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Emigration from Palestine: a gender perspective

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These papers will be discussed in two meetings between Policy Makers and Experts on the same topic in winter 2011. The results of these discussions will also be published.

The entire set of papers on Gender and Migration are available at
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Within this framework, CARIM aims, in an academic perspective, to observe, analyse, and forecast migration in Southern & Eastern Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan Countries (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 17 countries observed by CARIM: Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Palestine, Senegal, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey.

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.

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- Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan migration database;
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Abstract

Several factors make Palestine a case apart for the analysis and study of migration: a dependent state still under Israeli occupation; a dependent economy; no control over borders; the lack of sovereignty over land and natural resources; and the absence of detailed data on migration. Given these limitations, this note approaches several aspects of the gender dimension of migration from Palestine, by using a variety of sources, both national and international, in order to define the most comprehensive profile of Palestinian women on migration. As a whole, the propensity for Palestinians to emigrate has decreased in the last decades regardless of their level of education. However, the same analysis conducted according to sex, found evidence that highly-skilled women were more likely to emigrate than their male counterparts. As women are more likely to undertake tertiary education, and as, at the same time, socio-economic conditions do not improve, emigration is found to be a good (or necessary solution) in improving life conditions and trying to develop skills abroad. Indeed, the characteristics of women abroad are continually changing. Younger generations of Palestinian female emigrants tend to be better educated and tend too to participate more in the labor market of host countries. However, studying the link between gender and migration leads to a more comprehensive reflection on the cultural constraints faced by women in Palestinian society. Despite the disadvantaged position of women with respect to men in all labor-market indicators, the vast majority do not wish to migrate in order to stay with family or spouses. They often stop their education because 'they want to remain at home in housekeeping' or simply because 'their family does not allow them to continue studying'. These patterns suggest that the cultural environment is an 'obstacle' for women, both in leaving the country, their family and their spouses and in entering the Palestinian labor market. To conclude, while the gender gap is declining in Palestinian life and while Palestinian women abroad are better and better educated and ever more present in the labor market, greater efforts must be made in order to attain gender equality in all aspects of life at home.

Résumé

L'absence d'un Etat indépendant - en reste de l'occupation israélienne, une économie tributaire, l'absence de contrôle aux frontières, de souveraineté sur ses territoire et ressources naturelles, de données détaillées et actualisées se rapportant au phénomène de la migration, pour ne citer que ces facteurs, demeurent des points de crispation dans le débat. Au regard de ces limites, cette note adopte une approche pragmatique des aspects relevant de la migration palestinienne fondée sur la dimension genre, sur la base d'un recueil de sources nationale et internationale, en vue ensemble d'établir une définition compréhensive du profil de la femme émigrante palestinienne. En général, la propension des Palestiniens à émigrer a significativement diminué au cours de ces dernières décennies aussi bien parmi les hommes que parmi les femmes, et peu important encore le niveau d'éducation. Toutefois, la même analyse menée en termes de sexe révèle une propension à émigrer plus élevée et croissante de femmes hautement qualifiées par comparaison avec la gente masculine. Alors que les femmes disposent davantage d'un niveau d'éducation supérieur, sans que les conditions socioéconomiques ne s'améliorent, l'émigration est accueillie comme une bonne voire nécessaire solution en vue à la fois d'améliorer leurs conditions de vie et de développer leurs compétences à l'étranger. En effet, les caractéristiques de l'émigrante palestinienne résidant à l'étranger tendent à se modifier sur une base continue. Les jeunes générations d'émigrées palestiniennes sont de plus en plus éduquées, et tendent à participer davantage au marché du travail au sein du pays de destination. Toutefois, l'analyse du lien existant entre femmes et migration impose une réflexion plus compréhensive intégrant les contraintes culturelles pesant sur les femmes appartenant à la société palestinienne. En dépit de leur position désavantagée marquée au regard de tous les indicateurs du marché de travail - par comparaison avec leurs homologues masculins, la majorité d'entre elles se refusent à émigrer en vue de rester avec la famille et l'époux. Elles arrêtent très souvent leurs études dans la mesure où "elles veulent rester à la maison et s'occuper du foyer" ou simplement parce que "leur famille refuse qu'elles poursuivent leurs études". Ces caractéristiques sont le point de départ d'une réflexion à mener sur l'environnement

culturel érigé comme “obstacle” aux femmes dans leur volonté à la fois d’émigrer, de quitter leur famille et leur époux, et d’intégrer le marché du travail au sein du pays d’origine. En conclusion, il convient de relever que, bien que le *gender gap* tend à s’atténuer dans une série de secteurs, et que les femmes résidant à l’étranger sont de plus en plus éduquées et investies dans le marché du travail au sein du pays d’accueil, reste que des efforts supplémentaires doivent être fournis en vue d’obtenir une équation équilibrée entre égalité des opportunités et égalité des genres dans tous les aspects de la vie dans le pays d’origine.

Introduction

Migration is increasing all over the world and Palestinians are still affected by high emigration rates due to this community's unique situation. Palestinians are still in fact under occupation in a territory where they have no control over their borders. Moreover, since 1948 they have been continuously exposed to forced movements and have lived under abysmal socio-economic conditions.

Unfortunately, a major challenge for studying migration trends and migrants' characteristics here is that there is a lack of updated data: borders statistics are collected without detailed information on the characteristics of individuals; population registers are still under the control of the Israelis while no law enforcement exists to make people register their changes of residence; few comprehensive *ad hoc* surveys on migration have been carried out;¹ finally, Census data (1997 and 2007) only touches on internal and return migration. Given these challenges, this paper will focus on gender in international emigration from Palestine by using data provided by the institutions of the countries of destination together with the results of two *ad hoc* surveys on Palestinians residing in Syria and Lebanon managed by the PCBSNR, as well as the results of an *ad hoc* survey on "Migration from Palestine" conducted in 1999 by Birzeit University.

In the first section, a brief historical overview of emigration patterns from Palestine is presented; section 2 will focus, instead, on the gender dimension of Palestinian emigration by using destination countries' statistics, the two abovementioned surveys concerning Palestinians in Syria and Lebanon and the results of the Birzeit survey; in section 3, some interesting considerations are drawn concerning the potential link between education and emigration among Palestinian graduates, while section 4 is dedicated to return migration from a gender perspective. Finally, some conclusions and recommendations are offered.

1. A historical overview of emigration from the Palestinian Territory

Migration of Palestinians during the Ottoman period and before the end of World War I barely affected population growth and no accurate documented statistics at that time were available; nor are there any accurate statistics dating back to the British mandate. According to the BADIL- Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights (BADIL), from 1922 to 1947 (i.e. during the British Mandate) the hostile measures put in place by Great Britain against the Palestinians forced more than 40,000 Palestinians to leave their homeland, in addition to around 30,000 persons who were forced to leave their homes after these were destroyed by the British Administration (BADIL, 2007). However, the most important (forced) movements from Palestine occurred during the *Nakba* of 1948 and the 1967 war. The 1948 Arab-Israeli war was a watershed for Palestinian refugees. It led to the forced exile of 750,000-900,000 Palestinians according to different estimates (made by British, American and Palestinian sources), mostly to neighboring Arab countries – Jordan, Lebanon and Syria – where they were settled. Less than twenty years later, in 1967, about 350,000 more Palestinians were displaced as a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war (Zriq, 1997; Khawaja, 2008), ending up outside their country. At that time, the majority of them were settled in different geographical areas across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and in neighbouring Arab countries particularly Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, as well as in Europe, North and South America and other countries.

¹ Two notable exceptions are represented by the 'Migration Survey 2010', carried out by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and the 1999 *ad hoc* Survey on 'Migration from Palestine', conducted by Birzeit University. As to the former, unfortunately, results are not available at the time of writing. Regarding the latter, instead, the main results will be

2. Palestinians residing abroad: the role of women

In this section, three kinds of sources are used in order to analyze the main characteristics of Palestinians residing abroad and to understand better the role of women in outward migration patterns from Palestine. Namely, in section 2.1, statistics of destination countries are presented; section 2.2 approaches the conditions of Palestinians in Syria and Lebanon by using data from the two aforementioned surveys (see introduction); finally, section 2.3 presents the results from the Birzeit University emigration survey.

2.1 Statistics of destination countries

According to UNDP (2009), the stock of Palestinians abroad equaled 490,000 in 1960, 910,000 in 1990, 1.7 million in 2005 and 1.9 million in 2010. In relative terms, the proportion of Palestinians residing abroad as a percentage of the total Palestinian population at home stood at 44.5% in 1990 and 44.1% in 2005. As to the female emigrant population, their percentages as part of the total emigrant population did not vary significantly in this period (49.2% in 1960 and 49.1% in 2005) and confirm gender parity in emigration from Palestine.

The distribution of the Palestinian migrants around the world reveals that the majority reside in Arab countries 85.4%, followed by African countries (others than Africans) at 11.1%, European countries 2.3% and North America 0.6% (UNDP, 2009).

The **emigration rate** of Palestinians towards OECD countries declined from 3.7% in 1990 to 2.9% in 2000. As a rule of thumb, **the better educated an individual**, the more likely they are to emigrate. In 2000, the emigration rate stood, in fact, at 0.9% among those with a primary education; 2.9% for those with no more than secondary education; and 12.0% among those who had tertiary education (table 1).

Table 1. Emigration rate (*) of Palestinians directed towards OECD countries by level of education and sex, 1990, 2000

Level of education	1990				2000			
	Males (A)	Females (B)	Both sexes	Gender gap (A-B)	Males	Females	Both sexes	Gender gap (A-B)
Primary	1.8	1.6	1.7	0.2	1.1	0.8	0.9	0.3
Secondary	3.2	8.8	5.0	-5.6	2.6	3.4	2.9	-0.8
Tertiary	16.1	14.0	15.4	2.1	11.4	13.1	12.0	-1.7
Total	3.7				2.9			

Notes: (*) Emigration rate = (Palestinian emigrants at time t/labor force population resident in Palestine at time t)*100

Source: World Bank

From a gender perspective, it is worth mentioning that, as of 2000, the emigration rate is higher for men with a primary level of education (1.1% for men vs 0.8% for females), while the contrary is true at higher levels: in populations with secondary education it stands at 2.6% for men and 3.4% for women, while among those with a tertiary education the same value stands at 11.4% for men and 13.1% for women). By comparing the gender gap in 1990 and 2000, this differential behavior by sex comes out, suggesting an increasing propensity among educated Palestinian women to emigrate when

(Contd.) _____

reported in this analysis. Further, the results of two surveys managed by PCBSNR dealing with the conditions of Palestinians in Syria and Lebanon are reported as well.

compared to men. As women are increasingly going through tertiary education,² and as socio-economic conditions do not improve, emigration is a good, perhaps even a necessary solution for improving life conditions and trying to develop skills abroad.

The propensity of highly-skilled Palestinians to emigrate is confirmed by looking at the stock of Palestinian residing in OECD countries around 2000: the majority (59.5%) had a university degree or above, 20.4% a secondary diploma, while 20.1% had only primary education (table 2). Again, the educational profile improved from 1990 (where the proportion of those having a tertiary education was 46.9% to 2000 (table 2).

Further, despite men being better educated than women, the gap by sex tends to diminish over time. In 1990, the proportion of males with a tertiary education out of all Palestinians abroad was 58.7% vs 30.1% for females, meaning a gap of 28.6 percentage points (p.p.). In 2000, instead the same values stood at 62.7% for men, 55.1% for women, with a gender gap then equal to only 7.6 p.p. (table 2).

Table 2. Palestinians residing in OECD countries by sex and level of education, 1990, 2000

Level of education	1990						2000					
	Males		Females		Both sexes		Males		Females		Both sexes	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Primary	4,402	27.6	4,816	42.9	9,219	33.9	3,418	17.8	3,231	23.3	6,650	20.1
Secondary	2,201	13.8	3,039	27.0	5,241	19.3	3,739	19.5	3,005	21.6	6,744	20.4
Tertiary	9,371	58.7	3,383	30.1	12,754	46.9	12,018	62.7	7,655	55.1	19,673	59.5
Total	15,974	100.0	11,238	100.0	27,214	100.0	19,175	100.0	13,891	100.0	33,067	100.0

Source: World Bank

2.2 Palestinians residing in Syria and Lebanon: results from two *ad hoc* surveys

In what follows we try to understand the gender dimension of Palestinian emigration in Syria and Lebanon by exploring the characteristics of Palestinians as provided by two recent surveys conducted by the PCBSNR in cooperation with some international institutions. In details, these are: 1) the *MICS III for Palestinians in Syria and Lebanon* conducted in **2006** among Palestinians residing in Syria and Lebanon and managed by the PCBSNR, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the General Authority for Arab Refugees (GAPAR) (PCBSNR, UNICEF and GAPAR, 2006); 2) the *Survey on Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon* conducted in **2008** among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and managed by PCBSNR, UNICEF and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) (PCBSNR, UNICEF and UNIFEM, 2009).

As to the **age** of emigrants, the Palestinian population is young both in Syria (2009) and Lebanon (2008). Almost one third is aged 14 years or younger. As to the working age population, it is worth mentioning that in both countries **women tend to prevail in the 15-24 age group**, while the contrary occurs in the 25-44 age group. This pattern is probably related to the peculiar job sectors where women are employed in both countries and is also due to the fact that Palestinian men (aged 15-24), especially those with a high level of education, tend to seek migration in other places rather than Syria and Lebanon due to limited work opportunities and difficult living conditions, particularly in Lebanon where, until recently, they were not allowed to exert independent and qualified professions, e.g. physicians, lawyers, journalists, engineers and pharmacists (Muhsen, 2008). Concerning the

² In the academic year 1997/1998, the sex ratio (males/females*100) among university students was 120.3% while in 2007/2008 the same value stood at 81.1% (PCBS, 2009).

population aged between 45 and 64 years old, the situation is more differentiated by host country: while in Lebanon women tend to prevail, in Syria the contrary is true (table 3).

Table 3. Palestinians residing in Syria (2009) and Lebanon (2008) by age group and sex (in %)

Age group	Males		Females		Both sexes		Sex ratio	
	Syria	Lebanon	Syria	Lebanon	Syria	Lebanon	Syria	Lebanon
0-4	10.0	8.2	9.5	8.5	9.8	8.4	105.7	94.9
5-9	11.8	12.1	11.5	10.8	11.7	11.4	103.0	110.3
10-14	11.8	13.8	11.6	12.7	11.7	13.2	102.1	106.9
15-19	11.9	13.2	11.8	12.0	11.9	12.6	103.0	108.3
20-24	11.1	10.5	10.2	8.5	10.7	9.5	109.3	121.6
25-29	7.8	6.5	8.1	7.1	7.9	6.8	96.7	90.1
30-34	6.3	6.1	7.1	7.3	6.7	6.7	89.1	82.2
35-39	5.8	6.6	6.9	7.8	6.3	7.2	84.4	83.3
40-44	5.7	6.5	6.0	6.8	5.8	6.7	95.4	94.1
45-49	4.6	4.2	4.2	3.9	4.4	4.0	110.0	106.0
50-54	3.5	3.0	4.0	3.4	3.7	3.2	87.9	86.8
55-59	2.5	2.1	2.4	2.7	2.4	2.4	104.6	76.5
60-64	2.7	2.2	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.4	113.0	83.3
65-69	1.8	1.8	1.6	2.2	1.7	2.0	113.0	80.5
70+	2.7	3.2	2.7	3.7	2.7	3.5	100.4	85.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.4	98.4

Source: General Authority for Arab Refugees (GAPAR) for Syria; Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and Natural Resources (PCBSNR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), 2009

Data on the **marital status** of Palestinians residing in Syria (in 2006) and Lebanon (2008) reveal that, as might have been expected, women are more likely to be married, even if the gap is not so large (53.3% among females vs 50.7% for males). Surprisingly, in Lebanon the contrary is the case. More men than women tend to be married (55.6% vs 49.8%), while an impressive number of females are widowed (10.5%) (table 4).

Table 4. Palestinians (aged 15 +) residing in Syria (2006) and Lebanon (2008) by marital status and sex (in %)

Marital status	Syria		Lebanon	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Never married	48.3	40.8	41.6	36.7
Married	50.7	53.3	55.6	49.8
Divorced	0.5	1.7	1.1	3.0
Widowed	0.5	4.2	1.7	10.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: PCBS, UNICEF and GAPAR, 2006 for Syria; PCBS, UNICEF and UNIFEM, 2009 for Lebanon

Data on **illiteracy** among Palestinians in both Syria (2006) and Lebanon (2006) show a positive gender gap for the sake of females in young age groups, i.e. 15-24 in Syria and 15-39 in Lebanon, while the opposite is true in older age groups; this pattern could be explained by the fact that the gender gap was negative for females with regard to enrollment in education among past generations, but that then it has tended to decline over time (table 5).

Table 5. Illiteracy rate (*) of Palestinians residing in Syria and Lebanon by sex and age group, 2006

Age group	Syria		Lebanon	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
15-19	7,2	5,9	11,1	7,3
20-24	9,3	8,2	14,1	8,1
25-29	8,9	9,4	17,9	13,0
30-34	8,6	11,1	21,6	17,4
35-39	9,1	13,7	24,5	22,8
40-44	13,2	19,3	22,2	29,9
45-49	10,7	23,1	18,8	32,5
50-54	11,2	36,2	19,4	49,8
55-59	14,6	49,1	28,9	71,6
60-64	23,6	60,7	31,7	82,2
65-69	30,8	79,9	47,7	92,4
70-74	43,2	88,8	55,6	91,3
75+	58,4	91,9	67,6	96,3
Total	12,3	20,7	21,3	29,5

Notes: (*) Illiteracy rate = (Population who can read and write with understanding a short simple statement on his/her everyday life/total population)*100

Source: PCBS, UNICEF and GAPAR, 2006

Indeed, by comparing table 5 and 6, an **improvement** in the overall educational profile of Palestinian women residing in Lebanon is confirmed: the proportion of illiterate Palestinian females, indeed, decreased from 29.5% in 2006 to 25.7% in 2008.

Table 6. Palestinians (aged 10+) residing in Lebanon by level of education and sex (in %), 2008

Level of education	Males	Females
Illiterate	21.6	25.7
Primary	38.4	33.5
Preparatory	19.3	24.0
Secondary and above	20.7	16.8
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: PCBS, UNICEF and UNIFEM, 2009

Data on Palestinians in Syria (2000) allow a comparison by sex regarding **participation in the labor market and unemployment conditions**. As to the former, women tend to participate less in the labor market; though this performance is largely to be expected, the gender gap is extraordinarily high with a participation rate equal to 80.0% for males and 18.0% for females. However, the situation seems to improve for highly-educated female migrants and thus for the new generations which tend to

be better educated. Indeed, the gap differs from 75.7 p.p. among those holding an elementary degree (including those who can read and write) only to drop to 56.2 p.p. among those with a preparatory or secondary degree and finally goes down to 23.1 p.p. among those with a secondary or higher educational level (table 7a). As might be expected for marital status, the gender gap in the participation rate is lower for those who have never been married (46.7 p.p.) than for married individuals (73.1 p.p.) (table 7b).

Table 7. Participation rate (%) of Palestinian labor force population residing in Syria by level of education and sex (7a) and by marital status and sex (7b), 2000

Educational attainment (7a)	Males (A)	Females (B)	Gender gap (A-B)
Illiterate	46.6	6.6	40.0
Elementary or can read and write	87.0	11.3	75.7
Preparatory or secondary	71.0	14.8	56.2
Above secondary	90.6	67.5	23.1
Marital status (7b)	Males (A)	Females (B)	Gender gap (A-B)
Never married	73.2	26.5	46.7
Married	86.4	13.3	73.1
Divorced/separated	82.2	33.2	49.0
Widowed	29.2	8.0	21.2
Total	80.0	18.0	62.0

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and Natural Resources-Damascus

As to **unemployment dynamics** by sex in Syria, it is worth mentioning that young women (aged 15-24) are more likely to be unemployed than their male counterparts (table 8), despite women in this age group being better educated (or at least less illiterate) (see table 5 above). This gives a fair idea of the **kind of work available for Palestinians in countries like Syria and the likely mismatch between their 'natural' occupation and that on offer**. The unemployment rate of the rest of the population seems, instead, to be more favorable for women.

Table 8. Unemployment rate (%) among Palestinians residing in Syria by age group and sex, 2000

Age group	Males	Females
15-24	28.4	37.7
25-34	13.4	13.5
35-44	10.3	7.0
45-54	9.8	6.1
55+	17.5	13.1

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and Natural Resources-Damascus

2.3 Results from the 1999 *ad hoc* survey

A survey conducted in the West Bank by Birzeit University in late 1999 revealed that there were on average 1.2 emigrants per household (Gicaman and Jonson, 2002), taking into consideration individuals directly related to the head of household such as the father, mother, children, siblings or spouses. 55% of these emigrants were male and the majority of total migrants were aged between 35 and 54 years old.

As to their profile, Palestinian emigrants show a **high level of education**: 19% hold a secondary educational degree, 20% a university or college degree and 3% a post-graduate degree.

Of all migrants, 30% reported work as their **reason for emigration**, 29% marriage, and 11% education, while 14% reported other reasons such as being born abroad or accompanying someone else. A significant proportion (16%) migrated due to expulsion. There were significant differences between males and females regarding motives for migration. Half of the males left for work, 2% for marriage, 19% for study and 20% were expelled, while only 5% of women left for work, 61% for marriage, 1% for study and 12% were expelled. It was clear that the oldest migrants left because of expulsion. Of those aged 50 years and over, about 56% left for this reason, while younger males (15-49 years) typically left for work (66%). On the contrary, younger females (under 35 years) tended to leave for marriage (67%).

The results of the survey indicate that camp dwellers accounted for a higher percentage of those who emigrated to Jordan (72%), while more villagers (33%) migrated to the US and Canada, and more urban migrants (28%) migrated to the Gulf States. These results indicate that patterns of migration are linked to **family histories and job opportunities**; villagers are mostly found in the US where there is a higher demand for unskilled labour and fewer special qualifications, and urban migrants with generally higher levels of education are mostly found in the Gulf. Palestinian villagers migrating to the US tend to take up difficult or dangerous forms of unskilled work with the help of relatives and friends from their place of origin who have settled abroad. This help from the Diaspora is how Palestinian villagers find work in the US. Furthermore, a high percentage of Palestinians working in the US are employed by Palestinian and Arab businesses. In brief, Palestinians who have moved to the US have typically received help from friends and relatives and are employed in unskilled jobs. Palestinians migrating to work in the Gulf States need higher levels of education, given that dangerous or unskilled work is carried out by migrants from other parts of the world who cost less than Palestinians.

Of the Palestinians residing in Jordan, most of whom have Jordanian nationality, 66% had only primary education and 33% had higher levels of education, of which 39% had secondary education, 40% had a university degree and 20% had a postgraduate qualification. By contrast, **27% of migrants residing in the Gulf States and other Arab countries had only primary education, and 73% had higher levels of education.**

Regarding the distribution of the Palestinian migrants by **period of migration and destination**, emigration was higher in the Oslo period (1994-1999) than during the first *Intifada* (1988-1993). On the other hand, emigration to the US and Canada increased after 1968. There were regular financial links with 15% of migrants: 22% among males and 7% among females. Of the 22% male emigrants who maintained a link, more sent money (14%) than received money (8%), and of the 7% of females who had a link, more received financial support (4%) than sent money back (2%). By receiving country/region, migrants in the US are more likely to send money back home (30%) than migrants in the Gulf States. In the latter, remittances have declined in comparison to previous periods and other destinations, where financial links are weaker and, in case of Jordan, more money flows out to emigrants than back to Palestinian households.

3. Emigration among graduates: the impact of gender

Unemployment, unstable political conditions and high levels of poverty are likely to be the main triggers to emigration from Palestine regardless of sex. However, by looking at a specific population, e.g. highly-skilled individuals, gender-specific differentials related to unemployment and working conditions seem to put females in a more disadvantaged position compared to males and ultimately means a higher propensity to leave the country.

In order to get to grips with this issue, the results of a survey on Palestinian graduates implemented by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2005) has been used. This survey was carried out in 2005 and conducted among Palestinians who graduated in the period 1987-2005.

By looking at data by **field of education** and sex, it becomes clear that female graduates are concentrated in the humanities (25.8%), teaching and training programs (13.8%), the social sciences (12.9%) and commercial and business programs (10.7%). The main specializations for men are, instead, related to commercial and business programs (20.1%), followed by the humanities (17.4%), engineering programs (12.3%) and the social sciences (10.7%) (table 9). The higher propensity of females to be involved in such specializations is certainly related to cultural factors that mostly accept the work of females in these occupations, as well as in the services sector; about 55.2% as compared with 34.2% of males in 2008. The gender gap in specialization clearly reflects this fact.

Table 9. Palestinians who graduated in the period 1987-2005 by field of education and sex (in %), 2005

Field of education	Males	Females	Both sexes
Teaching training programs	4.2	13.8	7.7
Humanities	17.4	25.8	20.4
Social and behavioral science programs	10.7	12.9	11.5
Commercial and business administration programs	20.1	10.7	16.7
Law programs	5.1	1.9	3.9
Natural science programs	4.5	7.8	5.7
Mathematics and computer science programs	7.1	7.8	7.3
Medical science programs	9.6	6.5	8.5
Engineering programs	12.3	3.7	9.2
Other specializations	9.0	9.1	9.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Graduates	99,327	57,512	156,839

Source: PCBS, 2006a

A significant gender gap exists in terms of **labor-force status**, putting graduate women in a more disadvantaged position than men. 32.5% and 27.8% of female graduates are unemployed and inactive respectively, whereas the same values stand at 20.3% and only 2.7% for men (table 10).

Table 10. Palestinians who graduated in the period 1987-2005 by labor force status and sex (in %), 2005

Labor force status	Sex		
	Males	Females	Both sexes
Wage employee	64.0	38.2	52.4
Employer/self employed/unpaid	13.0	1.5	7.8
Unemployed	20.3	32.5	25.8
Didn't work and not seeking a job	2.7	27.8	14.0

Source: PCBS, 2006a

By looking at the distribution of females by **labor force status and year of graduation**, the proportion of inactive people shows some positive evidence: indeed, it tends to decrease over time, meaning that the younger generations are more likely to search for jobs or – from a negative perspective – are less discouraged in the hope of finding a job since the time for looking for a job is shorter than in previous generations. Otherwise, as expected, the proportion of unemployed females is higher among the younger generations of graduates (table 11).

Table 11. Palestinian females who graduated in the period 1987-2005 by labor force status and year of graduation (in %), 2005

Labor force status	Year of graduation		
	1987-1993	1994-2000	2001-2005
Wage employee	35.2	45.9	34.3
Employer/self employed/unpaid	1.9	1.4	1.3
Unemployed	22.2	23.5	43.3
Didn't work and not seeking a job	40.7	29.2	21.1

Source: PCBS, 2006a

The **unemployment rate by field of education and sex** sheds light on important issues regarding the disadvantaged position of women in the Palestinian labor market. Indeed, females are concentrated in educational branches, which qualify them to work in the services sector (health, education and other services sectors), also an acceptable work environment culturally. But this is one with high unemployment for female graduates due to excess unplanned numbers of graduates in each of these specialties. In fact, the unemployment rate among female graduates stands at 37.8% in 2005 (vs 14.6% for men), a value which is higher than the average value for those graduated in ‘Social and behavioral science programs’ (43.4%, i.e. + 5.6 p.p. than the average value) and ‘teaching training programs’ (42.8%, i.e. + 5.0 p.p. than the average value). Then, as with their male counterparts, other difficult specializations are represented by ‘commercial and business administration programs’, where the rate of unemployment equals 39.8% for women and 19.2% for men (+ 2.0 p.p. and + 4.6 p.p. than the average rate of unemployment for women and men, respectively) and ‘engineering programs’, where the rate of unemployment is 39.2% for women and 15.4% for men (respectively + 1.4 p.p. and + 0.8 p.p. over the average rate of unemployment respectively for women and men) (table 12).

Table 12. Unemployment rate among Palestinian graduates aged 20 years with bachelors and above by field of specialization and sex (in %), 2005

Field of specialization	Sex		
	Males	Females	Both sexes
Teaching training programs	13.2	42.8	31.6
Humanities	10.4	37.1	22.3
Social and behavioral science programs	15.2	43.4	25.4
Commercial and business administration programs	19.2	39.8	23.1
Law programs	17.9	-	22.1
Natural science programs	10.9	31.7	20.6
Mathematics and computer science programs	11.1	36.6	19.8
Medical science programs	8.6	24.4	12.5
Engineering programs	15.4	39.2	18.6
Other specializations	20.2	35.6	25.2
Total	14.6	37.8	22.2

Source: PCBS, 2006a

Further, the percentage of graduate females who would accept a job if offered was 37.5% at the end of 2005 compared with 42.5% for male graduates. Data from the same survey showed that the decision to stay outside the labour force came down to the desire to continue education among males (42.5%) compared with only 5.9% for females who were instead more likely to stay at home (72.7%). Another indicator of this cultural gap by sex is the proportion of those who are not allowed to work, i.e. 7.9% for women and no men (table 13).

Table 13. Palestinians who graduated in the period 1987-2005 by reason for being outside the labor force and sex (in %), 2005

Reason for being outside the labor force	Sex		
	Males	Females	Both sexes
Continue education	42.5	5.9	9.8
Housekeeping	0.0	72.7	6.4
Discouraged	9.5	6.4	6.7
Not allowed to work	0.0	7.9	7.1
Others	48.0	7.1	11.4

Source: PCBS, 2006a

Despite all the analyzed indicators putting women in a more disadvantaged position, **their link with emigration is not obvious at all**. In fact, when women were asked about their wish to emigrate and their required conditions, the vast majority stated that, in principle, they would not accept work abroad (85.2% vs 31.0% for males) (table 14). Despite this part concerning only intentions (and intentions, of course, change), the high proportion of women in the category suggests that the cultural environment is an 'obstacle' for women, both in leaving the country, their family and their spouses and in entering the labor market at home.

Table 14. Palestinians who graduated in the period 1987-2005 by acceptance/non acceptance to work abroad and sex (in %), 2005

Acceptance/non acceptance to work abroad	Sex		
	Males	Females	Both sexes
Accept to work in Arab countries with conditions	14.9	8.4	10.8
Accept to work in any country with conditions	13.0	2.0	6.1
Accept to work in Arab countries without conditions	14.9	3.1	7.5
Accept to work in any country without conditions	26.2	1.3	10.7
Do not accept to work abroad	31.0	85.2	64.9

Source: PCBS, 2006a

4. Return migration: a gender perspective

It is apparent in the data of 2006 on returnees that they are concentrated in the younger age groups; almost 50% of them are in the 15-39 age group. Yet still there is a variation by region: the West Bank is higher 49.9% compared with 45.5% for the Gaza Strip; this can be explained by the present state of affairs in Gaza, where moving outside or even going to the Gaza Strip is extremely different because of the blockade imposed on Gaza since 2006. About 10% are under 14 years of age, i.e. dependent individuals of the returnees (table 15).

Table 15. Palestinian return migrants by age group and region (in %), 2006

Age group	Region		
	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Palestinian Territory
0-14	11.1	9.1	10.4
15-24	23.7	24.0	23.8
25-39	26.2	21.5	24.5
40-59	26.2	20.9	24.3
60+	12.8	24.5	16.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: PCBS, 2006b

The Palestinian population sex ratio is 103 males per 100 females. Among Palestinian returnees, the same value is observed, where male returnees constitute about 53-54% in 1997 and 2006 (table 16).

Table 16. Palestinian return migrants by sex (in %), 1997, 2006, 2007

Sex	1997	2006	2007 (*)
Males	53.6	53.3	51.0
Females	46.4	46.7	49.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Notes: (*) Data represent only the West Bank

Source: PCBS, 2006b

The majority of returnees in 2006 are married (63.4%) and more than a quarter are single (28.0%) (table 17). It is worth mentioning that there is no significant variation according to region. These results are consistent with the fact that the married are seeking job opportunities to support their families, while singles are seeking jobs for new families as well as to support their families of origin.

Table 17. Palestinian return migrants by marital status and region (in %), 2006

Marital status	Region		
	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Palestinian Territory
Single	28.8	26.7	28.0
Married	64.9	61.0	63.4
Divorced	0.7	1.7	1.1
Widowed	5.3	10.3	7.1
Separated	0.4	0.2	0.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: PCBS, 2006b

More than two thirds (68.4%) of returnees have a secondary or intermediate diploma and 12.6% hold a bachelor degree or above (10.8% for the West bank compared with 16.0% in Gaza Strip) (table 18).

Table 18. Palestinian return migrants by level of education and region (in %), 2006

Level of education	Region		
	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Palestinian Territory
Illiterate	5.8	16.9	9.8
Can read and write	9.6	8.4	9.2
Basic and secondary	65.5	53.3	61.1
Intermediate diploma	8.3	5.6	7.3
Bachelor or above	10.8	16.0	12.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: PCBS, 2006b

Conclusion

It is clear that Palestinians are not different from other populations with regard to migration generally. But still the Palestinians are unique in the number of factors that complicate the issue: a dependent state, still under Israeli occupation; a dependent economy; no control over their borders; the lack of sovereignty on land and natural resources; and the absence of detailed up-to-date data on migration are still unsolved issues.

Given these limitations, this note has approached the main aspects of the gender dimension of migration from Palestine, by using a great variety of sources, both international and national in order to define the most comprehensive profile of Palestinian women on migration.

As to outward migration, the propensity to emigrate for Palestinians has tended to decrease in the last decades both for men and women regardless of their level of education. However, the same analysis conducted according to sex, found evidence of a rising tendency for highly-skilled women to emigrate as compared to their male counterparts. As women increasingly graduate, and socio-economic conditions fail to improve, emigration is found to be a good (or necessary solution) for improving life conditions and trying to develop skills abroad. Indeed, the characteristics of women abroad are continuously changing. Younger generations of Palestinian female emigrants are better educated and tend to participate more in the labor market of host countries.

In order to look at the socio-economic gender specific determinants of emigration, women are in a more disadvantaged position with respect to all labor-market indicators: they participate less in the labor market and the rate of unemployment is higher with respect to men. The worst outcomes are faced by female graduates in 'social and behavioral science programs' and 'teaching training programs', the main specializations of Palestinian women. Notwithstanding these disadvantaged positions, their links with emigration is not obvious at all. In fact, when women were asked about their wish to emigrate and required conditions, the vast majority stated that, in principle, they would not accept work abroad. We are dealing here with intentions and intentions, of course, change, but this high proportion of women who do not want to emigrate reflects once more the cultural environment as an 'obstacle' for women, both in leaving the country, their family and their spouses and in entering the labor market at home. By looking at potential migrants, the paper found, however, evidence of the persistence of a cultural background in Palestinian society which is likely to constrain Palestinian women.

To conclude, while the gender gap is declining in many fields, still more efforts must be made to achieve gender equality in all aspects of life.

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