

## 5. REFUGEES

### ■ Background

The Palestinian refugee problem was created as the result of two wars (*An-Naqba* of 1948 and *An-Naksa* of 1967), massacres, and other aggressions perpetrated by Jewish underground and terror groups such as 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 outside ("1948 refugees") while 32,000 remained within the armistice lines. Some 531 villages and towns were destroyed or resettled with Jews. The total losses of destroyed or confiscated Palestinian property is estimated at US\$209 billion. In addition to the refugees, there are the **internally displaced** Palestinians, who were expelled from their villages – located in what became Israel – during the 1948 War. At the end of the war, they numbered some 30-40,000 people who were not allowed internally to return to their homes and placed under military rule to facilitate the expropriation of their land. Until today, Israel does not recognize internally displaced Palestinians, whose number is estimated at 263,000-300,000 (BADIL Center, Bethlehem).

In 1950, 914,221 refugees were registered with **UNRWA**. In 1967, some 300,000 Palestinians were displaced from the WBGS ("1967 displaced persons"), including around 175,000 UNRWA registered refugees who became refugees for a second time.

**Today**, the total 1948 **refugee population** is estimated at 5.5 million, incl. 4 million registered with UNRWA and 1.5 million not registered (either they simply did not register or did not need assistance at the time they became refugees). In addition, there are 263,000 internally displaced (of 1948) and some 773,000 1967 displaced persons. (PLO Negotiations Affairs Department, *Factsheet on Palestinian Refugees*, May 2003).

**After Oslo**, all camps in the WBGS except Shu'fat Camp in Jerusalem came under the control of the PA, but the overall fate of the refugees remains one of the most complex issues still awaiting a solution in the context of the 'final status' talks between the PLO/PA and Israel. Israel rejects the 'right of return' for the refugees and displaced persons, given the demographic threat to the Jewish state, and wants to solve the problem by resettlement in Arab host countries, international efforts to improve the refugees' living conditions, and restricted readmission based on humanitarian considerations.

The Palestinians, conversely, demand the absolute 'right of return' to the area of mandatory Palestine for all 1948 refugees, based on **UNGA Res. 194** (Dec. 1948), which recognized the right of refugees to return or receive compensation and which has been affirmed by the UNGA over 110 times so far. However, Israel continues to dispute the legality of the Palestinian claim based on Res. 194 and refuses to repatriate refugees, even though Israel's admission to the UN in 1949 was conditional upon accepting UN Resolutions, incl. 194!

**NB:** In 2005, 42.2% of **Palestinian children** under 18 years living in the WBGS were refugees: 37.9% in the West Bank and 62.1% in Gaza Strip. (PCBS, *Palestinian Children - Rights and Numbers*, Ramallah, 2005.)



UNRWA Registered Refugees (June 2005)

RR = Registered Refugees	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Jordan	Syria	Lebanon	Total
1950	- <sup>1</sup>	198,227	506,200 <sup>1</sup>	82,194	127,600	<b>914,221<sup>2</sup></b>
RRs 1975	292,922	333,031	625,857	184,042	196,855	<b>1,632,707</b>
RRs 2005	690,988	969,588	1,795,326	426,919	401,071	<b>4,283,892</b>
Increase over 2004	2.3%	3.2%	2.1%	2.3%	1.1%	<b>2.3%</b>
% of total RRs	16	23	42	10	9	<b>100</b>
No. of refugee camps	19	8	10 <sup>3</sup>	10	12	<b>59</b>
RR living in camps (in % of RR)	182,191 (26)	474,079 (49)	284,461 (16)	113,663 (27)	211,593 (53)	<b>1,265,987 (30)</b>
RR outside camps	508,797	495,509	1,510,865	313,256	245,404	<b>3,017,905</b>
<b>Facilities:</b>						
Schools	93	180	177	115	87	<b>652</b>
Training Centers	3	1	2	1	1	<b>8</b>
Primary Health Care	36	18	23	23	25	<b>125</b>

<sup>1</sup> West Bank figures included in Jordan until 1967.

<sup>2</sup> Excl. 45,800 people who received relief in Israel from UNRWA until 1952.

<sup>3</sup> Three additional neighborhoods in Amman, Zarqa and Madaba are considered 'unofficial' camps by UNRWA. (Source: *UNRWA in Figures*, UNRWA Headquarters, March 2004.)



### Distribution of UNRWA Registered Refugees by District and Camps (RC)

West Bank *			Gaza Strip		
District	Camp (year of est.)	Population	District	Camp (year of est.)	Population
Nablus	Askar (1950)	14,629	Gaza North	Jabalia (1948/49)	106,691
	Balata (1950)	21,903		Gaza City	Shati (Beach) (1949)
	Camp No. 1 (1950)	6,508	Gaza South		Khan Younis (1949)
Jenin	Far'a (1949)	7,244		Rafah (1949)	95,187
	Jenin (1953)	15,496	Gaza Central	Deir Balah (1949)	19,534
Tulkarem	Nur Shams (1952)	8,659		Nuseirat (1948/49)	57,120
	Tulkarem (1950)	17,455		Bureij (1949)	28,770
Ramallah	Ama'ri (1949)	8,805		Al-Maghazi (1949)	22,266
	Deir Ammar (1949)	2,275			
	Jalazon (1949)	10,390			
	Qalandia (1949)	10,024			
Jerusalem	Shu'fat (1965/66)	10,069**			
Jericho	Aqabat Jaber (1948)	5,510			
	Ein Sultan (1948)	1,723			
Bethlehem	Dheisheh (1949)	12,045			
	Aida (1950)	4,534			
	Beit Jibrin (1950)	2,025			
Hebron	Fawwar (1949)	7,630			
	Arroub (1950)	9,859			

\* In addition to the listed numbers, there are some 4,458 ex-Gazan refugees distributed in the WB camps.

\*\* The de facto camp population is much higher as many refugees and non-refugees have moved into the camp in the past years to avoid losing their residency rights in Jerusalem.

(Source: UNRWA, as of March 2005.)

#### Recommended Research Sources:

<http://www.badil.org/> (Badil Center for Refugee and Residency Rights)      <http://www.un.org/unrwa/index.html>  
<http://www.shaml.org/> (Shaml Palestinian Diaspora & Refugee Center)      <http://www.palestineremembered.com/>  
<http://www.prc.org.uk/> (Palestinian Return Center, London)      <http://al-awda.org/>  
<http://www.arts.mcgill.ca/MEPP/PRRN/prfront.html> (c/o McGill University)      <http://www.pcrp.org>

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