

Palestinian Refugees in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip

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Basic Information

Name: West Bank and Gaza Strip*

Capital: East Jerusalem*

Population: 3.88 million (mid-2006 est.)**

MAP – [West Bank and Gaza Strip](#)

** The 'West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip' is used interchangeably with 'the 1967 Occupied Palestinian Territories' ('1967 OPTs'). Israel often refers to the West Bank as Judea and Samaria, disputed or administered territory.*

*** The figure is based on the 1997 census of the [Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics](#) upgraded according to the average annual population growth rate. The Bureau has been unable to conduct a census since 1997 due to the political situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The figure does not include Jewish Israelis residing in settlements established in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since 1967.*

Summary

The Palestinian refugee situation is one of the most protracted cases of forced displacement in the world today (UNHCR, 2006). The largest group of Palestinian refugees originate from areas inside the state of Israel and were displaced during the 1948 Israeli-Arab war. A smaller number of Palestinians remain internally displaced from this period and are citizens of Israel.

The second largest group of Palestinian refugees were displaced during the 1967 Israeli-Arab war and originate from the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. Large numbers of Palestinian refugees displaced in 1948 to these areas were displaced for a second time in 1967. A small number of Palestinians were internally displaced as a result of this war.

The third largest group of Palestinian refugees comprise those displaced from the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip since 1967 due to Israel's protracted military occupation. Specific causes of displacement include revocation of residency status, denial of family reunification and deportation. Internal displacement in the 1967 Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) is an ongoing problem due to military occupation (IDMC, 2006).

Estimates of the total size of the Palestinian refugee and internally displaced population vary considerably due to the absence of a universally-accepted refugee definition, lack of a comprehensive registration system, voluntary registration of those eligible for UN assistance, deficiencies in host country statistics, and frequent migration.

Indicative estimates of the total Palestinian refugee population – i.e., all displaced persons and their descendants who are unable to exercise a voluntary durable solution – suggest that as many as three-quarters of the Palestinian people have been displaced since 1948 (Boqai & Rempel, 2005). Fewer may be in need of international protection. Half have been displaced outside the borders of their homeland.

Most Palestinians and Israelis do not share a common narrative about the conflict nor do they share a common analysis of the factors leading to Palestinian displacement and its solution. Most Palestinians consider the conflict to be one between an indigenous population and a settler colonial movement. Many Jewish Israelis consider the conflict to be one between two national movements.

Palestinian refugees say they fled out of fear and some were forcibly expelled. They argue for a solution that respects the rights of those wishing to return and repossess property. Many Jewish Israelis argue that Arab states and the Palestinian leadership are to blame for the refugee plight and emphasize that any solution must preserve the Jewish character of the state including a permanent Jewish majority.

The majority of the Palestinian refugee population is located in frontline states and territories that border the state of Israel. The second largest population resides in the 1967 OPTs where refugees comprise over 40 per cent of the total Palestinian population. Around 40 per cent of the refugees in the 1967 OPTs reside in twenty-seven refugee camps.

Overview

History

The West Bank and Gaza Strip [MAP – [West Bank and Gaza Strip](#)] emerged as non-self-governing occupied territories after the first Israeli-Arab war in 1948. Before the war these territories were part of Mandate Palestine. [MAP – [Mandate Palestine](#)] They include the former Mandate districts of Nablus (1,568 sq. km) and Ramallah (680 sq. km) as well as portions of the districts of Jenin (sq. 578 km), Tulkarem (sq. 332 km), Hebron (sq. 934 km), Jerusalem (sq. 1,304 km), and Gaza (sq. 365 km) (Hadawi, 1988). Palestinian Arabs comprised the majority of the population of these areas with small numbers of Jews residing primarily north and south of Jerusalem (Abu Lughod, 1971).

The League of Nations granted Great Britain mandatory status in Palestine at the 1920 San Remo Conference after the dismemberment of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire at the end of WWI. British Common Law and judicial structures were introduced in most legal areas and residents were considered citizens of Palestine. Palestine was classified as an 'A' Mandate or closest to independence. The 1922 [Mandate for Palestine](#) incorporated terms of the 1917 [Balfour Declaration](#) by which the British government agreed to facilitate the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine through immigration and colonisation. At the time Jews comprised 11 per cent of the population of the country (McCarthy, 1990) and owned 2.5 per cent of the land (Lehn, 1988). Great Britain had previously pledged support for Arab independence ([McMahon-Hussein letters](#)) in exchange for assistance during WWI.

Great Britain administered Palestine for more than two decades, a period characterised by frequent civil unrest related to unresolved self-determination claims of the Zionist movement and the indigenous Palestinian Arab majority. As many as 100,000 Palestinian Arabs were displaced within and from Palestine during this period (Rempel, 2003). In 1947 Great Britain transferred the question of Palestine to the United Nations. The UN General Assembly established a special committee to examine and issue [recommendations](#) about the future status of the country. In November of the same year, the Assembly adopted a plan to partition Palestine. General Assembly [Resolution 181/II](#) recommended the establishment of a Jewish state on 56 per cent of the land and an Arab state on the remaining territory. [MAP – [The Partition Plan](#)] A second plan that failed to muster sufficient support of the Assembly called for a unitary state in the country.

The Palestinian Arab population and its leadership rejected the plan in favour of an independent democratic state in all of Palestine. The Zionist movement accepted partition as an historic opportunity to establish a Jewish state, despite misgivings about the borders and demographic composition of the proposed Jewish state. Half of the population of the proposed Jewish state was Arab who owned nearly 90 per cent of the land. Few Jews were located and owned land in the territory allotted to the proposed Arab state. [MAP – [Arab and Jewish Population, 1946](#)] [MAP – [Arab and Jewish Land Ownership, 1945](#)] Some states suggested that the UN obtain legal counsel from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) before proceeding arguing that the plan exceeded UN powers regarding non-self-governing territories set out in the organization's Charter.

Civil conflict erupted within days of the adoption of the UN plan. Six months later in May 1948 British forces withdrew from Palestine. By this time several hundred thousand Palestinian Arabs and several thousand Jews had been displaced as a result of hostilities. On 14 May the Zionist movement [declared](#) the establishment of the state of Israel. Arab forces from frontline states entered Palestine marking the beginning of the first Israeli-Arab war. When the war came to an end in 1949 Israeli forces controlled 78 per cent of Mandate Palestine – the *de facto* territory of the state of Israel. The remaining 22 per cent – i.e. West Bank and Gaza Strip – fell under the control of Arab forces. [MAP – [1949 Armistice Lines compared to the 1947 Partition Plan](#)] The United Nations estimated that more than three-quarters of a million people, primarily Palestinian Arabs, were displaced during the war (UNCCP, 1949).

The war resulted in a *de facto* partition of the country but failed to resolve rival self-determination claims. The boundaries of the newly-established Jewish state greatly exceeded those set out in the UN plan and the Palestinian Arab population, its leadership, and Arab states who continued to oppose partition refused to recognize the new Jewish state. The mass displacement of the Palestinian Arab population further complicated efforts to resolve the conflict. Most of the displaced had found refuge in the West Bank where the population swelled from 460-740,000 and in the Gaza Strip where the population nearly quadrupled to 270,000 (UNCCP, 1949). The UN General Assembly resolved that all refugees should be permitted to return to their homes and receive compensation for losses and damages ([Resolution 194/III](#)).

The 1948 war resolved many of the Zionist movement's territorial and demographic concerns. The new Jewish state not only had a Jewish majority, it also controlled most of the land. Israel thus favoured resettlement and compensation rather than return as the most appropriate solution for the Palestinian Arab refugees. Palestinian Arabs who remained inside the borders of the state of Israel became citizens. Thousands continued to be displaced after the war (Rempel, 2003). Most internally displaced Palestinians were not permitted to return to their homes (Cohen, 2002). A military government was set up to administer Palestinian affairs and remained in place until 1966. Over the next two decades the state confiscated half of the land owned by Palestinian citizens (Lustick, 1980; Kedar, 2002). Planning restrictions and the establishment of new Jewish Israeli towns prevented the natural expansion of existing Palestinian villages and towns (Yiftachel, 1995; Abu Hussein & McKay, 2003).

The 1948 war failed to resolve the status of those areas of Mandate Palestine occupied by Arab forces and it shattered the social, economic and political livelihood of the indigenous Palestinian Arab population. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan administered the West Bank until 1967 and maintained formal ties until 1988. In April 1950 the Jordanian parliament formally annexed the West Bank, but stated that the measure was taken without prejudice to the final settlement of the conflict (Quigley, 1990). Most states, Great Britain being an exception, did not recognize the annexation. Palestinians were permitted to participate in national and local government, but political activity was restricted. Ottoman and British Mandate laws that did not contradict the Jordanian Defense Law remained in effect while new laws were promulgated by the Jordanian parliament. [Map – [West Bank Governorates and Districts According to Jordanian Administration](#)]

The Arab Republic of Egypt administered the Gaza Strip for most of the same period through an Egyptian-appointed governor-general, an eleven-member executive council and a 44-member legislative council with limited powers (Quigley, 1990). On 1 October 1948, a short-lived All Palestine Government, recognized by Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen, declared the establishment of an independent state in all of Mandate Palestine with its capital in Jerusalem. Most Ottoman and British laws remained in force in Gaza while Egypt introduced a Basic Law for Gaza in 1955 and a Constitutional Order in 1962. Israeli Jewish forces temporarily occupied the Gaza Strip and the Sinai during the second Israeli-Arab war (Suez Crisis) in October 1956, but withdrew from these areas in March of the following year under threat of international sanctions. [Map – [Gaza Strip Governorates and Districts According to Egyptian Administration](#)]

In June 1967 Israeli military forces occupied all of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (as well as the Syrian Golan and Egyptian Sinai) during the third Israeli-Arab war. [MAP- [Territories Occupied by Israel During the 1967 War](#)] Nearly 200,000 refugees were displaced for a second time and 240,000 Palestinians became refugees for the first time (Takkenberg, 1998). Most found refuge in Jordan. The UN Security Council called upon Israel to withdraw from the territories occupied during the war ([Resolution 242](#)) and facilitate the return of the refugees ([Resolution 237](#)). Israel's military occupation and the Palestinian leadership's shift in favour of a two-state solution in the 1970s ('[10 Point Program](#)') refocused the self-determination conflict on the status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

After the war Israel established a military government to administer the West Bank and Gaza Strip, dissolved the Palestinian municipality in East Jerusalem and annexed the city along with adjacent parts of the West Bank. [Map – [West Bank and Gaza Strip Districts According to Israeli Administration](#)] [MAP – [Jerusalem Occupied and Expanded by Israel since 1967](#)] The military government abolished the court system, assumed legislative, executive and judicial powers, and introduced over 2,000 military orders, amending, changing or repealing virtually every piece of existing legislation. Israeli civil and military law considered Palestinians to be resident aliens or foreigners requiring special permits to leave and enter (Kadman, 1999). Palestinians in East Jerusalem were classified as 'permanent' residents of Israel and issued blue-coloured Israeli ID cards, unlike Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip who held orange Israeli-issued ID cards (Stein, 1997).

Israel also began to confiscate land and colonise the 1967 OPTs. A separate administrative system was set up for Israeli Jewish settlers (Lein, 2002). Palestinian municipal elections were cancelled in 1976 after nationalist forces swept to power and Israel began to encourage the development of alternative political forces including Islamist groups like Hamas. A Civil Administration set up in 1981 formalized the separation of civilian and military powers and elevated the status of military orders and other legislative acts promulgated by the military government to the level of permanent laws (Shehadeh, 1985). Some commentators warned that these policies would make it impossible to resolve self-determination claims through partition (Benvenisti, 1984). The military occupation resulted in new forms of displacement - an estimated 20,000 persons/annum were displaced between 1967-1987 (Kossaifi, 1996) - and a process of economic de-development (Roy, 1995).

In December 1987 a Palestinian popular uprising (*intifada*) against Israel's military occupation broke out in the Gaza Strip and quickly spread to the West Bank. The uprising lasted until the early 1990s and was characterized by street demonstrations, confrontations between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers, strikes, boycotts, and tax resistance. Israel responded with a policy of 'force, might, and beatings', curfews, closure of Palestinian institutions, house demolitions, and the arrest of 1000's of Palestinians. In 1988 the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), established in 1964 as the political expression of the Palestinian people and their struggle for self-determination and return to their homeland, [declared](#) the establishment of an independent state of Palestine in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip. Jordan formally relinquished responsibility for the West Bank.

Following the 1991 Gulf War, the United States and Russia brought together Arab states, the Palestinians, and Israel, with the European Union (EU) and the UN participating as observers, for an international conference in Madrid, Spain. Bilateral negotiations between the parties ensued but failed to produce agreement. Secret talks in Norway between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators led to the 1993 [Declaration of Principles](#) between the PLO and Israel setting out the framework for a two-stage peace process based on the 1978 [Camp David autonomy plan](#). Israel agreed to a staged redeployment of its military forces in the 1967 OPTs and limited Palestinian self-government. The parties also agreed to hold negotiations to determine the final status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including Jerusalem, security, water, as well as the fate of the refugees and other issues of common interest.

A self-governing Palestinian National Authority was set up in 1994 according to terms set out in the 1994 [Agreement on the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area](#). [MAP – [Palestinian Autonomous Area – Gaza Strip](#)] [MAP – [Palestinian Autonomous Area – Jericho](#)] Israel dismantled the Civil Administration but its military government remained (Shehadeh, 1997). The 1995 [Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip](#) set out modalities for elections, the establishment of an 88-member Palestinian Legislative Council and further redeployments from Palestinian cities, villages and most refugee camps in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The West Bank was divided into three zones – Areas A, B, and C – based on responsibility for security and civil affairs. Israel retained overall control of security issues and most of the land in the 1967 OPTs. [MAP – [Oslo II, Outlining Areas A, B, C](#)]

During the second half of the 1990s the Israeli-Palestinian peace process was marked by growing mistrust, mutual recriminations and violence. Palestinians pointed to ongoing land confiscation, [settlement expansion](#) and increasing restrictions on freedom of movement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel accused the Palestinians of not living up to security obligations. Several major incidents threatened to undermine the peace process. In February 1994 a Jewish Israeli settler walked into the Ibrahimi Mosque/Tomb of the Patriarchs in the West Bank city of Hebron and shot dead 29 Palestinian civilians. In April of the same year the first Palestinian suicide attack on Israeli civilians took place. Two years later Israeli and Palestinian police and security forces clashed following Israel's decision to open a tunnel under the Haram ash-Sharif/Temple Mount in the old city of Jerusalem.

These incidents were followed by a number of agreements as the parties and the international community attempted to advance peace negotiations. The 1997 [Hebron](#)

[Protocol](#) [MAP- [Hebron Redeployment](#)] set out the criteria for the redeployment of Israeli military forces from the West Bank city of Hebron. The 1997 [Wye River Memorandum](#) [MAP- [West Bank after first stage of Israeli redeployment](#)] set out a timetable for the further redeployment of Israeli military forces in the West Bank and the implementation of security measures. The 1999 [Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum](#) [MAP – [West Bank after first Israeli redeployment](#)] [MAP – [West Bank after second Israeli redeployment](#)] set out a timetable for the implementation of existing agreements and the resumption of final status talks. In 1999 the parties also adopted a [Safe Passage Protocol](#) setting out the modalities for Palestinian movement between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israel and the PLO conducted negotiations at Camp David, Maryland, under the auspices of the United States in July 2000 in an effort to reach a final peace agreement. [MAP – [West Bank Final Status Map Presented by Israel](#)] Israeli Prime Minister Barak wanted a quick deal to seal a victory in upcoming elections. The PLO agreed to participate in the talks but expressed concern that more time was needed to prepare for the talks and ready their respective constituencies to accept the terms of a comprehensive agreement. The summit ended without agreement. Israel and the United States blamed the PLO, although subsequent analysis by Israeli and American participants to the talks also cast blame on Prime Minister Barak and the Clinton administration (Middle East Institute, 2005). Subsequent efforts to revive negotiations in the fall of 2000 and in January 2001 during joint Palestinian-Israeli talks in Taba, Egypt, also ended without an agreement. [MAP – [Final Status Map Presented by Israel at Taba](#)]

A second Palestinian *intifada* broke out in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in late September 2000. Many argue that the visit to the Haram ash-Sharif/Temple Mount by then Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon provoked expression of widespread popular frustration with the peace process. Some Israelis accused the Palestinian leadership of using violence as a negotiation tool. Confrontations between Palestinians and Israeli police and security forces escalated into armed clashes. Israeli military forces subsequently reinvaded Palestinian cities, towns, and refugee camps. The reinvasion caused massive damage to the Palestinian civilian and public infrastructure and led to a dramatic rise in unemployment and poverty in the 1967 OPTs. [MAP – [Physical/Institutional Damage Assessment](#)] The Israeli military also placed then PLO Chairman and PNA President Yasser Arafat under house arrest at his Ramallah headquarters. Several high level international meetings and missions to Israel and the 1967 OPTs failed to restart political negotiations.

In 2002 Israel began construction of a separation Wall in the West Bank comprised of a combination of ditches, trenches, roads, razor wire, electronic fences and concrete walls. [MAP – [Humanitarian Impact of the Wall](#)] Israel argues that the Wall is a temporary defensive measure against Palestinian attacks. Others express concern that Israel is using the Wall to annex West Bank land and Jewish Israeli settlements (Lein & Cohen-Lifshitz, 2005). It is also creating new internally displaced Palestinians (IDMC, 2006). In December 2003 the UN General Assembly requested ([Res. ES-10/14](#)) the ICJ to render an advisory opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's construction of a Wall in the West Bank. In July 2004 the Court concluded that the construction of the Wall in the West Bank was illegal. The [advisory opinion](#) called upon Israel to cease construction, dismantle completed sections of the Wall, return land and compensate persons affected by the Wall for losses and damages (ICJ, 2004). Israel

declined to appear before the Court and rejected the opinion. In August the General Assembly ([Res. ES-10/15](#)) requested Israel to comply with the opinion and called upon the UN Secretary-General to establish a register of damages for all legal and natural persons affected by the construction of the wall.

After several failed initiatives, a new political process began in April 2003 based on a three-stage initiative adopted by the United States, Europe, Russia and the United Nations. The so-called [Performance-based Road Map to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#) aimed to establish an independent Palestinian state by 2005. The Road Map was closely linked to a process of PNA reform. The UN Security Council ([Res. 1515](#)) endorsed the Road Map and vision of a two-state solution although it left the issue of borders to be negotiated between the parties. In April 2004 US President George Bush issued a [letter](#) to then Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon stating that Israel would not be required to withdraw to the 1949 armistice lines and that a solution for refugees would have to be found within a Palestinian state. Palestinians rejected the premise of the letter stating that it represented a departure from international law and prejudiced the outcome of bilateral negotiations.

Implementation of the Road Map has yet to move beyond stage one and some United Nations officials have called for the road map to be revised in light of new developments including the ICJ advisory opinion (UNCHR, 2006). In September 2005 Israel unilaterally redeployed its military forces from the Gaza Strip, withdrew Jewish Israeli settlers and demolished the settlements in a process known as '[disengagement](#)' (Hb: *hitnatkut*). The plan aimed to relieve Israel of the heavy security costs of maintaining several thousand settlers in the Gaza Strip, and to address the demographic threat posed to Israel as a Jewish state by more than a million Palestinians. Two months later the United States brokered an [agreement on access and movement](#) between Israel and the PNA under which Palestinians assumed control of the border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt under European Union supervision.

In late 2005 Israel announced a second unilateral plan to redeploy military forces and remove settlers from isolated settlements in the West Bank under a plan known as 'convergence' (Hb: *hitkansut*) to be completed by 2010. Some have warned that the plan would make it impossible to resolve rival self-determination claims through a two-state solution. As of early 2006 the state-building process in the West Bank and Gaza Strip had come to a virtual standstill. Major international donors suspended all financial and political ties to the PNA as a result of the January Palestinian Legislative Council elections won by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), which Israel and the above states classify as a terrorist organization. Financial and political ties were conditioned on the PNA government's commitment to non-violence, recognition of Israel's right to exist, and acceptance of previous peace agreements (Quartet, 2006).

The economic boycott of the PNA has led to a further decline in living conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. By mid-year UN agencies and selected NGOs took the unprecedented step of revising their emergency appeal for the 1967 OPTs from US\$ 215 to 385 million (UNOCHA, 2006a). International humanitarian agencies have expressed concern that the PNA will slowly collapse as a result of the economic pressure. In June international donors agreed to set up a three-month temporary funding mechanism to deliver basic humanitarian aid bypassing the PNA. The January elections also witnessed intensified confrontations between Hamas and the

Fatah movement which lost power after a decade in government. Palestinian political factions were seeking to resolve differences and meet international conditions for the resumption of financial aid through a [national conciliation agreement](#) drafted by Palestinian political prisoners.

Geography

The total area of the West Bank [MAP – [West Bank](#)] is 5,655 sq. km. The area derives its name from its location on the west bank of the Jordan river. The West Bank is 130 km in length and varies between 40 and 65 km in width. To the north, south, and west it is bounded by the state of Israel. The *de facto* boundary between the West Bank and Israel is 307 km and runs along the 1949 Israeli-Jordanian armistice line, also known as the 'Green line' because of the green pencil used to draw the line during armistice talks. To the east the West Bank shares a common border (97 km) with Jordan. The total area of the Gaza Strip [Map – [Gaza Strip](#)] is 365 sq. km. It is 45 km long and varies between 5 and 12 km in width. To the north and east the Gaza Strip is bounded by Israel. The *de facto* boundary is 51 km in length. To the south, the Strip shares a common border with Egypt (11 km), while the Mediterranean sea comprises the western border (40 km) of the Strip.

The main cities in the West Bank, from the south to the north, are Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Jericho, Salfit, Qalqilya, Nablus, Tulkarm, Tubas and Jenin. The West Bank is divided into 11 Governorates/Districts. The largest governorates are located in the south (Hebron, 997 sq. km) and central (Ramallah & al-Bireh, 855 sq. km) parts of the West Bank (PCBS, 2005). In addition there are 19 [refugee camps](#) located in both urban and rural areas, including one camp in East Jerusalem. There are five Governorates/Districts in the Gaza Strip. The main urban areas in the Gaza Strip are Gaza City, Deir al-Ballah, Khan Younis and Rafah. There are 8 [refugee camps](#) in the Gaza Strip. In the Gaza Strip there are no major differences between rural and urban camps due to the built up nature of the area. [MAP – [Refugee Camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip](#)]

There are 121 Jewish Israeli settlements in the West Bank (not including more than 100 'outposts') [MAP – [Jewish Settlements in the West Bank](#)] and 15 in East Jerusalem. [MAP – [Jewish Settlements in Jerusalem](#)] West Bank settlements are organized into six regional councils: Samaria, Jordan Valley, Benjamin, Etzion Bloc, Mt. Hebron and Megilot. Israel also classifies three settlements as municipalities or cities: Ariel located in the north, Ma'ale Adumim to the east and the Etzion Bloc to the south of Jerusalem (Lein, 2002). Approximately 40 per cent of West Bank land controlled by Israel has been incorporated into the settlements (World Bank, 2006b). Israel dismantled 17 settlements in the Gaza Strip and 4 in the northern West Bank in September 2005. [MAP – [Israeli Settlements Dismantled in the Gaza Strip](#)] [MAP – [Israeli Settlements Dismantled in the Northern West Bank](#)] Israel has also committed itself to dismantle settlement outposts.

The climate of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is Mediterranean with hot, dry summers and short, wet, cool winters. Temperature and rainfall vary with altitude and location. Average summer temperatures range from 23C in the southern West Bank to over 31C in the Jordan Valley while winter temperatures range, respectively, from 9C to 16C. Elevations range from as high as 1,022 meters above sea level in the Ramallah

district to as low as 400 meters below sea level in the Bethlehem district near the Dead Sea (PCBS, 2005).

Major water sources in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are mainly from rainfall stored in aquifers. The three major West Bank aquifers are located roughly along the 1949 armistice line ('green line'), in the central part of the West Bank running north of Nablus and north and south of Jerusalem. Average rainfall during the winter season ranges from 54mm in the Jordan Valley to over 300mm in the northwestern part of the West Bank. There are 5 major rivers including the Jordan River (253 km); Yarmuk (40 km); Muqatta (13 km); and Auja (26 km). The total area of water is 438 sq. km (PCBS, 2005). Israel exploits approximately 80 per cent of the ground water accounting for 25 per cent of Israel's water needs. [MAP – [Water Sources](#)]

The majority of West Bank (3,519.0 sq. km) and Gaza Strip (191.5 sq. km) land is heath, pastures, meadows, and fallow land. Agricultural land and forests account, respectively, for 1,372.8 sq. km and sq. 88.5 km in the West Bank and 113.7 sq. km and 3.2 sq. km in the Gaza Strip. Palestinian built-up areas comprise 531.9 sq. km in the West Bank and 53.8 sq. km in the Gaza Strip (PCBS, 2005). There are no comprehensive figures for the total amount of West Bank land expropriated by Israel since 1967, however, Israel continues to exert full control over an estimated 55 per cent of the West Bank (World Bank, 2006). Prior to 1967, Jews owned between 17 and 30 sq. km of land or less than half of one percent of the total West Bank land including several hundred buildings thereon (Fischbach, 2003; Lehn, 1988). In September 2005 Israel returned land expropriated in the Gaza Strip and small areas in the northern West Bank to the PNA.

The West Bank is effectively cut into three distinct areas, in addition to East Jerusalem, by a combination of Israeli military checkpoints (50 permanently-manned and 8 partially-manned), physical obstacles (471) and a permit system, which also separate Palestinian and Israeli movement. Palestinian access to the Jordan Valley from the rest of the West Bank is limited. [MAP – [West Bank Closure and Access](#)] Israel first implemented the policy of military closure in March 1993 preventing Palestinians from entering Jerusalem and Israel after several attacks against Jewish Israeli civilians. The Wall narrows the West Bank on its western flank while Israeli-imposed restrictions on Palestinian movement in the Jordan Valley narrow the West Bank on its eastern flank. A special permit regime restricts Palestinian entry into the area between the Wall and the green line. Upon completion as much as 57 sq. km of land or 10.1 per cent of the West Bank (including parts of East Jerusalem) and three-quarters of the settler population will lie between the Wall and the 'green line' (UNOCHA, 2006b).

The Gaza Strip became a single contiguous territorial unit following the dismantling of Jewish Israeli settlements and redeployment of Israeli military forces in September 2005. Since December 2005, however, the Israeli military has enforced a 2.5 km 'no-go zone' in the northern part of the Gaza Strip surrounding the former Jewish Israeli settlements of Dugit, Nisanit and Alei Sinai. The Gaza Strip is already surrounded by an electrified fence. Israel further controls movement in and out and between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Demography, Religion and Ethnicity

The majority of the population residing in the 1967 OPTs (mid-2006) is Palestinian Arab. Approximately two-thirds (2.44 million est.) reside in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, with the remaining population (1.44 million est.) residing in the Gaza Strip (PCBS, 2006).

Refugees comprise 42.5 per cent (1.6 million) of the total Palestinian population of the 1967 OPTs (end of 2005). In the West Bank refugees comprise approximately one-quarter (655,000) of the total population, while in the Gaza Strip refugees comprise some two-thirds (969,000) of the entire population (PCBS, 2005). There are no conclusive or comprehensive numbers of the size of the IDP population in the 1967 OPTs. Estimates range from 20,000 to more than 100,000 if all forms of internal displacement are included (IDMC, 2006).

Around 400,000 Jewish Israeli settlers live in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem in contravention of international humanitarian law. Jewish Israeli settlers comprise around 15 per cent of the total West Bank population (including East Jerusalem). Israel withdrew several thousand Jewish settlers who comprised less than one per cent of the population from the Gaza Strip and from four small settlements in the northern West Bank in September 2005.

The majority of the Palestinian population in the 1967 OPTs is urban. In the West Bank more than half of all Palestinians reside in urban centers. A larger number of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip reside in urban areas due to the densely built-up character of the Strip. Nearly two-thirds reside in cities with slightly less than one-third residing in camps. The largest population concentration in the West Bank is in the Hebron Governorate (524,510) in the south followed by Jerusalem (398,337), and Nablus (326,873) and Jenin (254,218) in the north. In the Gaza Strip, the largest Governorate is Gaza City (487,904) (PCBS, 2005).

Approximately one-third (663,746) of the total refugee population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip lives in refugee camps (UNRWA, 2005b). Some of the largest Palestinian refugee camps in the region are located in the Gaza Strip. In the West Bank there are fewer refugees in camps, however, there are a large number of Palestinian towns and villages (approximately 100) in which 1948 refugees comprise more than 50 per cent of the total population (PCBS, 1997). The large number of Palestinians remaining in camps after more than five decades of exile can be explained by the lack of a negotiated solution to the conflict; legal, political, and social obstacles which force refugees to remain in the camp; physical safety; lack of resources to rent or buy alternative accommodation outside the camp; lack of living space outside the camp due to overcrowding; and, family and village support structure in the camp (Boqai & Rempel, 2005).

According to UN registration records (January 2000) for those refugees eligible for assistance, approximately two-thirds (363,728) of the refugees in the West Bank are from the central areas of Israel (Jerusalem and Lydda/Lod). The remaining refugees (218,444) are from the north (Galilee) with smaller numbers from areas in the south of the country. In the Gaza Strip, two-thirds (544,859) of the refugees are from the southern part of the country and approximately one-third (271,244) from central areas (Lydda/Lod) with smaller numbers from other parts of the country (7,778) (UNRWA,

2000).

The average density of the Palestinian population in the West Bank (mid-2006) is 431 persons per sq. km. In the Gaza Strip the population density is nearly 10 times higher at 3,945 persons per sq. km (PCBS, 2005). Overall population density rises significantly taking into consideration the land controlled by settlements, the Israeli military and land expropriated for the construction of the Wall. Population density is higher inside refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In the West Bank, for example, the refugee camps have a combined population of 184,252 persons (March 2005) and cover only 6.2 sq. km. Population density is even higher in the Gaza Strip due to the larger number of refugees and smaller combined area of the refugee camps. Refugee households in camps in the 1967 OPTs are also more crowded (39 per cent), defined as 3+ persons per room, than non-camp households (27 per cent) (Jacobsen, 2003).

The Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is a young population. Nearly half of the total population is under the age of 15 years. The population in the Gaza Strip is slightly younger (PCBS, 2005). Forty-four per cent of all refugees that receive UN assistance are below age eighteen. The refugee population in the Gaza Strip is younger (48.3 per cent) than in the West Bank (39.7 per cent) (UNRWA, 2005b). There are no statistics for the age structure of internally displaced Palestinians in the 1967 OPTs but they are likely similar to that of the refugee and non-refugee population (Boqai & Rempel, 2005).

The annual growth rate of the Palestinian population in the 1967 OPTs was 3.4 per cent in 2004 (PCBS, 2005). The refugee population receiving UN assistance grew by 2.4 per cent between July 2004 and June 2005 (UNRWA, 2005b). This rate, however, is only an approximation of the annual growth rate as refugees do not immediately register new births and deaths. Factors contributing to the natural growth rate of the Palestinian population include a high fertility rate and decreasing mortality rates. Between 1999 and 2003 the total fertility rate of the Palestinian population in the 1967 OPTs was 5.6 per cent with infant and child mortality rates of 24.2 and 28.3 (PCBS, 2005). The total fertility rate of Palestinian refugees receiving UN assistance is 4.25 per cent with infant and child mortality rates of 20.3 and 23 per cent. Rates are higher in the Gaza Strip (UNRWA, 2005b).

Palestinian society in the Gaza Strip is historically more traditional than in the West Bank. This can be explained in part by the fact that the majority of the population is refugees and have been completely cut off from familial and other ties in their places of origin. Unlike the West Bank the limited area and resources of the Gaza Strip has severely inhibited economic absorption and integration of the refugee population. The overwhelming majority Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are Sunni Muslim. The remaining Palestinian population is Christian.

Politics

The [Palestinian National Authority](#) (PNA) is an interim administrative organ of the PLO established in accordance with the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian [Declaration of Principles](#) and the 1994 [Agreement on the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area](#). PNA jurisdiction covers approximately 45 per cent of the 1967 OPTs, excluding East Jerusalem. Civil powers

transferred by Israel from the former Civil Administration to the PNA, including economy, industry, taxation, agriculture, energy, justice, social welfare, education, health, culture, tourism, transport, and telecommunications, are subject to overall Israeli approval. According to the above agreements PNA powers exclude foreign relations and defence. The 11 West Bank and 5 Gaza Strip Governorates/Districts are subordinate to the PNA Ministry of Local Government and headed by a Governor appointed by the PNA President. [Map – [West Bank and Gaza Strip Governorates and Districts under the Palestinian Authority](#)]

The 1995 [Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip](#) provided for the holding of elections and the establishment of an 88-member elected [Palestinian Legislative Council](#) (PLC). In June 2005 the PLC adopted legislation expanding the number of seats in the Council to 132. The electoral law was also changed in 2005 to allow for a majority and proportional electoral system. PLC members are automatically members of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), the 669 member parliament in exile of the Palestinian people. The PLC cannot issue legislation related to Jewish Israeli settlements in the 1967 OPTs. Only those Palestinians living in the 1967 OPTs, including refugees, are eligible to candidate and vote in PLC elections. Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem may vote under certain conditions but cannot candidate if their official domicile is in Jerusalem. The PLC also has a special sub-committee on refugees although the [PLO Refugee Affairs Department](#) has overall responsibility for refugees in the 1967 OPTs.

The first PLC elections were held in January 1996. The majority of seats were held by Fatah (55 seats) and independent candidates affiliated with Fatah (15 seats). Five women were elected to the Council. PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat was elected President of the PNA with 88.2 per cent of the vote ([Central Elections Commission, 1996 Result](#)). Subsequent PLC elections were postponed due to the second Palestinian *intifada*. New elections for PNA President were held in January 2005 after the death of President Arafat in November 2004. The Deputy Chairman of the PLO, Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) was elected with 62.5 per cent of the vote ([Central Elections Commission, 2005 Result](#)). The second PLC elections were held in January 2006. The Change and Reform List (Hamas) won a majority (74 seats) followed by Fatah (45 seats). The remainder of the seats are held by a number of independent and left of center parties. Thirteen women were elected to the council ([Central Elections Commission, 2006 Result](#)).

There are 521 local authorities (491 in the West Bank and 30 in the Gaza Strip) comprised of 107 municipalities, 11 local councils, 374 village councils and 27 refugee camps (Passia, 2005). The first municipal elections in the West Bank since 1976 and in the Gaza Strip since 1946 were held in 2005. In the late 1990s when the PNA began to consider holding municipal elections Palestinian refugees decided that those living in camps would not participate in order to avoid the impression that the camps were no different from West Bank and Gaza Strip towns and villages – i.e. that the refugees were settled and no longer required a durable solution. Four rounds of municipal elections were held in 2005 with Hamas making significant gains winning between 26 and 74 per cent of the vote (Pina, 2006).

The main political parties in the West Bank and Gaza Strip include the Palestinian Liberation Movement ([Fatah](#)); the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine ([PFLP](#));

the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP); the Palestinian People's Party (PPP); The Palestinian Democratic Union ([FIDA](#)); the Islamic Resistance Movement ([Hamas](#)); and the Islamic Jihad Movement ([Islamic Jihad](#)). Fatah is the largest political movement and is headed by PLO Chairman and President of the Palestinian National Authority, Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen).

Israel continues to administer the West Bank and Gaza Strip through a military government and exercises effective jurisdiction in 55 per cent of the West Bank. The Civil Administration was dismantled in 1994. A separate administrative system governs the affairs of West Bank Jewish Israeli settlers who elect their local or regional council, participate in Israeli parliamentary (Knesset) elections, pay taxes, national and health insurance, and enjoy all the social rights granted by Israel to its citizens. If suspected of an offense under the law they are arrested by the civilian police and tried in civilian courts in accordance with the law applying in Israel (Lein 2002). Since 1967 Palestinian affairs in East Jerusalem which Israel annexed have been governed by the Israeli Jerusalem municipality although the PLO and PNA have attempted to set up institutions and provide services. Israel closed several major Palestinian institutions in 2001.

Economy

The West Bank and Gaza Strip rank within the group of lower middle-income countries. The trade deficit is 50 percent of GDP and mainly financed by remittances from Palestinians working inside Israel and external assistance. The West Bank and Gaza Strip has no currency of its own. The primary currency for domestic transactions is the New Israeli shekel. Price levels are largely determined by the economic developments and policies in Israel. Private investment in productive capacity is low while public investment is almost entirely financed by external assistance. Since 1993 donor commitments to the PNA total more than US\$ 6 billion of which 68 per cent has been disbursed (Passia, 2005). Due to its degree of dependence on Israel and on foreign assistance the Palestinian economy is highly sensitive to external stimuli (World Bank, 2006b).

Economic relations between the PNA and Israel are governed by the 1994 [Protocol of Economic Relations](#). The agreement gives only limited room to the PNA to design an independent fiscal and trade regime. The PLO/PNA has entered into a preferential access agreement with the European Union, signed a preferential treatment and duty-free access agreement with the US, and is classified by the Arab League within the list of Arab Least Developed Countries, granting it preferential treatment. The PNA does not have access to international financing normally available to members of the Bretton Woods Institutions (IMF and WorldBank) because it is not a sovereign state. Allocations totalling nearly half a billion US dollars, however, have been available through a separate *Trust Fund for Gaza and West Bank* (TFGWB) established in 1993 (World Bank, 2006a)

Israeli-imposed closures of external and internal borders disrupt labor and commodity flows and continue to be the single most negative factor affecting the Palestinian economy. Access and movement restrictions imposed during the second *intifada* resulted in a severe economic recession and rising unemployment and poverty rates across the 1967 OPTs. Real GDP in 2005 was about 31 per cent lower than in 1999

(World Bank, 2006a) In July 2005 unemployment in the 1967 OPTs stood at 33 per cent overall and 43 per cent inside refugee camps (IUED, 2006). Some 44 per cent of Palestinians and up to two-thirds of Gazans are living below the official poverty line of US\$ 2.3 per person per day and an estimated 15 per cent is living in so-called deep poverty meaning that they are unable to afford basic subsistence (World Bank, 2006a).

While economic growth recovered slightly after 2003, income and real GDP per capita remain considerably lower when compared to rates on the eve of the second *intifada*. The economic sanctions imposed against the PNA after the January 2006 Legislative Council elections are leading to further and rapid economic decline. International efforts are currently focused on maintaining existing economic levels rather than economic improvement. It is estimated that real GDP per capita could decline by 27 per cent in 2006 and personal incomes (real GDI per capita) by 30 per cent with unemployment reaching 40 per cent and poverty 67 percent by the end of 2006 (World Bank, 2006b), although an earlier study from July 2005 found the overall poverty rate in the 1967 OPTs already at 68 per cent with 35 per cent of the population living in deep poverty (Bocco, 2006).

The largest number of employed Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are employed in services (34.9 per cent), followed by commerce (19.4 per cent) and agriculture (15.9). Smaller numbers are employed in mining and manufacturing (12.7 per cent), construction (11.7 per cent) and transportation and communication (5.4 per cent). More women are employed in services (50.2 v. 31.5 per cent) and agriculture (33.7 v. 12.0 per cent) than men (PCBS, 2005). Employment structure of Palestinian refugees in the 1967 OPTs is similar to non-refugees although more camp refugees than those living outside camps are employed in services (41 v. 33 per cent). More refugees (23 per cent) than non-refugees are employed in construction (Jacobsen, 2003).

Over half of the West Bank and Gaza Strip population are of working age (15 years and older) but less than half (40.4 per cent) are in the labor force. This reflects in part the low rate of participation of women (13.5 per cent) (PCBS, 2005). Refugee camps in the occupied Gaza Strip have the lowest rate of labor force participation among both men and women. The most common reason for refugee men being outside the labor force is studying or training (50 per cent) while the most important reason for camp women is home making (72 per cent). More men from refugee camps than from outside however report illness or age as a reason for being outside the labor force (Jacobsen, 2003).

The living conditions outside West Bank and Gaza Strip refugee camps deteriorated sharply in 2005 with the overall level of poverty higher outside camps. In the West Bank the poverty rate outside camps hits 72 per cent with the rate inside camps at 66 per cent. Extreme poverty was more prevalent inside West Bank camps, however, with roughly 36 per cent of Palestinian refugees living in extreme poverty compared to 31 per cent outside camps. Fewer and fewer Palestinians are able to rely on savings, fewer are able to pay bills and more are buying on credit. (Bocco, 2006). More and more refugees are also relying on international assistance, primarily from the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) as a result of the economic deterioration since 2000 and the economic sanctions

against the PNA.

Legal Status

The West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip are considered occupied territories under international humanitarian law. International law consensus affirms the *de jure* applicability of the [Fourth Geneva Convention](#) to these areas (ICJ, 2004). Israel does not accept the *de jure* application of international humanitarian law to the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip and argues that it is not responsible for implementation of international human rights law in the 1967 OPTs. UN human rights treaty bodies that review implementation of these conventions and the International Court of Justice disagree. International consensus considers the Gaza Strip to be occupied territory even after the dismantlement of Israeli Jewish settlements and redeployment of Israeli military forces as Israel continues to exercise effective control of the land borders, sea and airspace. The High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention have met but have not taken robust measures to ensure implementation of the Convention in the 1967 OPTs.

The West Bank and Gaza Strip do not meet the formal requirements of a state (Takkenberg, 1998) nor do the Oslo agreements acknowledge Palestinian sovereignty over the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip (Falk, 1994-95). The PNA is therefore not a signatory to international humanitarian and human rights instruments, although the PLO has agreed to become a contracting party to the Fourth Geneva Convention. Elements of Ottoman, British, Jordanian (in the West Bank) and Egyptian (Gaza Strip) law and over 2,000 Israeli military orders are still active in the 1967 OPTs. The Palestinian Legislative Council also promulgated an additional 30 new laws between 1994 and 2006. The Legislative Council does not have the power to legislate matters affecting Israeli Jewish settlers. Israeli citizens and all Jewish non-citizens in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are subject to Israeli civilian law rather than military law applying to these territories (Lein, 2002).

Palestinian refugees displaced in 1948 and in 1967 are considered refugees as a group according to Article 1D of the 1951 [Convention relating to the Status of Refugees](#) providing that the cessation clauses (1C, 1E, and 1F) do not apply. The first paragraph of Article 1D suspends application of the Convention to those refugees already receiving protection and assistance from the United Nations (Akram & Goodwin-Gill; UNHCR, 2002; Sondergaard, 2005). The Office of the [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees](#) (UNHCR) therefore does not consider West Bank and Gaza Strip refugees as convention refugees because they receive assistance from the UN [Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees](#) (UNRWA) even though there is no UN agency with an explicit mandate to protect refugees in the 1967 OPTs. Refugees who are outside UNRWA's areas of operation may be considered convention refugees under the second paragraph of Article 1D. Palestinians displaced from the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1967 may be considered convention refugees under Article 1A(2) (UNHCR, 2002). Refugees living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are also protected persons under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Refugees and IDPs have the same residency status as non-refugee Palestinians: they are considered resident aliens or foreigners under Israeli civil and military law. Residency status in the 1967 OPTs (excluding Jerusalem) is administered by the PNA

(Jamal & Darwish, 1997). Israel ceded the authority to revoke residency rights of Palestinians from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip excluding East Jerusalem but a joint Israeli-Palestinian committee to find solutions for those Palestinians whose residency rights Israel previously revoked was never established and the issue remains unresolved. Israel retained the authority to make the final determination on requests for permanent residency and family reunification rendering the authority transferred to the PNA 'largely meaningless' (Kadman, 1999).

The PNA is authorized to issue 'Palestinian Passports' that function as travel documents to those Palestinians residing in the 1967 OPTs (excluding East Jerusalem) holding both Israeli-issued ID cards and Palestinian serial numbers. Refugees and IDPs who held Jordanian passports before July 1988 are also eligible for a five-year renewable Jordanian passport that functions as a travel document. Holders of a Palestinian passport and a passport from a second state must enter and exit the West Bank and Gaza Strip on their 'Palestinian Passport'. Palestinian residents of Jerusalem who hold Jordanian passports and wish to travel via land to Jordan must obtain a permit from the Israeli Ministry of Interior; a *laissez passer* is required for travel via Israel's international airport. Since January 2002 holders of Palestinian passports from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including Palestinians with dual citizenship, are not permitted to exit or enter Israel through Ben Gurion International Airport in Tel Aviv (Boqai & Rempel, 2005; Sondergaard, 2005).

Refugee and non-refugee Palestinians have access to the same basic civil and political and social, economic and cultural rights in the 1967 OPTs. They also experience similar obstacles to the full realization of these rights, primarily as a result of Israel's protracted military occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. One of the most pressing human rights problems is denial of the right to life. In 2005 some 190 Palestinians, including 5 children, were killed by Israeli military forces. Many were killed unlawfully, in deliberate and reckless shootings, shelling and air strikes in densely populated residential areas, or as a result of excessive use of force. Some were extrajudicially executed and others died in armed clashes. Hundreds were injured. Palestinian armed groups killed 41 Israeli civilians, including 6 children, in suicide bombings and mortar attacks in Israel and the OPTs (Amnesty, 2006).

UN human rights treaty bodies that monitor implementation of international human rights law have listed numerous human rights problems in the 1967 OPTs. In 2005 the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women raised concerns about the treatment of Palestinian women at checkpoints, including access to healthcare for pregnant women (CEDAW, 2005). In 2003 the UN Human Rights Committee raised concerns administrative detention entailing restrictions on access to counsel and to the disclosure of full reasons of the detention, targeted killings or assassinations, the partly punitive nature of property and house demolition, the use of Palestinian civilians as human shields, illegal interrogation techniques, and restrictions on freedom of movement, especially in the area of the West Bank between the Wall and the Green Line referred to as the 'Seam Zone' (CCPR, 2003).

In the same year the UN Committee on Economic and Social Rights expressed concern about closures, extended curfews, roadblocks and security checkpoints, the construction of the Wall, access to water, home demolitions, land confiscation and restrictions on residency rights. It also noted that Israel had yet to address a number of

concerns raised in previous reports, including the control of most of the land in Israel by institutions chartered to benefit Jews exclusively and the fact that Palestinian refugees were denied the right to return to their homes and properties (CESCR, 1998). In 2002 the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern about discrimination against Palestinian children (defined as persons under age 16) compared to Israeli children (persons under 18), inhumane or degrading practices and of torture and ill-treatment of Palestinian children during arrest, interrogation and detention, closures, curfews and mobility restrictions, the destruction of health infrastructure, large-scale demolition of houses and infrastructure, demolition of civilian infrastructure, and deteriorating access to education (CRC, 2002).

The UN Committee on Torture expressed concern in 2002 that the international definition of torture had yet to be incorporated into Israeli domestic law, illegal methods of interrogation, torture and ill-treatment of Palestinian minors, administrative and incommunicado detention, impunity of persons allegedly responsible for torture and ill-treatment, extra-judicial killings, and that certain instances of closure and house demolitions may amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (CAT, 2002). In 1998 the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination expressed concern about Israeli settlements, property destruction, and the denial of the right of many Palestinians to return and possess their homes in Israel (CERD, 1998).

In the areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip under PNA jurisdiction security and judicial institutions remain dysfunctional, beset by factional fighting and power struggles, and unable or unwilling to restore law and order leaving many people to seek the protection or mediation of armed groups to resolve their problems. Specific concerns raised by international human rights organizations include the use of children to carry out attacks and transport explosives or weapons (although the main armed groups reportedly disavowed the use of children and some blamed such abuses on local cells acting on their own initiative), abductions of Palestinians and foreign nationals, and the death of Palestinians in political inter-factional fighting, family feuds and score-settling, and those accused of ‘collaborating’ with Israeli security services. Other concerns include the use of the death penalty, detention without trial, and ‘honour’ killings (Amnesty, 2006).

Causes and Consequences

Armed conflict and military occupation are the primary causes of Palestinian displacement from and within the West Bank and Gaza Strip. An estimated 100-150,000 Palestinians were displaced during British rule in Palestine due to eviction of tenant farmers from land sold to Zionist colonization associations, punitive house demolitions by British mandate authorities, expulsion of Palestinians opposed to British rule and denationalization under the 1925 Palestine Citizenship Order (Rempel, 2003).

The largest displacement occurred during the civil conflict that erupted in Palestine in late 1947 after the UN recommended that the country be divided into two states, and during the first Israeli-Arab war in 1948-49. It is estimated that a quarter of the refugees were expelled by Israeli forces; more than half fled under military assault.

Approximately one-fifth fled out of fear and psychological warfare and one per cent as a result of orders from Arab leaders (Abu Sitta, 2000). Upwards of three-quarters of a million persons were displaced during this period (UNCCP, 1949).

The refugees originated from more than 500 cities, towns and villages located in those areas of Mandate Palestine that became the state of Israel in 1948 (Abu Sitta, 2000). Only 15 per cent of the Palestinian Arab population remained in this area after the cessation of hostilities (Rempel, 2003). Most of the refugees found shelter in the West Bank and Gaza Strip while others found refuge in frontline Arab states including Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Egypt. The small Jewish population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip sought shelter in those areas of Mandate Palestine that became the state of Israel.

The state of Israel decided that displaced Palestinians would not be permitted to return except the few who qualified for family reunification. Israel argued that the fate of the refugees could not be considered separate from a comprehensive solution to the conflict and that security considerations militated against the return of the refugees in the absence of peace between Israel and neighboring Arab states (Morris, 1987). Refugee homes and properties were used to house new Jewish immigrants and build up the economy of the new state (Peretz, 1959; Fischbach, 2003). Displaced Jews, except for small numbers who had been living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, which were occupied by Arab forces, were able to return.

New legislation (1952 Citizenship Law) effectively denationalized the Palestinian Arab refugees. Due to the fact that they were displaced outside the borders of the state of Israel on or after 14 July 1952 they are legally prevented from resuming domicile in their homes of origin. The same law enables all persons defined as Jews to acquire citizenship under the 1950 Law of Return which only applies to Jews. New land laws enabled the transfer of refugee property to the state and to the Jewish National Fund (JNF). One of the early heads of the JNF estimated this to be more than 85 per cent of the total area of Israel (Fischbach, 2003). Under the 1950 Absentees' Property Law, for example, any person who on the date of partition was a citizen or resident of the Arab states or who was a Palestinian citizen who had left his/her place of residence even if to take refuge within Palestine, is classified as an 'absentee'. Absentee property is vested in the Israeli Custodian of Absentee Property who is authorized the 'sell' the property to the Israeli Development Authority. Refugee property held by the state and the JNF may not be transferred by sale or in any other manner (Boling, 2000-2001; Dajani, 2005; Halabi, 2003; Kedar, 2002).

Between 1948 and 1967, Palestinians who remained within the borders of the state of Israel continued to be displaced. It is estimated that by the mid-1950s the number of Palestinians displaced by Israeli authorities comprised some 15 percent of the total Palestinian population inside Israel. At least 30,000 Palestinians were expelled from Israel between 1949 and 1956 (Rempel, 2003). This included large numbers of Bedouin and internally displaced Palestinians who were forced across the *de facto* borders of the state of Israel into the West Bank, Gaza Strip and into Syria (Segev, 1986; Masalha, 1997). Israel expropriated over half of the land owned by Palestinian citizens. A 1988 study discovered that 58 per cent of all Palestinians in Israel and 75 per cent of land-owning Palestinians in Israel had land expropriated (Smootha, 1992). Several IDP villages were also destroyed.

The second largest group of refugees were displaced during the 1967 Israeli-Arab war. Approximately 60 per cent of refugees who sought refuge in Jordan fled as a result of military assault by Israeli forces (Dodd & Barakat, 1969). As many as 400,000 Palestinians were displaced/expelled from the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip during the 1967 Israeli-Arab war. Half of the displaced population were refugees displaced for the first time in 1948 (Takkenberg, 1998).

Few Palestinian villages were depopulated during the 1967 war. Depopulated Palestinian villages include Imwas, Yalu and Beit Nuba in the Latrun salient northwest of Jerusalem, the entire Moroccan quarter inside the Old City of Jerusalem, adjacent to the Western Wall, and the villages of Beit Marsam, Beit Awa, Jiftlik, and al-Burj as well as half the city of Qalqilya. Most of the refugees found shelter in Jordan, with smaller numbers seeking refuge in Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. Displacement affected approximately 35-40 per cent of the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Rempel, 2003).

Only those Palestinians (and their offspring) registered in Israel's September 1967 census of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip were considered legal residents of the 1967 OPTs. The administrative measure effectively prevented most Palestinian refugees displaced in 1967 from voluntarily returning to their homes. The International Committee of the Red Cross did facilitate an agreement, however, between Jordan and Israel in August 1967 that established a process for the orderly return of the refugees. Out of more than 35,000 repatriation applications for some 140,000 persons, Israel only approved slightly more than 4,500 allowing less than 20,000 refugees to return to their homes. Israel rejected appeals by the ICRC to extend the time limit to enable the return of all those refugees wishing to do so (ICRC, 1970).

Military orders promulgated in the 1967 OPTs effectively applied many of the same property laws employed inside Israel. Palestinian land was expropriated under military orders dealing with 'abandoned' land, 'state' property, military use, and public purpose, among others (Benvenisti, 1984; Dajani, 2005; Lein, 2002). In the aftermath of the 1967 war Israel acquired immediate control of more than 400 sq. km of land owned by displaced – i.e. absentee – Palestinians. While expropriated Palestinian property held by the state is not considered inalienable, the use of land acquired under these military orders (i.e., construction of Jewish colonies, including related infrastructure such as 'bypass roads'), suggests *de facto* permanent acquisition (Bisharat, 1992). JNF acquisitions are considered as the inalienable property of the Jewish people.

Israel's military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip has led to further displacement primarily as a result of policies that aim or result in the alteration of the demographic composition of the 1967 OPTs. Sources of displacement include revocation of residency, denial of family reunification, deportation, land confiscation, and house demolition (Akram & Rempel, 2004). It is estimated that 20,000 Palestinians were displaced annually from the West Bank and Gaza Strip between 1967 and 1986 (Kossaifi, 1996). Expulsion of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip came to a halt with the beginning of the Oslo process, however, an amendment to the 1952 Entry into Israel Law authorized the expulsion of those

Palestinians who entered the 1967 OPTs ‘illegally’ or without a permit. Israel began to expel Palestinians again in the context of the second *intifada*. Demolition of Palestinian homes largely continued during after the signing of the Oslo agreements with the exception of homes in areas which came under PNA jurisdiction. The rate of house demolition increased dramatically in the context of the second *intifada* with particularly heavy impact on refugee camps (Amnesty, 2004).

Needs and Responses

Palestinian refugees and IDPs lack voluntary durable solutions. Most refugees originate from areas inside the state of Israel which opposes their return. Historically, only a small number of Jewish groups and individuals have supported the return of Palestinian refugees to their homes of origin inside Israel. More recently, however, a number of groups like [Zochrot](#) and [Bat Shalom](#) have begun education programs about Palestinian refugees and their rights. These include visits to the sites of destroyed refugee villages hosted by a refugee or IDP from the village and sign-posting at the village site.

The framework for durable solutions for Palestinian refugees displaced in 1948, including internally displaced persons inside Israel, is set forth in paragraph 11 of UN General Assembly [Resolution 194\(III\)](#), 11 December 1948. The resolution affirms three separate rights – i.e., right of return, right to housing and property restitution, and the right to compensation – and two distinct solutions (i.e. return, restitution and compensation *or* resettlement, restitution and compensation) governed by the principle of individual refugee choice. The framework for refugees displaced for the first time from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967 is set forth in UN Security Council [Resolution 237](#), 14 June 1967.

The first round of political negotiations to craft a solution to the conflict including durable solutions for all persons displaced in 1948 lasted from 1949 to 1952. These UN-facilitated talks ended without agreement (Caplan, 1997). The UN established a special agency to seek durable solutions and protect this refugee group, the UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) – composed of representatives of the United States, France and Turkey. The UNCCP, which was established in 1948 under Resolution 194, also had a mandate to facilitate a resolution of all aspects of the conflict. The UNCCP attempted to facilitate solutions for refugees primarily through intervention with Israel and Arab host states, preliminary technical work such as the creation of a profile of the refugee population, investigating methods for determination of refugee choices and examination of modalities for compensation, a series of framework proposals, mixed working groups and several conferences. The UNCCP did manage to obtain the release of refugee assets held in banks inside Israel and it completed a global and individual identification of Palestinian properties (Boqai & Rempel, 2005).

When the UN set up the UNCCP it was assumed that the refugees would return to their places of origin within a short period of time. The Commission was not provided with the machinery or with the resources to facilitate a solution in the context of a protracted conflict. Since 1952 the Commission has taken the view that the governments concerned have the primary responsibility for the settlement of their

outstanding differences, including the plight of the refugees (Forsythe, 1972). A final effort to facilitate durable solutions for the refugees in 1961 led by Joseph E. Johnson, then head of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, ended without agreement. The UNCCP still exists, but has no budget and no staff. The UN Department of Political Affairs assigns an individual responsible as UNCCP secretary. The Commission continues to file an annual report of roughly one paragraph in length stating that it has nothing new to report.

The international community was still searching for durable solutions for 1948 Palestinian refugees when they were faced with a new caseload of refugees from the 1967 Israeli-Arab war. The United Nations did not establish a separate agency to facilitate durable solutions for Palestinian refugees displaced for the first time in 1967. A small number of refugees were able to return under a Jordanian-Israeli agreement brokered by the ICRC in August 1967 (ICRC, 1970). In 1969 the United Nations recognized ([GA Res. 2523B](#)) the inalienable rights of the people of Palestine under the UN Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights which included the right to self-determination and the right of refugees to return to their homes. These rights were subsequently reaffirmed by the UN in a resolution ([GA Res. 3237](#)) also recognizing the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. In 1976 the UN prepared a comprehensive two-stage [peace plan](#) for a two-state solution and a two-stage solution for Palestinian refugees.

The Palestinian refugee issue was raised during peace negotiations between Egypt and Israel in the late 1970s. The 1978 [Camp David accords](#) between Egypt and Israel included a three-stage autonomy plan for the West Bank and Gaza Strip with the final status of these areas to be decided after a five year interim period and called for the establishment of a special committee to find solutions for refugees displaced from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967 and for a prompt, just and permanent implementation of the resolution of the 1948 refugee problem. This would become the basic framework set out in agreements signed by Israel and the PLO over a decade later. A 1983 UN-sponsored [International Conference](#) on the Question of Palestine failed to advance a solution to the conflict and for refugees.

The 1993 [Declaration of Principles](#) established a two-stage process with three tracks for addressing the question of Palestinian refugees. The interim period of the peace process aimed to resolve the status of 1967 refugees. The parties did not agree as to whether refugees displaced after 1967 from the OPTs were included. The final status period was to begin no later than three years from signing of the 1993 Declaration and aimed to resolve the status of 1948 refugees. The process did not address the status of IDPs. The three tracks comprised multi-lateral and bilateral talks on the current and future status, respectively, of Palestinian refugees displaced in 1948, and a third quadripartite process (including the Palestinians, Israel, Jordan and Egypt) on the future status of Palestinians displaced for the first time in 1967.

The multi-lateral talks addressed issues of regional character and, therefore, involving, at least in part, regional solutions. A [Refugee Working Group](#) (RWG), headed by Canada ('Gavel holder') was established during the first round of the multilateral negotiations in 1992 and had a primarily humanitarian mandate to: (1) improve the living conditions of Palestinian refugees without prejudicing the final status deliberations on the refugee issue; (2) to ease and extend access to family

reunification; and, (3) to support the process of achieving a viable and comprehensive solution of the refugee issue. Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinians and Syria are all members of the RWG, although Syria and Lebanon have boycotted the RWG.

The RWG identified seven main themes and assigned a lead country (shepherd) to follow-up each theme: Databases (Norway); Family Reunification (France); Human Resources Development (US); Job Creation (US); Public Health (Italy); Child Welfare (Sweden); Economic and Social Infrastructure (EU); and the Human Dimension (Switzerland). Plenary sessions review ongoing work and set priorities for the future and 'intersessional' meetings bring together Arab and Israeli representatives, their extra-regional counterparts and international experts for more detailed consideration of specific issues. No plenary sessions of the RWG have been held since the Arab League called for a boycott of the multilaterals in 1997 in protest of the policies of the Israeli government in the 1967 OPTs (Tamari, 1999).

The Quadripartite Committee was unable to find solutions for refugees displaced for the first time in 1967. The parties were unable to find a solution to the first major challenge, that of defining who was a 1967 Palestinian refugee. The 1994 Jordan-Israel peace agreement included provisions concerning Palestinians refugees according to which the parties would solve the refugee issue in accordance with international law and 'in negotiations, in a framework to be agreed bilaterally or otherwise.' Following the passage of the agreement Israel amended its 1950 Absentees' Property Law declaring that property of Jordanian residents or citizens would not longer be defined as absentee property. The amendment, however, does not apply retroactive to the agreement and thus prevents Palestinian refugees in Jordan from filing claims for housing and property restitution (Fischbach, 2003).

The first round of final status negotiations took place in the United States at Camp David in July 2000. There were no substantive negotiations on durable solutions for Palestinian refugees. Neither Israel nor the United States, which hosted and facilitated the talks, was willing to contemplate durable solutions that included the voluntary return of refugees to homes of origin in Israel. The last round of final status negotiations were held at Taba, Egypt in January 2001. In early 2002 the EU Special Representative to the Middle East Peace Process released a paper summarizing the general content of the Taba negotiations and positions of both parties on the Palestinian refugee issue (EU, 2002). According to the paper Israeli officials suggested a 15-year absorption program to facilitate limited return (25-40,000 persons) of Palestinian refugees to Israel over three to five years. These numbers represent less than one percent of the total Palestinian refugee population. Israeli officials rejected the right of Palestinian refugees to be restituted of their properties. There have been no official talks on the refugee question since this period.

Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are also in need international protection, both as refugees and as protected persons under international humanitarian law living in a situation of protracted military occupation. The protection crisis spans the panoply of basic rights afforded to refugees under international and regional instruments (see above). In the context of the second *intifada*, basic physical security has become so urgent that it has subsumed concern about protection of all other rights (Akram & Rempel, 2004). Thousands of refugees, including women, children, and the

elderly, have been injured, killed, arrested, and separated from families since Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967. Israeli military forces have also destroyed thousands of refugee shelters and commandeered UN installations in refugee camps, in violation of UN privileges and immunities.

There is no active international body with an explicit mandate to protect Palestinian refugees including those resident in the 1967 OPTs. The UNCCP, the body mandated to provide protection for Palestinian refugees has not provided effective protection since the early 1950s. The UNHCR does not provide protection to Palestinian refugees in the [UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees](#) (UNRWA) areas of operation although it has recognized the existence of a protection gap for Palestinian refugees. During the late 1980s and the early 1990s UNHCR executive committee conclusions expressed concern about the protection gap and called for action within the UN system to address their protection needs. These conclusions ceased following the commencement of the Oslo process in 1993, despite the continued protection gap (Akram & Rempel, 2004). In 2002, UNHCR issued a revised interpretation of the status of Palestinian refugees under international refugee law which should lead to improved protection at least for those refugees outside UNRWA areas of operation (UNHCR, 2002).

The UNRWA does not have an explicit mandate to provide protection, but its mandate does not specifically exclude protection. Agency officials have made repeated interventions to the United Nations and relevant officials concerning the protection of Palestinian refugees in the 1967 OPTs. During the first Palestinian *intifada* UNRWA recruited additional international staff to provide protection through monitoring, reporting and a limited degree of intervention. The Refugee Affairs Officer Program (RAO) was eventually phased out following the redeployment of the Israeli military and establishment of the PNA in the mid-1990s (Takkenberg, 1998). The provision of services that guarantee basic economic, social, and cultural rights, particularly in emergency humanitarian crises, may also be considered as a type of protection. More recently the Agency has hired a Senior Protection Policy Adviser to examine ways in which the Agency could take on a wider protection role in its five areas of operation. A jointly-authored brochure to be released by UNRWA and UNHCR will provide further clarification about the mandates of each agency and their operational activities with respect to Palestinian refugees.

The [International Committee of the Red Cross](#) (ICRC), the main body responsible for the implementation of international humanitarian law, has worked in the 1967 OPTs since the 1948 war. ICRC protection, however, is limited to the extent that Israel is willing to cooperate. No protecting power has been appointed for the 1967 OPTs and Israel rejected an ICRC offer to act as a substitute protecting power (Takkenberg, 1998). ICRC civilian program have focused on physical protection, prevention of forced expulsion, tracing of missing persons, family reunification and facilitation of the return of refugees to their places of origin. The ICRC provided similar types of protection during the 1948 and 1967 Israeli-Arab wars. Since 1967, the ICRC has continued to provide protection to Palestinian civilians, including refugees. Protection activities have included intervention concerning special cases seeking family reunification and intervention with the Israeli authorities in response to violations of humanitarian law, such as expropriation of land, deportation and house demolition.

Many refugees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip continue to be in need of basic international assistance, especially as a result of deteriorating socio-economic conditions during the second *intifada* and the international sanctions imposed on the PNA. Dispossession, lack of access to land-based forms of subsistence, relative lack of accumulated savings, confinement to the fixed locality of the camp, and large family size increase the impact of economic downturns on refugee households. Palestinian refugees and IDPs frequently experience higher rates of unemployment, lower incomes, and higher rates of poverty. Housing conditions in many areas do not meet international housing standards. While literacy rates and educational attainment are generally high, there is a weak correlation between higher education and economic advancement. Refugees also appear to experience higher rates of chronic and mental illness (Boqai & Rempel, 2005).

The United Nations established a special agency to provide international assistance to Palestinian refugees – the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Established under UN General Assembly [Resolution 302\(V\)](#), 8 December 1949, the General Assembly accorded UNRWA a short-term mandate, based on the expectation that the plight of the refugees would soon be resolved in accordance with the framework set forth in General Assembly Resolution 194(III). UNRWA's early programs also focused on emergency relief, employment programs and regional economic development (Schiff, 1995). By the end of the 1950s the UN concluded that the economic development programs had failed to provide a solution to the refugee problem (UNSG, 1959). UNRWA refocused its humanitarian operations on the delivery of basic education, health and social assistance services.

UNRWA's education program is the largest of the Agency's programs. Refugee children registered with UNRWA have access to free elementary and preparatory education. The Agency also offers special education for children with learning difficulties and operates four vocational and technical training centers in the 1967 OPTs. Health services include: primary health care, nutrition and supplementary feeding, assistance with secondary health care, and environmental health in refugee camps. The relief program provides food support for special hardship case families, shelter rehabilitation, and selective cash assistance. Eligibility and registration for UNRWA services also falls under the relief program. The social services program consists of five main sub-programs: organizational development of community-based organizations, women in development, a disability program, youth activities, and the poverty alleviation program. Since 1991 UNRWA has also operated a successful microfinance and microenterprise program in the 1967 OPTs.

UNRWA's five-year Medium Term Plan (2005-2009), developed in consultation with donor states and other international agencies aims to 'restore the living conditions of Palestine refugees to acceptable international standards and set them on the road to self reliance and sustainable human development' (UNRWA, 2005a). UNRWA has contracted external specialists to help move from a *status-based* to a *needs-based* approach to poverty alleviation and to develop and implement a comprehensive action plan for gender mainstreaming. A recently-established Camp Development Unit (CDU) will focus on improving the living conditions in refugee camps based on the principle of community participation and increased attention to the physical, social and economic facets of refugee lives. UNRWA is also partnering with the School of Social Work at the Southern Illinois University to refine Agency social services

practice and has developed a digital social services map to help identify non-UNRWA resources and services to complement and strengthen those provided by UNRWA.

Monitoring is being improved through the development of policy guidelines and data collection systems. The Graduate Institute of Development Studies (IUED) at the University of Geneva and the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium have been tasked with carrying out comprehensive surveys of the refugee population to assist in the planning of services and the development of knowledge-management systems. An Intranet registration system, currently under construction, will allow UNRWA to update (and improve accuracy) of refugee information from all fields in a central database. A new health management information system will improve the surveillance, monitoring and evaluation of maternal health and non-communicable disease services, as well as action-oriented interventions and response at the service delivery level. The development of a community-based organization database system will improve planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation capabilities of UNRWA community centers.

During 2004-2005 an external donor review of the Agency's management structure and processes was initiated. The Overseas Development Institute's Humanitarian Policy Group is also undertaking a substantive independent evaluation of UNRWA's emergency programs in the 1967 OPTs. UNRWA has also invested efforts to improve relations with Agency stakeholders. In September 2004 the Agency set up a working group on stakeholder relations to discuss UNRWA's program cycle, policy, constituencies not currently represented in Agency meetings, and structural arrangements for the improvement of stakeholder relations. The group concluded that UNRWA's biannual donor meetings should be more substantive and endorsed wider participation of UN and international agencies and NGOs. This includes the reinvigoration and expansion of UNRWA's Advisory Commission. Improvement of stakeholder relations also includes initiatives towards greater refugee participation in the development, monitoring and evaluation of UNRWA programs.

Finally, refugees have sought increase opportunities for participation in the search for durable solutions. The peace process that began in the 1990s provided few opportunities for public participation. Refugees were talked about, argued over and decided for but rarely included (Nabulsi, 2003). This peacemaking process also shifted from an agenda articulated by Palestinian civil society to one that was subject to regional and international political pressures. This is particularly evident in relation to the question of Palestinian refugees. Agreements established different elite negotiating fora but did not address the issue substantively (Bell, 2000). Refugees have more often than not been considered as objects of humanitarian assistance rather than individuals with rights and as legitimate actors in the peacemaking process. They have been assessed, surveyed, quantified, classified, but few policymakers, diplomats and commentators have bothered to ask and listen to the refugees themselves about how they envision a solution to their plight.

Exclusion of Palestinian refugees and IDPs from the peacemaking process combined with demands for better representation from their own leadership, gave rise to initiatives of political self-organization among refugee community in 1967 OPTs. Popular refugee conferences set out the basic principles, structures and mechanisms of a popular campaign for refugee rights. Refugees emphasized that the campaign should

be a broad-based, non-sectarian, independent movement comprised of Palestinian popular organizations and initiatives (refugee and non-refugee) pressure and lobby for the protection and durable solutions based on international law (Popular Refugee Conference, 1996). Strategy debates, lobbying and protest activities encouraged not only additional grassroots organizations, but also the PLO operated Popular Service Committees, elected members of the Palestinian Legislative Council and activists in Palestinian unions, political parties and national institutions (Palestinian National Council, and others) to join the campaign (Jaradat-Gassner, 2000).

Other Resources

Newspapers and Media Services

Palestinian:

- [Palestine News Agency \(WAFA\)](#)
- [Palestine Media Center \(PMC\)](#)
- [International Press center \(IPC\)](#)
- [al-Masdar](#)
- [al-Quds](#)
- [al-Hayat al-Jadedah](#)
- [Jerusalem Media & Communication Center \(JMCC\)](#)
- [al-Ayyam](#)
- [Ma'an News Agency](#)

Israeli:

- [Ha'aretz](#)
- [Yediot Aharonot](#)
- [Jerusalem Post](#)

Websites

Palestinian:

- [AcrossBorders](#)
- [BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights](#)
- [PCBS - Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics](#)
- [PLO Negotiations Affairs Department](#)
- [PNGO – Palestinian NGO Network](#)
- [PNA – Palestinian National Authority](#)
- [Union of Youth Activities Centres](#)

Israeli:

- [Batshalom](#)
- [Btselem – Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories](#)
- [Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)
- [Zochrot Association](#)

International:

- [UNISPAL – UN Information System on the Question of Palestine](#)
- [UNRWA - UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees](#)
- [UN Office of the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs – OPTs](#)
- [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre – Palestinian Territories](#)
- [World Bank – West Bank and Gaza](#)
- [Palestinian Refugee ResearchNet](#)
- [University of Geneva – Graduate Institute of Development Studies – Palestine Research Unit](#)
- [FAFO – Institute for Applied Social Science](#)

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