

Refugees

■ Historical Background

The Palestinian refugee problem was created as the result of two wars (*An-Nakba* of 1948 and *An-Naksa* of 1967), and numerous aggressions perpetrated by Jewish underground military groups (e.g., Haganah, Irgun, and Stern). After the War of 1948, the UN Conciliation Commission estimated that **726,000 Palestinians** (75% of the Arab population of Palestine) had fled, or were expelled, from what became Israel ("**1948 refugees**"), while **25,000** others still lived at home, but without any means of income because they were separated from their lands by the armistice lines (so-called "border-line cases") (UN, First Interim Report of the UN Economic Survey Mission for the Middle East, 16 Nov. 1949; see full document at <http://unispal.un.org>). Some **531 Palestinian villages** and towns were **destroyed** and/or **resettled** with Jews (Abu Sitta, S., *The Palestinian Nakba 1948: The Register of Depopulated Localities in Palestine*, London, 2000).

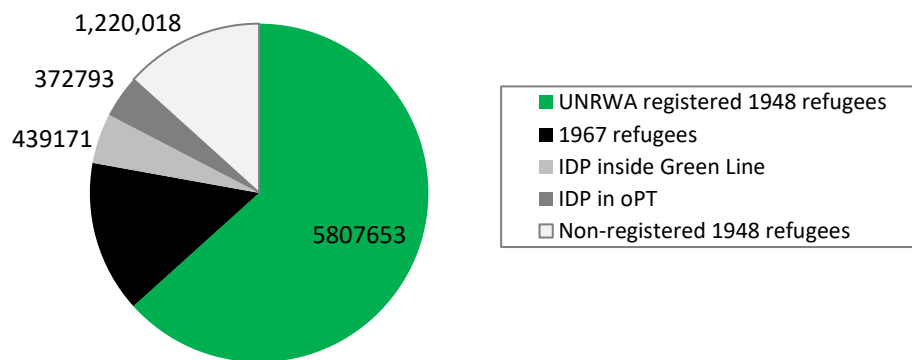
In addition to the refugees, there are the **internally displaced persons** (IDP), who were expelled from their villages but remained in what became Israel. At the end of the **1948** war, they numbered 30,000-40,000 people; they were not allowed to return to their homes but placed under military rule to facilitate the expropriation of their land. Until this day, Israel does not recognize IDPs.

In **1950**, 914,221 refugees were registered with the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (**UNRWA**), which was established on 8 December 1949. In **1952**, Israel effectively **denationalized** the Palestinians who had fled or were expelled by adopting the Israeli Nationality Law. Their property was seized and transferred to the State of Israel.

During the **1967** War, about 300,000 Palestinians were displaced from the WBGS ("**1967 displaced persons**"), including some 175,000 UNRWA registered refugees who became refugees for a second time.

At the end of 2021, there were some **9.1 million displaced persons** (66.7% of the worldwide population), of which approx. 8.3 million were **refugees** and 812,000 **internally displaced persons**:

Palestinian Refugees and their Descendants, End of 2021



Source: Badil, *NAKBA Statement: 73 years of Nakba and 73 years of Resistance*, May 2022.

Since the **Oslo Accords** deferred the refugee issue to the final status negotiations that never began, the legal status of the refugees remained unchanged, except that their camps in the occupied territory came under the **PA's control**. **Palestinians** insist on their **right of return** and demand that **international law** be applied, that **Israel** recognizes its **responsibility** in the refugee issue, that **refugee properties** will be **restituted** or fully **compensated**, and that the refugees' displacement and suffering will be compensated. However, Israel refuses to discuss the rights of refugees and rejects any responsibility, although its admission to the UN in 1949 was conditional upon accepting *all* UN resolutions, including **UNGA Resolution 194**, which recognizes the right of refugees to return. Instead, Israel advocates their resettlement in Arab countries. The **right to return** is also embodied in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 13 (2)), the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Art. 5(d)(ii)), and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, (Art. 12(4)), and has been applied to Bosnian, East Timorese, Kosovo, and Rwandan refugees.



■ Refugees Today

Palestinian refugees constitute the world's longest suffering refugee population, around half of whom are **stateless**. The vast majority of them live in the OPT or neighboring countries, about 28.4% of them **inside** one of the 58 **refugee camps**. In Palestine, registered refugees account for **42% of the total population** (WB: 26.3%, GS: 66%) (PCBS, *Press Release, 74th Annual Commemoration of the Palestinian Nakba, May 2022*).

In 2021, there were almost 6.4 million UNRWA-registered refugees and persons, 35% of them under 20 years (*UNRWA Registered Population Dashboard, Sept. 2021*).

Distribution of Registered Refugees



Source: UNRWA Registered Population Dashboard, 2022.

UNRWA Registered Refugees (RR) and Persons (RP)

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Jordan	Lebanon	Syria ¹	Total
1950	- ²	198,227	506,200 ²	127,600	82,194	914,221³
RR 1975	292,922	333,031	625,857	196,855	184,042	1,632,707
RR 2022	872,071	1,478,131	2,310,620	480,290	569,990	5,711,102
Other RPs 2022 ⁴	211,685	167,131	158,344	64,836	88,068	690,064
Total RPs 2022 ⁵	1,083,756	1,645,262	2,468,964	545,126	658,058	6,401,166
Official camps	19	8	10 ⁶	12	9	58
Schools (2020)	96	278	169	65	102	710
Primary Health Care	43	22	25	27	23	140

¹ Figures for Syria are working estimates as the situation there remains volatile. ² West Bank figures included in Jordan until 1967. ³ Excl. 45,800 people who received UNRWA relief in Israel until 1952. ⁴ Includes those eligible to receive services, e.g., non-refugee spouses and descendants, Gaza poor. ⁵ RRs and other RPs. ⁶ Three other neighborhoods in Amman, Zarqa and Madaba are considered 'unofficial' camps by UNRWA.

Sources: UNRWA Registered Population Dashboard, September 2022; UNRWA in Figures, December 2020.

Distribution of UNRWA Official Registered Refugees living in Camps (RC), 2022

West Bank			Gaza Strip		
District	Camp (year of est.)	Population	District	Camp (year of est.)	Population
Nablus	Askar (1950)	23,390	Gaza North	Jabalia (1948/49)	114,234
	Balata (1950)	32,117			
	Al-Ain/Camp #1 (1950)	9,402			
Jenin	Far'a (1949)	10,733	Gaza City	Rimal (Beach)	88,777
	Jenin (1953)	23,395			
Tulkarem	Nur Shams (1952)	13,346	Gaza South	Khan Yunis (1949)	87,670
	Tulkarem (1950)	26,974		Rafah (1949)	130,598
Ramallah	Al-Ama'ri (1949)	15,110	Gaza Center	Nuseirat (1948)	83,628
	Deir Ammar (1949)	3,638		Bureij	45,482
	Jalazon (1949)	16,200		Deir Balah (1949)	26,293
	Qalandia (1949)	15,877		Maghazi	32,495
Jerusalem	Shu'fat (1965/66)	16,197 ¹	TOTAL		609,177
Jericho	Aqabat Jabr (1948)	10,163	¹ The actual camp population is much higher as many non-refugees have moved there due to unaffordable rents elsewhere in Jerusalem. ² The total number of people registered with UNRWA is way higher as over 700,000 others live not in camps. ³ Tens of thousands of other people live in the camps. Source: UNRWA, as of 30 June 2022.		
	Ein Sultan (1948)	3,312			
Bethlehem	Dheisheh (1949)	18,718			
	Aida (1950)	7,024			
	Beit Jibrin (1950)	3,002			
Hebron	Fawwar (1949)	12,295			
	Arroub (1950)	15,439			
TOTAL		276,332²			

Recommended Research Sources:

<http://www.palestineremembered.com> <http://www.badil.org> <http://www.unrwa.org>
<http://www.prc.org.uk> (Return Center, London) <http://al-awda.org> <http://www.righttoenter.ps/>
<http://refugeeacademy.org> <http://prnblog.wordpress.com> (Refugee ResearchNet)

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Morris, Benny, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
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