

PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS
FACTS, FIGURES AND TRENDS
2008

PUBLISHED BY:

DIYAR

EDITED BY:

RANIA AL QASS COLLINGS

RIFAT ODEH KASSIS

MITRI RAHEB

PREFACE

Tens - or probably hundreds - of resources could be found on Palestinian Christians, whether in a soft form - on the internet - or in publications. However, a few of them could be considered comprehensive and up-to-date with the status of Palestinian Christians today. This has been confirmed by a recent mapping carried out by Diyar Consortium, in partnership with the Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre and the National Coalition for Christian Organisations.

Diyar realised the immediate need for such a resource, and began systematic work towards building a cohesive database on Christians in Palestine. Creating such database, always updated, is an essential cornerstone in developing a shared, comprehensive and ecumenical strategic vision for Christian support in Palestine, so that Christianity will survive and thrive. This booklet is the result of this work.

Although, the booklet marks the ending result of the process, it does not, however, mark the end of the process itself. Information has to be constantly updated, as the Palestinian Christians' lives are not static as much as the political and social environment of Palestine is in constant transformation. More Palestinian Christians find themselves towed into the trend of emigration, while some come back from the Diaspora. Some find themselves leaving their rural communities to join their brothers and sisters in cities for search of an alternative. Not to mention, the natural growth of the Christian population in Palestine adds to the demographic characteristics in reference to the natural growth of the Palestinian population as a whole unit. Though, in this case, the growth indicators are noticeably small, but are constant enough to draw up a counterbalance with the rather high emigration levels.

The booklet includes different forms of information; statistics, charts and tables, as well as a directory. The simple, yet colourful, lay-out of the booklet is meant to make access to information more comprehensive.

The information compiled in this booklet is based on desk reviews of existing literature, case-studies, researches, and field surveys – namely "Diyar Report: Christian Clubs" and "Diyar's Study on the Presence of Christians in the West Bank and Their Attitudes Towards Church-Related Organizations". However, the booklet does not claim to be faultless and complete. There is nothing more difficult than getting exact and current figures in the Middle East. As such, Diyar invites the readers to share their comments and insight in an attempt to produce more comprehensive and fulfilling information on the status of the Palestinian Christians.

Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb

DIYAR CONSORTIUM

Diyar is a consortium of Lutheran-based, ecumenically-oriented institutions serving the whole Palestinian community, with emphasis on children, youth, women and the elderly through unique programs that are contextual and holistic in nature. The overall mission of Diyar is to help build Palestine, stone by stone; to empower a community, person by person, to assume a proactive role in shaping its future; and to establish viable institutions that are here to last. This mission is to meet the vision that Diyar has for the Palestinian community, which is to have a life and have it abundantly.

Diyar is the plural of Dar, which means 'home' in Arabic, and as a consortium, it consists of 4 organizations that work for the vision stated above, yet each has its own mission and focus. These organizations are: Dar Annadwa (The International Center of Bethlehem), Dar al-Kalima Health and Wellness Center, Dar al-Kalima College and Dar al-Balad.

PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS: STRENGTHENING IDENTITY, ACTIVATING POTENTIAL (PC: SIAP)

The booklet is part of a bigger initiative of Diyar Consortium, that of the “Palestinian Christians: Strengthening Identity, Activating Potential” Programme. The aim of the programme is to encourage and enable Palestinian Christians to engage more fully in Palestinian society at large, thereby strengthening the social fabric of Palestinian society as a whole, actively maintaining the Christian witness in Palestine, and stemming the outward flow of Palestinians from their ancestral lands.

The initiative consists of four parts. They are: 1) a mapping exercise designed to identify and study Palestinian Christian churches, church-related organisations (CROs), and Christian communities and individuals, as well as their needs and resources; 2) the development, through consultation with church, CRO and community leaders, as well as the community at large (especially those not currently involved in church/CRO activity), of a shared, comprehensive, ecumenical strategic vision for Christian engagement in Palestine; 3) implementing, individually and in cooperation with others, this strategy through a variety of activities that would prepare and cultivate young leaders within the Christian community, and 4) the documentation of the activities of the initiative, in writing and in audio-visual productions, as well as background information on the history of Palestinian Christians. It is our hope that, through this programme, the networking capacity of the Palestinian Christian community might expand to include for the first time, according to our knowledge, rural areas as well as urban ones, that churches and CROs might be more aware of and responsive to the specific and unique needs of the Christians in Palestine, that community awareness of the contributions to society that Palestinian Christians have made will increase, and that increased feelings of self-efficacy will motivate more Palestinian Christians to engage in Palestinian society along with their Muslim sisters and brothers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Our gratitude goes to all those who made this publication possible.

We would specifically like to thank Mr Yusef Daher, Ms May Nasrawi, Mr Charlie Haddad, Mr George Awad, Mr Hanna Zu'mot, Ms Haneen Aweis, Ms Mariana Khader, Mr Fayege Ibrahim Khoury, Mr Fadi Khoury, Mr Anton and Ms Lina Youakeem, Mr Wael Sulieman, Mr Jabra Zarafeeli, Mr Tony Morqus, Mr Mousa Rabadi, Ms Georgette Hazboun, Ms Rana Khoury, Ms Kate Hagan, and Mr Nidal Abu Zuluf for providing data for this booklet.

DISCLAIMER

The editors do not claim that the booklet is faultless or complete. If on the chance that any piece of information is missing or misplaced, we bid you our sincerest apologies. We welcome any comments and feedback, as we feel compelled, out of a sense of duty and urgency, to deliver more comprehensive and fulfilling information on the status of the Palestinian Christians today.

Section A

Mapping the Palestinian Christians

This section includes information on the Christian population and the church-related organisations in Palestine.

PALESTINIAN CHRISTIAN POPULATION

The estimated number of Palestinian Christians in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem, which Diyar researchers found, is 51,710, making the percentage of the Palestinian Christians 1.37 percent of the Palestinian population. The total number of the Palestinian population used in this document (3,767,126) is calculated by adding the population of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip (1,416,543) to the population of the Palestinians in the West Bank excluding Jerusalem (1,986,934), and then to the estimated Palestinian population in Jerusalem (363,649), which includes both territories administered by the Palestinian Authority and those administered by Israeli authorities ¹. These figures – Palestinian population in the Palestinian Territories and Israeli-administered Jerusalem – were published by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics following the 2007 population census.

In contrast, there is a higher percentage of Christians in Israel. The percentage of the Arab Christians in Israel – including Israeli-administered parts of Jerusalem – is 1.66, according to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics.

Regarding Christian localities, in terms of concentration, Bethlehem Governorate is the home to the highest percentage of Christians in Palestine (43.4%), followed by Ramallah Governorate (24.7%), then Jerusalem (17.9%). The rest of the Christian population is distributed across the rest of Palestine as follows; Gaza Strip (5.9%), Jenin (5.7%), Nablus (1.4%), and Jericho, Tubas and Tulkarem with less than 1% each.

Furthermore, the number of the Christian population has grown ever so slightly in the past 50 years. The natural growth ratio of the Christians in Palestine is 2 (Sabeel, 2006) compared to the total Palestinian natural growth ration, which is 3.3 (Population, 2008). It seems that there are some factors which affect the growth of the Christian population in Palestine. One main factor is emigration. The level of emigration within the Christian communities in Palestine is relatively high to the extent that it almost levels out with the natural growth level. Please refer to section E for more information about emigration trends within the Palestinian Christian population and for references to recent relevant researches.

¹ Usually referred to as J1 and J2 in documents released by the Palestinians Central Bureau of Statistics. J1 refers to the areas of Jerusalem annexed by the Israel following its occupation of the West Bank in 1967, while J2 refers to the remaining parts of Jerusalem not annexed by Israel in 1967. J1 includes; Beit Hanina, Shu'fat Refugees Camp, Shu'fat, Al'Isawiya, Sheikh Jarrah, Wadi Al-Joz, Bab Al-Sahira, As Suwwana, At-Tur, , Ash-Shayyah, Ras Al-Amud), Silwan, Ath-Thuri, Jabal Al-Mukabbir, As-Sawahira Al-Gharbiya, Beit Safafa, Sharafat, Sur Bahir, Um Tuba, and Kufr A'qab. J2 includes; Rafat, Mikhmas, Qalandya Refugees Camp, Qalandya, Beit Duqqu, Jaba', Al-Judeira, Beit Anan, Al-Ram, Dahiat Al-Pareed, Al-Jib, Bir Nabala, Beit Ijza, Al-Qubebeh, Khirbet Um Al-Lahem, Biddu, An-Nabi Samu'eil, Hezma, Beit Hanina At-Tehta, Qatanna, Beit Surik, Beit Iksha, A'nata, Az Za'eem, Al-Sawahreh Al-Sharqiyeh, Ash-Sheikh Sa'd, Ezzariyyah, Abu Deis, Jaba', Al-Khan Al-Ahmar and the Bedouin Communities. These areas of Jerusalem combined are referred to, officially, as East Jerusalem. West Jerusalem, however, refers to the areas of Jerusalem beyond the Armistice Line of 1949. This latter, also known as the Green Line, was placed following the 1949 Armistice Agreements between Israel on one side and Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria on the other, which set a halt to the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 – also known as An-Nakba. In this document, the word "Palestine" refers to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank including J1 and J2 areas, unless stated otherwise.

Table 1: Estimated Christian Population in Palestine by District, Select Sub-District, and Estimated Percentages of Christian Population per District and Select Sub-District

Locality / District		Christian Population				Total Population 2007 ²	% of Christians	
		Jordanian Census 1961 ^{3 4}	Israeli Census 1967 ³	Estimated 1995 ⁵	Estimated Dec 2006 ³			Estimated 2007/8 ⁶
Bethlehem District		15,234	14,406	20,487	22,000	22,440	176,235	12.73
of which	Bethlehem City	7,246	6,405	6,799	7,000	7,140	25,266	28.26
	Beit Jala	4,530	4,271	6,343	7,000	7,140	11,758	60.72
	Beit Sahour	3,458	3,730	7,345	8,000	8,160	12,367	65.98
Hebron		168	200	-	-	-	552,164	-
Jericho		1,212	539	535	450	459	42,320	1.08
Jerusalem ⁷		10,795	10,813	11,910	8,000	9,260 ^{8 9}	363,649	2.55
of which	Jerusalem City (J1) ¹⁰	-	-	-	-	8,000	225,416	3.55
	Ezzariyyah	-	-	-	-	550 ¹¹	17,606	3.12
	Qubebeh	-	-	-	-	11 ¹¹	3,172	0.35
Ramallah & Al-Birah District		15,371	10,597	12,362	12,500	12,750	279,730	4.56
of which	Ramallah	8,745	6,966	6,450	6,000	6,120	27,460	22.29
	Ain Arik	260	86	328	400	500 ^{11 12}	1,567	31.91
	Jifna	5,650	538	649	1,100	1,122	1,716	65.38
	Bir Zeit		1,351	2,158	2,200	2,244	4,529	49.55

² From **Population, Housing and Establishment Census 2007: Summary of the Census Final Results in The West Bank**, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2008, except for population figure in the Gaza Strip.

³ From **Sabeel Survey on Palestinian Christians in the West Bank and Israel**, 2006.

⁴ The Jordanian Census divided the West Bank into; Nablus: North with 3,069 Christians, Jerusalem: Centre with 42,618, and Hebron: South with 168 Christians.

⁵ Arabic reference: (تاريخ الكنيسة في الأرض المقدسة) Heyer, Friedrich. History of Church in the Holy Land, 1995.

⁶ For mere statistical purposes, estimates are calculated by adding an estimated annual increase of 2% over the estimated Christian Population for 2006, unless stated otherwise.

⁷ Jerusalem here includes J1 and J2 areas (refer to footnote 1).

⁸ There is a difference in the estimated number of Arab Christians in Jerusalem between Table 1 and Table 2. This difference covers those who live in areas of Jerusalem located beyond the Armistice Line of 1949 (refer to footnote 1).

⁹ The estimate for the Christian population in Jerusalem is calculated in relation to comparisons between the Christian population of Jerusalem in 1967 by the Israeli Census and that compiled by Dr. Bernard Sabella in reference to the Socio-Economic Survey conducted by the Latin Patriarchate in 1990 and other sources (O'Mahony (ed.), 1999). Using Sabella's natural growth vs. emigration theory, the Christian population in Jerusalem was about 68 percent of its potential population with the natural growth in 1990. Assuming that the percentage has not changed massively since 1990, the number of the Christian Jerusalemites at end of 2007 is estimated at 9,260 or about 60 percent of the potential population.

¹⁰ J1 refers to the areas of Jerusalem annexed by Israel following its occupation of the West Bank in 1967.

¹¹ Estimates for 2007/2008 were acquired from Diyar field researchers.

¹² According to the PCBS, the total population of Ain Arik includes the Palestinian population in the Ain Arik Refugee Camp – about a third of the total population in Ain Arik. This leaves the village with a 1:1 Christian-Muslim ratio.

	Taiyba		1,156	1,760	1,600	1,300 ^{11 13}	1,452	89.53
	Abud	716	500	1,017	1,200	1,224	2,084	58.73
Nablus (& Rafidiya)		3,069	688	1,041	700	714	320,830	0.22
Salfit			1,628	-	-	-	59,570	0
Qalqilya				-	-	-	91,217	0
Tubas				-	-	60 ¹¹	50,261	0.12
Tulkarim			100	-	50	16 ¹¹	157,988	0.01
Jenin District			1,045	2,789	2,100	2,951	256,619	1.15
of which	Jenin		123	537	300	306	39,004	0.78
	Zababdeh		922	2,252	1,800	2,500 ¹¹	3,665	68.21
	Kaferqod village		-	-	-	24 ¹¹	1,143	2.1
	Deir Ghazaleh Village		-	-	-	8 ¹¹	895	0.89
	Jalamah Village		-	-	-	50 ¹¹	2,060	2.43
	Birqin		-	-	-	63 ¹¹	5,685	1.11
Gaza Strip		-	2,478	2,439	3,000	3,060	1,416,543 ¹⁴	0.22
Total West Bank and Gaza Strip - including the Arab population in Jerusalem		45,855	42,494	51,563	48,800	51,710	3,767,126	1.37

¹³ According to Diyar field researchers, Taiyba has 4 Muslim families and about 1,300 Christian individuals.

¹⁴ From **Press Release: the Completion of the Census Process in the Gaza Strip**, Palestinian 2007 Census, 19 Feb 2009.

Chart 1: Palestinian Christian Population Growth by Major Christian Locality

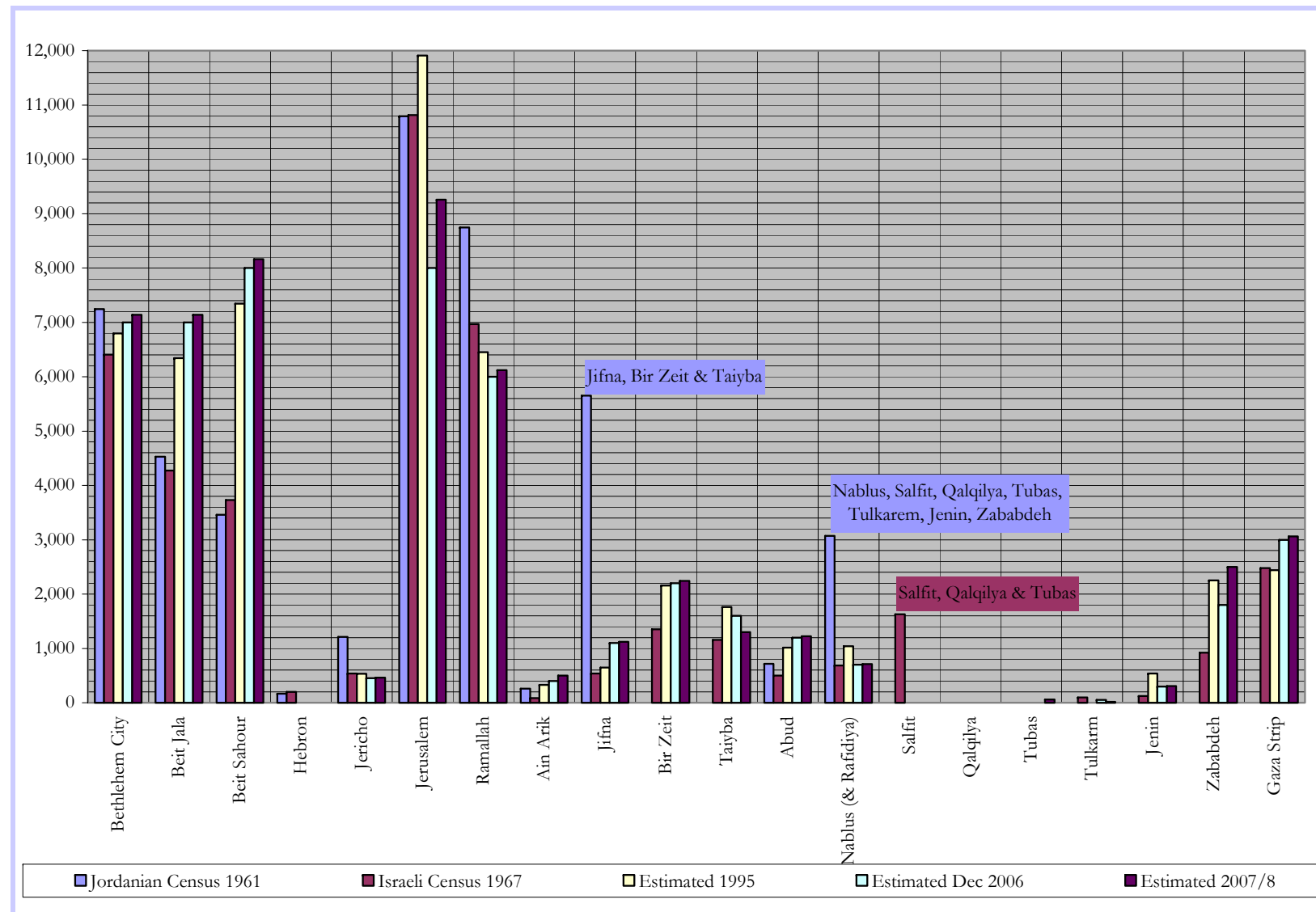


Table 2: Christian and Arab Population in Israel by District and Sub-District ¹⁵

Locality / District		Population end 2007					
		Christian Population		(of which) Arab Christian Population	Arab Population		Total Population
		#	%	#	%	#	#
Jerusalem District		16,100	1.81	12,700 ⁸	1.43	269,900	889,263
Northern District		89,900	7.36	84,700	6.93	648,300	1,221,929
of which	Zefat	-	-	-	-	10,400	99,383
	Kinneret	-	-	-	-	30,300	98,833
	Golan	-	-	-	-	22,300	40,605
	Yizre'el	36,300	8.3	34,800	7.96	235,000	437,186
	Akko	41,900	7.68	40,200	7.36	350,300	545,922
Haifa District		22,100	2.54	15,500	1.78	208,800	871,193
of which	Haifa	-	-	-	-	55,500	527,546
	Hadera	-	-	-	-	153,300	343,647
Central District		7,900	0.46	3,900	0.23	141,100	1,730,521
of which	Sharon	-	-	-	-	79,800	380,938
	Petah Tiqwa	-	-	-	-	29,200	590,981
	Ramla	-	-	-	-	31,200	276,185
Tel Aviv District		9,400	0.77	3,700	0.3	17,700	1,216,498
Southern District		5,900	0.57	-	-	164,200	1,037,438
of which	Beer Sheva	-	-	-	-	163,200	575,879
Total Israel		151,600	2.09	120,500	1.66	1,450,000	7,243,634

Table 3: Christian Population in Select Countries in the Middle East ¹⁶

Country	Christian Population	Total Population	Estimated Percentages of Christians
Egypt	8.1 million	81,714,000	10%
Sudan	1,968,950	39,379,000	5%
Lebanon	1,191,582	3,971,941	30%
Syria	987,379	19,747,586	5%
Iraq	846,330	28,211,000	3 %
Jordan	185,960	6,198,677	3%
Israel	110,507	6,500,389	1.7%
Palestinian Territories	50,000	4,149,173	1.2% ¹⁷
Total	13,440,708	189,871,766	7.1%

¹⁵ From **Statistical Abstract of Israel**, Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 2008.

¹⁶ From Sabella, Dr. Bernard. *Research Paper: Christians in the Middle East: A New Role or Decline?* Jerusalem, Feb 2008.

¹⁷ The findings of Diyar research are slightly higher than that recorded by Dr. Sabella. Please refer to Table 1 for more details.

Chart 2: Total Christian Population in Select Years

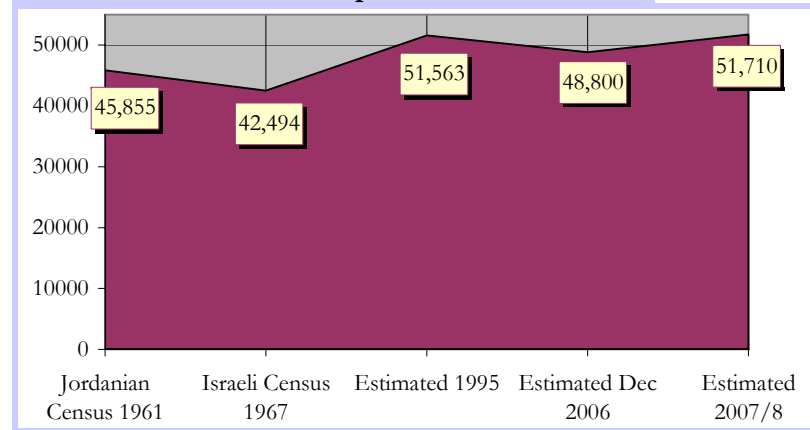
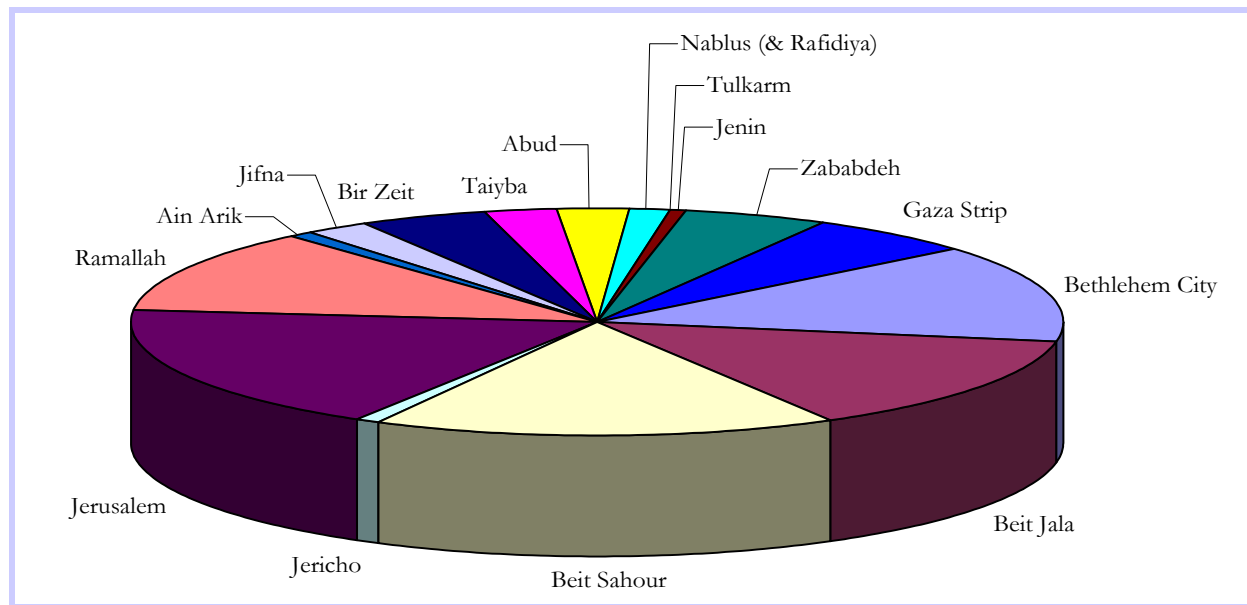
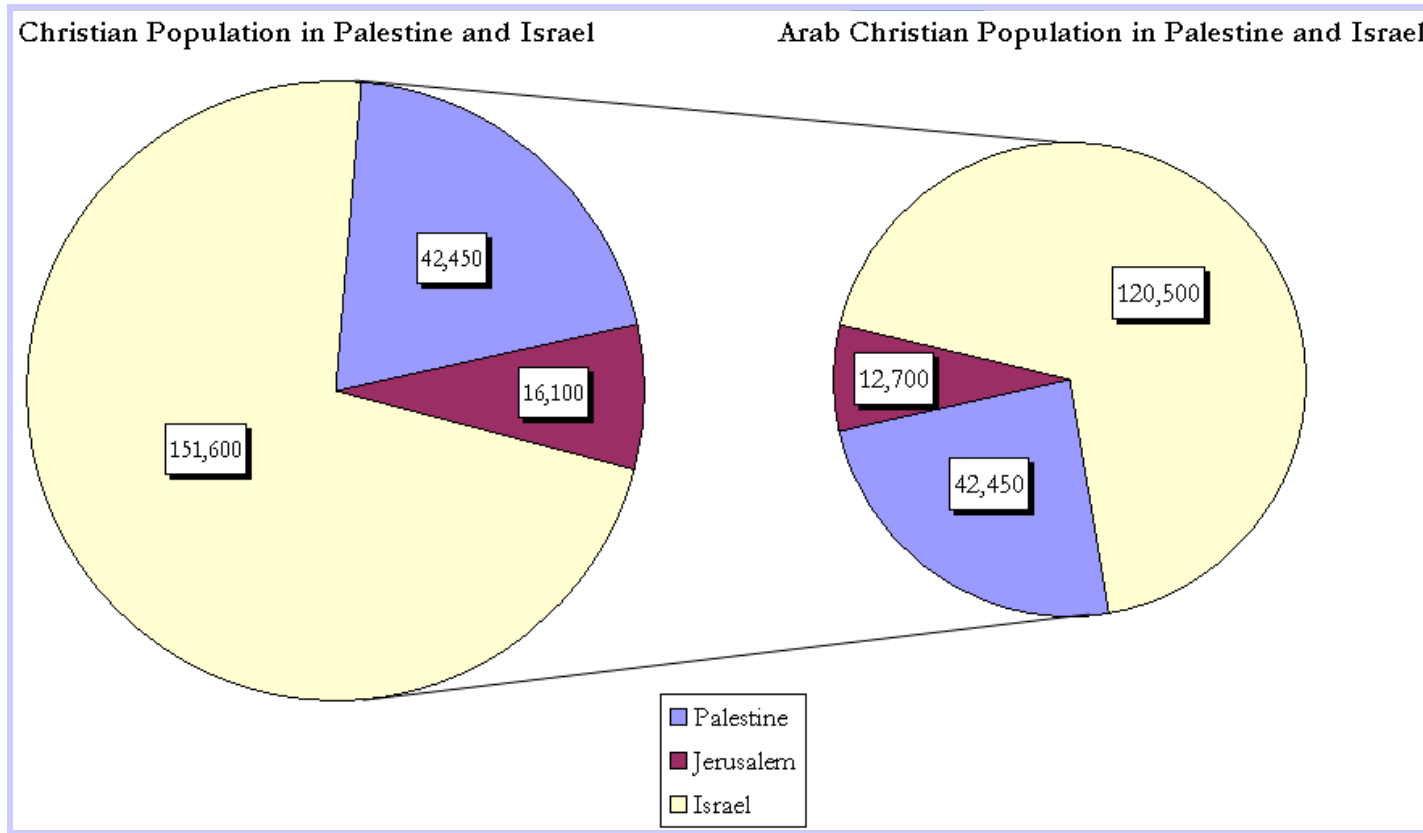


Chart 3: Christian Population by Major Christian Locality¹⁸



¹⁸ Christian population in Tulkarem is negligible and consequently it does not appear on the chart.

Chart 4: Christian Population in Israel and Palestine ¹⁹



¹⁹ This chart shows a comparison between the Christian population in Palestine and Israel, on one hand, and between the Arab and non-Arab Christian population on the other. To simplify the chart, and for mere statistical purposes, Jerusalem is placed as individual slices in the bi-pie chart. In both pies, Jerusalem includes Palestinian administered areas, mainly J2, and Israeli administered areas; J1 and the other parts of Jerusalem which are beyond the Armistice Line of 1949. Please refer to footnote 1 for more information on J1, J2, and the Armistice Line.

CHURCH-RELATED ORGANISATIONS

This section includes an overview for organisations working in Palestine with connection to church or a Christian mission. Those organisations vary in their focus from academic to philanthropic, covering a great deal of societal need.

There are more than 260 church-related organisations in Palestine, including about 40 international organisations. Of these organisations, 17 are theological; three in the Bethlehem Governorate and fourteen in the Jerusalem Governorate, 4 provide informational service, and 5 provide tourist services. The rest (72%) are organisations which offer social, medical and educational services. This ratio is parallel with the Palestinian societal need.

Table 4 shows a comparison between the numbers of church-related organisations and other non-governmental organisations in Palestine by nature of offered services.

Table 4: Church-Related and Non-Governmental Organisations in Palestine ²⁰

	Christian-Related Organisations	Non-Governmental Organisations ²¹	%
Cultural	1	82	1.2
Environmental	1	8	12.5
Social Service	38	104	36.5
Education, Vocational Training and Research	121	169	71.6
Health Services	29	61	47.5
Other (including sports, youth, agriculture, Communities)	71	151	47
Total	261	575	45.4

EDUCATION

This part includes tables and graphs related to Church involvement in education in Palestine. The figures below show clearly that the educational services provided by the various churches in Palestine cover the general need of the Christian students, as well as a good proportion of Muslim students, in most of the Palestinian towns and cities.

The percentage that church-related schools cover is parallel to the percentage of the Christian population in Palestine. However, some parents choose to send their children to governmental schools in some towns and villages for the lack of a Christian school – or the appropriate grade at the Christian school – at that location.

Concerning higher education, only one university is Christian out of twelve in Palestine. Bethlehem University – founded in 1973 – is a Catholic institution in the Lasallian tradition. Moreover, there are four Christian colleges registered at the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education, out of thirty-one in Palestine. One out of the four offers BA and Diploma degrees, while three offer a Diploma degree. Those five institutes are all located in the Bethlehem Governorate.

²⁰ The Gaza Strip and the West Bank including J1 and J2 areas (refer to footnote no 1 for more information).

²¹ Information on church-related institutes are compiled by Diyar researchers in 2008 while the info on the non-governmental institutes – church-related included – are based on the Arabic reference: (المنظمات غير الحكومية الفلسطينية: دراسة جغرافية تنموية) Palestinian Non-Governmental Organisations Forum, 2005.

Table 8 includes a listing of educational institutes in Palestine other than those registered at the Palestinian Ministry of Education – listed in Table 7 – while Table 6 includes a listing of schools, kindergartens and specialised schools in Palestine.

Bethlehem University had the share of 859 (3%) newly accepted applicants out of 27,969 new applicants accepted in all the universities in Palestine, while the four colleges had the share of 131 (1.8%) out of 7,400 new applicants. Those five academic institutes produced 670 (3.3%) graduates in 2008 out of 20,250 total graduates. In addition, those five institutes had the share of 2,981 (2.5%) enrolled students in 2008 out of a total of 120,274.

Note: For contact information for the different Christian educational institutes, please refer to section G

Table 5: Christian Schools in Palestine ²²

Christian Denomination	Schools	Staff		Students	
		Total	Christian	Total	Christian
Catholic	43	1,596	-	19,371	-
Greek Orthodox	12	302	-	3,972	-
Armenian Orthodox	1	25	-	100	-
Lutheran	5	211	171	2,054	1,116
Anglican	3	124	-	1,590	-
Syrian Orthodox	1	5	-	110	-
Coptic Orthodox	2	35	-	140	-
Russian Orthodox	1	-	-	-	-
Quakers	2	-	-	-	-
Other	6	-	-	-	-
Total	76	2,508	-	29,337	-

Catholic Schools	Schools	Staff	Students	
			Total	Christian
Latin Patriarchate	13	436	5,355	2,609
Custodian TS	6	267	3,220	2,036
Greek Catholic	3	109	1,208	
Syrian Catholic	1	9	36	
Rosary	4	233	2,833	
Frères	3	153	1,860	
Others	13	389	4,859	

²² Statistics used for table and charts are based on *Christian Schools in Palestine*, Yousef Daher, JIC, 2007.

Chart 5: Christian Schools by Christian Denomination Group

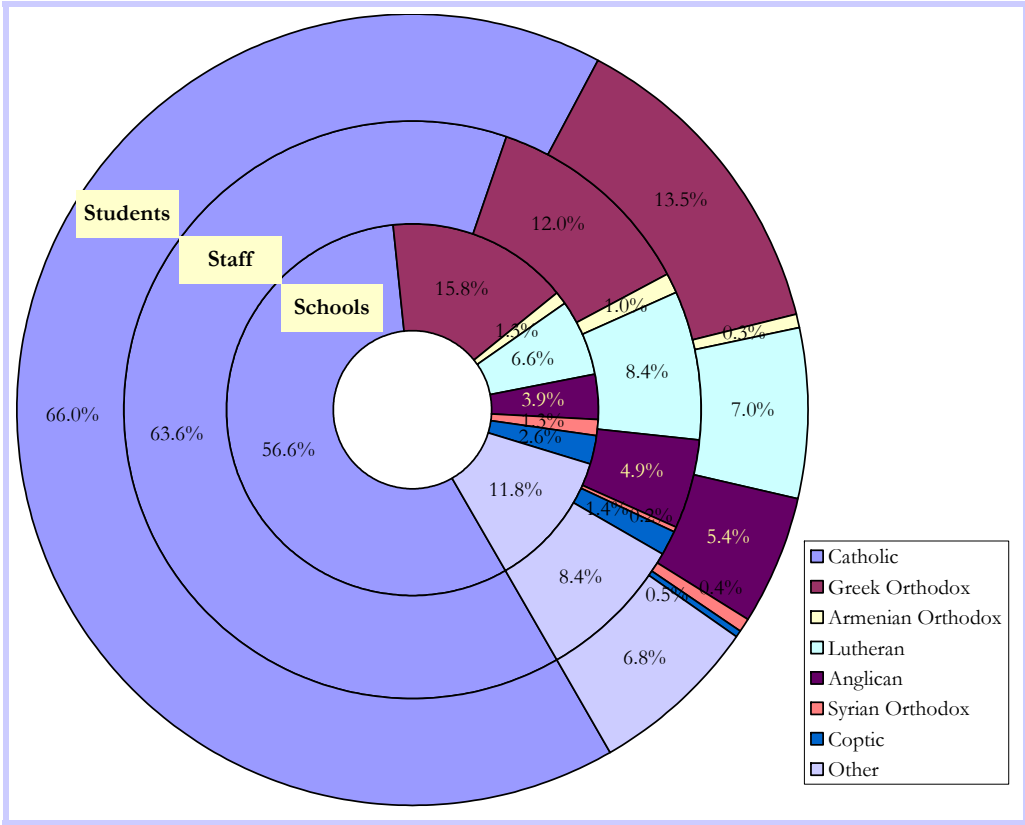
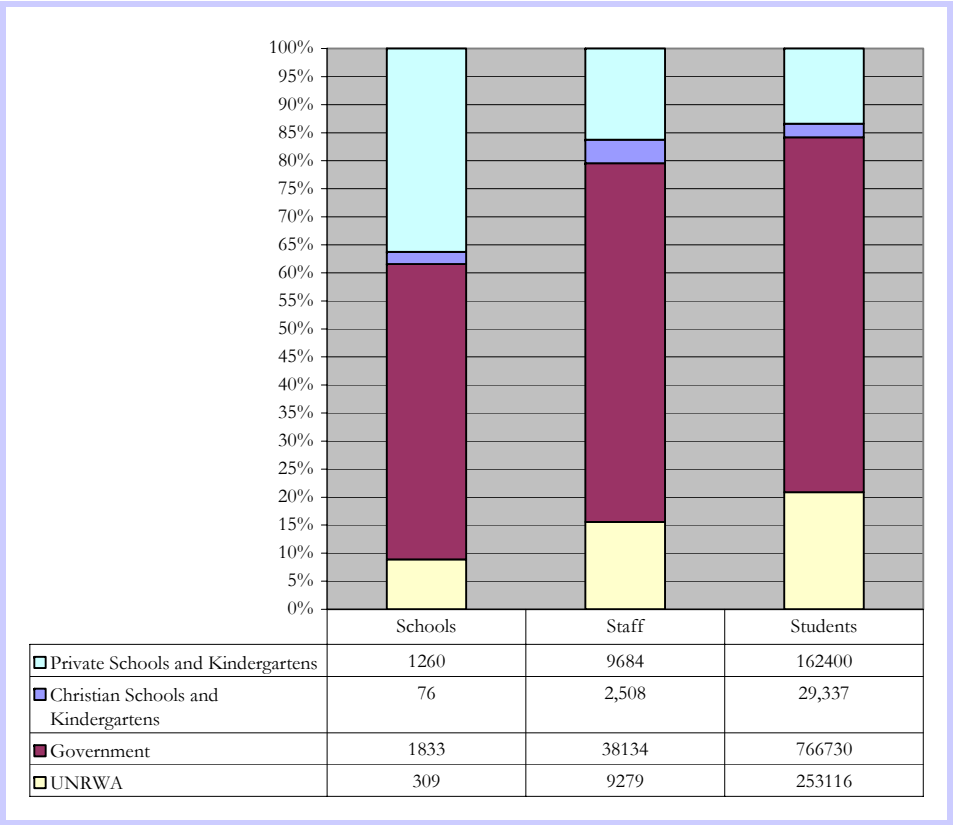


Chart 6: Schools in Palestine by Type of School



MEDICAL INSTITUTES

According to our findings, there are about 28 Christian medical institutes in Palestine, including Jerusalem. This number comprises of hospitals, clinics, and medical compounds.

Table 9 lists the church-related medical institutes identified by this research. It also demonstrates comparisons in capacity amongst those institutes with inpatient facility on the one hand, and a comparison with the total inpatient capacity amongst medical institutes in Palestine on the other.

YOUTH GROUPS, SCOUTS AND SPORTS CENTRES

There are about 40 organisations in Palestine which focus on youth and their needs. Table 10 below gives an overview of a number of church-related scout groups in Palestine while Table 11 gives an overview of a number of selected youth groups in Palestine.

PHILANTHROPIC ORGANISATIONS

Christian philanthropic organisations cover a variety of social needs in Palestine. Out of approximately 60 organisations, 15 institutions focus on the rehabilitation of the Disabled, 9 are orphanages, 11 are homes and centres for the elderly and 2 focus on child and family care.

References of Section A:

- Arabic reference: (تاريخ الكنيسة في الأرض المقدسة) History of Church in the Holy Land, 1995
- Arabic reference: (المنظمات غير الحكومية الفلسطينية: دراسة جغرافية تنموية) Palestinian Non-Governmental Organisations Forum, 2005
- Daher, Yousef, *JIC Report: Christian Schools in Palestine*, 2007
- Hagen, Kate. *Diyar Report: Christian Clubs*, Jan 2008
- Health Status in Palestine 2005, Palestinian Ministry of Health, Oct 2006
- Population, Housing and Establishment Census 2007: Summary of the Census Final Results in the West Bank, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2008
- Press Release: the Completion of the Census Process in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian 2007 Census, 19 Feb 2009
- Rabadi, Mousa and Georgette Hazboun, "Diyar's Study on the Presence of Christians in the West Bank and Their Attitudes Towards Church Related Organizations", Field Survey 2008
- Sabella, Bernard. *Research Paper: Christians in the Middle East: A New Role or Decline?* Jerusalem, Feb 2008
- Sabella, Bernard. *Socio-Economic Characteristics and Challenges to Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land, Palestinian Christians: Religion, Politics and Society in the Holy Land* edited by Anthony O'Mahony, 1999, pp. 82-95.
- Sabeel Survey on Palestinian Christians in the West Bank and Israel, 2006
- Statistical Abstract of Israel, Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 2008
- Statistical Yearbook 2007/2008, Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2008

Section C

Churches in Palestine

MAIN CHURCHES IN PALESTINE

The following are the main churches and Heads of Churches present in Palestine:

A. The Eastern Orthodox Church

1. Greek Orthodox Church - Patriarch Theophilos III

B. The Non-Chalcedonian (Oriental Orthodox)

2. Armenian Church - Patriarch Torkom Manooghian
3. Syrian Church - Archbishop Swerios Malki Murad
4. Coptic Church - Archbishop Anba Abraham
5. Ethiopian Church - Archbishop Abouna Mathias

C. The Catholic Church

6. Roman (Latin) Catholic Church - Patriarch Fuad Twal
7. (Syriac) Maronite Catholic Church - Archbishop Paul Sayyah
8. Greek Catholic (Melkite) Church - Archbishop Youssef Jules Zreyi
9. Armenian Catholic Church - Fr. Rafael Minassian
10. Syrian Catholic Church - Bishop Pierre Malki
11. Custodians of the Holy Land - Fr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, ofm

D. The Evangelical Churches

12. Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and The Holy Land – Bishop Munib Younan
13. Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East – Bishop Suheil Dawani

For Palestinian civil legislations concerning the 13 churches recognized by the Palestinian National Authority, please refer to Section D

STATEMENTS BY THE CHURCH LEADERS IN PALESTINE

This section includes statements issued by the Heads of Churches in Palestine during the year 2008.

The list of statements, arranged chronologically, includes:

- ☒ Letter to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, 7 March
- ☒ Letter to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, 7 March
- ☒ Easter Message
- ☒ Christmas Message
- ☒ Statement On the current devastating situation in Gaza, 30 December

Letter to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas

Mr. President Mahmoud Abbas Abu Mazen

President of the Palestinian Authority

We the Patriarchs and Heads of the Christian Churches in Jerusalem address this letter to you to express our condolences for all the victims who have fallen and are still falling in this wave of violence in Gaza. We share the tragedy with our people and with all those who are exposed to death today and to further violence. We know that you do not spare any effort in your attempts to reach a comprehensive and just peace. Nevertheless, we urge you to do whatever possible to find rapid and opportune ways to bring back the unity of the Palestinian people; heal all the wounds, in order that the tragedy of which all of us are victims, today more than ever, will come to an end. We join you with our prayers as we ask God to inspire you in efficient ways to reach agreement with the concerned Israeli Authorities to stop all violence, so as to work for the achievement of peace, despite all the grave difficulties which are known to all of us.

May God give you strength and wisdom to keep you well in order to lead the Palestinian people to peace and security.

Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem

Patriarch Theofilos III

Patriarch Michel Sabbah

Patriarch Torkom Manooghian

Fr Pier Battista Pizziballa, ofm, Custos of the Holy Land

Letter to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert

To H.E. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert

To the Grand Rabbinat

We write to express our condolences for the killing of the Yeshiva students, not least to the parents and families of the victims. It is a sad and tragic event coming from the cycle of violence in which the whole Land is victim. We appeal to you, political and religious leaders of Israel, to find ways to put an end to all violence so as to free all of us from this infernal cycle of violence of which we all are victims. In the name of the believers in this Land, we reaffirm our determination to work for peace and the end of all violence. Only peace is needed and new ways must be found for the Land called to be Holy by the Almighty for the Jewish people and for the Palestinians. We pray that God will inspire all of us to submit to His ways in order to reach a comprehensive and just peace with a total security for you and for all.

Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem

On Their behalf:

Patriarch Theofilos III

Patriarch Michel Sabbah

Patriarch Torkom Manooghian

Fr Pier Battista Pizziballa, of, Custos of the Holy Land

Heads of Churches in Jerusalem

Easter Message 2008

"In the evening of the first day of the week, Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, "Peace be with you" and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord and again he said to them "Peace be with you."

St. John ch.20 vv 19-21

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Christ is risen.

Many people limit their thoughts on Easter to the empty tomb. How important then, for us to concentrate on the first manifestation which our Lord made to his disciples. There is considerable encouragement to be gained from the fact that the living Christ is greeting his living Church. We do not under estimate the burden of so many of our faithful today from the continuing violence and acts of terrorism that surround them, and of which we all are victims, in the West Bank, in Gaza and in the Israeli society. Nevertheless, the Risen Lord reminds us and tells us that we have a role and we have to change the present situation, through the power and strength which He gives us.

On that first Easter evening it seems obvious that the disciples were full of fear mingled no doubt with doubt and perplexity. So much had happened to make them uncertain of the future and consequently they were afraid. However, in their moment of greatest need Jesus came and stood amongst them. At least they believed that he suddenly appeared to them. Because, since they saw him die on the Cross, they believed that everything had ended and the Master has abandoned them. But, fear, weakness and locked doors could not keep Jesus from his disciples... then or now! He appeared to them glorious and renewed their faith.

In giving the disciples the conventional greeting "Peace be with you" Jesus is seeking to quieten the hearts of his anxious and troubled disciples. He shows them his hands and his side to convince them of his identity as the one recently crucified. So their fear and doubt are replaced by joy. Today we too, we live in fear and perplexity. We too need to see the Risen Lord, in order to take away perplexity and fear because of all that is happening around us and in us, so to replace our fear and anxiety with peace and joy.

However the message of Easter does not end there. The new joy is a mission which the apostles have to bring to the world. Jesus sent them to the troubled world as a whole in order to bring to every one its joy and peace.

So Jesus says: "As my Father has sent me, even so send I you."

In this way Jesus reveals that his Church is to be the instrument through which his saving power is to be made known to the world as the lives of men and women are challenged to submit to the claims of his Kingdom.

More is revealed as Jesus tells the disciples of the spiritual power which will be given them to enable them to fulfill their task which he has given them

"He breathed on them and said Receive the Holy Spirit"

In that instance he is preparing them for the forthcoming Pentecost. He also shows them the intimate relationship between himself and the Holy Spirit, sometimes described in the Early Church as "the Spirit of Christ".

Having told the disciples of the spiritual power He is giving them Jesus then makes it clear that the Church has a specific function in the world to explain and convince people that men and women have a responsibility to confess their sins. If they truly repent and relieve then their sins are forgiven.

It is very normal that we bring the same message to our Land. Similarly we have to take away the many burdens on people's lives caused by Occupation, bloodshed, violence and killings and mutual hatred, as well as the wrong ways followed so far to reach security. In all these situations of death we demonstrate that we are the apostles of the resurrection, with its joy and hope. We have to tell the people that the present situation in which we are living is part of the world's sin, but it must also be part of the new power given to us by the Risen Lord. Hence we invite them to make penitence, to admit their involvement in the sin of the world, to be forgiven and to become able to see the right ways that lead to security and peace. We say this to our Leaders in

Palestine and Israel. The ways used until today to reach security must be changed. If not, we will remain in the same positions in a permanent cycle of violence. For you, Leaders of this Land, we ask that God give you light and strength to take away from it death and fear so as to restore in it peace with security.

So, as we greet all of you this Eastertide we urge all concerned to demonstrate their faith in more positive terms not least showing their personal belief in a Risen and Glorified Jesus. Moreover, our Jesus is no figure of history but rather the One to teach us and guide us along the path of peace and new life.

To our friends across the world we wish the peace and joy of the Risen Lord. Thank you for your prayerful support but please we would ask that you recall that your faith in Christ has its origin in this Holy Land. You have to assume your responsibilities here. You too are responsible with us for restoring in it the joy of the Resurrection so as to lift the burdens of death, hatred, Occupation, Security Walls and the fear of taking the risk of peace. Do whatever you can and please involve your Governments too to assume their responsibilities for the peace of this Land.

Pray for us as well as for a just and comprehensive peace in this Land; pray that fear, the main obstacle for peace, will disappear. Pray that people recognize and accept each other, so that the right ways be open before the glory of the Resurrection so that this Land of the resurrection may enjoy the new life to which God has called it.

Christ is risen.

Happy and Holy Easter.

Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem

Patriarch Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox

Patriarch Michel Sabbah, R.C. Latin

Patriarch Torkom I Manoogian, Armenian Orthodox

Fr Pierbattista Pizzaballa, ofm, Custos of the Holy Land

Archbishop Anba Abraham, Coptic Orthodox

Archbishop Swerios Malki Murad, Syrian-Orthodox

Archbishop Abouna Matthias, Ethiopian Orthodox

Archbishop Paul Sayyah, Maronite

Bishop Suhail Dawani, Anglican

Bishop Mounib Younan, Lutheran

Bishop Pierre Malki, Syrian-Catholic

Archimandrite Joseph Saghbini, Greek Catholic

Fr. Rafael Minassian, Armenian Catholic

Christmas Message 2008 from the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem

Dear Sisters & Brothers

Greetings.

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas there seems to be even more darkness, conflict and despair in the world around us. That means for us, as Christians, we must think even more carefully and deeply about Jesus – the baby born in Bethlehem's stable.

Many people are afraid of the dark whether it be the absence of light around them or fear of the unknown in their personal lives or the world at large.

Despite all this we need to think and mediate about Jesus ...

“a light that shines in the dark,
a light that darkness could not overpower.” St. John ch. 1 v. 5

St. John's Gospel goes on to remind us of the facts of Jesus' birth ...

“That he was born into a world which did not recognize him and a people that did not receive him.”

St. John Ch.1 vv 10 & 11

So, as we approach another Christmas we must show the world around us that Jesus is a light in the dark which never goes out, a burning light which takes the terror from the night and moreover, a light on which we should fix our eyes not least when the clouds appear to be gathering around us..

Just as the baby in the stable is the focal point of our Christmas celebrations, so we must affirm and witness to the fact that Jesus is the light which shines out from our personal and corporate lives at all times.

Again and again we need to ask ourselves “What would Jesus do, what would Jesus say?”. Then, our thoughts and ideas of His actions and words must be translated into the daily life of our community – particularly in this Holy Land.

Similarly, we have to convince the world's political leaders that the true peace will only come on earth when we seek God's will for his people ... not least through the words and actions of Jesus. Nor must we belittle the fact, affirmed in St. John's Gospel, that to all who accept Jesus, He gives power to become the Children of God.

This means we must stand alongside all who suffer around us – the hungry, the homeless, the unemployed and the bereaved since Jesus tells us that when we help others we are doing it to Him as though He were suffering for them.

To stand alongside also involves us in action. We need the light of Christ to shine on this Land to enable us to work more realistically for a two state solution which would end the burden of restrictions arising out of Occupation.

(So we pray for the President – Elect of the USA that he and other world leaders may see the urgent need for peace in the Middle East and not least in this Land).

We need also to see the situation in which many are suffering in Gaza in the light of Christ and make a determined effort to bring them urgent relief.

Moreover, we must never forget our duty to point our children and young people to the light of Christ assuring them that, through Jesus we all have hope for a better world.

Then we would greet our Sisters and Brothers across the world – not least the thousands who have visited this Holy Land recently. It is important to recall that you are walking in the footsteps of Jesus and when you pause to see the plight of many of your fellow Christians that you respond as you believe He would.

We are conscious of all who suffer across the world but for all we believe the only way forward is to see people and situations in “The light of Christ”.

Be assured of our good wishes and prayers for all of you as Christmas approaches and may God’s blessing be on your homes and families.

Walk in the light and the light will illumine your path,
Walk in the truth and the truth will set you free,
Walk in the way of peace and you will have, through Christ,
the peace which passes understanding.

(Prayers of the Way: by John Johansen-berg).

Jerusalem December 2008

Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem

H.B. Patriarch Theophilos III	Greek Orthodox Church
H.B. Patriarch Fouad Twal	Roman Catholic Church
H.B. Patriarch Torkom Manooghian	Armenian Orthodox Church
Fr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, ofm	Custos of the Holy Land
Archbishop Anba Abraham	Coptic Orthodox Church
Archbishop Swerios Malki Murad	Syrian Orthodox Church
Archbishop Abouna Mathias	Ethiopian Orthodox Church
Archbishop Paul Sayyah	The Maronite Church
Archbishop Youssef Jules Zreyi	The Greek Melkite Church
The Rt. Revd. Suhel Dawani	The Anglican Church
The Rt. Revd. Mounib Younan	The Lutheran Church
The Rt. Revd. Pierre Malki	The Syrian Catholic Church
Fr. Rafael Minassian	The Armenian Catholic Church

**Statement by the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem
On the current devastating situation in Gaza**

We, the Patriarchs, Bishops and the Heads of Christian Churches in Jerusalem, follow with deep concern, regret, and shock the war currently raging in the Gaza Strip and the subsequent destruction, murder and bloodshed, especially at a time when we celebrate Christmas, the birth of the King of love and peace. As we express our deep sorrow at the renewed cycle of violence between Israelis and Palestinians and the continued absence of peace in our Holy Land, we denounce the ongoing hostilities in the Gaza Strip and all forms of violence and killings from all parties. We believe that the continuation of this bloodshed and violence will not lead to peace and justice but breed more hatred and hostility – and thus continued confrontation between the two peoples.

Accordingly, we call upon all officials of both parties to the conflict to return to their senses and refrain from all violent acts, which only bring destruction and tragedy, and urge them instead to work to resolve their differences through peaceful and non-violent means.

We also call upon the international community to fulfil its responsibilities and intervene immediately and actively stop the bloodshed and end all forms of confrontation; to work hard and strong to put an end to the current confrontation and remove the causes of conflict between the two peoples; and to finally resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with a just and comprehensive solution based on international resolutions.

To the various Palestinian factions we say: It is time to end your division and settle your differences. We call on all factions at this particular time to put the interests of the Palestinian people above personal and factional interests and to move immediately toward national comprehensive reconciliation and use all non-violent means to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

Finally, we raise our prayers to the Child in the manger to inspire the authorities and decision makers on both sides, the Israelis and Palestinians, for immediate action to end the current tragic situation in the Gaza Strip. We pray for the victims, the wounded and the broken-hearted. May the Lord God Almighty grant all those who have lost loved ones consolation and patience. We pray for all those living in panic and fear, that God may bless them with calm, tranquility and true peace.

We call on all to observe next Sunday, January 4, as a day for justice and peace in the land of peace.

+ Patriarch Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate

+ Patriarch Fuad Twal, Latin Patriarchate.

+ Patriarch Torkom II, Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Patriarchate.

Fr. Pier Battista Pizzaballa, ofm, Custody of the Holy Land

+ Anba Abraham, Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate.

+ Archbishop Swerios Malki Mourad, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate.

+ Abune Matthias, Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate

+ Archbishop Paul Nabil Sayyah, Maronite Patriarchal Exarchate.

+ Bishop Suheil Dawani, Episcopal Church of Jerusalem & the Middle East.

+ Bishop Munib Younan, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land.

+ Bishop Pierre Malki, Syrian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate

+ Bishop Youssef Zre'i, Greek Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate.

Fr. Raphael Minassian, Armenian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate

Jerusalem on 30 December 2008

Section D

**Christian Representation in the
Palestinian Government**

CIVIL LEGISLATIONS CONCERNING CHRISTIAN AFFAIRS IN PALESTINE

The following are recent civil legislations and decrees in relation to the Palestinian Christian status ²³, including;

- ☒ Presidential Decree concerning recognised churches at the Palestinian National Authority, 2008
- ☒ Palestinian Council of Ministers Decree concerning recognised churches at the Palestinian National Authority, 2008
- ☒ Presidential Declaration concerning the Reformation of the High Committee for Christian Affairs, 2008
- ☒ Presidential Declaration concerning the Formation of the High Committee for Christian Affairs, 2007
- ☒ Council of Ministers Decree Concerning Weekends at Christian Non-Governmental Schools, 2006
- ☒ Presidential Decree on the allocation of PLC seats to electoral districts, 2005
- ☒ Presidential Declaration on the appointment of head of local councils in main Christian localities, 2001

Presidential Decree concerning recognised churches at the Palestinian National Authority

Presidential Decree No. () of 2008

President of the PLO Executive Committee
President of the Palestinian National Authority

Having reviewed:

Basic Law – revised in 2003,
Committees of Religious Communities Law No. 2 of 1938,
Committees of Non-Muslim Religious Communities applied in the West Bank since 1958,
Religious Endowment Tax-Exemption Law No. 46 of 1962, and

According to the reference of the Council of Ministers in meeting No. 71 of 08/09/2008,
Based upon the powers bestowed upon me, and
Based of the needs of the common social benefit,

I hereby decree the following:

Article (1)

Recognise and activate official recognition of the churches acknowledged at the Palestinian National Authority, listed as follows;

1. Greek Orthodox Patriarchate
2. Latin Patriarchate
3. Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Patriarchate
4. Custody of the Holy Land
5. Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem
6. Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate
7. Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate
8. Maronite Patriarchal Exarchate in Jerusalem and the Palestinian Territories

²³ These civil legislations were translated from Arabic by the staff of Diyar Consortium, except for "Presidential Decree on the allocation of PLC seats to electoral districts". The latter was published in English on the Central Elections Committee webpage, while the two declarations concerning the High Committee for Christian Affairs and the Decree Concerning Weekends at Christian Non-Governmental Schools were published in Arabic on the Birzeit University-Institute of Law webpage. The rest were acquired by Diyar Consortium as handouts.

9. Greek Melkite Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate
10. Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land
11. Episcopal Church of Jerusalem & the Middle East
12. Syrian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate
13. Armenian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate

Article (2)

All competent authorities, each within its own jurisdiction, shall implement this Decree. The Decree shall enter into force upon its issuance and shall be published in the Official Gazette.

Issued in the city of Ramallah on 07/11/2008

Mahmoud Abbas

President of the PLO Executive Committee

President of the Palestinian National Authority

Palestinian Council of Ministers Decree concerning recognised churches at the Palestinian National Authority

Council of Ministers Decree No. (03/71/12/م.و.ف.س) of 2008

Based upon the powers bestowed upon us,

According to the reference of the President of High Committee for Christian Affairs,

Based of the needs of the common social benefit, and

Having reviewed:

Basic Law – revised in 2003,

Committees of Religious Communities Law No. 2 of 1938 – specifically, Article 3, and

Committees of Religious Communities Law No. 9 of 1958 – specifically, Article 2,

The Council of Ministers, meeting in Ramallah on 08 Sep 2008, hereby decree the following:

Article (1)

Recognising the churches acknowledged at the Palestinian National Authority, listed as follows;

1. Greek Orthodox Patriarchate
2. Latin Patriarchate
3. Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Patriarchate
4. Custody of the Holy Land
5. Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem
6. Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate
7. Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate
8. Maronite Patriarchal Exarchate in Jerusalem and the Palestinian Territories
9. Greek Melkite Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate
10. Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land
11. Episcopal Church of Jerusalem & the Middle East
12. Syrian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate
13. Armenian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate

Article (2)

The Decree shall be submitted to the President of the Palestinian National Authority for endorsement..

Article (3)

All competent authorities, each within its own jurisdiction, shall implement this Decree. The Decree shall enter into force upon its issuance and shall be published in the Official Gazette.

Issued in the city of Ramallah on 08/09/2008 (08 Ramadan 1429 H)

Salam Fayyad
Prime Minister

Presidential Declaration concerning the Reformation of the High Committee for Christian Affairs

Presidential Declaration No. (2) of 2008

President of the PLO Executive Committee
President of the Palestinian National Authority

Having reviewed:

Basic Law – revised in 2003,

Presidential Decree concerning the Formation of the High Committee for Christian Affairs of 03/03/2007,

Based upon the powers bestowed upon me, and

Based of the needs of the common social benefit,

I hereby declare the following:

Article (1)

Amending the declaration on formation of the High Committee for Christian Affairs to become in the following manner:

1. Ziyad Abdullah al-Banak as president of the committee
2. Nabil Issa Kassis, member
3. Rafiq Haydar al-Husseini, member
4. Naser Jareer al-Qudwa, member
5. Chlodate Issa Habash, member
6. Zahi Wadi' Khoury, member
7. Issa Jamil Kassisieh, Rapporteur

Article (2)

The High Committee for Christian Affairs is responsible for the following:

1. Follow-up on the Christian affairs with local and international churches, including matters related to law, estates, and establishments
2. Correspond with local, regional and international authorities concerning Christian affairs
3. Follow-up on activities and actions related to inter-religious dialogue on the local, regional and international levels

Article (3)

The committee shall present her reports and recommendations to the President of the PLO Executive Committee/President of the Palestinian National Authority, to take necessary measures

Article (4)

All that contradicts with the articles in this declaration shall be cancelled

Article (5)

All competent authorities, each within its own jurisdiction, shall implement this Decree. The Decree shall enter into force upon its issuance and shall be published in the Official Gazette.

Issued in the city of Ramallah on 27/01/2008

Mahmoud Abbas
President of the PLO Executive Committee
President of the Palestinian National Authority

Presidential Declaration concerning the Formation of the High Committee for Christian Affairs

Presidential Declaration No. (4) of 2007

President of the PLO Executive Committee
President of the Palestinian National Authority

Having reviewed:

Basic Law – revised in 2003,

Based upon the powers bestowed upon me, and

Based of the needs of the common social benefit,

I hereby declare the following:

Article (1)

The formation of a High Committee for Christian Affairs as the following:

1. Nabil Issa Kassis as president of the committee
2. Rafiq Haydar al-Husseini, member
3. Naser Jareer al-Qudwa, member
4. Ziyad Abdullah al-Banak, member
5. Chlodate Issa Habash, member
6. Zahi Wadi' Khoury, member
7. Issa Jamil Kassisieh, Rapporteur

Article (2)

The High Committee for Christian Affairs is responsible for the following:

1. Follow-up on the Christian affairs with local and international churches, including matters related to law, estates, and establishments
2. Correspond with local, regional and international authorities concerning Christian affairs
3. Follow-up on activities and actions related to inter-religious dialogue on the local, regional and international levels

Article (3)

The committee shall present her reports and recommendations to the President of the PLO Executive Committee/President of the Palestinian National Authority, to take necessary measures

Article (4)

All competent authorities, each within its own jurisdiction, shall implement this Decree. The Decree shall enter into force upon its issuance and shall be published in the Official Gazette.

Issued in the city of Ramallah on 03/03/2007

Mahmoud Abbas
President of the PLO Executive Committee
President of the Palestinian National Authority

Council of Ministers Decree Concerning Weekends at Christian Non-Governmental Schools

Council of Ministers Decree No. (125) of 2006

Council of Ministers

Having reviewed:

Civil Service Law No. (4) of 1998 – and its amendments,

Council of Ministers Decree No. (106) of 2006, and

Based on the reference of the Prime Minister, and

Based on the acknowledgement of the Council of Ministers in their meetings in the city of Ramallah and the city of Gaza on 11/09/2006, No. (22/24/10),

We decree the following;

Article (1)

Christian non-governmental schools shall be excluded from Council of Ministers Decree No. (106) of 2006, which stated that Thursdays and Fridays shall become the official weekend at all ministries and governmental institutions.

Article (2)

The weekend at the Christian non-governmental schools shall be Sundays and Fridays.

Article (3)

All competent authorities, each within its own jurisdiction, shall implement this Decree. The Decree shall enter into force upon its issuance and shall be published in the Official Gazette.

Issued in the city of Gaza on 11/09/2006

Ismail Abu Hanniyeh
Prime Minister

Presidential Decree on the allocation of PLC seats to electoral districts

Presidential Decree No. () of 2005

President of the PLO Executive Committee
President of the Palestinian National Authority

Having reviewed:

Article 3/2 of the General Elections Law of 2005,
Statistics of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS),
Statistics of the Central Elections Commission (CEC) and,
Based upon the powers bestowed upon me

I hereby decree the following:

Article (1)

Members of the PLC shall be allocated to the 16 electoral districts stipulated in article 2/A of the General Elections Law of 2005 as per the number of population therein as follows:

Electoral District	No of Seats	Christian Seats
Jenin	4	
Tubas	1	
Tulkarem	3	
Qalqilyah	2	
Salfit	1	
Nablus	6	
Jericho	1	
Ramallah & al-Bireh	5	1
Jerusalem	6	2
Bethlehem	4	2

Hebron	9	
North Gaza	5	
Gaza	8	1
Deir al-Balah	3	
Khan Younis	5	
Rafah	3	

Article (2)

All competent authorities, each within its own jurisdiction, shall implement this Decree. The Decree shall enter into force upon its issuance and shall be published in the Official Gazette.

Issued in the city of Gaza on 15/09/2005

Mahmoud Abbas

President of the PLO Executive Committee

President of the Palestinian National Authority

Presidential Decree on the appointment of head of local councils in main Christian localities

President of the PLO Executive Committee

President of the Palestinian National Authority

Based upon the powers bestowed upon me and according to the reference of the Minister of Local Governance,

I hereby decree the following:

Article (1)

Head of local council in each of the localities listed below, either through a voting system or appointment, shall be a Palestinian Christian;

1. Bethlehem
2. Beit Jala
3. Beit Sahour
4. Ramallah
5. Bir Zeit
6. Jifna
7. Taiyba
8. Abud
9. Ain Arik
10. Zababdeh

Article (2)

The Decree shall enter into force as of 30 December 2001.

Yasser Arafat

President of the PLO Executive Committee

President of the Palestinian National Authority

CHRISTIAN MEMBERS AT THE PLC

According to the presidential decree on the allocation of PLC seats to electoral districts (see previous page), 6 seats are allocated to Christian members. Those who were elected in 2006 to fill in for the Christian quota at the PLC are:






- ☒ Emil Mousa Basil Jarjou'i † (1935-2007), Jerusalem District, Fatah Movement

- ☒ Fayez Antoun Elias Al-Saqqa, Bethlehem District, Fatah Movement
- ☒ Fouad Kareem Saliba Kokali, Bethlehem, Fatah Movement
- ☒ Husam Fou'ad Kamal Yacoub Al-Taweel, Gaza City District, Independent
- ☒ Ivivan (Bernard) Zakariya Abdullah Sabella, Jerusalem District, Fatah Movement
- ☒ Mahib Salama Abdullah Salama, Ramallah District, Fatah Movement

One more Christian member was elected to the PLC to fill in one seat out of the remaining 60, which were open to all Palestinians regardless of their religion or political affiliation. This member is:

- ☒ Hanan Daoud Khalil Ashrawi, Jerusalem, The Third Way

AMBASSADORS AND REPRESENTATIVES

	Alif Safieh; Palestinian Ambassador to Russia, and; Chief of Mission at the PLO Office in Washington, DC (until May 2008)
	Elyas Sunbar; Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to UNESCO
	Emanwel Hassassian; Head of the Palestinian General Delegation to the United Kingdom
	Gabriel Al-Shomali; Deputy Palestinian Ambassador to Ghana
	Hind Khoury; Head of the Palestinian General Delegation to France

MUNICIPALITIES AND VILLAGE COUNCILS

According to the presidential decree on the appointment of head of local councils in main Christian localities (see previous page), ten municipalities and village councils in Palestine have to appoint or elect a Christian member to head their local council. The following is a list of those local councils and names of heads of councils for 2008;

Locality	Type of Council	Head of Council
Abud	Village Council	Ilyas Azar
Ain Arik	Village Council	Khalil Shahin
Beit Jala	Municipality	Raji Zeidan
Beit Sahour	Municipality	Hani Naji Hayek
Bethlehem	Municipality	Victor Batarseh
Birziet	Municipality	Dr. Yousef Naser
Jifna	Village Council	Jabi Na'im Kamil
Ramallah	Municipality	Janet Mikhail (Michael)
Taiyba	Municipality	Daoud Kanaan Khoury
Zababdeh	Municipality	Victor Is'eid

MINISTERS

A presidential decree on formation of the council of ministers was issued on 17th June 2007. The decree listed 13 ministers, 2 of which are Christian:

- ☒ Khouloud Francis Khalil D'eibes; Minister of Tourism and Women's Affairs
- ☒ Ziad Abdullah Hanna al-Bandak; Minister of Local Government

Section E

Emigration Trends

The percentage of Christian Palestinians has been in decline over the past century. The influx of Jewish immigration since the late 1880s, the Nakba of 1948 and the Naksa of 1967²⁴ had played a big role towards that decline. While the latter two pushed great scores of Palestinians – including Christian Palestinians – to seek refuge in nearby Arab countries and some European countries, the increase in the percentage of Jews in Mandate Palestine had influenced the drop of the Christian population percentage in contrast. Still, the main factor for the decline of the Christian population since the early 1990s is emigration.

According to Diyar's recent study entitled "The Presence of Christians in the West Bank and Their Attitudes Towards Church Related Organizations", most of those who choose to emigrate amongst the Christians of Palestine are mainly aggravated by the lack of freedom and security. The second main concern and motivation for emigration is the deteriorating economic situation in Palestine. On the scale of main causes of emigration, the latter is followed by political instability in the region, then by pursue of education abroad. At the bottom of the scale are family reunification, fleeing religious extremism and finding a spouse.

The survey also concluded that the demographic imbalance – less children and young adults – in the Christian population compared to that of the Muslim population in Palestine is attributed to emigration, as well as the desire to start a family in a relatively older age than the average age.²⁵

A report by the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs showed that 45,000 Palestinians had applied to diplomatic foreign representatives for immigration in 2006. Most of those Palestinians were either amongst the highly educated or business men, or both. This massively affects the levels of economy and education amongst the Muslims and Christians of Palestine. Similarly, the Survey on Palestinian Christians in the West Bank and Israel (2006) found that 4.5% of the sample of 1,500 Christian families – 7.5% in the West bank and 2.8% in Israel – had been processing emigration papers.

Many of the Christian localities in Palestine share the disturbance in population growth and demographics, and economic and social security due to high levels of emigration and, frequently, internal migration from villages to cities. Those who choose to emigrate, mostly seek settlement in Jordan, the Arab Gulf States, the USA, Canada, some European countries, and the rest of the Arab countries. Harassments by Israeli soldiers, few job opportunities, dire economic situation, closures and separation walls and fences that prevent the villagers from accessing the city, are various main reasons for emigration. In Birqin's case, those reasons, and more, force the young and the educated to seek refuge and security somewhere else. Abud and Taiyba, for instance, had lost an equivalent of about 60% of their total population since 1948, mainly, to Jordan, USA, Canada, and the Gulf States. Similarly, the levels of emigration in Beir Zeit reached more than half of its population, although it is a relatively large student town as Bir Zeit University, the biggest institute for higher education in the West Bank, is located there. Jifna town in the Ramallah Governorate had been struck by a wave of emigration in 1994, when it lost about half of its population who sought a better career at the time elsewhere.

On one hand, Qubebeh, in the Jerusalem Governorate, is one of the many villages that were extremely affected by the Nakba of 1948. Its population was estimated to be (799) in 1931 and (1730) in 1945 – all of whom were Christian – added to (877) nomadic Bedouins in 1945. About 2,000 people were evicted from the town when the Jewish Haganah militias destroyed most of the village's residential area. The refugees and the internally displaced, originally from Qubebeh, mounted to 12,253 Palestinians in 2007. According to the PCBS estimates, about 2,000 Palestinians lived in the village in 2006. Until recently, three

²⁴ **Nakba**; also known as War of 1948, was an Israeli-Arab war which broke out after the declaration of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948, and after which Israel seized control over 77.4% of Palestine. This rendered thousands of Palestinian refugees and 418 depopulated or destroyed Palestinian villages. **Naksa**; also known as War of 1967, happened when Israeli launched an attack on Egyptian posts on 5 June 1967, which "resulted in the Israeli occupation of the rest of Palestine, i.e., the Gaza Strip and West Bank, incl. East Jerusalem. [...] Israel illegally declared its jurisdiction over all the OPT on 27 June and formally annexed Arab Jerusalem on 28 June 1967". From **Towards Palestine**, JAI, 2006.

²⁵ For a summary of the main findings, please refer to Section F.

(extending) Christian families resided in the village. However, only 11 members of one of those families live in the village now, while the other 9 members of that same family spend most of their time in Jerusalem city. The two other families immigrated to the USA and a few members migrated to Jerusalem city. On the other hand, Zababdeh had relatively gained in population. Although the town had lost a lot of its residents to emigration, it is still considered a good alternative for internal migration, for some. Zababdeh holds a relatively high percentage of Christians; one drive for some Christians aiming for resettlement. Ain Arik, in comparison, could be one of the very few villages that have not been recently massively affected by emigration. Less than 500 people immigrated from Ain Arik to some European countries over the past 40 years. However, the village has a relatively small population to start with, especially if taken into consideration that a third of its population consists of refugees from surrounding villages and towns, and their offspring, who settled in Ain Arik Refugee Camp after the Nakba of 1948.

Moreover, Bethlehem Governorate ranks first for the highest Christian population and percentage of total population, as well as for the highest figure of Christian emigrants. Quite a significant number of Palestinian Christians originally from Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour now live in sizeable clusters in five continents. Immigrant and refugee Bethlehemite Christians are centered in South America, Australia, Jordan, the Gulf States, some European countries and other Arab countries.

In relation to emigration trends amongst the Christian denominations, and according to a small select sample, Palestine had lost, thus far, about 61 percent of its Armenian Orthodox, 50 percent Assyrian Orthodox, 32 percent Arab Greek Orthodox, 28 percent Roman Catholic, 15 percent Greek Catholic, and 8 percent Protestant (Rishmawi, 2007).

Section Resources:

- a. ***"Diyar's study on the Presence of Christians in the West Bank and Their Attitudes Towards Church Related Organizations"***, Field Survey conducted by Mousa Rabadi and Georgette Hazboun, 2008
please visit the following link for a full English version of the field survey:
http://www.annadwa.org/en/media/pdf/christian_english_research.pdf
or the following link for a full Arabic version of the field survey:
http://www.annadwa.org/en/media/pdf/christians_arabic_research.pdf
- b. **Survey on Palestinian Christians in the West Bank and Israel**, Sabeel, 2006
- c. ***Palestinian Christians under Israel and Palestine***, Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre, 2008
- d. Various reports by "Palestinian Christians: Strengthening Identity, Activating Potential" field workers, DIYAR, 2007-2008
- e. Palestinian Ministry for Foreign Affairs
- f. Rishmawi, Saliba, *A Research Study Report on the Influence of Arab Christian Emigration on the Churches and Its Holistic Ministry in the Bethlehem Region of the Holy Land*, 2007 - downloadable on the ELCJHL website (<http://www.elcjl.org>)

Section F

Diyar's Study on the Presence of Christians in the West Bank and Their Attitudes Towards Church-Related Organizations

2008

Main Findings

SUMMARY

The study tackles various recent uncertainties and issues related to the Christian population in the West Bank. These were: Christian coexistence in the West Bank, main challenges; Christian societal needs; services offered by Church-related organisations; and secular support to the church.

For the research, 366 statements by Palestinian Christians in the West Bank were chosen as the main sample, while discarding 7 for being void.

The characteristics portrayed by the sample could be applied onto the characteristics of the Christian population in the West Bank. The researchers had deliberately made a choice of a varied spectrum for their sample in terms of sex, age, nature of household, religious affiliation and political affiliation and had chosen the sample by locality in accordance with the percentage of the Christian population to that of the total population in each locality.

One of the main findings of the study, in terms of Church and Church-related organisations' contribution to Christian societal needs, was that these organisations cover 54.6% of the Christian communities' educational needs, 45.9% of their economical needs, and 48.9% of their health and medical needs. These percentages are quite close to those that indicate the share of the Church and Church-related organisations in terms of contribution to the Palestinian societal needs in the West Bank – see Table 4. Although the sample shows a level of disappointment of the Church-related organisations' contribution to their needs, the percentages clearly demonstrate that these organisations do attempt to cover societal needs of a broader spectrum of the Palestinian population, regardless of religious affiliation. Thus, these organisations are elaborately connected to the Palestinian society.

MAIN FINDINGS

One of the key questions projected onto the sample involved their expectations from church. The sample agreed on the following main needs and expectations:

- ☒ Secular and spiritual political meetings between the two faiths; Islam and Christianity
- ☒ Social and educational programmes
- ☒ Discrimination-free services, in terms of denomination or social status
- ☒ Ecumenical educational courses about Christianity and social conduct
- ☒ Enforcement of communications between clergymen and the heads of their churches
- ☒ Ecumenical accord between churches
- ☒ Maintaining church property, while including secular Christians within the responsibility range
- ☒ Supporting young Christians by providing training and job opportunities
- ☒ Providing family, woman and child health care, consultation, psychological support, and awareness programmes and aid
- ☒ Providing health and care services for people with special needs, the elderly and the chronically ill
- ☒ Establishing cultural centres
- ☒ Offering scholarships, financial aid, and facilitated financial loans
- ☒ Providing halls for social activities
- ☒ Establishing housing programmes

On the other hand, when asked about what they can offer to the church, the sample established the following;

- ☒ Voluntary work
- ☒ Providing educational support and activities by conducting courses
- ☒ Put political, social, environmental and economical programmes into practice within the Palestinian context through secular Christian organisations

The study also found out the following;

- ☒ Eighty five percent of the sample showed a solid tendency to link Christianity with the political peace process. More than half of the sample indicate that the church supports political involvement of its parish, while, slightly less than half consider church a role player in political affairs. Thus, about 45% of the sample agree on the need for organising programmes that advise coping mechanisms with the current situation, through the church or Christian-related organisations. In addition, more than 90 percent of the sample believe in human rights and that the church contributes in building a society that respects human rights and values and calls for freedom and diversity.
- ☒ About half of the sample believe that the Palestinian Christians and the Church in Palestine have a heavier economic burden than the other Palestinians. The great majority of the sample attach a responsibility on the clergy to take part in solving the financial problems of their own parishes. However, the majority, again, agree that they would rather it be a more practical approach of aid than a straight forward charity.
- ☒ There are several factors that affect the growth of the Christian population in Palestine in relation to the levels of reproduction, aptness of marital conditions and the economic situation. The great majority of the sample declare that the deteriorating economic situation is a main reason contributing to the reduced level of marriages amongst the 20 to 30 age group. Taking the latter into consideration along with other factors such as the feasibility of allocating good living conditions and housing, the number of births per Christian family had dropped. Not to mention, and as part of the Palestinian culture, taking care of an elderly or a sick member of the family places financial drains on the family.
- ☒ More than 80 percent of the sample acknowledge that the church and church-related organisations are highly interested in providing educational services to the community and about 60 percent say that the church and church-related organisations actually contribute in raising the educational level of the Palestinian population. Moreover, more than 70 percent of the sample accredit Christian private schools for providing a higher educational standard than that provided by public schools.
- ☒ Again, more than 80 percent of the sample agree that Christians have to be acquainted with the different beliefs in their society to be able to co-exist. In relevance to the latter, a similar percentage believe that Christian-Muslim as well as ecumenical dialogues are extremely required.
- ☒ Concerning health and medicine, more than 80 percent of the sample feel the need for more church-related medical institutes and services as they believe that the institutes already established along with the national health insurance does not cover all their medical needs – especially surgical treatments. It is worth mentioning that more than 75 percent of the sample stated that they seek out financial aid from church or church-related organisations to cover for their medical needs.

MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF SAMPLE

Table 14: Distribution of Sample

Locality	Quantity	Proportion
Bethlehem	56	15%
Beit Jala	57	15.3%
Beit Sahour	68	18.2%
Jerusalem	67	18%
Ramallah	49	13.1%
Bir Zeit	17	4.6%
Jifna	9	2.4%
Abud	7	1.9%
Taiyba	11	2.9%
Ain Arik	3	0.8%
Nablus + Rafidia	6	1.6%
Zababdeh	15	4%
Jenin	3	0.8%
Tulkarem	1	0.3%
Jericho	4	1.1%

Charts 7 – 17: Main Characteristics

