

Palestinians Worldwide

A Demographic Study⁽¹⁾

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Introduction

Palestinians Worldwide: A Demographic Study contributes to the growing body of literature within Palestinian demographic studies, taking a global approach that prompts further research given the close link between Palestinian demographic issues and potential political transformations and solutions.

This book constitutes the first exclusively demographic study of Palestinians that takes interest in both Palestinians at home and in the diaspora, distinguishing it in its field, which has neglected the diaspora for the past two decades. Moreover, the study represents a valuable contribution towards a comprehensive demographic research project for the Palestinian population globally. Furthermore, it is an

extension of the researchers' project on Palestinian demography that goes back two decades.

The book monitors the Palestinian population distributed across nearly 200 countries, whether within the borders of the Palestinian territories of 1967 or 1948, or in the Arab and international diaspora. It addresses their demographic conditions, as an essential element that has not been thoroughly discussed in previous studies. The book also studies Palestinian immigrant societies before and after 1948, relying on a historical approach to explore the different migration streams in order to make demographic predictions for Palestinians as far as 2050. The book's case study approach facilitates an examination of the specificity of each Palestinian society in the 23 countries considered (pp. 17-20).

Palestinians under Occupation: The Fertility Battle

Demographic data is a weapon in the Palestinian arsenal for the preservation of their people, who number 13 million. Although the 5 million Palestinians residing in the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and East Jerusalem do not constitute a majority of the Israeli population at present, they could soon become

the majority (pp. 27-28). The number of Palestinians inside occupied Palestine increased from 900,000 in 1960 to 5 million in 2017, at a growth rate of 2.5%. In 2015, Jerusalem housed 339,000 Palestinians (32% of the city) compared to 1,058,000 Jews (67%). Israel has mainly relied on settlements to increase the

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demographic growth of Jews in Jerusalem, with the number of settlers between 1977 and 2016 increasing about 15 times over, from 40,000 to 604,000 settlers (pp. 39-43).

Within the Israeli State, which emerged after the 1948 Nakba, only 156,000 Palestinians remained, whose population multiplied more than 9 times in 68 years. These Palestinians were granted Israeli citizenship, but in return thousands of hectares of land were confiscated, and the Israeli authorities pursued a project of systematic expulsion against them (pp. 60-62), with Israel treating its Palestinian demography as a political and security issue. The Arab fertility rate exceeded the Jewish one in Israel, at 4.3 children compared to 2.6 per woman in 2000 but the rate increased among Jewish women and

decreased among Arab women to reach an equal rate of 3.13 children per woman in 2015 (p. 59).

The authors make a prediction for Palestinian demographic landscape by 2050, based on fertility rates and assuming the continued stability of the current political situation. They believe that the number of Palestinians inside occupied Palestine will exceed the Jews due to the Palestinian population momentum. Palestinians should make up 56% of the total population of the occupied territories, Gaza and the State of Israel, compared to Jews at 44%. The population of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip will rise from 4,700,000 in 2015 to about 9,500,000, and the number of Palestinians within the Israeli state will increase from 1,427,000 in 2016 to 2,400,000 in 2050 (pp. 47-50).

The Palestinian Diaspora in the Neighboring Arab Countries: Questions of Citizenship and Immigration

The Palestinian diaspora began to form in Jordan even before the establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan in 1921. The number of Palestinians without Jordanian citizenship in Jordan reached 634,000 in 2015. This is equivalent to 6.6% of the total population (9.5 million at that time), in addition to the Palestinians holding Jordanian citizenship, who are estimated to make up 42% of the total population (pp. 85-105). With regard to the demographic projections of Palestinian citizens of Jordan, the authors expect their proportion of the population to decrease by 2050 to just 39.9% (4,700,000 compared to 6,700,000 Jordanians), which dispels claims of a "Palestineization" of Jordan. The number of non-naturalized Palestinians in Jordan is projected to increase to about 938,000 by 2050. In any case, East Bank Jordanians will continue to represent the majority of the population (pp. 108-111).

In Syria, Palestinians represented 2.6% of the population with about 600,000 people in 2011, enjoying equal civil rights to Syrian citizens, but without any political rights, while still retaining Palestinian citizenship. However, in the wake of the ongoing conflict since 2011, many Palestinians, as well as Syrians, were forced to migrate, as the Palestinian camps were overrun. Out of the 14

Palestinian camps in Syria, 5 were destroyed (pp. 115-119, 124-125). In addition to the internal displacement of about 350,000 Palestinians between 2011 and 2016, about 142,000 Palestinian refugees sought refuge abroad until mid-2016. The authors expect the number of Palestinian refugees from Syria to European countries to increase due to the asylum provisions in the European Union countries, which considers them stateless, and that the number of Palestinians in Syria will increase from 418,000 to about 1,200,000 by 2050 (pp. 126-131).

The Palestinian demography in Lebanon, a country that lacks any definition of a Palestinian refugee, has been subject to the reverberations by major events and conflicts in Lebanon since the 1960s, in addition to legal restrictions, and has no access to civil or social rights (pp. 135-136). The authors estimate the number of Palestinians in Lebanon — including those holding Palestinian citizenship — to have been about 340,000 in 2017, or 5.5% of the total population (6,136,243)(pp. 137-141). Migration, in addition to a decline in fertility from 6.6 children per woman in 1980, to 2.8 between 2009 and 2011, has depleted their population (pp. 147-151). The authors believe that the tragic conditions of the Palestinians in Lebanon will remain the same, given the political

and sectarian conditions, "until a solution to the refugee problem is found within the framework of a comprehensive settlement in the region." Therefore, Palestinians have had no other choice but to emigrate (pp. 151-153).

In 1947, many Palestinians were displaced to Egypt, following the partition of Palestine according to United Nations General Assembly Resolution No. 181 and the outbreak of conflict between Jews and Arabs. Palestinian refugees in Egypt numbered 33,000 in 1969; However, the political tensions after the signing of the Camp David Agreement (1978) affected their situation. About 70,000-80,000 Palestinians returned

to the Gaza Strip after the Oslo agreement, bringing the number of Palestinians in Egypt down to 50,000, which later increased with the return of Palestinians from the Arab Gulf states. Sources vary in their estimates, ranging from 30,000-100,000 in the period 2014-2017 (pp. 157-162). A small number of Palestinians have obtained Egyptian citizenship and the number will increase following the amendment of the Nationality Law in 2004, which grants Egyptian nationality to those born from Egyptian-Palestinian marriages. The authors expect that the number of Palestinians in Egypt will decrease overall, especially with the increase in migration to the Gulf and Canada and the death of the elderly (pp. 162-167).

The Palestinian Diaspora in the Gulf: Political-Economic Fluctuations

The Palestinian presence in the Arab Gulf countries emerged nearly a century ago. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait attracted 90% of the Palestinian workforce in the Gulf before the second Gulf War (1990), after which mostly moved to Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. After the war, the number of Palestinians in Kuwait decreased from 400,000 to 30,000. Estimates prior to the second Gulf War indicated that the annual growth rate of Palestinians was more than 10% in Kuwait. Fertility rates were lower than that of the occupied territories, at 4.5 children per woman compared to 7.2. In Saudi Arabia, the fertility rate of Palestinian women reached 5.8 children per woman by 1990, but the number of Palestinians migrating to Saudi Arabia has declined, and the same is true in the United Arab Emirates due to competition from the Asian labour market. The fertility rate for Palestinian women in the UAE is similar to that of Palestinian women in Kuwait.

In Qatar, Palestinians and Jordanian citizens of Palestinian descent represented 9.4% of the total population before 1990, but the emigration of Palestinians from Qatar overtook the immigration

rate. In Bahrain, Palestinians numbered about 2,000 people before 1990, and recent estimates indicate that it has increased to 5,000 people, with the Palestinian fertility rate there similar to Palestinians in Kuwait. The Palestinian population in Oman is far less and its expansion slower due to competition from the Asian labour market (pp. 179-187).

The authors expect that the Palestinians will be negatively affected by the fluctuations of political and economic conditions and Gulf foreign policies, and that in the Gulf states by 2050 they will number about 1,096,000, with 57,000 in Kuwait, 414,000 in Saudi Arabia, 517,000 in the UAE, 86,000 in Qatar, 9,000 in Bahrain, and 14,000 in Oman (pp. 187-191).

In Iraq, the number of Palestinian refugees was 4,000 in 1949, increasing with the "oil boom" and subsequent influx of workers, reaching 34,000 in 2003, but declining to 10,000 — perhaps less — by 2010, following the Anglo-American invasion. The authors expect that the Palestinian community in Iraq will be practically extinct by 2050 (pp. 171-175).

Palestinians in Europe and the Americas: The Symbolic Importance of a Growing Demography

The immigration of Palestinians in small numbers to France dates back to the beginning of the 20th century,

with most of them receiving French citizenship. Their number ranges between 2,000 and 3,000 people, and

they do not have economic power (pp. 195-200). In the United Kingdom, the Palestinian presence preceded the Nakba. Palestinian society in Britain is distinguished by its participation in political life and the emergence of Palestinian personalities in various fields. The authors estimate that the number of Palestinians in Britain stood at 60,000 people in 2017, and they expect that number to grow to 90,000 by 2050 (pp. 201-206). Germany is home to the largest Palestinian population in Europe, with the number of non-naturalized Palestinians in Germany estimated at about 14,000. But if the number of Palestinians is added to the number of Jordanian citizens (most of whom are of Palestinian origin), and Israelis (a small percentage of whom are Palestinian), this number rises to closer to 200,000 (as of 2017). Furthermore, the authors expect that the total number of Palestinians (including Jordanian and Israeli nationals of Palestinian origin) will stand at about 200,000 in 2050 (pp. 207-221).

The first Palestinians arrived in Sweden in 1962, and the authors estimate Palestinians in Sweden to have numbered about 10,000 in 2015 (pp. 225-229). In Denmark, the number of Palestinian immigrants in 1978 was 2,694, the majority of whom came from Lebanon, reaching about 15,000 at the beginning of the 21st century (pp. 229-231). In Norway, there are an estimated 3,825 Palestinians (pp. 232-233), while roughly a few dozen Palestinians reside in Iceland, but there is no official census recording them (pp. 234-235). About 100 Palestinians departed to Finland after the Nakba, and the authors estimate their number to have been about 3,500 in 2016.

They expect the number of Palestinians in these five countries to double by 2050 (pp. 235-238).

Estimates of the number of Palestinians in the United States of America vary between 72,000 and 179,000, but the authors estimate the actual number to be closer to 236,000 people in 2005. And based on the calculated growth rate (2.3%), they estimate the number to have grown to about 310,000 people in 2017. The migration of Palestinians to the US dates back with the economically motivated emigration of Syrian and Lebanese Arab merchants beginning in 1893. The authors expect that the number of Palestinians in the United States to reach 344,000 in 2025, and 441,000 by 2050 (pp. 243-251).

In Latin American countries, estimates of the number of Palestinians are shrouded in ambiguity due their designation as "Arabs" under one umbrella category. However, the Palestinians in Chile, Honduras, and Brazil are estimated to number around 700,000, and they are of political and symbolic importance, as well as an economic and demographic advantage. The emigration of Palestinians to Chile dates back to the 1850s, with the Crimean War (1853-1856) in particular. Most of them were merchants, and they were dominated by Christians because of their benefit from solidarity networks. The Palestinians chose Chile as a destination to distance themselves from the competition with the Levantine immigrants who headed to other Latin countries. The authors estimate the number of Palestinians in Chile at about 205,000 in 2017, and they expect it to reach 235,000 in 2050 (pp. 255-270).

Conclusion: On the Palestinian Demographic Battle

By examining the demographic conditions of the Palestinians in 23 countries, the book sought to provide some foresight about the fate of the Palestinian population around the world, with an attempt to point out the specifics of each of these societies. The book constitutes a rigorous effort to determine the number of Palestinians, their fertility rates, and their demographic future by 2050. However, it is worth mentioning that the book varied in accuracy with regard to the different cases studied. The authors

provided demographic projections for each case, but the book lacks a comparative analytical conclusion that allows for demographic generalizations. The following table summarizes the most prominent results reached by the authors in their book.

Accordingly, it is important to note that the number of Palestinians is on the rise in most cases, subject to natural growth factors, in addition to the migration factor — with a different growth rate, which is close to doubling in some cases. However, given the wide

Table 1
Palestinian Population (2015-2017) and Estimates (2050)

Country	Palestinian population (according to 2015-2017 estimates)	Estimated Palestinian population in 2050
Palestine	4,700,000	9,500,000
Israel	1,427,000	2,400,000
Jordan	634,000	938,000
Syrian	418,000	1,200,000
Lebanon	340,000	-
Egypt	30,000-100,000	Decline
Iraq	Less than 10000	Predicted Extinction
Kuwait	43,000	57,000
Saudi Arabia	280,000	414,000
The United Arab Emirates	350,000	517,000
Qatar	56,000	86,000
Bahrain	6,000	9,000
Oman	10,000	14,000
France	2000-3000	-
United Kingdom	60,000	90,000
Germany	-	200,000
Sweden	10,000	Predicted to rise
Denmark	15000	Predicted to rise
Norway	3825	Predicted to rise
Iceland	A few dozen	Predicted to rise
Finland	3500	Predicted to rise
United States of America	310000	441000
Chile	205000	235000

Source: Prepared by the author according to the data from the book

disparity between growth rates, it is difficult to make solid demographic projections for the total number of Palestinians, who are estimated to number 13 million at present,⁽³⁾ by 2050.

It goes without saying that Palestinian demography plays an important role in determining the future of the Palestinian state. Since projections indicate that in the year 2050, the number of Palestinians in the

West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the State of Israel will reach about 10,724,000 compared to 9,212,000 Israeli Jews,⁽⁴⁾ the conflict resolution attempts should consider these demographic realities; as these realities are affected by a one-state solution or a two-state solution, as well as the creation of a state in the Gaza Strip. It is self-evident to say that the demographic weight of the Palestinians is essential

3 "Ḥawālay 13 Milyūn Falastīnī fī Falastīn al-Tārīkhiyya w-al-Shatāt," *Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics*, 11/7/2019, accessed on 26/10/2020, at: <https://bit.ly/37176DG>

4 Youssef Courbage, "Al-Dīmughrafīya w-al-Širā'āt fī Siyāq 'Isrā'īl/Falastīn: Tawaqu'āt lil-Mustaqbal," *Omran*, vol. 2, no. 8 (2014), pp. 40-41.

to their survival. But is the talk about the "Battle of Numbers" or even the "War of the Cradles" at the core of the Palestinian issue? What contexts govern the wager on the demographic struggle?

The importance of numbers in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict increases if the strategy of the Palestinian liberation movement shifts toward aiming for a unified, secular democratic state, which is a major fear for Israel. In the event that one state is established and the Palestinians of the West Bank merge with the Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, it is possible that other marginalized groups, such as the Sephardic and Ethiopian communities, join the Palestinian struggle for equality. They could then move from building up demographic weight to developing ideology at the level of political action. With regard to a two-state solution, the numbers have far less impact given that the demographic competition between the Palestinians and the settlers would disappear with the annexation of the settlements to Israel. In the event of separation, each state will endeavour to preserve its own nationalism. Thus, Palestinian demographic weight would hold on to the land but be powerless to eliminate Zionism and its colonial regime from the Palestinian lands.

Regarding the Palestinians abroad and the diaspora, claiming that there is one Palestinian national identity ignores the diversity and pluralism within the diaspora and assumes a national unity that has never existed.⁽⁵⁾ And while the Palestinian struggle has depended on a Palestinian diaspora that strived to revolutionise the Palestinians at home, the Oslo Agreement and the marginalization of the Palestine Liberation Organization weakened the influence of Palestinian groups abroad. Accordingly, if the PLO does not re-frame the Palestinian national project to include the Palestinians of the diaspora and abroad — with all Palestinians being recognised as Palestinians by definition and identity documents — it will lose refugees in neighbouring countries to

distant emigration destinations attempting to escape their tragic living conditions, because the resistance symbolised by the Palestinian residence in camps already began to erode years ago.

For the Palestinian demography distributed all over the world to contribute to the resistance, mutual liberation strategies between the Palestinians at home and abroad must be developed — including economic solidarity. The Palestinians in the Arab Gulf countries and Latin America were a major source of funding for the Palestine Liberation Organization,⁽⁶⁾ and this mechanism, which is based on Palestinians abroad partnering with Palestinians at home, should be brought back but must be preceded by the resurrection of trust between the PLO and the Palestinian people. Otherwise, the diaspora will remain inactive, and they will increasingly disengage from the collective Palestinian identity. Palestinian sub-identities began to form a long time ago, as every Palestinian diaspora group expressed its identity in terms of its own concerns and priorities. These fears are exacerbated by the possibility of a "repetitive diaspora" for many Palestinian groups in Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria, since the repeated experience of seeking refuge reduces the effectiveness of the social network in preserving identity, forcing Palestinians to engage in the social networks of the new host community. This results in an almost complete amalgamation that increases with each generation born abroad.⁽⁷⁾

Finally, the book serves an important reference for taking a panoramic view of the demographic conditions of Palestinians around the world, from Palestine to Chile. It is also a noble attempt to engage in the adventure of correcting estimates of the number of Palestinians in several places and predicting their 2050 outlook. Naturally, this study opens the door to more future research into the formation of each Palestinian society in the diaspora, using demographic and sociological tools.

5 Rosemary Sayegh, "The Embodiment of Identity in Palestinian Refugee Camps: A New Look at 'Local' and 'National,'" in: Are Knudsen & Sari Hanafi (eds.), *Palestinian Refugees Identity, Space and Place in the Levant* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), pp. 50-64.

6 For example, the People's Committee to Aid the Palestine Mujahideen in Saudi Arabia sent approximately \$6.2 million, collected mainly through a cut of 5% of the salaries of Palestinian employees working in the kingdom. See: *Yawmiyāt wa Wathā'iq al-Wiḥḍa al-'Arabīyya* (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 1996), p. 36.

7 Majd Abu Amer, "Al-Shatāt al-Mutakarir: Mu'dilat al-Indimāj w-al-Hifāz 'Alā al-Huwiyya (Al-Lāji'ūn al-Falastīniūn 'Ām 1948 min Ghaza 'Ilā Qatar: Dirāsāt Hāla," Paper presented at the Middle East and North Africa Research Centers Forum "Migration and Diaspora," Center for Middle Eastern Studies (ORSAM), Ankara, 9-10/7/2019.

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