Palestinians in the Diaspora

n the wake of the Nakba, more than 700,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced from their homes. Thinking that their exile was temporary, these refugees initially paid little attention to their living conditions in the host countries, their hearts tied to their homes in Palestine. Years passed, however, and popular movements and organizations sprung up to advocate for the political rights of Palestinians. However, there was no political entity to represent Palestinians until the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964, the political body that represented all Palestinians worldwide, while less than 20% of what remained of Palestine stayed under Arab administration, Jordan ruling the West Bank and Egypt the Gaza Strip. Many of the refugees, meanwhile, spread over the entire globe.

The collection of data about persons with Palestinian heritage who live in the diaspora is confronted with professional, financial, and political obstacles. In many host countries it is difficult to conduct field surveys and studies, and statistical samples for field surveys and studies do not tend to give accurate results. Successful integration of Palestinians in their adopted places of residence may furthermore make it difficult to census them, not to mention the high cost and political impediments that prevent the conducting of field studies and surveys in other countries, as the carrying out of surveys contradicts with the principle of the sovereignty of a state.

To overcome such problems, the PCBS tailors its activities to the requirements of the situation in order to produce the best professional estimates possible, using available data from different sources. By the end of 2015, PCBS estimated that there were 12.37 million Palestinians living in the world. If we compare this number to the 1.454 million Palestinians cited by statistical data as living in Palestine at the end of the British Mandate, just prior to 1948, we find that the Palestinian world population has increased more than eightfold. The distribution is as follows: 4.75 million live in the State of Palestine (38.4% of the total world population), 1.47 million in the Palestinian areas occupied by Israel in 1948 (11.9%), Palestinians in Arab countries amount to 5.46 million (44.2% of world population), while Palestinians in foreign countries amount to 685,000 (5.5% of Palestinian world population). This means that half of the Palestinians in the world live outside historical Palestine.
A study carried out by the Norwegian FAFO Research Foundation, looking into the living conditions in Palestinian camps in Jordan in 2011, showed that 39.9% of camp inhabitants are below 15 years old, while 4.3% of individuals are aged 65 years and above. The average household size in refugee camps was 5.1 members per household, while the average size of Palestinian families outside camps reached 4.8 members. Annual demographic growth reached 2.2%, and the overall fertility rate of Palestinian women in Jordan was 3.3 children per woman. Infant mortality rate in these camps reached 22.6 deaths per 1000 births, while the morality rate for children aged below five years was 25.7 deaths per 1000 live births in 2010.

- **Palestinians in Jordan**

  Data available for 2009 regarding Palestinians living in Syria indicate that 33.1% of the total population was aged 15 years and below, while those aged 65 years and above constituted 4.4%. The gender ratio was 98.2 males per every 100 females. Palestinian unmarried females in Lebanon (12 years and above) reached 43.7%, while married female Palestinians represented 52.2%, divorced 2.3%, widows 1.7%, and separated 0.1%. Data also showed that the average Palestinian household had 4.4 members, the fertility rate was 2.8 children per woman, infant mortality rate 15.0 deaths per 1000 births, and the mortality rate of children under five amounted to 17.0 per 1000 live births.

  **Conclusion:** Palestinians are a young society, both in the diaspora and inside Palestine. The fertility rate of Palestinian women in the diaspora is noticeably lower than that of Palestinian women inside Palestine, which explains why the natural annual population growth rate with 2% among Palestinians in the diaspora is lower than that among Palestinians residing in Palestine, which attained a 2.9% increase in population per year. PCBS relies with many of its data on numbers provided by UNRWA.