



Refugees

The Palestinian refugee problem was created as the result of two wars (*An-Nakba* of 1948 and *An-Naksa* of 1967), and numerous aggressions perpetrated by Jewish underground military groups (e.g. Haganah, Irgun, and Stern). After the War of 1948, the UN Conciliation Commission estimated that **726,000 Palestinians** (75% of the Arab population of Palestine) had fled, or were expelled, from what became Israel ("**1948 refugees**"), while **25,000** others had become so-called "border-line cases": they still lived at home, but without any means of income because they were separated from their lands by the armistice lines (UN, First Interim Report of the United Nations Economic Survey Mission for the Middle East, 16 Nov. 1949; see full document at <http://unispal.un.org>). Some 531 Palestinian villages and towns were destroyed and/or resettled with Jews.



In addition to the refugees, there are the **internally displaced** Palestinians, who were expelled from their villages but remained in the lands that became Israel. At the end of the 1948 war, they numbered 30,000-40,000 people and were not allowed to return to their homes but instead placed under military rule to facilitate the expropriation of their land. Until today, Israel does not recognize internally displaced Palestinians, whose number (incl. their descendants) is now estimated at 263,000-300,000 (Badil, Bethlehem).

After the 1948 War, UN General Assembly Resolution 302 (IV), of 8 December 1949, established the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (**UNRWA**) to address the needs of Palestine refugees. In 1950, 914,221 refugees were registered with UNRWA. In 1952, the Israeli government effectively **denationalized** the Palestinians who had fled or were expelled by adopting the Israeli Nationality Law. Their property was seized and ultimately transferred to the State of Israel.



During the 1967 War, about 300,000 Palestinians were displaced from the WBGS ("**1967 displaced persons**"), including some 175,000 UNRWA registered refugees who became refugees for a second time.

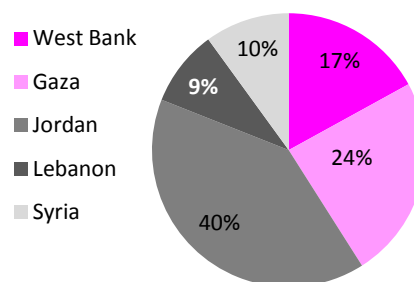
The total Palestinian **refugee population** is estimated at over **7.98 million** (66% of the entire, worldwide Palestinian population, estimated at 12.1 million in 2014) (Badil, *Survey of Palestinian Refugees and IDPs 2013-15 (Vol. VIII)*), constituting the world's longest suffering refugee population. Of the total, almost 6 million are registered with UNRWA (those who either simply did not register or did not need assistance at the time they became refugees in 1948).

Around half of the Palestinian refugees are **stateless**. The vast majority of the Palestinian refugees live in the OPT or neighboring countries, some 71% of them **outside the refugee camps**.

In 2017, there were over 5.87 million Palestinian UNRWA-registered refugees and persons, constituting approx. 45% of the total Palestinian population worldwide. In the WBGS, they account for **some 42.8% of the total population** (WB: 27.3%, GS: 68%) (PCBS, *Special Statistical Bulletin on the 68th Anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba*, May 2016).

Most of the Palestinian refugees live in neighboring countries under diverse living conditions; In **Jordan**, most of them are full citizens and do not live in camps. In **Lebanon**, they are stateless, live in poor and overcrowded camps, are subject to extensive employment restrictions, and barred from owning property. In **Syria**, most lived outside camps and are considered non-citizens, but with access to employment and social services; however 5 of the 12 camps have been either destroyed or are inaccessible due to the ongoing fighting in

Distribution of Refugees



Source: UNRWA.

Syria. Of the 438,000 refugees who remain inside Syria (out of the total of 600,000 registered refugees) 280,000 are internally displaced, while 120,000 have been forced again into exile, to Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt and increasingly, to Europe (UNRWA, 2017).

UNRWA Registered Refugees (RR) and Persons (RP)

	West Bank ²	Gaza Strip	Jordan	Lebanon	Syria ¹	Total
1950	- ²	198,227	506,200 ²	127,600	82,194	914,221 ³
RR 1975	292,922	333,031	625,857	196,855	184,042	1,632,707
RR 2017	809,738	1,348,536	2,175,491	463,664	543,014	5,340,443
Other RPs 2017 ⁴	187,435	87,080	111,152	50,131	75,114	510,912
Total RPs 2017	997,173	1,435,616	2,286,643	532,173	618,128	5,869,733
Increase over 2014	2.7%	3.4%	1.7%	5.5%	-1.9%	1.8%
No. of refugee camps	19	8	10 ⁵	12	9	58
RPs living in camps (in % of RPs)	242,257 (24.3%)	578,694 (40.3%)	397,739 (17.4%)	260,106 (48.9%)	186,858 (30.2%)	1,665,654 (28.4%)
Facilities:						
Schools	96	267	171	67	101	702
Primary Health Care	43	22	25	27	26	143

¹ Figures for Syria are working estimates as the situation there remains volatile. ² West Bank figures included in Jordan until 1967. ³ Excl. 45,800 people who received UNRWA relief in Israel until 1952. ⁴ Includes those eligible to receive services. ⁵ Three other neighborhoods in Amman, Zarqa and Madaba are considered 'unofficial' camps by UNRWA. Source: UNRWA in Figures, January 2017.

Since Oslo, all camps in the WBGs (except Shu'fat camp in Jerusalem) are under the PA's control, but the fate of the refugees still awaits a solution. To date, Israel refuses to discuss the rights of Palestinian refugees, rejects any responsibility for their plight and disputes the legality of their claims - this, although its admission to the UN in 1949 was conditional upon accepting *all* UN resolutions, including **UNGA Resolution 194**, which recognizes the right of refugees to return or receive compensation (and has been affirmed over 110 times so far). Israel also refuses to repatriate refugees, given the demographic threat to the Jewish state, and advocates instead their resettlement in Arab countries, efforts to improve their living conditions, and limited readmission based on humanitarian considerations.

Besides UNGA Resolution 194, the **right to return** is also embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948 (Art. 13 (2)), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 21 December 1965 (Art. 5(d)(ii)), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 16 December 1966 (Art. 12(4)) and has already been applied to Bosnian, East Timorese, Kosovo, and Rwandan refugees!

Palestinians demand that **international law** be applied, including the recognition of **Israel's responsibility** in the creation and continuation of the refugee issue; the **restitution of Palestinian refugee properties**; full **compensation** for those properties (in cases where restitution is not possible or the refugee chooses compensation for losses), and compensation for the longstanding displacement and suffering of the refugees. They insist on the **right of return** and the option to exercise it, but may eventually **opt** for resettlement in Palestine or in third countries, or for normalization of their legal status in their current host country.



Distribution of UNRWA Registered Refugees living in Camps (RC)

West Bank			Gaza Strip		
District	Camp (year of est.)	Population	District	Camp (year of est.)	Population
Nablus	Askar (1950)	20,693	Gaza North	Jabalia (1948/49)	252,468
	Balata (1950)	29,229			
	Camp No. 1 (1950)	8,358			
Jenin	Far'a (1949)	9,640	Gaza City	Rimal	235,234
	Jenin (1953)	21,091		Zaitun	152,873
Tulkarem	Nur Shams (1952)	12,019	Gaza South	Khan Yunis (1949)	235,844
	Tulkarem (1950)	24,377		Rafah (1949)	224,401
Ramallah	Al-Ama'ri (1949)	13,646	Gaza Center	Nuseirat (1948)	161,546
	Deir Ammar (1949)	3,089		Deir Balah (1949)	113,863
	Jalazon (1949)	14,579			
	Qalandia (1949)	14,273			
Jerusalem	Shu'fat (1965/66)	14,558	TOTAL		1,376,229³
Jericho	Aqabat Jaber (1948)	8,942	¹ The actual camp population is much higher as many non-refugees have moved there due to unaffordable rents elsewhere in Jerusalem. ² The total number of people registered with UNRWA is much higher as over 700,000 others live not in camps. ³ At least an additional 118,107 people live in the camps.		
	Ein Sultan (1948)	2,688			
Bethlehem	Dheisheh (1949)	16,879			
	Aida (1950)	6,330			
	Beit Jibrin (1950)	2,719			
Hebron	Fawwar (1949)	10,883	Source: UNRWA estimates, as of 30 September 2017.		
	Arroub (1950)	13,769			
TOTAL		247,886²			

The number of registered refugees in Palestine is projected to reach 2,349,000 in 2020, 3,454,000 in 2035, and 4,533,000 in 2050 (WB: 1,633,000, GS: 2,920,000) (Prime Minister's Office, State of Palestine & UNFPA, *PALESTINE 2030: Demographic Change: Opportunities for Development*, December 2016).

Recommended Research Sources:

<http://www.palestineremembered.com> <http://www.badil.org> <http://www.unrwa.org>
<http://www.prc.org.uk> (Return Center, London) <http://al-awda.org> <http://www.righttoenter.ps/>
<http://prnblog.wordpress.com> (Palestinian Refugee ResearchNet) <http://ialiis.birzeit.edu/fmru/>

Abu Sitta, Salman. *From Refugees to Citizens at Home*. London: Palestine Land Society & PRC, 2001.

Badil, *Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (2013-2015)*, Vol. VIII, 2016.

Refugees in Their Homeland: The Question of Representation and Protection. Birzeit University - Ibrahim Abu Lughod Institute of International Studies, 2017.

Brynen, Rex & Roula El-Rifai (eds.). *The Palestinian Refugee Problem: The Search for Resolution*, London, 2012.

____ (eds.). *Compensation to Palestinian Refugees and the Search for Palestinian-Israeli Peace*, London, 2013.

HRW, *Forget about Him, He's Not Here- Israel's Control of Palestinian Residency in the West Bank and Gaza*, 2012.

International Crisis Group, *Bringing Back the Palestinian Refugee Question*, Middle East Report No. 1569, Oct. 2014.

Morris, Benny. *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Pappe, Ilan. *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. Oxford, 2006.

PASSIA. *Palestinian Refugees Special Bulletin*. Jerusalem, 2004.

Takkenberg, Lex. *The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

Tamari, S. *Palestinian Refugee Negotiations: From Madrid to Oslo II*. Washington, DC: IPS, 1996.

Zureik, Elia. *Palestinian Refugees and the Peace Process*. Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1996.