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# IRREGULAR MIGRATION, PALESTINIAN CASE. DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES

*Ismail Lubbad*

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**CARIM Analytic and Synthetic Notes 2008/70**

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**Irregular Migration Series**

*Demographic and Economic Module*

Cooperation project on the social integration  
of immigrants, migration, and the movement  
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**CARIM**  
**Euro-Mediterranean Consortium**  
**for Applied Research on International Migration**

**Analytic and Synthetic Notes – Irregular Migration Series**  
**Demographic and Economic Module**

**CARIM-AS 2008/70**

**Irregular Migration, Palestinian Case:**  
**Demographic and socioeconomic perspectives**

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This publication is part of a series of papers on the theme of Irregular Migration written in the framework of the CARIM project and presented at a meeting organised by CARIM in Florence: "Irregular Migration into and through Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries" (6 - 8 July 2008).

These papers will also be discussed in another meeting between Policy Makers and Experts on the same topic (25 - 27 January 2009). The results of these discussions will be published separately. The entire set of papers on Irregular Migration are available at the following address: <http://www.carim.org/ql/IrregularMigration>.

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## **CARIM**

The Euro-Mediterranean Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration (CARIM) was created in February 2004 and has been financed by the European Commission. Until January 2007, it referred to part C - “*cooperation related to the social integration of immigrants issue, migration and free circulation of persons*” of the MEDA programme, i.e. the main financial instrument of the European Union to establish the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Since February 2007, CARIM has been funded as part of the AENEAS programme for technical and financial assistance to third countries in the areas of migration and asylum. The latter programme establishes a link between the external objectives of the European Union’s migration policy and its development policy. AENEAS aims at providing third countries with the assistance necessary to achieve, at different levels, a better management of migrant flows.

Within this framework, CARIM aims, in an academic perspective, to observe, analyse, and predict migration in the North African and the Eastern Mediterranean Region (hereafter Region).

CARIM is composed of a coordinating unit established at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS) of the European University Institute (EUI, Florence), and a network of scientific correspondents based in the 12 countries observed by CARIM: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and, since February 2007, also Libya and Mauritania. All are studied as origin, transit and immigration countries. External experts from the European Union and countries of the Region also contribute to CARIM activities.

The CARIM carries out the following activities:

- Mediterranean migration database;
- Research and publications;
- Meetings of academics;
- Meetings between experts and policy makers;
- Early warning system.

The activities of CARIM cover three aspects of international migration in the Region: economic and demographic, legal, and socio-political.

Results of the above activities are made available for public consultation through the website of the project: [www.carim.org](http://www.carim.org)

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## **Abstract**

In this paper, particular attention is given to Palestinian refugees since they comprise over half of the world-wide Palestinian population. Demographic and economic data is used to study the impact of refugees on Palestinian society and the Palestinian economy.

The paper has four main sections: along with a brief review of the literature, the first section provides definitions of irregular migration and Palestinian refugees. The second section offers a detailed look at demographics, while the third section examines socioeconomic characteristics. Both the second and third sections offer comparisons between refugees and non-refugees in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt). A conclusion is given in the fourth and final section.

The data shows a variance in socioeconomic characteristics between Palestinian refugees and non-refugees living in the oPt. Both refugees and non-refugees live in similar social and economic settings, thereby strengthening solidarity amongst Palestinians. The article concludes by noting that the increasing numbers of young Palestinians in the oPt along with a trend of local de-development and a lack of economic opportunities will drive more Palestinians to emigrate. For Palestinian refugees, this will give rise to a second, or even third, displacement.

## **Résumé**

Dans cet article, l'accent est mis principalement sur les réfugiés Palestiniens puisqu'ils représentent plus de la moitié de la population palestinienne totale. Les données démographiques et économiques sont utilisées pour étudier l'impact des réfugiés sur la société et l'économie palestiniennes.

L'article est divisé en quatre principales sections. La première section, en plus de la revue de littérature, est consacrée aux définitions de «la migration irrégulière» et des «réfugiés Palestiniens». La seconde section donne un aperçu détaillé sur la démographie tandis que la troisième est centrée sur les caractéristiques socio-économiques. Dans ces deux dernières sections, on trouve des comparaisons entre réfugiés et non réfugiés des territoires Palestiniens occupés. La quatrième et cinquième sections sont conclusives.

Les données montrent une variabilité des caractéristiques socio-économiques entre Palestiniens réfugiés et non réfugiés, vivant dans les territoires occupés. Les deux groupes vivent dans des conditions sociales et économiques similaires renforçant ainsi la solidarité entre Palestiniens. L'article conclut que l'accroissement de la population jeune dans les territoires occupés, accompagné d'une tendance de développement local et de manque d'opportunités économiques, mènera plus de Palestiniens à l'émigration. Pour les réfugiés Palestiniens, ceci engendrera un second, ou même troisième, déplacement.

## **List of acronyms**

CARIM	Euro-Mediterranean Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FAFO	FAFO Institute for Applied International Studies
GS	Gaza Strip
GSWB	Gaza Strip and West Bank
IMR	Infant mortality rate
oPt	occupied Palestinian territories (also referred to as Palestinian Territories)
PA	Palestinian Authority (also referred to as Palestinian National Authority)
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
SEM	Southern and Eastern Mediterranean
SPSS	Statistical package for the social sciences
TFR	Total fertility rate
UN	United Nations
UNRWA	United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East
WB	West Bank
WBGS	West Bank and Gaza Strip

## **I. Introduction**

As part of a thematic session on irregular migration in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean (SEM) region, CARIM (Euro-Mediterranean Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration) proposed research into irregular migration flows in relation to Palestinians. Any research is hobbled because data on Palestinian irregular migration is unreliable and sparse. However, research has been carried out into Palestinian refugees, refugees being one of the three types of irregular migration. Given this, we focused on Palestinian refugees post 1948, after the Arab-Israeli War and the creation of the state of Israel. The United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) began gathering data on Palestinian refugees shortly after the war, and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) started carrying out census and socioeconomic surveys in 1994. Using this data, we were able to study the socioeconomic differences between refugees and non-refugees in the Gaza Strip (GS) and on the West Bank (WB), which make-up the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt). In brief, the facts reflect the following situation in the oPt:

- Refugees make-up around forty percent of the total population. Half of all refugees live in camps.
- With a high population growth rate, the refugee population will double by 2029.
- Both refugees and non-refugees have a similar age structure, with almost half the total population being under 15 years of age.
- The total mortality rate is slightly higher among refugees, while infant mortality is lower for refugees than for non-refugees.
- Non-refugees marry at a younger age than refugees.
- Non-refugees find work more easily than refugees.
- Refugees have a slightly higher literacy rate and complete higher levels of education.
- Poverty rates among refugees are somewhat higher than non-refugees and, significantly, more refugees live in deep poverty.
- More non-refugees live in housing than refugees, who tend to live in rented apartments.

### **I.1 Background**

The issue of irregular migration continues to strain SEM countries politically, economically, socially, and culturally. Massive flows of migrants move in and out of, and often times, within states. Push and pull factors vary across migrant groups, however, the majority seek higher wages, educational opportunities, safety and security, and marriage and family reunification. The type and number of restrictions placed on movement in home and destination countries have been added to in recent decades, particularly after the events of September 11; and migrants find increasing impediments put in their way. With ever tightening legal boundaries around the issue of migration, people are forced to migrate without proper documents or permits.

Crépeau and Nakache (2006) define an irregular migrant as one who “is in – or tries to enter – a destination country without proper authorization. This includes those who entered clandestinely, those who entered with forged documents, and those whose entry was legal, but whose stay in the destination country is not” (p. 5). What causes irregularity? Irregular migration results from a “mismatch” between legal restrictions in a host country and the number or type of people wanting to migrate from the country of origin (Ghosh, 1998, p. 34-35). Irregular migrants are often the most desperate, as they are willing to risk the consequences of irregularity (i.e. punishment and arrest) or willing to work in low wage jobs despite sometimes being over or wrongly qualified (ibid). Irregular migration takes on various forms and the lines between each category can sometimes blur.

CARIM (2008, p. 2-3) has identified and defined three types of irregular migrants: 1) irregular labour migrants, 2) transit migrants, and, 3) refugees or asylum-seekers. *Irregular labour migrants* satisfy demand from the informal economic sectors, which hire workers without reference to legal labor standards. They work in the host country while receiving lower pay and lack the benefits and rights granted to workers in the formal sector. There is great demand for irregular labour migrants, therefore, they often overstay their residence permits and become integral parts of the host country. *Transit migrants* are a new phenomenon in the study of international migration. Migrants become *transitory* when they are trying to move to a host or home country and 'get stranded' (p.3). Lastly, *refugee and asylum-seekers* make-up the largest number of irregular migrants in the SEM region (ibid). Despite fleeing their home country for safety, a major challenge for this group is that they are not recognized as refugees while they await asylum in a host country and cannot return to their country of origin (e.g.– Iraqi refugees following the Iraq War).

Each irregular migrant group presents unique challenges for policy-makers and for legal mechanisms, while producing equally complex consequences for states of both origin and destination. Then each group moves according to different push and pull factors yet often end up living side-by-side with non-refugees. In response to the vast number of irregular migrants flowing through the SEM region, countries have developed policies that protect their own citizens rather than work at “integrating immigrants into society” (ibid).

In 2005, the Lisbon Expert Roundtable (cited in Koser) developed another category of irregular migrants. As Koser (p. 5-6) explains, “irregular secondary movements refer(s) specifically to refugees who move in an irregular fashion” outside of the country that has granted them refugee status. They choose to move due to a lack of protection or “legal migration opportunities” (ibid). Irregular secondary movements may be applicable to the case of Palestinian refugees. Although there is no Palestinian state that can grant them refugee status, Palestinians who fled from their homes when Israel was created in 1948 are considered refugees, by international organizations (UN) and the Palestinian establishment (PA, PLO). Palestinian refugees, of which the majority live outside the Palestinian Territories, move irregularly in the SEM region, a result of political instability, lack of economic opportunities, and statelessness. Insufficient data makes studying this phenomenon among the Palestinians unfeasible at this juncture; however, it does offer a new concept for readers to consider.

Considering the three categories of irregular migration suggested by CARIM, the category into which Palestinians most easily fit is that of refugees. Certainly, the oPt is not a place of transit. And while the thousands of Palestinians who worked as day-labourers in Israel before the second *Intifada* come close to the definition of irregular labour migration, they were forced to return to the Palestinian Territories at the end of the working day and they lacked any legal right to reside in the country where they worked. Thus, according to Lubbad (2008, p. 7) day-labourers are classified as 'temporary' migrants. Palestinian migrants prove to be incredibly difficult to trace owing to the catastrophic events that have disrupted the Palestinian way of life beginning in 1948 with the creation of the state of Israel, and including the 1967 (Six Day) War and the 1991 Gulf War. For researchers, this makes analyzing issues related to their movement and livelihoods extremely difficult. Considering that the majority of Palestinians are refugees, a fact which has influenced Palestinian society profoundly, this paper will focus on this irregular migrant group as it survives in the oPt.

## **I.2 Literature Review**

Migration is an integral part of the Palestinian narrative and has had a great impact on Palestinian society: it produced and maintained a trend of ‘de-development, dependency, and conservatism’ (Hilal, 2007). Refugees from 1948 were thrown into a new life in camps where they lived on humanitarian aid. Since then refugees have waited to return to their homes in historical Palestine. But with ongoing occupation and conflict, closures and statelessness the creation of a fully-independent economy was



never brought about. As closures and occupation measures increased, many Palestinians developed conservative habits in order to preserve aspects of their culture and their social structure. Along with migration, other factors have had a significant impact on society: first, lack of statehood prevents Palestinians from engaging in economic agreements and prevents them from engaging in and planning or achieving sustainable socioeconomic development; second, there was significant long-term social and psychological damage from occupation and “colonial-settler rule”; and third, the separation between the WB and GS prevents political or socioeconomic unity (ibid, p. 11).

Due to the restriction on movement, the lack of job and educational opportunities, and the overall dissatisfaction and disillusionment that resulted from occupation and conflict, many Palestinians voluntarily left the GSWB for a better life. With a large stream of Palestinian migrants moving into and out of the oPt, Hilal states that the prosperity that accompanied better jobs and livelihoods helped to create a Palestinian middle class abroad (p. 12). In fact, almost half of the families in the oPt have an immediate relative living outside the GSWB (ibid, p. 5). A second factor in promoting out-migration was the availability of quality secondary education, which Palestinians view as “cultural capital” (ibid, p. 19). Palestinian families encouraged their children to attend universities in Arab states, the former Soviet Union, parts of Europe and North America, which facilitated the creation of wealthier Palestinians with political influence. The creation of the Palestinian Authority (PA) after 1994 provided thousands of public sector jobs in the WBGS and enlarged the middle class at home. Despite the growth of a white-collar Palestinian group, poverty and substandard living conditions remained for many living in the oPt, especially refugees in camps.

Refugee camps are seen as a “temporary habitat” for Palestinian refugees, as they are even now waiting to return to historical Palestine (Hilal, 2007, p. 2). Despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of Palestinians today were born after 1948, refugees see modern-day Israel as their home having been educated and brought up to believe in their right to return. A FAFO study showed that the social services offered to Palestinian refugees across Arab countries commonly exceeded those for non-refugees (Hanssen-Bauer & Jacobsen, 2007). Despite the poorer living conditions in camps, these free-of-charge services provide a way to offset the imbalance between refugees and non-refugees. The study showed that living conditions for refugees “generally resemble those of host countries’ populations” (ibid, p. 2). A greater divergence remains between rural and urban areas, the rural being disadvantaged by poor infrastructure (water sanitation, and electrical systems), and urban camps benefiting from UNRWA rehabilitation programs (FAFO, 2005, p. 144-45).

Hanafi (2008) points out that a lack of urban planning in the refugee camps has created slum-like conditions and “illegal building in all directions” (p. 7). This has meant problems that international agencies are unable to manage, and conditions may get worse before they improve. Roughly thirty to forty percent of households in refugee camps are overcrowded (three or more persons per room) (Hanssen-Bauer & Jacobsen, p. 6). Refugees *and* non-refugees living in the WB dwell in an Apartheid-like situation with checkpoints, constant surveillance, and the Separation Wall, which were implemented and are monitored by the Israeli armed forces (ibid, p. 8). Non-refugees in the GS also feel the impact of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a siege and near total blockade of goods that began in June 2007.

From 1998 to 2005 poverty rates increased by nearly thirty percent among both refugees and non-refugees, according to a UNRWA study concerning the socio-economic impact on both groups in the oPt (2006, p. 37). However, “the burden of poverty... was born disproportionately by refugees” as they comprise half the population and as they suffer from greater poverty levels (ibid).

With such hardship and hopelessness, many young people want to emigrate (44% of 18-29 year old) (Lubbad, 2008, p. 12). Many move to established Palestinian communities abroad that are near family or members of their local communities (Hilal, p. 6). Thus, the places Palestinians migrate to are not determined solely by where they originally lived (e.g. – rural or urban areas, or refugee camps) (ibid). This has caused experts on international migration to view their destinations “as a result of new forms of trans-national solidarity between different scattered communities” (ibid, p.7).

Due to continued conflict and occupation and with the absence of a self-ruling government, the oPt still relies on international donors for financial support and is therefore unable to create a self-sustaining economy. Interesting propositions for a way out of economic dependence using migration as a tool have emerged in recent years. Circular migration might be one way to utilize the movement of Palestinians that would provide a steady cash flow to the host country. According to Khalil (2008, p. 6), circular migration is when migrants move frequently back and forth between home and host country. With over half of Palestinians under 15 years old wanting to emigrate from the oPt (Lubbad, p. 12), the economic and social consequences of even a minority emigrating would be detrimental (Shaheen & Edwards, 2008, p. 1). Any mechanism that would bring youth back and forth between the oPt and host country could spur economic growth at home, prevent brain drain, and sustain social solidarity (Lubbad; Khalil 2008).

### **I.3 Methods and Data Sources**

Due to the lack of data on Palestinian migration, this paper will exploit alternative sources for tracking the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of Palestinian refugees in the oPt.

Data collected by UNRWA on Palestinian refugees is employed here. However, UNRWA data does not include sufficient information on demographic or socioeconomic characteristics. To fill this gap, three surveys conducted by the PCBS are also referred to: first, a national Family Survey (2006) that focuses on household characteristics; second, the Labor Force Survey conducted in the first quarter of 2008; and, third, a 2006 Poverty Survey. Raw data from the aforementioned surveys were analyzed in direct cooperation with PCBS. These surveys saw refugees and non-refugees questioned on topics related to the demographic and socioeconomic situation in the WBGs.

## **II. Demographic characteristics of Palestinian refugees**

Forced from their land during the Arab-Israeli War (1947-48), 700,000-750,000 Palestinians took refuge in neighboring Arab states including Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt (Schulz 2003; Gabiam 2006). Palestinians refer to this event, which led to the creation and establishment of the state of Israel, as “the Catastrophe” or *al-Nakba* in Arabic. Since 1948, the Palestinian way of life has been altered entirely, the exodus “shattering” their society (Hilal, 2007, 4). Other events caused waves of Palestinians to emigrate (the 1967 War), return to the WBGs (Oslo Agreement, Gulf War), or to lose their right to movement (Second *Intifada*).

### **II.1 Definition of a Palestinian refugee**

To provide relief and protection for Palestinian refugees, the United Nations (UN) created UNRWA under the UN General Assembly Resolution 302 (1949). The agency became operational in 1950 and since then it has provided humanitarian aid and social services, such as healthcare and education. Under an operational definition created by UNRWA, anyone “whose normal place of residence was Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948, who lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict” are classified as Palestinian refugees (UNRWA, 2007b). Its mandate has been renewed time and again as a result of occupation, economic dependence, absence of statehood, and the lack of a permanent and viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. UNRWA operates fifty-eight camps in WBGs, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt. As of 2007, more than 1.3 million Palestinians refugees live in these camps (UNRWA, 2007a).

The PCBS (2008a) uses a different definition of Palestinian refugees for statistical purposes, including censuses and surveys: “refugee status is a status for Palestinians who were expelled from the

Palestinian lands Israel occupied in 1948 including the male children and the grandchildren". Palestinian individuals are classified into the following categories:

1. Registered refugee: A refugee who has his or her name registered on the UNRWA card (food ration card).
2. Unregistered refugee: A refugee who is not registered on a UNRWA card (food ration card).
3. Non-refugee: Any Palestinian who does not belong to the previous two categories.

## II.2 Numbers of Palestinian refugees during the years of expulsion (1948-1950)

Concerning the numbers of Palestinian refugees expelled from 1948-50 many estimates have been published, including estimates from official British, American, Palestinian, and Israeli bodies as well as UNRWA (see Table 1). Estimates given by the British, American, and Palestinian sources are similar. In 1949 and 1950, the UN conducted two censuses. The estimates of the total Palestinian refugee population vary: the first estimate (1949) puts the total number at 726,000, while the later estimate (1950) at 957,000. Official Israeli sources estimate the number of Palestinian refugees at 520,000, which is 437,000 less than the second UN estimate. With such divergence among the estimates, tracing migrants accurately after the years of expulsion is extremely difficult. This trend is true today, and continues to hobble research into Palestinian migration in general and refugees in particular.

**Table 1: Estimated Palestinian Refugees (1948-1950)**

Region	Estimated Number of Palestinian Refugees (1948-50)				
	Official British Estimates	Official U.S. Estimates	United Nations Estimates	Official Israeli Estimates	Palestinian Estimates
Gaza Strip	210,000	208,000	280,000	-	201,173
West Bank	320,000	-	190,000	-	363,689
Arab Countries	280,000	667,000	256,000	-	284,324
<b>Total</b>	<b>816,000</b>	<b>875,000</b>	<b>726,000</b>	<b>520,000</b>	<b>849,186</b>

Source: PLO

## II.3 Current estimates of Palestinian refugees in the oPt and Arab states

Since 1948, the Palestinian population has doubled 7.5 times, with an estimated global population of 10.8 million (PCBS, 2008b). UNRWA figures show that the number of registered Palestinian refugees at the end of 2007 was 4.6 million. About 39% of the Palestinian refugees, or 1.8 million, live in the Palestinian Territories (16.3% in the WB and 23% in the GS) (UNRWA, 2007a). The PCBS estimates are higher, with refugees constituting 44.6% of the total population in 2006. According to the preliminary findings of the 2007 PCBS Census, the total population of the Palestinian Territories is 3.762 million; consequently, the number of refugees is, in accordance with such data, approximately 1.7 million people (2.062 million non-refugees).

The difference in figures between UNRWA and PCBS is a result of different data-collection methods. UNRWA relies purely on the voluntary registration of refugees; hence, the numbers includes deceased refugees and refugees who left the Palestinian Territories to live abroad for a period exceeding one year whose families failed to notify UNRWA. PCBS does not include such refugees in its numbers. Rather, PCBS counts refugees living in the Palestinian Territories at the time of census.

**Table 2: Estimated Palestinian Refugees by Refugee Status and Country, end 2007**

Country	UNRWA registered refugee	Percentage of annual increase 2006-2007	Percentage of the total	Registered refugees in camps
Jordan	1,903,490	2.4	41.7	332,948
Lebanon	413,962	1.4	9.1	219,201
Syria	451,467	2.1	9.9	121,898
West Bank	745,776	3.2	16.3	189,787
Gaza Strip	1,048,125	3.1	23.0	491,636
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,562,820</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,355,470</b>

Source: UNRWA, 2008.

Over sixty percent of UNRWA register refugees live outside the oPt in neighboring Arab states, including Jordan (1.9 million), Lebanon (0.4 million), and Syria (0.45 million) (Table 2). They also reside in the Gulf States, North America and Europe. One third of Palestinian refugees live in UNRWA camps in Arab countries. The spread of the Palestinian refugee population throughout the Middle East also reflects the difficulty not just in maintaining accurate statistics, but also in collecting them. Many Arab states established offices specifically to monitor Palestinian refugees and what might broadly be called Palestinian issues.

PCBS puts the annual growth rate of Palestinian refugees at 2.6%. According to this figure, the number of Palestinian refugees will double to 3.4 million in less than twenty-two years (by 2029), assuming that the natural population growth rates remain constant and that Palestinian refugees in the diaspora do not return. The Palestinian refugee population climbs by 78,000 persons per year, despite statelessness, internal and external conflicts, and socioeconomic hardship (Hanssen-Bauer & Jacobsen, p. 3). These figures are worrying, as Palestinian refugees, especially those living in refugee camps, must endure difficult living conditions without any tangible means for returning to historic Palestine or socioeconomic development.

Outside the camps, refugees make-up 41.3% of inhabitants in urban areas and 23.3% in rural ones; the refugee population is distributed by locality at 34.1%, 14.8%, and 51.1% for respectively urban areas, rural areas, and refugee camps. Many refugees left the camps for neighbouring towns and villages, which lack the infrastructure to absorb them. Additionally, in light of high unemployment rates in the oPt, especially in the camps (see Table 7), some refugees left after finding jobs outside the camps or abroad. Others left for marriage, or to join family members. Strong kin connections tend to keep refugees in the camps despite the overcrowded conditions and poverty. Refugees also receive many free services inside the camps, like education and healthcare, mainly from UNRWA.

#### II.4 Age structure of the population

According to PCBS (2006), there is negligible variance in age structure between Palestinian refugees and non-refugees. The percentage of individuals younger than 15 years of age in the oPt is 45.5%

(45.8% for refugees and 45.3% for non-refugees). High fertility rates, especially among the refugee population (4.9 births per women in 2006), accounts for the high proportion of youths in the oPt (PCBS, 2008). On the other hand, fertility rates declined during the second half of the last decade and will slow population growth somewhat. A high youth population means burdens on infrastructure and government or agency-led services. These must develop and implement programs not only to build housing, schools, and clinics, but also to create job opportunities in order for the population to avoid poverty while becoming self-sufficient.

**Table 3: Palestinian Population by Refugee Status in the oPt (%), 2006**

Age	Refugee	Non-Refugee	Palestinian Territory
0-14	45.8%	45.3%	45.5%
15-64	51.4%	51.6%	51.5%
65+	2.8%	3.1%	3.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: PCBS, 2006

## II.5 Fertility and parity

UNRWA (2006) figures show that the **total fertility rate (TFR)** among Palestinian refugees decreased and is almost in-line to the population in host countries. PCBS (2006) published similar findings, by which the TFR differed slightly between refugees (4.8) and non-refugees (4.6) in the oPt (Table 4). By comparison, UNRWA figures issued three years earlier indicated that the TFR of Palestinian refugees in the GS is higher than that on the WB (respectively 4.4 children per woman to 4.1). Thus, an increase in TFR among refugees in the oPt from 2003-2006 means that women are bearing more children despite an increase in unemployment, poverty, and food insecurity.

**Table 4: Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in the oPt in 2006**

Age Groups	Refugee Status		Palestinian Territory
	Refugee	Non- Refugee	
15 - 19	0.6	0.8	0.7
20 - 24	1.8	1.9	1.9
25 - 29	3.2	3.4	3.3
30 - 34	4.7	4.6	4.6
35 - 39	5.6	5.5	5.6
40 - 44	6.7	6.3	6.5
45 - 49	7.2	7.1	7.2
50 - 54	7.8		7.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>4.7</b>

Source: PCBS, 2006

## II.6 Infant and child mortality rates

**Infant mortality rate (IMR)** per 1,000 live births is a universally recognized indicator in the field of child health care. It is also one of the Millennium Development Goal indicators. In Arab countries, IMR has declined in the last twenty years (ESCWA, 2003). Between 1990 and 2003, refugees in the oPt also experienced a drop in IMR. On the WB, it fell from 26.5 to 15.3 deaths per 1,000 live births, and from 28 to 25 in the GS (Madi, 2004).

Since 2003, the PCBS surveyed IMR across the oPt between refugees and non-refugees in its Household Health Survey (2006). In 2006, IMR in the oPt totaled 25.3 per 1,000 live births and it varies slightly between refugees (27.3) and non-refugees (25.0). The mortality rate among children of five years of age or younger in the oPt totaled 28.2 per 1,000 live births. The mortality rate among refugee children (below 5 years of age) totaled 30.2 compared to 27.8 for non-refugees. The higher mortality rates among refugee infants and children under 5 reflect the inadequate health services available in the camps. Refugees receive free health care from UNRWA but in general cannot afford private health care and do not have regular check-ups. However, up to 90% of women on the WB and 99% in the GS receive pre-natal care (Hanssen-Bauer & Jacobsen, p. 7). Causes then for the variance between refugees and non-refugees require further study.

## II.7 Marital status

When looking at difference in **marital status** between females and males in the oPt, data show that 41.2% of males (aged 15 and above) have never been married compared to 32.1% of females in the same age group. The percentages do not vary greatly between male refugees (41.6%) and non-refugees (40.9%), or between female refugees (33.1%) and non-refugees (31.1%).

**Table 5: Population (15 years and over) in the Palestinian Territory by Sex, Refugee Status and Marital Status (%), 2006**

Sex/Refugee Status	Marital Status						Total
	Never Married	Legally Married	Married	Divorced	Widowed	Separated	
<b>Refugee</b>							
Male	41.6%	1.8%	55.5%	3.0%	8.0%	0%	<b>100</b>
Female	33.1%	1.5%	56.8%	1.2%	7.1%	0.3%	<b>100</b>
<b>Both Sexes</b>	37.4%	1.6%	56.1%	8.0%	3.9%	0.2%	<b>100</b>
<b>Non- Refugee</b>							
Male	40.9%	1.2%	57.0%	2.0%	6.0%	0.1%	<b>100</b>
Female	31.3%	1.5%	58.7%	1.1%	6.9%	0.5%	<b>100</b>
<b>Both Sexes</b>	36.1%	1.4%	57.8%	7.0%	3.7%	0.3%	<b>100</b>
<b>Palestinian Territory</b>							
Male	41.2%	1.5%	56.3%	3.0%	7.0%	0.1%	<b>100</b>
Female	32.1%	1.5%	57.8%	1.2%	7.0%	0.4%	<b>100</b>
<b>Both Sexes</b>	36.7%	1.5%	57.1%	7.0%	3.8%	0.2%	<b>100</b>

Source: PCBS, 2006.

Though slightly more refugees (56.1%) than non-refugees (57.8%) were married in 2006. More refugees complete high school than non-refugees (see Table 5), which persuades more non-refugees to marry (and to marry earlier) and find work to support their new families. The divorce rate was one percent higher for refugees and the widow rate was roughly the same between both groups (3.9% for refugees, 3.7% for non-refugees). It is noteworthy that the widower percentage (i.e. male widows) is higher among refugees (8.0%) than non-refugees (6.0%). Also, in the refugee population fewer females are widowed than males.

### **III. Socioeconomic characteristics of Palestinian refugees in the oPt**

#### **III.1 Education**

**UNRWA's presence in refugee camps** increased the quality of education for refugees. Accessibility improved as well, since education was offered free of charge. Thus, discrepancies are found between refugees and non-refugees both in terms of attainment and achievement. Refugees see education as the only option for future security. Non-refugees often have land and property that provides options for income, such as small businesses and agriculture.

##### *III.1.a. Literacy*

In the oPt refugees have a slightly higher rate of literacy when compared to non-refugees. In 2006, a PCBS family survey showed that among those over 15, about 93.6% of the refugee population are literate compared to 92.5% of non-refugees. Hence, illiteracy among refugees does not exceed 6.4%, including 9.6% for females and 3.3% for males, which reflects the educational advantage among refugees.

##### *III.1.b. Education level*

In its 2006 Family Health Survey, PCBS found that the percentage of refugees (aged 10 and above) who did not attend schools was 17.8% compared to 20.1% for non-refugees (Table 6). The percentage of people with primary (elementary) education is in favor of the non-refugees, whereas the percentages of those with preparatory school education among refugees or non-refugees are the same. However, the percentage for those with bachelor degrees and higher is 7.3% for refugees compared to 6.2% for non-refugees. Again, refugees are privileged in their access to education over non-refugees; though as unemployment increases in the WBGS, those with advanced education must seek better paying jobs abroad in order for their education to produce benefits for themselves and their families. Without stability and economic opportunities at home, the brain drain effect will continue and the general Palestinian population will suffer from a shortage of social capital.

**Table 6: Distribution of Palestinian Population 10 years and over by Educational level, 2006**

Educational level	Refugee Status		Total
	Refugee	Non-Refugee	
None	17.8%	20.1%	19.1%
Elementary	23.7%	26.1%	25.0%
Preparatory	28.3%	28.3%	28.3%
Secondary	18.5%	16.0%	17.1%
Associated Diploma	4.4%	3.3%	3.8%
B.A and above	7.3%	6.2%	6.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: PCBS, 2006.

## III.2 Labor

### III.2.a. Relation to labor force

According to the PCBS Labor Force Survey from the first quarter of 2008, 40.6% of Palestinians, including 14.7% of women, are part of the WBGs **labor force**. More non-refugee females (15.1%) are part of the labor force than female refugees (14.2%). The low percentage of female participation pinpoints the marginalization of women in the Palestinian economy. However, UNRWA's 2006 study showed an increase in the number of women employed in the oPt from the previous year, suggesting an improvement in the 'formalization' of female labor (p. 19). Palestinian women are encouraged to generate income to make ends meet, placing a further burden on them as unemployment continues to rise and their domestic roles remain the same. As a result of poor job creation and free education for refugees, there is a larger difference between male refugees and non-refugees, respectively 63.2% and 68.2%.

### III.2.b. Unemployment

In the first quarter of 2008, the unemployment rate in the oPt stood at 22.6%: refugee unemployment at 26.1% compared to 20.0% for non-refugees. The occupation, a state of siege, and general closure have caused these rates to climb, especially among camp-dwelling refugees, whose unemployment rate is 24% compared to 21% in rural areas. This phenomenon further illustrates the difficulty of finding work in camps where available private property is dwindling, a result of increased urbanization. Interestingly, unemployment is lower for females (17.4%) than males (20.5%) amongst non-refugees, highlighting the economic opportunities for women outside the camps.



**Table 7: Unemployment Rate for Palestinians (15 years and over) by Refugee Status, January-March, 2008**

Refugee Status	Unemployment Rate		
	Male	Female	Total
Refugee	25.8%	27.2%	26.1%
Non- Refugee	20.5%	17.4%	20.0%
<b>Palestinian Territories</b>	<b>22.7%</b>	<b>21.7%</b>	<b>22.6%</b>

Source: PCBS, 2008c.

### III.2.c. Employment Status

According to the same survey, in the first quarter of 2008, Palestinians (over 15 years old) in the oPt who are wage employees make up 62.5% of all those employed or 67.7% of refugees and 58.9% of non-refugees (Table 8). Nearly one-quarter (24.3%) of those own a business, with the rates diverging between refugees (21.0%) and non-refugees (26.5%). Due to scarcity of land in camps and high poverty rates, the percentage of refugees who own businesses in the Palestinian Territories is low in comparison with non-refugees.

Thousands of Palestinians worked as day-labourers, or low-paid unskilled or skilled workers, in Israel before 2000. Since that time, most of these workers have had no job or have worked at jobs that they have no practice in or training for. With the collapse of the construction and manufacturing industries in the GS since June 2007, more and more refugees turn to the service industry. Refugees working in the service sector stands at 48%, a higher percentage than among non-refugees (32%). As more camps are situated in urban areas, fewer refugees work in the agricultural sector: 8.8% compared to 15.7% for non-refugees.

**Table 8: Population (15 years and over) in oPt by Employment Status (%), 2008**

Refugee Status	Employment Status				Total
	Employer	Self	Wage	Unpaid Family Member	
Refugee	3.1	21.0	67.7	8.3	100.0
Non- Refugee	4.2	26.5	58.9	10.3	100.0
<b>Palestinian Territories</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>24.3</b>	<b>62.5</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: PCBS, 2008c.

### III.3. Living standards and housing conditions

#### III.3.a. Poverty

The siege and closures imposed by the Israeli government since September 2000 has increased the **poverty rates** in the oPt dramatically (Table 9). For the one-third (33.3%) of refugees living in deteriorating conditions without job opportunities, poverty is more of a threat than for non-refugees (29.1%). According to consumption patterns in households, the PCBS Poverty Report (2006) shows that the poverty rate reached 30.8% for both refugees and non-refugees. The similar poverty rate among both groups demonstrates the non-discriminatory nature of conflict, slow economic growth, and de-development. Moreover, similar wealth distribution provides an invisible line between the refugees and non-refugees, allowing for stronger unity and solidarity for Palestinians as a whole.

**Table 9: Population under Poverty Line According to Actual Monthly Consumption Patterns of Households and Refugee Status of Head of household, 2006**

Refugee Status	Value	Poor of Total Population
Refugee	33.3	43.1
Non- Refugee	29.1	56.9
<b>Palestinian Territory</b>	<b>30.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: PCBS, 2007b.

#### III.3.b. Type of housing unit and ownership

Most people in the oPt live in houses (61.4%) rather than apartments (37.0%) (Table 10). Scarcity of houses in camps means more refugees than non-refugees live in apartments. Of the total inhabited housing units in the oPt, 84.9% are privately owned in non-refugee housing units, and 85.3% are owned privately by refugees. Lack of urban planning and overcrowded conditions in camps has created vast urban sprawls, with houses sometimes built virtually on top of each other and divided by extremely narrow roads or pathways. As a result, refugee camps in the GS are some of the most densely populated places in the world.

**Table 10: Percentage Distribution for Occupied Housing Units, by Type of Housing Unit and Refugee Status, 2006**

Type of Housing Unit	Refugee Status		Palestinian Territory
	Refugee	Non- Refugee	
Villa	0.5	0.7	0.6
House	56.1		61.4
Apartment	42.2	32.9	37.0
Independent Room	1.1	0.8	1.0
Other	0.1	0.0	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: PCBS, 2007b.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The literature review and our exploration of different sources for migration figures indicates that studying irregular migration among Palestinians was achievable only for post-1948 refugees in the oPt. Palestinian refugees data has been collected by UNRWA since 1950 and by PCBS since 1994. Based on this data, it is possible to say that Palestinian refugees represent almost half of the total population in the oPt. A projection of the refugee population sees it doubling in less than twenty-two years to 3.4 million, assuming no change in population growth and no migration. With nearly half the population under age 15, the socioeconomic challenges facing Palestinian society will then increase dramatically. As poverty and unemployment rates continue to hold close to the quarter mark, it is important to ask how the PA and UNRWA will create jobs for the young and build infrastructure to sustain them. These pressing obstacles to Palestinian development and economic independence are then further hindered by the stateless nature of the oPt and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Young Palestinians are trying to find their own ways around these issues and at the top of their list is emigration. Refugees, who can find educational and job opportunities abroad, will be displaced a second-time if they choose to take up residency in their host country. Since they tend to migrate to already established Palestinian communities abroad, Palestinian national identity and the Palestinian resistance movement will remain strong and perpetuate the transnational nature of Palestinians. For non-refugees, the trends show their tendency to marry young and find employment earlier. They also have better access to permanent or privately-owned housing, and private property. These factors may increase the likelihood of their staying in the oPt.

The expulsion of Palestinians in 1948 created a new socioeconomic and geopolitical dynamic in the Middle East. Since Israel was founded on the land of historical Palestine, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and neighboring countries, in particular Jordan, are now heavily populated by Palestinian refugees. While economic conditions improved in all countries of refuge as a result of free services offered to refugees, the temporary nature of refugee life has failed to create and sustain a thriving independent economy. For the oPt, the economic woes of dependency perpetuate poverty and instability among refugees and non-refugees, while strong social cohesion and solidarity keep Palestinians from breaking under the constant pressure of occupation, conflict, and de-development.

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