



Refugees

Historical Background

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 UN 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 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 **Oslo Accords** did not directly tackle the refugee issue but deferred it to a second stage of negotiations that were to begin during the third year of the interim period, but never did. The legal status of the refugees thus remained unchanged, except that their camps in the WBGS came under the **PA's control**. To date, Israel refuses to discuss the rights of 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). Refusing to repatriate refugees, Israel advocates their resettlement in Arab countries instead.

The **right to return** is further 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 insist on their **right of return** and demand that **international law** be applied, that **Israel** recognizes its **responsibility** in the refugee issue, that **refugee properties** will be **restituted** or fully **compensated**, and that the displacement and suffering of the refugees will be compensated.

Refugees Today

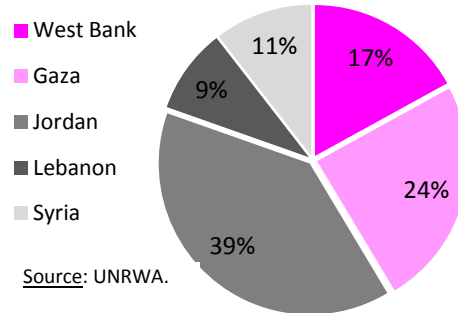
Palestinian refugees constitute the world's longest suffering refugee population. By the end of 2017, an estimated 8.07 million – or 66% - of the entire, worldwide Palestinian population (estimated at 13 million in 2017) were forcibly displaced persons.

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 2018, there were some 5.9 million Palestinian-UNRWA-registered refugees and persons, constituting about 45.3% of the total Palestinian population worldwide (some other 2 million simply did not register or did not need assistance at the time they became refugees in 1948). In the WBGs, registered refugees account for **some 42.5% of the total population** (WB: 26.6%, GS: 66.2%) (PCBS, *Press Release on the International Day of Refugees*, 20 June 2018). In 2018 (as of September) UNRWA reported 6.1 million **registered refugees** (*UNRWA Registration Statistical Bulletin*, Third Quarter, Sept. 2018).

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).

Distribution of Refugees



The majority of the Palestinian refugees live in neighboring countries under diverse living conditions. In **Jordan**, they are mostly 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 live as non-citizens outside camps, 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 Syria. Of the 438,000 refugees who remain inside Syria (out of the total of 600,000 registered refugees) 58% are internally displaced and 95% in need of sustained humanitarian assistance (Syria: UNRWA - Humanitarian Snapshot, Sept. 2018).

UNRWA Registered Refugees (RR) and Persons (RP)

	West Bank	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	824,008	1,415,811	2,233,906	473,547	558,446	5,523,718
Other RPs 2017 ⁴	150,926	47,089	98,541	23,860	44,814	365,230
Total RPs 2017 ⁵	1,041,881	1,561,241	2,365,036	531,367	640,611	6,140,136
No. of refugee camps	19	8	10 ⁶	12	9	58
RPs living in camps (in % of RPs)	255,109 (24.5%)	593,165 (38%)	410,284 (17.4%)	269,312 (50.7%)	194,191 (30.3%)	1,722,061 (28.1%)
Facilities (2017):						
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 Includes those married to non-refugee family members are male non-refugee spouses married to female registered Palestine refugees and their descendants. ⁶ Three other neighborhoods in Amman, Zarqa and Madaba are considered 'unofficial' camps by UNRWA. Source: UNRWA Registration Statistical Bulletin, Third Quarter, Sept. 2018.

Distribution of UNRWA Official 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)	21,291	Gaza North	Jabalia (1948/49)	113,990
	Balata (1950)	29,963			
	Camp No. 1 (1950)	8,544			
Jenin	Far'a (1949)	9,870	Gaza City	Rimal	85,628
	Jenin (1953)	21,804			
Tulkarem	Nur Shams (1952)	12,338	Gaza South	Khan Yunis (1949)	87,816
	Tulkarem (1950)	25,028		Rafah (1949)	125,309
Ramallah	Al-Ama'ri (1949)	14,028	Gaza Center	Nuseirat (1948)	80,194
	Deir Ammar (1949)	3,177		Bureij	43,330
	Jalazon (1949)	15,027		Deir Balah (1949)	25,569
	Qalandia (1949)	14,643		Maghazi	31,329
Jerusalem	Shu'fat (1965/66)	15,061	TOTAL		593,165³
Jericho	Aqabat Jaber (1948)	9,289			
	Ein Sultan (1948)	2,918			
Bethlehem	Dheisheh (1949)	17,404			
	Aida (1950)	6,495			
	Beit Jibrin (1950)	2,782			
Hebron	Fawwar (1949)	11,289			
	Arroub (1950)	14,158			
TOTAL		255,109²			

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 Tens of thousands of other people live in the camps.

Source: UNRWA Registration Statistical Bulletin, Third Quarter 2018, September 2018.

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/>

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

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

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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.

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