the early 1950s several clubs, like the Arab Palestine Club, were established in Egypt to strengthen the relationship between Palestinians and Egyptians, provide assistance, and raise awareness about the Palestinian refugee situation. As soon as the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed in summer of 1964, it adopted Cairo as a center for its offices. Permission to open a radio station, *The Voice of Palestine*, was granted by Egyptian authorities in the same year. After the war in 1967, the Egyptian authorities allowed Fateh to work in public. A second radio station operated by Fateh was opened following the battle of al-Karama, Jordan in March 1968. The two stations were unified a year later.

The Popular Front, on the other hand, had to secretly open an office in Cairo under the name of the Bahranian Liberation Front. Fateh, also, was not immune from the changing political conditions in Egypt. In 1974, Egyptian authorities closed down the party's radio station after it aired criticism of Egyptian acceptance of the Roger's Plan to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. The station, however, was

later re-opened. Members of both the Popular and Democratic Fronts for the Liberation of Palestine also faced arrest and deportation by the Egyptian security police. Palestinian members of the communist parties faced a similar fate after the Camp David Accords.

Palestinians in Egypt also organized unions. In 1963, about fifty Palestinian women formed the Palestinian Women's League, which eventually became part of The General Union of the Palestinian Woman in 1965. Another union for worker's rights was also established in 1965, but shifted its activities to Damascus after the Camp David Accords. The General Union of Palestinian Writers adopted Cairo as its center following its establishment in 1966. A second writer's union, the General Union of Palestine Writers and Journalists, which was formed in Beirut in 1972, also opened a branch in Egypt. This branch continued until the Camp David Accords when four of its member were arrested and deported.

Only Fateh was allowed to work openly along with 25 members of the Palestinian National Council. Nevertheless, other parties continue to garner support from Palestinians in Egypt. In fact, most of the Palestinian community in Egypt remains opposed to the Oslo Accords. This opposition finds substance in the writings of Palestinians like Dr. Ahmed Sudki al-Dajani, Moh'd Khalid al-Az'ar and the author.

Palestinians in Egypt continue to suffer and endure, increasing their desire for an independent state in which their rights will be secured and where they will be free from the anxiety of expulsion and transfer.

Endnotes:

¹ The social figures had arrived in Egypt by the train after acquiring a visa to enter Egypt from the Egyptian Council in Jerusalem in 1947-48.

² This may explain that the majority of the camp inhabitants were originally from Jaffa.

³ The general term Palestinians is used for brevity. Under the British Mandate, Jewish, Greeks, Armenians, and Persons from other communities residing in Palestine were considered Palestinians.

⁴ Dr. Nadera al-Serraj (et. al), *Arab Palestinians in Egypt*. Cairo: Arab Future House, 1986, pp. 40-41.

⁵ L.A. Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World: Institution Building and the Search for a State*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988, p. 43.

⁶ Ibid, pp. 49-51.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ al-Wafd, Cairo (7 March 1995). Awni Salim, "Estimate of the Palestinian Population in Egypt," Arab Palestinians in Egypt, pp. 16-17.

⁹ Ibid, p. 16.

¹⁰ Brand, pp. 49-51.

¹¹ Abdel Qader Yasin, Sari Hanafi, Olivier Sanmartin, *Palestinians in Egypt in the North Sinai*. Ramallah: SHAML (Palestinian Diaspora and Refugee Center), 1996.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Under the 1960 law permit categories were special, ordinary, and temporary, with most Palestinians qualifying only for the temporary permit. check Lex Takkenberg, *The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998, p. 152.

¹⁴ Moh'd Khaled al-Az'ar, "Palestinians in Egypt between the Present and the Future," *Arab Palestinians in Egypt*, p. 109.

¹⁵ Abbas Shibliak, *Residency Status and Civil Rights of Palestinian Refugees in Arab Countries*, 45. SHAML Monograph Series No. 1 Ref.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 38.

¹⁸ Book of the Palestinian Charitable Society, at 3118. Ministry of Social Affairs, Cairo (1998), pp. 1-4.

¹⁹ Law No. 415, 416, 481 and 537 respectively.

²⁰ Brand, pp. 55-56.

²¹ Issa.

²² Abdullah Kamal, *Palestinians in Egypt, Refugees and Millionaires*. Cairo (13 September 1993), pp. 26-29.

²³ Law No. 47, 48 (1979).

²⁴ Salam, p. 18.

²⁵ Law No. 104 (1985).

²⁶ Ibid. See also al-Az'ar, pp. 109-110.

²⁷ Salam, pp. 17-18.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 18.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid, pp. 56-57.

Tables

a. Dr. Salah Abdel-Jaber Issa, "The Arabs in Egypt According to the Censi, 1897-1986," Arab Studies and Research, No. 219 (1991), pp. 73-102.

b. al-Serraj, pp. 35-37.

c. Salam, p. 18.

"The participants declare that the *right of return* and the refugee issue are the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Therefore, any effort at the establishment of a just peace in the region will fail, if it does not include a just solution for the refugees based on internationally legitimized solutions, especially UN Resolution 194. We do not oppose peace. We are for a peace built on mutual respect for internationally recognized rights, and hold that the implementation of the right of return and the respect of the Palestinian national rights are the key to ending the conflict in the whole region."

*Recommendations from the First Popular Refugee Conference
Deheishe Refugee Camp, 1996*