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Palestine:  
the demographic and  
economic dimension of migration

*Mustafa Khawaja*

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**CARIM Analytic and Synthetic Notes 2012/04**

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**Series - Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan Migration:  
Recent Developments**  
*Demographic and Economic Module*



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CARIM-AS 2012/04**

**Palestine:  
the demographic and economic dimension of migration**

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## **Abstract**

Political and economic instability, the uncertainty of the future of the region, together with the importance of extended family relations have all been major determinants in the size and patterns of migration from Palestinian Territory. This paper focuses on recent trends in emigration and return migration from and to Palestine by presenting the main results of the Migration Survey implemented by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in 2010, the first survey of its kind. In addition, the desire to emigrate among Palestinians will be explored. A final section will then be dedicated to inward migration, i.e. foreign-born Palestinians living on the West Bank and in Gaza Strip.

## **Résumé**

L'instabilité politique et économique, l'incertitude de l'avenir de la région ainsi que l'importance des relations familiales ont été des facteurs déterminants de migration en partance des territoires palestiniens. Cette analyse se concentre sur les tendances enregistrées au cours de la période récente du phénomène migratoire, et plus précisément s'agissant de l'émigration et la migration de retour de et vers la Palestine, à l'appui des résultats tirés de l'Enquête sur la Migration conduite par le Bureau central palestinien des statistiques en 2010 - la première enquête du genre. En outre, les facteurs déterminants la décision et la volonté d'émigrer parmi les Palestiniens feront l'objet d'une analyse circonstanciée. Une dernière section sera consacrée aux étrangers résidant dans la Bande de Gaza.

## Introduction

Palestinian migration reflects the historical and political background that has shaped, and that continues to shape, the structure and distribution of Palestinians, and, indeed, the region as a whole. The 1948 Arab-Israeli war was a watershed for Palestinian migration, and led to the forced exile of approximately 750,000-900,000 Palestinians, mostly to neighboring Arab countries, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, where they settled. It was at this point that the term 'refugee' entered the Palestinian lexicon. Less than twenty years later, in 1967, an additional 350,000 Palestinians were displaced as a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. These refugees were dispersed across different Arab and non-Arab countries all over the world.

The problems created by the activities of the Palestinian resistance movement, based first in Jordan until its expulsion in 1970, and then in Lebanon until the Israeli invasion of 1982, caused another wave of Palestinian migration to other areas.

The next stage in the development of the Palestinian refugee problem started with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the first Gulf War, when 300,000 Palestinians left Kuwait, most of whom settled in Jordan. An estimated 25,000 returned to the West Bank and Gaza. The remainder migrated to other parts of the world, especially to North America. Something similar happened to Palestinians in Libya in 1995 when the regime there decided to force most Palestinians to leave the country. In 2003, and just after the invasion of Iraq, thousands of Palestinians left or tried to leave for neighboring countries (Jordan and Syria) or, again, for other parts of the world.

As of January 2010, 4.8 million registered Palestinian refugees were registered with the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) and lived in the regions covered by UNRWA (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza), of whom about 1.9 million registered refugees reside in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. In this regard, it is worth noting that refugees registered with UNRWA represents about 75% of all Palestinian refugees, as the registration of Palestinian refugees is not compulsory<sup>1</sup>.

The present note is structured as follows. Section 1 gives a general overview of migration from and to Palestine. Section 2, 3, and 4 describe the main results of the Migration Survey 2010 allowing to detect recent trends and characteristics of recent outward migration (section 2), and return migration (section 3) patterns as well as an overview of the wish to emigrate among Palestinians (section 4). Section 5 concludes with an analysis of inward migration in the West Bank.

## 1. Outward migration from Palestine

### 1.1 Flow data

The two main points of exit and entry for Palestinians leaving or coming to the Territory are the Rafah Crossing that links the Gaza Strip to Egypt and the Allenby Bridge that links the West Bank to Jordan. A third point *was* Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, but this is not now accessible to Palestinians, save those residing in Jerusalem.

Data on cross-border movements have been available only for the number of people crossing borders annually. No other info on their characteristics is available in part because no questions about the reason for travel are included on the border-crossing forms that Palestinians have to complete on arrival and departure, but also because of the unwillingness of the Israeli authorities, to release such data, a refusal justified for reasons of 'security'.

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<sup>1</sup> UNRWA registers, 2011: <http://www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/pdf/reg-ref.pdf> (access date 16/02/2011)

Net migration has been historically negative, with the exception of the years 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1994. The positive balance in the three-year period 1990-1992 reflects the return of around 25,000 Palestinians from Kuwait during and after the Gulf War. A number of these returnees may have re-migrated for other destinations later on. The positive balance in 1994 was probably due to the influx of Palestinians from other countries on the signing of the Oslo Agreements and with the beginning of the peace process.

In September 2005, after Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip, the Rafah Crossing fell under Palestinian control with European monitor forces, so it was the first time we had detailed data on the arrivals and the departures through the borders there. This data showed that, in 2005, the total number of departures amounted to 156,436, compared to 152,483 arrivals, so the net was, approximately, 4,000. About 63% of the arrivals were males, equivalent to the proportion of males among the departures; whereas among those aged 15-64 there were 85% arrivals compared with 84% for departures. Even a brief glance at these figures explains the systematic data for both arrivals and departures for 2006 at the Rafah Crossing. However, in mid-2006, internal Palestinian clashes led to anarchy at the Rafah Crossing, and the Palestinian Authority officials – under the control of Hamas – could not continue their work. Israel forced the shutting down of the border: European observers left and the Egyptian side of the border was closed. The borders have been closed since then except for a handful of humanitarian cases and seasonal religious visits. At one point the Palestinians in Gaza broke the Egyptian blockade and passed for other social and economic purposes. However, a few days later the gates were closed again, though all those who had crossed got back again to the Gaza Strip.

The Jordanian Bridges Security Department which controls the King Hussein Bridge (Allenby or Karamah) released the arrivals and departures for the period 2000-2008: there we can see a negative balance on the Jordanian side of about 81,000, which means a positive balance for the Palestinian side<sup>2</sup>. More Palestinians left the Palestinian Territory in the period 2002-2004 which can be easily explained by the outbreak of the second *Intifada*. After a period of relative stability, numbers went up again following on from the victory of Hamas in 2006 and the resulting boycott.

## 1.2 Stock data

According to the Migration Survey, in 2010, 3.4% of the Palestinian households have at least one emigrant abroad; 1.1% have 2 emigrants; 1.0% have 3-4 emigrants and 1.2% have 5 emigrants and more. It is worth mentioning that these figures do not include the emigrants whose households moved as the methodology of the survey refers to a family member. The majority (51.2%) of emigrants left the country before 2000; 15.9% left 2000-2004; and 28.4% in 2005 or after (table 1).

**Table 1. Palestinian emigration stock by period of emigration and sex (in %), 2010**

Period of emigration	Sex		
	Males	Females	Total
Before 2000	48.3	55.8	<b>51.2</b>
2000-2004	15.5	16.4	<b>15.9</b>
2005 and after	32.2	22.6	<b>28.4</b>
Not stated	4.0	5.2	<b>4.5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Migration Survey in the occupied Palestinian territory - 2010, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)

<sup>2</sup> The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Public Security Directorate, Bridges Security Department: [http://www.bridges.psd.gov.jo/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=371&Itemid=392](http://www.bridges.psd.gov.jo/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=371&Itemid=392) (access date 13/11/2008)

This trend shows that emigration is not linked to particular years as Palestinian history is, more or less, similar in recent years in terms of difficulties for the West Bank and Gaza Strip populations.

Overall, migrants tend to be young: the majority (58.6%) is aged 15-44 (table 2).

**Table 2. Palestinian emigration stock by age and sex (in %), 2010**

Period of emigration	Sex		
	Males	Females	Total
Less than 14	18.4	23.8	<b>20.6</b>
15-29	34.2	31.3	<b>33.0</b>
30-44	25.1	26.5	<b>25.6</b>
45-59	14.7	11.7	<b>13.5</b>
60+	6.2	5.2	<b>5.8</b>
Not stated	1.4	1.5	<b>1.5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Migration Survey in the occupied Palestinian territory - 2010, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)

## 2. Recent emigration from Palestine

### 2.1 Current determinants of Palestinian migration: an overview

The situation for the Palestinian population worsened dramatically following the onset of the crisis in September 2000. Poverty levels became higher than at any time before, with respectively 60.8%, 66.5%, 71.9% and 60.6% of Palestinian households living below the poverty line for 2001 to 2004. For 2007 the poverty rate fell to 57.2% with 45.7% in the West Bank and 79.4% in Gaza Strip; while the deep poverty for 2004-2007 was respectively 25.6%, 29.5%, 30.8% and 30.3%.<sup>3</sup> For 2009 the poverty rate reached 26.2%, while it declined to 25.7% in 2010<sup>4</sup>.

Unemployment rates were respectively 25.2%, 31.3%, 25.6% and 26.8% for 2001 to 2004, and the rate stood at 23.5%, 23.6%, 21.5%, 26.0% and 24.5% for 2005 to 2009. While unemployment reached 23.7% in 2010<sup>5</sup>, from 11.8% in 1999. In other fields, most employed persons since 2001 have worked in the Palestinian Territory and fewer than 10% are working in Israel, whereas, before the crisis in 2000, there was almost double this percentage working in Israel.<sup>6</sup> It is worth highlighting that all Palestinian workers in Israel go back to their homes in the Palestinian Territory every day.

The *per capita* GDP 'in US\$' at constant prices in the Palestinian Territory (excluding East Jerusalem) was respectively 1,270, 1,070, 1,195, 1,300 and 1,349 for 2001-2005, while the gross domestic products (GDP) 'in million US\$' at constant prices in the Palestinian Territory (excluding East Jerusalem) over same

<sup>3</sup> The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2008. *Press Release on Poverty and Living Conditions in the Palestinian Territory, 2007*. Ramallah-Palestine.

<sup>4</sup> The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011. *Poverty in the Palestinian Territory/ Main Findings Report (2009-2010)*

<sup>5</sup> The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011. *Labour Force Survey: (October-December, 2010) Round, (Q4/2010)*. Press Release on the Labour Force Survey Results. Ramallah - Palestine.

<sup>6</sup> The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2008. *Labor Force Survey: Annual Report: 2007*. Ramallah-Palestine.



period was 3,765, 3,264, 3,750, 4,197 and 4,479 million US\$.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, there was an unsurprising GDP rise of only 0.8% in 2008 with a population growth of about 3.0% 'or close to', while the annual growth before 1999 was about 6%.<sup>8</sup> GDP for the year 2009 stood at 6,763.6 million US\$<sup>9</sup>.

The international boycott after Hamas's election victory in 2006 led to civil servants' salaries not being paid and the breakdown of normal functions in the Palestinian Authority for about one year, and the closure of Gaza Strip mid 2007 came about after fighting between the two main parties (Fateh and Hamas).

Politically, the period 2000-2009 was characterized by instability and insecurity as a direct result of the wide range of military and security measures taken by Israel: curfews, border closures, military checkpoints, the construction of a wall separating the Palestinian Territory from Israel, limitations on personal mobility, the special case of the Gaza Strip ...etc. The level of crime and insecurity has increased and affected living conditions. This situation pushed people, especially the young, to look for alternatives for their economic, social, political and psychological needs. The migration may have been the alternative when possible.

## 2.2 Recent emigration trends and characteristics: some figures

A migration survey implemented by the Palestinian Central Bureau of statistics in 2010 allows scholars to detect, with a certain degree of certitude, the recent trend of emigration from Palestine as well as the characteristics of recent migrants. This survey aimed to fulfill the urgent need for migration indicators in the light of severe shortages in migration statistics in general and international migration statistics in particular.

Data showed that about 33,000 emigrants left the Palestinian Territory 2005-2009 excluding figures of complete families that migrated, while returnees, during the same period, stood at about 30,000. The balance is negative, but still considered as marginal when compared with the Palestinian context.

As to the profile of recent Palestinian emigrants (i.e. those emigrated in the period 2000-2009 and still abroad in 2010), 34.4% went abroad for study, 21.9% for family reunification; 14.6% went to improve their standards of living; and 13.7% for work as jobs were lacking at home (table 3). Political reasons seem thus to be residual in affecting the choice to migrate from Palestine.

**Table 3. Palestinian emigrants (having emigrated 2000-2009 and still abroad in 2010) by main reason of emigration and sex (in %), 2010**

Main reason of emigration	Sex		
	Males	Females	Total
Unemployed and seeking work/lack of jobs in the oPt	1.4	18.6	<b>13.7</b>
To improve living standards	2.4	19.5	<b>14.6</b>
Education	11.2	43.8	<b>34.4</b>
Family reunification	64.0	4.9	<b>21.9</b>
Others	21.0	12.9	<b>15.1</b>
Not stated	0.0	0.3	<b>0.2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Migration Survey in the occupied Palestinian territory - 2010, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)

<sup>7</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2008, *National Accounts at Current and Constant Prices (2000-2005)*. Ramallah - Palestine.

<sup>8</sup> World Bank: OPT: Growth weak, aid dependency rising.

<sup>9</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011. *National Accounts at Current and Constant Prices (2008, 2009)*. Ramallah - Palestine.

Among these, 35.7% hold bachelor degrees and above while 6.2% have diploma. These percentages were lower at the time of emigration (28.2% and 5.0% respectively) highlighting that the migration experience led to an improvement in Palestinians' human capital (table 4).

**Table 4. Palestinian emigrants (having emigrated 2000-2009 and still abroad in 2010) by level of education at the time of migration and in 2010 (in %), 2010**

Level of education	At the time of migration			In 2010		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Less than elementary	2.4	5.0	<b>3.2</b>	0.8	2.5	<b>1.3</b>
Elementary	4.4	10.0	<b>6.0</b>	3.2	9.1	<b>4.9</b>
Preparatory	12.3	25.9	<b>16.2</b>	11.6	25.3	<b>15.4</b>
Secondary	46.3	28.8	<b>41.3</b>	39.3	26.5	<b>35.7</b>
Associate Diploma	4.7	5.7	<b>5.0</b>	5.6	7.6	<b>6.2</b>
Bachelor and above	30.0	24.0	<b>28.2</b>	38.5	28.5	<b>35.7</b>
Not stated	0.0	0.5	<b>0.1</b>	1.0	0.5	<b>0.8</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Migration Survey in the occupied Palestinian territory - 2010, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)

Recent emigrants are mainly found in Jordan (23.5%), the US (21.6%), and the Gulf States (20.4%) (table 5). The destination of Palestinian emigrants can be divided by Arab and non-Arab countries reflecting different waves of Palestinian emigration. All these waves created strong social networks, which can partially explain the direction of recent emigration movements.

**Table 5. Palestinian emigrants (having emigrated 2000-2009 and still abroad in 2010) by country of residence and sex (in %), 2010**

Country of residence	Sex		
	Males	Females	Total
Jordan	15.8	42.7	<b>23.5</b>
Egypt	5.4	0.7	<b>4.0</b>
Arab Gulf countries	22.6	15.1	<b>20.4</b>
Other Arab countries	5.0	2.0	<b>4.1</b>
US	23.2	17.6	<b>21.6</b>
Other countries	27.8	21.4	<b>26.0</b>
Not stated	0.3	0.4	<b>0.4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Migration Survey in the occupied Palestinian territory - 2010, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)

25% of recent emigrants registered that they remit in cash or in kind. This number was significantly higher among males (31.1%) with only 9.7% of women remitting: fewer women, it must be remembered, are active in the workforce.

Moreover, the percentage of recent emigrants who perceived their experience of migration as being positive stood at 43.5%, compared with 22.8% who had negative experience, while those who stated that their experience had been neutral amounted to 25.1%. Here there was no significant difference between males and females. This perception did not reflect on household members' desire to join emigrants: so of 69% who has good or neutral perceptions, only 25% of related households members wanted to join emigrants (table 6).

**Table 6. Palestinian emigrants (having emigrated 2000-2009 and still abroad in 2010) by some indicators of perceived experience of migration (in %), 2010**

Indicators	Sex		
	Males	Females	Total
<b>Perceived Experience of Migration</b>			
Positive	43.0	44.8	<b>43.5</b>
Negative	22.9	22.6	<b>22.8</b>
Neither positive Nor negative	25.1	24.9	<b>25.1</b>
Don't know	9.0	7.7	<b>8.6</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Desire of any HH member to join emigrants</b>			
Yes	28.3	16.4	<b>24.9</b>
No	71.7	83.6	<b>75.1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Migration Survey in the occupied Palestinian territory - 2010, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)

### 3. Recent return migration trends and characteristics to Palestine

25.5% of return migrants living in Palestine in 2010 returned in 1990 and before, 18.9% 1991-1994, 31.0% 1995-1999, 10.4% 2000-2004 and 14.0% in 2005 and after (table 7).

**Table 7. Palestinian return migrants by period and region of return (in %), 2010**

Period of return	Region		
	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
1990 and before	27.3	18.0	<b>25.5</b>
1991-1994	17.9	23.3	<b>18.9</b>
1995-1999	28.8	40.3	<b>31.0</b>
2000-2004	10.3	10.7	<b>10.4</b>
2005 and after	15.5	7.7	<b>14.0</b>
Not stated	0.2	0.0	<b>0.2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Migration Survey in the occupied Palestinian territory - 2010, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)

These data clearly indicate that the majority of returnees made their move during the 'peace' era when the Palestinians were optimistic and hoped for a stable situation following the Oslo declaration of 1993. Of course, the Gulf war of 1990 where thousands of Palestinians were forced to leave Gulf states particularly Kuwait and Iraq was also decisive. The first 5 years of this century were very difficult politically and were not likely to encourage emigrants to return; though about 14% of them, nevertheless, came back during that period.

Returnees have the following age structure: three-quarters of them were young, namely 0-29, while 9% were 60 years and over, 22% were aged 45-59 and 26.4% 30-44. These figures reflect the normal distribution of the Palestinian population and do not support the hypothesis that those who returned had, for the most part, come back to retire at 'home' after a lifetime away.

As to recent returnees (those returned 1990-2009 and still in Palestine in 2010), the majority came back from Arab countries; 36.1%, from Jordan, 29.0% from the Gulf States, 5.1% from Egypt and 8.9% from other Arab nations, while 9.5% of the returnees had returned from the US, and 11.1% from

other foreign countries. In comparison, 52.9% of returnees had a first country of destination that was a non-Arab state which means that the movement during the migration period changed dramatically and became concentrated in the Arab countries (table 8).

**Table 8. Palestinian return recent migrants (returned 1990-2009 and still in Palestine in 2010) by (first and last) country of residence before return (in %), 2010**

Period of return	Country of residence before return	
	First country of residence	Last country of residence
Jordan	18.1	36.1
Egypt	3.9	5.1
Gulf States	19.2	29.0
Other Arab countries	5.9	8.9
US	5.9	9.5
Other non-Arab countries	47.0	11.1
Not stated	0.1	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Migration Survey in the occupied Palestinian territory - 2010, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)

#### 4. Wish to migrate among Palestinians

An additional section of the abovementioned survey was also dedicated to the perception of non-immigrant Palestinians towards emigration. It showed that 13.3% of Palestinians aged 15-59 in the Palestinian territory desired to emigrate in 2010. Among these, the majority wished to migrate to the Gulf region (23.1%), followed by the US (15.1%) (table 9).

**Table 9. Palestinian population (aged 15-59) who wish to emigrate by preferred country of destination and region of residence (in %), 2010**

	%
Jordan	8.6
Egypt	3.6
Gulf States	23.1
Other Arab countries	3.3
US	15.1
Other countries	27.8
Not stated	17.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Migration Survey in the occupied Palestinian territory - 2010, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)

The survey showed that 39.3% of those desiring to emigrate wanted to do so as to improve their living conditions, 15.2% because of unemployment or lack of job opportunities, 18.7% for study and education, and about 6.6% because of the absence of security (table 10). It is clear that the economic reasons count most.

**Table 10. Palestinian population (aged 15-59) who wish to emigrate by preferred country of destination and region of residence (in %), 2010**

Main reason for wishing to emigrate	%
Unemployment/lack of jobs	15.2
Inadequate income	6.2
Improving living standards	39.3
Education and study	18.7
Absence of security	6.6
Business opportunities	3.4
Other reasons	10.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Migration Survey in the occupied Palestinian territory - 2010, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), released survey results for 2007 demonstrating that about one third of young Palestinians (aged 10-29 years) are thinking of migrating: 45% of males and 18% of females. As for the reasons behind migration, the source suggested that the main reason was the declining economic situation, second the lack of safety and security, third politics and, fourth, social reasons. The same source mentioned that about 20% of youth wished to emigrate in 2003.<sup>10</sup> In the same context, Annajah University and the Palestinian center for public polls announced that about 38% of Palestinians wished to emigrate in February 2007. A Birzeit University Study in September 2006, meanwhile, showed that 32% of Palestinians indicated that they wanted to emigrate.<sup>11</sup>

Now neither the wish nor the idea of emigration necessarily become, of course, reality. Indeed, many surveys have shown that the wish has always been there – though with differences. However, history has also shown that when Palestinian migration took place, it has taken place in massive outflows and under specific circumstances. Palestinians left their lands in huge waves in 1948 and 1967, but there is no evidence for a similar outpouring in the near future.

On the basis of the description above, Israeli political scientists proposed that the most important alternative for Palestinians would be emigration to Israel which amounted to 105,000 from 1990-2006 and has amounted to about quarter million since 1967.<sup>12</sup> However, the construction of the wall which separates the territory from Israel does not allow new waves of Palestinian emigration to Israel, except again in cases which involve the extended family. But this is unlikely to amount to thousands as is sometimes suggested.

Indeed, Israel has closed its borders to Palestinians from abroad, which prevents those from other Palestinian communities, especially from Jordan, getting married with Palestinians from the Palestinian Territory, if they do not have Israeli permission or what is called ‘permanent residency’ in the West Bank or in the Gaza Strip. These cover three categories: Palestinians abroad who became refugees in 1948; those who were displaced in 1967; and those who lost their residency with the Israeli laws 1968-1994 ‘before the Oslo agreement’. Israel has also brought a halt to family reunification and the renewal of visas for Palestinians who temporarily reside in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, on security grounds, and irrespective of humanitarian cases where individuals are separated from their family. In 2007 and 2008, Israel approved about 50,000 reunification applications for Palestinians, but the majority of these were already residing in the Palestinian Territory. Israel does not allow those abroad to return.

<sup>10</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2008, *press release on youth day (12/08/2008)*. Ramallah - Palestine.

<sup>11</sup> Ettinger, Yoram: ‘Palestinian emigration and birth rate defy demographic doomsayers’. Ha’aretz (April 12, 2007)

<sup>12</sup> Shakid, Roni. *Palestinian Emigration*. Yedeo’at Ahraoat, 10/04/2007

## 5. Immigration stocks in the West Bank

In the West Bank, foreign-born Palestinians include both first-generation refugees forced to emigrate from Israel in 1948 and returnees. In 2007, they stood at around 126,000 in the West Bank, or 5.3% of its total resident population.

**Table 11. Foreign born Palestinians residing in the West Bank, 2007**

Country of birth	Number	%
1948 Areas (*)	17,502	13.9
Israel	5,764	4.6
Jordan	44,215	35.2
Syria	2,089	1.7
Lebanon	1,473	1.2
Egypt	850	0.7
Tunisia	212	0.2
Yemen	340	0.3
Gulf countries	39,073	31.1
Other Arab countries	1,778	1.4
US	6,842	5.4
Other	5,046	4.0
Not stated	397	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>125,581</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Notes: (\*) '1948 Areas' include the part of historical Palestine now known as Israel, as defined by the 1948 war.

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2008. Palestinian Population, Housing and Establishment Census 2007.

These Palestinians originated mainly in Jordan (35.2%) – and this is explained by the continuity between the West Bank and the East Bank of the Jordan Valley; the Gulf countries (31.1%) as a result of the return movements from Iraq after the Gulf wars; 1948 Areas (13.9%) which include the historic Palestine; Israel, (4.6%); the US (5.4%); while 5.3% were born in the West Bank, though most of them were born just after 1948. The rest of the foreign-born Palestinian population are those born in Syria, Lebanon and Egypt which account for 3.6% of the total and Tunisia, Yemen and other Arab countries not mentioned at 1.9%, most Palestinians in this category having returned according to the peace agreement in 1994.

## Conclusion

The migration of Palestinians in and out of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip has been heavily influenced, if not altogether determined, by the history of the region over the last sixty years. Waves of out migrants caused by war, in the form of refugees and displaced populations, have created a Palestinian diaspora, made up of millions of people world-wide, so that many people in the Palestinian Territory now have relatives and friends living abroad. These extended family relations generate higher levels of solidarity and cooperation between the Palestinians within and outside the West Bank and the Gaza Strip who help to arrange marriages and to find employment and housing for relatives. In the context of the Palestinian Territory, political factors strongly reinforce the socio-economic aspects of migration choices.

The reasons which trigger recent emigration trends have been instead more and more similar to those of other countries in the region (study, searching for a job) so that less importance seems to be attributed to specific political conditions of Palestine. Moreover, the preponderance of family reasons among female emigrants and their scarce propensity to leave the country among female university graduates suggest that emigration is still largely seen as a 'male activity'.

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