

Effect of Demographic Factor on Palestinian - Israeli Conflict

Hussein Al-Rimmawi
Associate Professor
Geography Department
Birzeit University

Esmat Zeidan
Assistant Professor
Geography Department
Birzeit University

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to tackle the demographic and spatial changes which took place in Palestine since the middle of 19th century to present. Throughout the last 160 years Palestine witnessed several waves of foreign immigrants whose settlements were diffused starting from coast toward interior parts of Palestine. Other foreign settlers were interested in residing in holy cities such as Jerusalem, Nazareth and Bethlehem. For the first time and after 1948 war in Palestine foreign immigrants outnumbered Palestinian people in which almost one million of its residents were forced to leave their homes. After the 1948 war Israel was established over 78% of Palestinian lands. West Bank and Gaza strip which comprised only 22% of Palestine became under Jordanian and Egyptian rules respectively. All the area of Palestine became under Israeli occupation in 1967. Due to Palestinians high growth rate, Israelis are heading toward losing their majority. At present Palestine is sliced into several concentration areas between Palestinians and Israelis. Because of such a mix up between both sides, a visible and just solution to this conflict is becoming more difficult. If the situation persists, an apartheid system will force itself on the land of Palestine. The author believes that that a new approach should be carried out in order to solve Arab- Israeli conflict including refugees' right of return.

Keywords: Spatial changes, demographic factors, apartheid, democratic state.

Introduction

This paper aims to analyze the impact of reform processes, foreign immigration, Palestinian exodus and population natural increase on demographic and spatial changes which took place on the land of Palestine from the Middle of nineteenth century to present. The Ottoman Empire reform plans started to move into modernization processes by introducing its several reforms policies. Such reforms had their spatial implications on Ottoman lands in general and Palestinian land in specific. They were carried out for the purpose of meeting their local, regional and international responsibilities. Throughout neighboring Europe and around the middle of 19th Century, a form of political, economic and religious fever in which calls were made for the occupation of the Holy Land. European countries interventions and occupations had its imprints on the space of Palestine. The most devastating impact on Palestine was the adaptation of implanting European Jewish immigrations. Such a project started to systemically taking place since 1882 and it has been pursued until present. On the other hand, Palestinians benefitted socially and economically from both Ottoman reforms and from contacts with Europeans. Consequently, Palestinians witnessed considerable natural increase and this was also affected by Arab tradition that favors and encourages large families. Furthermore, Palestinian natural population growth despite the exodus of more than 700,000 people and Jewish immigration and the stalemate of peace processes the situation became more complicated.

Since 1937, Several United Nations resolutions and other political initiatives were introduced to solve Arab-Israeli conflict but none of them has worked out. At present political peace process between both sides reached a deadlock. However, new political factors are emerging which may alternate the way the conflict is seen.

For example Palestinians who live in mandate Palestine may outnumber Israelis in the very near future. In addition, there are 6 million Palestinians live in diasporas. But by looking at contemporary map of population distribution of Palestinians and Israelis, it reveals that Palestinian refugees may enjoy their right of return without harming Israelis. The authors suggest that a just solution of this conflict is that both sides accept to establish a one democratic state may emerge in the absence of a two state solution.

Historical Background to Palestinian Census

Since its occupation to Palestine in 1517, the Ottoman Empire was interested in carrying out population census for the purpose of taxation and army conscription. In 1596, Ottoman authorities carried out their first census. Information was obtained about population, economic activities such as agriculture, grazing, and crafts. At the end of 16th century Palestine was inhabited by 206000 residents. But this number jumped to half a million by the middle of nineteenth century as a result of population natural increase. However, the population of Palestine decreased to be 46000 by 1883 and this was due to the killing of many Palestinians during the Ottoman wars or because of badly reported census. In addition, feudalists used not to report labors working for them fearing that the Ottoman Army would conscript those labors (Hutteroth and Abdulfattah, 1977).

Just before the launch of First World War the Palestinian population reached 689000 and their natural increase was about 1.3%. Illegal European Jewish immigration was another factor which had an impact on population increase and the coming of many European representatives and missionaries from all over the world to Palestine. For example, by the year of 1881, Jewish population in Palestine was about 22000, but this number jumped to be 100000 in 1914. Foreign missionaries had their impact in increasing the Christian population in Palestine. For example, Christian population jumped from 10% in 1850 to 16% of the total population in 1914. (Al-Rimmawi, 2009).

The more the Ottoman Empire became weak the more Palestine received travelers, missionaries and researchers who carried out their biblical, archeological, demographical researches. In 1860’s, British Government established Palestine Exploration fund for the purpose of carrying out researches about different physical and socioeconomic of Palestine in order to prepare it for future Jewish emigrants. In fact the British Occupation of Egypt in 1882, had facilitated the British efforts to prepare Palestine for its future project, taking advantage of its grip hold on Sues Canal which also secured its naval transportation to Asia and Africa (Jiryis, 1987).

The United Kingdom occupied Palestine during the First World War and became under its mandate in 1920 in which British authorities took the responsibility to execute the Balfour declaration of 1917 in which the British government promised the Zionist leadership to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine. First, British authorities carried out their first census of population in 1922. Such a census included items about urban, rural and nomadic residents. In addition, data regarding residents religion belonging were collected. Results of 1922 census of population are illustrated in table 1. The striking issue in which British authorities tried to shed light on was the division of Arab population according to their religion belonging. It appeared as if Judaism was the third religion in Palestine in addition to Islam and Christianity. According to 1922 census Arabs enjoyed large majority of 88% and Jews were only 11%. (Jbara, 1998).

Table 1: Palestinian Population demographic
Structure: 1922-2025. (In 1000)

National ID	Pop 1922	%	Pop 1931	%	Pop 1945	%	Pop. 1949	%	Pop 2010	%	Pop 2025	%	Pop 2050	%	Pop 2100	%
Original Arabs	661	88%	851	82%	1196	68%	150	20%	5378	47%	8360	53%	9989	47%	9833	40%
Immigrant Jews	84	11%	175	17%	554	31%	600	80%	6000	53%	7230	47%	11114	53%	14932	60%
Other	8	1%	10	1%	14	1%	---	---	11378	---	-----	---				
Total	753	100%	1036	101%	1764	100%	750	100%	100%	100%	15590	100%	21103	100%	24765	100%

In 1931 Great Britain carried out another census of population in 1931 and the total Palestinian population was 1,035,821. Because of continuing Jewish Immigration to Palestine under the auspices of British Mandate authorities. Consequently, Arab representation in Palestine decreased and became 82% while Jewish percentages increased up to 17%. However the year of 1948 witnessed ethnic cleansing in which around one million Palestinians were forcefully expelled from their land especially from the coastal area.

The expelled Palestinians became homeless refugees in West Bank, Gaza Strip, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq. Others were dispersed all over the world. In 1949, Arab Representation was severely affected in which it declined down to 20% while Jewish population increased up to 80%. (Abu Sitta, 2002; Abu- Al-Nameh, 2009; Mills, 1932). Palestinian people in 1946 were distributed all over their country. However, Jews were concentrated in the area located between Haifa, Jaffa and around Lake Taiberias (Palestine Remembered, 2010). In 2010 Arab-Jewish representation manifested great alteration. For example, percentages of Arabs and Jews became 47% and 53% respectively. Despite the fact that Israel received over one million new immigrants who were originated from Eastern Europe. In the year of 2025 Palestine will be inhabited by 8 million Palestinians (53%) and 7 million Israelis (47%). Furthermore, for the next 100 years, and according to the United Nations Division of Population Arabs will be about 14.9 millions (60%) and Israelis will be about 9.8 millions (40%) and a new era of Palestinian- Israeli conflict will be manifested (United Nations Population Division, 2004).

Table 2: : Results of two Palestinian Censuses of 1997 and 2007: West Bank and Gaza Strip.

District	Number of population in 1997	Number of Population in 2007	Number of people increased	Percentage of annual population increase
Jerusalem	320809	363649	42840	1.3%
Total (West Bank)	1787562	2350583	563021	3.1%
Total (Gaza Strip)	995522	*1527785	532263	5.3
Total (Palestinian Lands)	2783084	3878368	1095284	3.2%

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 1997 and 2007).

Under the Jordanian rule of the West Bank, Jordanian authorities also carried out two census of population in 1951 and 1962. According to 1951 census the total Palestinian population was 742000. But in 1962 the total population reached 806000 by which the annual increase was about 0.8%. The low of percentage of population increase was due to the departure of thousands of Palestinians toward Jordan, Gulf States, and other Arab and Foreign countries because of deteriorated economic conditions in the West Bank. (Department of General Statistics, Jordan, 1961)

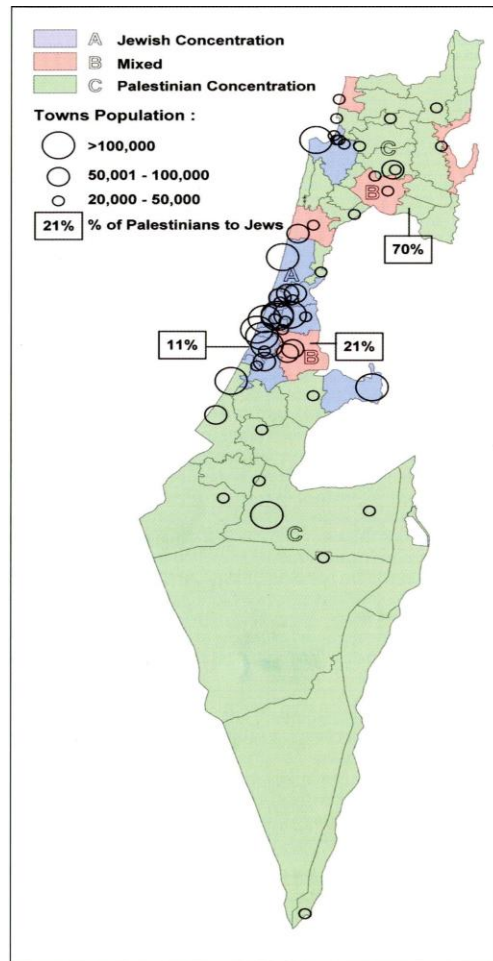
The total population of Gaza Strip in 1949 was about 270000. This high number of population was due to the coming of thousands of refugees who were expelled by force from their homes in 1948. In 1966, the total population of Gaza Strip was about 455000. But in 1967 Gaza Strip lost thousands of its population as a result of 1967 war in which Israel followed the policy of forcing people to leave. As a result Gaza Strip's total population was about 356000.

After the war of 1967, The West Bank and Gaza Strip became under Israeli occupation. Consequently these two parts of Palestine lost thousands of their residents who fled toward Jordan and Egypt. However, many of them tried to return back to their homes in Palestine. But despite Israeli rejection very few of the new refugees (Nazihun), were successful in getting back to Palestine through a United Nations program which was called "family reunion". Just after the war of 1967, Israeli army carried out its only population census of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in which each Palestinian offered a new identification card. However, residents of Jerusalem and its proximity were offered a different blue identification card than those of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Al-Surani, 2012). After 50 years of its occupation, Israel tried its best to change the demographic structure in Palestine. At present almost 51% of Palestinian people are living in diasporas. The other 49% live on the mandate land of Palestine. But Israeli population distribution is not far from that of 1948. Figure 1 shows percentage distribution of Palestinians and Israelis in Israel. In the very near future and because of their high natural increase (3.2%) Palestinians will supersede the Israeli population. If Israelis keep its grip on power, this country will witness a minority of Israelis ruling an Arab majority (Abu-Sitta, 2004).

Palestinian demographic threat against Israel is illustrated through population pyramids of Palestinians and Israelis (figures 2 & 3). A Palestinian population pyramid show that most of them are young people but Israeli population pyramid is has less young people and is heading toward having more aging people.

Soon after the establishment of state of Israel, the Central Bureau of Statistics was created as an autonomous unit under the auspices of Prime Minister’s Office. It was a direct continuation of the activities of British Mandate government’s statistical departments (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

Figure 1: Population Distribution of Arabs and Israelis 1998



Source: Abu-Sitta, 2004

Figure 2: Palestinian Population pyramid in West Bank and Gaza Strip 2003

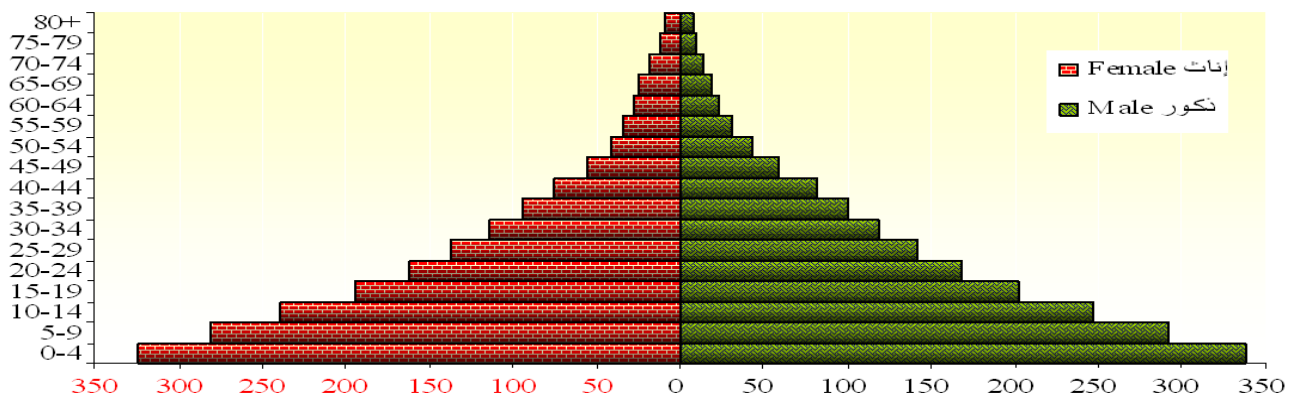


Figure 3: Israeli Population pyramid (Excluding Arabs) , 2003

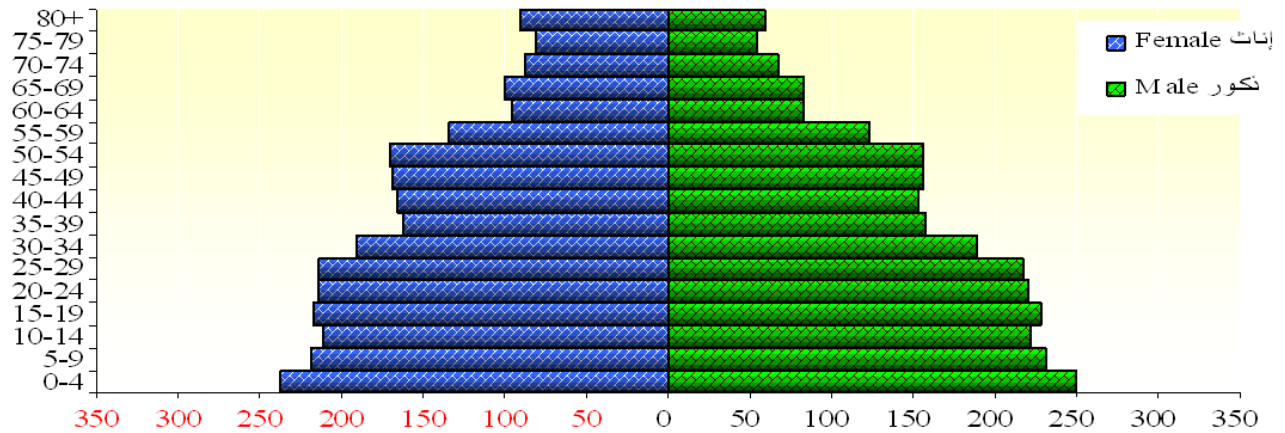


Figure (): Arab and Israel Age Composition in Israel, 2008



After the establishment of Palestinian National Authority in 1994, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics was able to carry out its first census of population in 1997 for the areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The second census was carried in the year of 2007. The results of these two censuses are shown in table 2 which illustrates the following facts:

- 1- Annual population increase in the West Bank and Gaza Strip reached 3.2% and this is a high percentage if compared with world average annual increase which is about 1.7% (Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel, 2010). The high annual population increase in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is related to reasons of religion, and traditions.
- 2- Annual population increase in Gaza Strip and the West Bank are 5.3% and 3.1% respectively. Palestinians who live in Gaza Strip are more conservative than those of the West Bank and this explains the difference in population increase of the two Palestinian regions. However, population natural increase in West Bank is still high.
- 3- Annual population increase in Jerusalem reached 1.3% and this is the least among other areas in Palestine and this is because of Israeli policy which is dedicated to illegally empty this holy city from its Arab residents. On the other hand, the establishment of the apartheid wall which crosses Arab neighborhoods aims to split Arab communities from each other. Israel aims to put 150000 Palestinians whose their homes are located behind the wall out of Jerusalem. Percentage of Palestinians in Jerusalem will be put down to be 15% of total residents of Jerusalem. At present, Palestinians compose 34% of the total population the holy city. But Jerusalemite Palestinians who hold the blue identification card and live in cities such as Ramallah and Bethlehem began to move back to Jerusalem in order to resist Israeli systematic policies of emptying Jerusalem from its Arab residents (Thawaba and Al-Rimmawi, 2012).

Palestinian Refugees

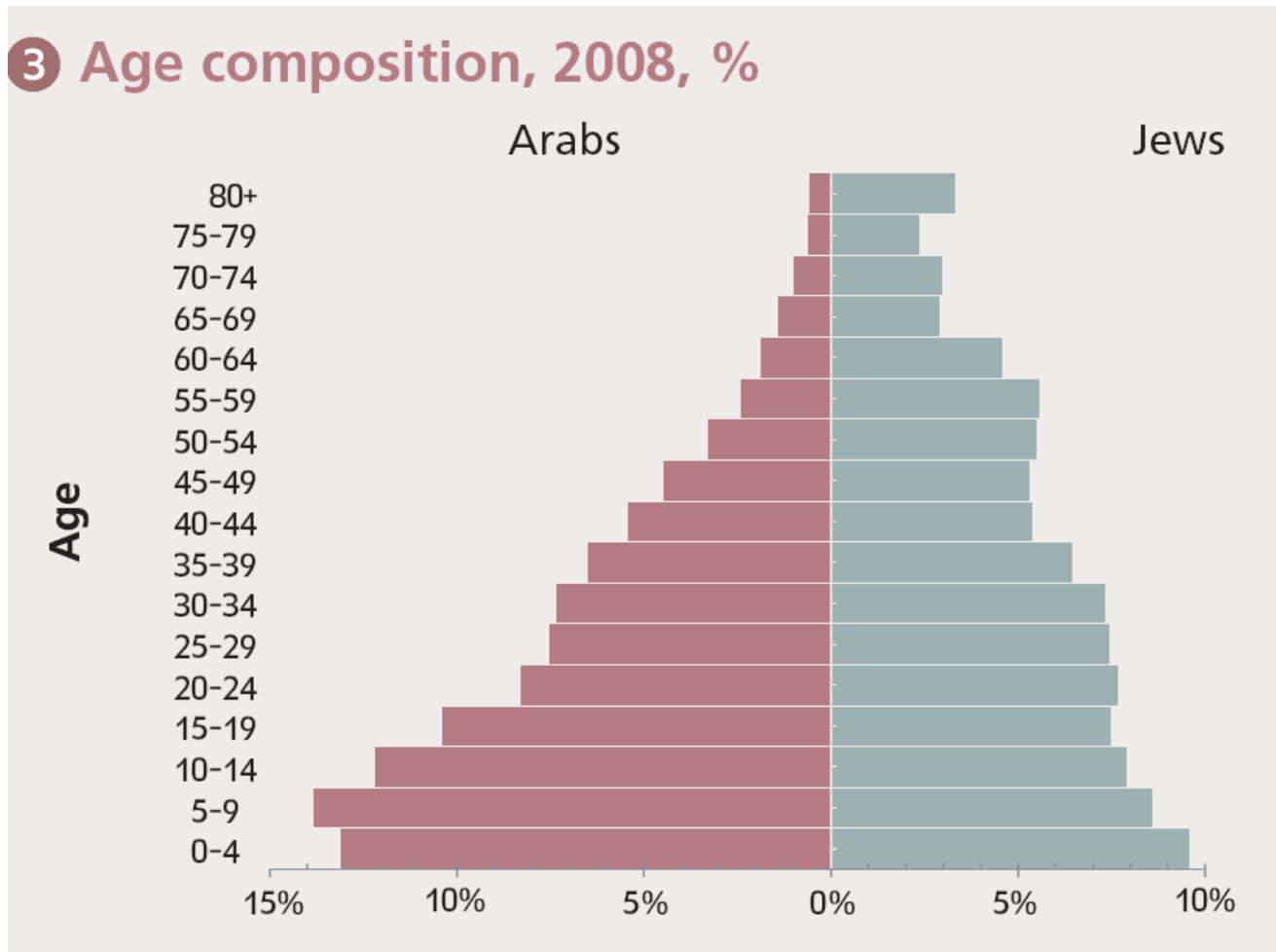
Several estimates of the number of Palestinian refugees who were expelled by force, violence and intimidation (Lustick and Lesch, 2005) were carried out by different local and international associations such as British, American, Palestinian, Israeli and United Nations (Table 4). In fact British and American estimates were similar. The United Nations have two estimates. The first which was carried out in 1949 indicate that the total number of Palestinian refugees was 726000, but the second estimate which was carried out in 1950 tells that their number was about 957000. On the other hand Israeli sources estimate the total number of Palestinian refugees by 520000 with a difference of 437000 from the United Nations estimates. As a result of their expulsion, and displacement, Palestinian refugees suffered from life altering in refugee camps because it was difficult for them move their capital assets from Palestine and still suffer from long-term displacement (Marfleet, 2006).

Present Estimates of Palestinians

Table 3 illustrates the distribution of Palestinian people all over the world and it has the following characteristics.

- a- 46% of Palestinians live at present on the land of historical Palestine. Israeli authorities believe that this high number constitutes a threat to the future of Israel. Israel also feels the threat which comes from Palestinian Arabs living in Israel. For example figure 4 illustrates age composition of Arabs and Jews in Israel in which Arabs have more young people and less aged than Jews while Jews have more aged and less young people than Arabs. Myers (2012) reports that nearly half of all Arab-Israelis in 2010 were younger than age 19, while only one-third of Jewish Israelis. Every while and then Israelis reiterate Arabs demographic threat toward Israel. But Shohat (2012) stresses that Demographic threat is an “Israeli idiom and is a symptom of an ailing society that is unable to determine its borders, or its own identity”

Figure 4: Arab and Israel Age Composition in Israel, 2008



Source: <http://www.cbs.gov.il>. Date retrieved April 15, 2010.

- b- 42% of Palestinians live in Arab states which surround Israel and they reside within geographic proximity of Palestine. In addition, 88% of Palestinians live inside Palestine and in the surrounding Arab states and such an existence provides daily contacts with their land directly or indirectly. For example, many of the refugees look forward to enjoy the right of return. In fact, most of refugees live in camps which are located within a distance of not more than 100km from the borders of Palestine. In case of allowing Palestinian refugees to return home according to United Nations Resolutions 181 and 194, they can do that in a very short period of time.
- c- 6% of Palestinians live in Arab countries which do not have borders with Palestine. Most of these countries are Arab Gulf States. Palestinians would have been more in number in Gulf States, but because of the departure of more than half a million from Kuwait as a result of Iraqi-Kuwait crises in 1990-1991 their percentage sharply fell down.
- d- Another 6% of Palestinians live in non-Arab countries which offered refuge, jobs and education to many Palestinians after the wars of 1948, 1967.

Table: 3 Global Distribution of Palestinian Population

Place	Number of Population	% of Total Population
Israel	1401020	%12
West Bank	2610000	%23
Gaza Strip	1620000	%14
Total in mandate Palestine	5631020	%49
Jordan	3500000	%31
Lebanon	426190	%4
Syria	528940	%5
Egypt	58905	%0.5
Total Border Countries	4514035	%40
Other Arab Countries	571000	%5
Non Arab Countries	640000	%5.6
Grand Total	11356055	%100

* Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2007; Al-Surani, 2012.

Possibility of applying the Palestinians right of return

Most of the properties of Palestinians refugees are still vacant in Israel. In addition, 80% of Israelis at present are living on lands which they lived in before 1948. Israelis are living on lands which constitute 15% of Israel and 18% of them live in cities which used to be mixed cities in which Palestinians and Jews lived together such as Haifa, Jaffa, Acre and Nazareth. The rest of Israelis who live in Kibbutz and Moshavim make 2% of Israeli population. However, Israeli army controls 85% of Israel of 1949 borders. On the other hand, population density in Negev desert which make half of Israel is not more than 6 persons per square kilometer, but the population density in the district of Gaza is about 5000 persons per square kilometers. This means that there is a clear possibility of applying the right of return to Palestinian refugees without harming Israelis. Palestinians believe that since there is a room for Jewish immigrants in Israel/ Palestine then there should be a room for Palestinian refugees who were expelled from their homeland in 1948. Saadeh (2009) found out most Palestinians who were interviewed in the town of Birzeit which is located near Ramallah insisted that they for sure will return back home if they are allowed to enjoy repatriation. (Khwaja, 2002) states that refugees prefer to go back home rather than long-term misery living in permanent settlement of refugees elsewhere hardship of return home would not be a matter if it is compared with what they faced upon their expelling in 1948.

The interviewed Palestinians who were originated from coastal cities of Jaffa, Luda and Ramla believe that their future conditions in original homes of pre 1948 would be better off than their conditions at present because they think that living in such cities would be promising in terms of business, education and owning back their lands. Upon returning Palestinians believe that they will not lose their new homes or businesses in Birzeit as a refuge town since it is located within the same country. In fact Only Israel refuses to let Palestinians to return to their homes (Barbarawi, 2010; Abu Sitta, 2002; Abu Sitta, 2004, Abu Sitta, 2005). Badil Resource Center (2007) reports that the rules contained in Articles 43 of the Hague Regulations decides upon the general right of return in humanitarian law permitting "all displaced habitual residents to return to their homes of origin: The Nationality of the inhabitants of occupied areas does not ordinarily changes through the mere fact that temporary rule of a foreign government has been instituted, inasmuch as military occupation does not confer *de jure* sovereignty upon an occupant." Israel has been successful in international comparative terms in absorbing Jewish immigrants in periods of times especially in area of housing policy. If these successful policies are "applied to address the intake of Palestinian returnees and the upgrading of current refugee and other inadequate housing. Hopefully, a peaceful settlement between Israel and Palestine will arrive soon." (El-Refai and Brynen, 2007). Pappé (2011) reports that life in Palestine for early Zionist settlers in Palestine was not easy in which their journey from Eastern Europe to Palestine was harsh and dangerous, and its land was unfamiliar. However, Palestinian received them well and showed them how to cultivate land. The time may come to Israelis that they should reciprocate to Palestinians returnee back homes. However, Israelis have to change their negative attitude toward Palestinians especially the series of legislative measures that continued to oppress Palestinians.

Palestinians have to get back to their rights of own, buy and sell land; elimination of imposing of emergency regulations which denied basic human and civil rights on the West Bank and Gaza Strip; levitating of town-planning ordinances that lead to ethnic cleansing of Palestinians who are living in Jerusalem for hundreds of years and levitating of parliamentary initiatives that bane reunion between Palestinian couples who live on two sides of armistice line of 1949. Making Israel a democracy for all and changing attitude toward Palestinians as primitives and non-modern would change Palestinian resistance which was rooted in despair and anger. In addition, Israel has to move its “spatial and demographic policies against the Palestinian community in Israel; in effect that settler’s community received all the advantages at the expense of the indigenous population.” (Pappe, 2011). The idea of returning Palestinian refugees back home was introduced by the United States and accepted by Israel (Peretz, 1993) and at present it may well be applicable. For Example, at the early days of Arab Israeli conflict and in response to President Truman who urged the return of 20,000 – 300,000 Palestinian refugees, Israel accepted the return of Gaza Strip refugees which were about 280000 according to the United Nations estimates (table 3). Khanen (2005) gave a hint that since Israel absorbed Jews of different backgrounds it may absorb Palestinian refugees who enjoy different back grounds than Israelis. In addition, Lesch (2005) suggested a blend of practical measures to solve Palestinian refugees problem such as “statehood, permanent residency abroad, and controlled implementation of the right of return.”

In fact, if Palestinians return home, it does not mean that their problems will be solved. There are significant socio-economic, political, peace and security aspects for refugees that have to be met upon their return and reintegration (Black et al, 2004; Phuong, 2000; El-Rifai and Brynen, 2007). Tamari (2005) report that after a process of acknowledgment of historical injustice, proposed three-pronged approach to material compensation. Palestinian refugees will have the following options to chose “repatriation to Palestine, repatriation in Palestine, repatriation to areas of Israel that will be annexed to Palestine (on a swap basis), repatriation to Israel, naturalization in host countries, and third-state migration”. However, Pappe (2005) has put a constructive solution to this conflict in which he states that Palestinians should not be treated as second-rate citizens, occupation cannot be perpetuated and refugees should not be out of their country. Returnee Palestinian will help adding up to economic of new state especially from those who have accumulated financial resources throughout the past six decades (Hanafi, 2005). Shafir (2005) reiterated the two state solution which is not working so far. Jamal (2005) is pessimistic about refugees right of return since Israel refuses to internally displaced persons to return home within Israeli land. Others like Zimmerman (2012) is cautious about the idea of refugees returning home since several factors that should be accounted for such as demography, economy, cultural inclination and fear.

The Arab reaction against foreign interests and Jewish waves of immigrations go back as early the middle of 19th Century. For example people in main cities as well as rural areas of Palestine demonstrated in streets and in front of European consulates, tore up European states flags. Palestinian elites drafted letters to Jewish leaders warning that increasing Jewish immigration towards Palestine was threatening peaceful co-existence between Muslims, Christians and Jewish residents of Palestine. Through time Palestinians became aware of settling Jews in Palestine. For example Palestine witnessed several revolts in 1920-1921, 1929, and 1935-1939. Several full-scale wars took place such as the wars of 1948, 1967, and 1973. Throughout the period between 1967 and 1993 the Palestinian Liberation Organization paratroops were engaged in guerilla warfare with Israel. In 1987, Palestinians living in West Bank and Gaza Strip launched their first Intifada (uprising) and it continued until 1993. After peace process reached a deadlock between Palestinians and Israelis in year of 2000, a second intifada took place and has been going ever since. But for last few years Palestinians have peaceful demonstration and they expressed in terms of civil disobedience against Israeli settlements and apartheid wall (Al-Rimmawi, 2009).

Conclusion

After 60 years of conflicts between Arabs and Israel, Palestinians did not disappear and in fact they are toward outnumbering Israelis. Palestinians continue to fight for their independence in the face of Israel continuing to squeeze Palestinian land. By establishing the Apartheid Wall in the occupied Palestinian Israel is trying to consolidate power. Over the last few years, Israel has turned itself into a ghetto within an apartheid state (Golani, 2008). Many Israelis (Shalhat, 2008a) and others believe that this state's future which is affected by demographic threat is not promising (Shalhat, 2008, 2008a; Zimmermnn, 2012; Abu Al-Namel, 2009). The author believes that only permanent peace on whole area of Palestine as a space will lead to progress in Palestine and one democratic state for all citizen will be the just solution of this conflict.

A one and democratic (Barghouti, 2005) state solution will relieve Israel of being hegemonic at the expense of Palestinians and also will in fact lead to the recognition of the solidarity of Palestinians. In fact there are people who are with this solution and others oppose the whole idea (Halwani and Kapitab, 2008). Peace will be advanced if Palestinian refugees right of return is implemented because it will change Israel to be a pluralistic, secular and democratic state and overall peace will be advanced by removing major injustice done in the past 64 years and Israelis should be socialized toward accepting the injustice that inflicted upon Palestinian refugees. (Qumsiyeh, 2004, and 2012; Lustick, 2005). Justice peace with Palestinians wills relief Israel from being dependent on Western protection (Badil, 2005). In addition, Israeli phobia of Palestinian demographic threat will be eliminated since all residents will be equal under law in which they will be granted equal citizenship and cultural, religious and cultural heritages of all will be preserved (Masalhah, 2000,). Fischabach (2003) reports that only creative international peacemaking will only solve such conflict. Finally, a new approach (Jubilus and Carnero, 2011) towards more durable solution to Palestinian refugees is needed in which the United Nations resolutions should be respected and implemented and synchronized with the establishment of a one secular and democratic state. Refugees returning back home are preferred by hosting countries and Palestinian refugees insist of going back to Palestine since they suffered too much in Arab countries such as Lebanon, Iraq, Libya and Syria.

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