



FEATURES

Jerusalem's Shifting Demographic Profile

**A statistical reading of the
city's demographic map**

Luay Shabbaneh

The wall as it cuts through the neighborhood of Abu Dis.

This article will present a reading of social and demographic transformation in Jerusalem in comparison with both Israeli residents of the same city, and West Bankers.¹ This analysis is based on statistics derived from a variety of local and international sources. Social and demographic transformation in Palestine, and particularly in Jerusalem, is caused both by the Israeli occupation and natural change. Natural transformations result from population growth, migration, fertility and mortality, while ‘occupation-made’ transformations have been imposed on the Palestinian people through displacement and compulsory population mobility. Residents face emerging direct and indirect challenges to their wellbeing. High population density, limited labour opportunities, lack of investment, poor quality of services, and a failure to meet service-related needs accompanying natural growth (through adequate education, health and social services, and infrastructure) all make living conditions extremely difficult and deprive society of the chance for growth and stability.

Demography and Strategic Options

The demographic struggle, in which Jerusalem is a crucial battlefield, has been a central issue for Palestine and Israel for decades. This debate ebbs and flows, depending on political trends, the proximity of serious political solutions, and their accompanying ramifications for population distribution and the natural resources that lie between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

From Israel's perspective, demographic considerations are a central starting point for the formulation of strategic options. Israeli decision-makers are particularly troubled by the demographic specifics of Palestinian society, which they see as a future threat. Palestinian society is young—minors under 14 years of age constitute about 46% of the population. Furthermore, young people and teens between the ages of 10 and 24 constitute approximately 33% of the whole. The growing number of young people in Palestinian society puts a burden on breadwinners and the rate of dependency rose to 96.3% in 2005.

What further compounds these grim statistics is the continuing rise in unemployment rates (especially among youth) to 39.8% for the 15-24 age group, in addition to an increase in poverty rates. In families where the head of the household is a female, poverty rates are 68.5%, as compared with 67.5% for households headed by a male. This has (and will have) adverse affects on economic and social growth. Population estimations indicate a continuing rise in fertility rates (5.6 births per capita in 2003), and these predictions indicate that the Palestinian population will double over the next 23 years.

These considerations are reflected in every Israeli decision concerning land and population distribution, development, and economic considerations. It can be argued that demographics and the accompanying economic burden were central motives for Israel's disengagement from Gaza and the unilateral convergence plan planned for the West Bank. These concerns also help to explain Israeli policies in Jerusalem, which seek to empty the city of its Arab residents by a variety of means.

From the Palestinian perspective, the issue of demography is an important component in the national vision. Population constitutes a fundamental determinant in the Palestinian people's strategic options vis-à-vis their overall growth and economic development, especially in light of their limited natural resources and political history. Considering the multitude of challenges facing sustainable development in the Palestinian territories, population policies have special significance. Scarce natural resources such as water and energy, sparse financial resources, as well as the investment needed to develop infrastructure, create job opportunities and develop human resources are all impacted by the growing population. Also, the issue relates to the administration of society's resources, which has become more complicated because of the Israeli occupation. Hence, there is great need to prepare

population estimates using demographic indicators that serve as a starting point for a comprehensive Palestinian population policy and the study of available options.

Since the start of the Israeli occupation in 1967, Palestinians have been subject to geopolitical and demographic changes resulting from Israel's attempt to control land, while minimizing the presence of Palestinians. These efforts have been concentrated in Jerusalem, where Israel has established a number of laws, among them the law to annex Jerusalem to the borders of the state of Israel, and the law that establishes united Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and makes Israeli law applicable to the city's residents. Palestinians who change their place of residency to an address outside of Jerusalem lose the right to return to the city. Land confiscations and restrictions on building, home demolitions, and settlement construction are all aimed at Judaizing Jerusalem, controlling it and isolating it from the rest of the Palestinian territories. Since the end of 2004, approximately 6,684 dunams have been confiscated from Palestinian Jerusalemites.²

The combined political, demographic and economic tools used by Israeli authorities to suppress Jerusalem's character and create a demographic balance in favour of Jews form one of the most formidable challenges facing Palestinians. This is even more so today, since Israel has largely succeeded in eliminating the issue of Jerusalem from the political arena over the past three years.

Since 1948, the Palestinians of Jerusalem have slowly been evicted from their places of residence. Approximately 98,000 citizens have been expelled through forced demographic change aimed at tipping the population ratio. In 1967, low-end estimates (due to the absence of accurate statistics) of the population of East Jerusalem, which was annexed to Israel in that year, indicate the presence of about 69,000 people. The estimated population in 1991 was approximately 151,000. Since 1997, using data from the first Palestinian census, there has been an accurate count of the number of Palestinians in the Jerusalem district, which is now comprised of two regions: the area annexed by Israel in 1967 (J1) and the remaining Jerusalem district (according to previous regional divisions) under Palestinian administration (J2).

Talking Numbers

Demographically, Palestinian society is considered in the early stages of demographic development³ given its high fertility rates, despite the gradual drop in fertility over the past decade. The overall fertility rate dropped from approximately six live births in 1997 to 4.6 in 2004. Still, the rate of population growth is on the rise. Those under the age of 18 comprise about half the society, which means continuing high growth rates (the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics estimates this at approximately 3.5%). Basic demographic indicators in the Jerusalem district, including fertility and growth rates, are similar to West Bank averages, where the overall fertility rate was 5.2 births per woman in 1997 with a growth rate of 3.5%.

The merging concerns of high natural increase and forced demographic transformation are a major challenge in Jerusalem residents' daily life.

The Wall and Demography

Israel's annexation and expansion wall adds another challenge to these trends. Approximately 62% of Palestinians in Jerusalem 10 years of age or older are forced to move out of areas surrounded by the wall to reach educational and health services, to go to work, for tourism and for social and entertainment activities. In addition, some 33% of Palestinians in Jerusalem changed their last place of residence, 54% of these changing their residence the first time ever after the wall was built. The wall also confiscated land belonging to 19.2% of Palestinian families in Jerusalem.

Some studies⁴ show that the annexation and expansion wall has had a major impact on trends of international migration. The number of people who are now thinking of emigrating has risen since the construction of the wall by approximately 22% in the Jerusalem governorate. It should be noted that this tendency is much higher in annexed Jerusalem (J1) as compared with the rest of the Jerusalem governorate or J2 (54% of households compared with 10% in J2). As such, the wall should be viewed as a *system* forcing isolation, rather than as a solitary physical structure. Along with this wall comes a permit system, specified crossing times, and limitations on freedom of movement. Combined studies show that the impact of this system is greater in its ramifications for residents' ability to move than both the *Nakba* of 1948 and the *Naksa* of 1967.

The Gap between the City's Arabs and Jews

At the end of 2005, the population of the Jerusalem governorate was approximately 324,000. The Palestinian residents of the area annexed to Israel constituted about 34% of this number (following the Israeli-defined borders of the Jerusalem municipality). Ultimately, Israel has acknowledged its desire to lower the percentage of Palestinian residents of Jerusalem to comprise only one-fifth of the city's population (22%).⁵

In 2005, the population of the Jerusalem governorate constituted approximately 17% of the population of the entire West Bank, with 62.2% of Jerusalemites living in the area annexed to Israel's borders after the occupation of 1967. Statistical data indicates that the average housing density in this area today is approximately 1.8 persons per room, as opposed to 1.1 individuals per room among Israeli counterparts.

The stark imbalance in indicators of social and economic status between the Palestinian and Jewish communities in Jerusalem affects all aspects of social and economic life. For example, statistics show that the average number of children to

each Palestinian paediatrics centre is approximately 69,000, while the average number of Israeli children per centre 1,821. The percentage of Palestinian schools equipped with computers is 16.5% in comparison with 83.5% of Israeli schools. There is no shortage in classrooms in Israeli schools in Jerusalem, while there was a need for an additional 650 classrooms in the city's Palestinian schools in 2005. In addition, 40% of Palestinian classrooms were originally designed as houses. The average number of Palestinians to each public park is 7,362 in comparison to 447 Israelis to each public park, each in their respective areas of the city. Furthermore, Palestinians have no public athletic facilities, while Israelis have 36 sports facilities. In Palestinian areas, there are 2,620 buildings that remain unconnected to sewage systems, while only 70 buildings are unconnected in Israeli areas.

The Palestinian Authority is prevented from providing services in the city, while the services offered by Israeli officials are not distributed equally among the city's residents. These disparities place residents under continuous pressure to leave the city and escape the prohibitions against construction and the high costs of obtaining a building permit (between US\$25,000-30,000).⁶ According to a special study conducted by Meir Margalit, former Jerusalem councilman, the cost of a building license in Palestinian areas for a 200-meter-square apartment runs at NIS 492,109 (nearly \$100,000 dollars, an exorbitant fee given Palestinian earning potential). This fee does not include additional required fees for connecting the property to sewage, or for paying lawyers. This means that the cost of attaining a building license might exceed the cost of the actual construction.⁷

Population and Family Status

As previously mentioned, the Jerusalem governorate is divided into two areas: annexed Jerusalem (J1), and the remaining parts of the governorate (J2). In 2005, about two-thirds of the population (62.5%) of Jerusalem lived in J1. Approximately one-third of the governorate's population is comprised of refugees (34.0%), 44.4% of them in J2 and 27.8% of them in J1. The median age of the entire population is 18 years of age—in J1, it is 19 years old, and in J2 it is 17 years old. The median age in the entire West Bank is 17.7 years of age. Youth under 15 years of age represent 42.3% of the governorate's population, while the percentage of dependency is 81.2 - 83.8% in J1, and 89% in J2. In the West Bank, the percentage of dependency in 2004 was estimated at 91.7%.

There has been a shift in Palestinian households towards the nuclear family (comprised of a mother, father, and children), which constituted approximately 83% of all families in 2004 (82.7% in the West Bank and 79.3% in Jerusalem). The relatively lower proportion of nuclear families in Jerusalem appears to be related to Israeli measures limiting construction and the high cost of construction permits. The median number of family members in Jerusalem is 5.3 individuals, 4.9 in J1 and 6.0 in J2.



The crossing point in the wall between Bethlehem and Jerusalem. *Source: City of Collision, Photographer Bas Princen*

Housing Conditions

To a great extent, living conditions reflect social, political and economic circumstances. The number of Palestinian housing units in J1 in 2002 was estimated at 32,000. Israeli settlers, on the other hand, had access to 58,000 housing units.

The average number of rooms in Palestinian homes in the Jerusalem governorate is 3.2 rooms (three rooms on average in J1, and 3.5 rooms on average in J2). It should be noted that 19,000 Palestinian houses were built between 1967 and 2002, in comparison to some 86,000 homes built in Israeli settlements over the same period.

Furthermore, data on population density in 1972 showed that 49% of Palestinian families in Jerusalem were living in high-density homes (three or more members to each room). This number dropped to about 20% in 1998. The percentage of Israeli families living in high density homes was 8.4% in 1972 and 1.5% in 1998. These housing circumstances are an indication of the wide gap that exists in Palestinian and Israeli qualities of life.

Education and Health

Education in Jerusalem is provided by the Israeli government, non-governmental organizations, and the United Nations Relief Works Agency. The governorate includes 186 schools, including 44 schools overseen by the Jerusalem Municipality and Israeli education ministry (these schools service 42,000 students). The other schools in the governorate service some 60,000 students. There are also 90 private preschools, with approximately 7,000 students.

The enrolment rate in preschools in the Jerusalem governorate is 57.4% (54.6% in J1 and 62.0% in J2). The enrolment rate for individuals six years of age or older is 40.5% (39.0% in J1 and 44.8% in J2). These rates are reflected at the adult level, where illiteracy among Palestinians in Jerusalem in 2005 was 6.3% for those 15 years or older. Illiteracy was measured at 3.4% among males and 9.2% among females. A total of 90.2% of residents in the Jerusalem district were included in the health insurance system in 2005. In J1, this percentage was at 98%, where the overwhelming majority have Israeli insurance linked to residency in Jerusalem. Anyone who is not included in the Israeli insurance system risks confiscation of their Jerusalem identity card. The percentage of J2 residents that hold Jerusalem identity cards is 77%, and 10.2% of them have Israeli insurance. Sixty percent carry Palestinian Authority insurance coverage.

In 2005, 25.3% of Jerusalemites 18 years or older in Jerusalem smoked (26.5% in J1 and 23.3% in J2).

The rate of immunization for children age 12-32 months in the Jerusalem governorate was 44.8% for the BCG (tuberculosis) vaccination (16.1% in J1 and 80% in J2). The percentage of children immunized with their third dose of DPT (diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus) vaccination was 92.9% (87.1% in J1 and 100% in J2). Further, 96.3% of children received all three doses of the vaccine against childhood polio (93.6% in J1 and 100% in J2). Vaccination against measles, on the other hand, was at 48.3% (22.6% in J1 as opposed to 80% in J2). The differences in coverage between the two areas for some vaccinations are attributed to neglect and poor services; other discrepancies are due to differing immunization programs.

Labour and Wages

The labour force in the Jerusalem governorate is comprised of those who work in Israel, the settlements, and the Palestinian territories. The Israeli labour market provided work opportunities for 35.6% of workers in 2004, in comparison with 39.1% in 2002.

Residents of the Jerusalem governorate have also suffered from a rise in unemployment since the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada at the end of 2000.

Unemployment rose by 53%, from 11.5% in 2000 to 17.6% in 2005. Comparatively, unemployment in the West Bank rose to 26.8% in 2005, in comparison to approximately 11% in 2000. This high rate is due largely to the closure policy that Israel has imposed upon Palestinian population centres since the end of 2000.

Relatively speaking, the unemployment rate in J1 is lower than that in J2 because of the relative ease of accessing labour markets in Israel. The unemployment rate in J1 was 15.5% in 2005, in comparison to an employment rate of 21.9% in J2.

Even though wages in Israel are higher than those in the Palestinian labour market, and although Palestinians in the J1 area are able to move easily within Israel, the rate of Palestinian workers who receive a monthly wage under minimum wage is more than four times (at 43.5%) the rate of Israelis (at 10%) in the same situation. Further, the main source of income for 32.2% of Palestinian families in J1 comes from salaries and wages from the Israeli labour market, compared with 14.2% of Jerusalem residents of J2.

Poverty and Social Security

Average household consumption and expenditure are major indicators in determining quality of life and proximity to the poverty line.

Even though rates of expenditure and consumption in the Jerusalem governorate are better in comparison to other districts in the Palestinian territories, the percentage of Palestinian residents of J1 who live under the poverty line (61.8%) is four times that of Israeli residents (17.5%). Nearly 70% of children in the J1 governorate live under the poverty line, as opposed to 26.7% of Israelis—i.e. poverty is three times more prevalent among Palestinian children than it is among Israeli children.

The above challenges faced by Jerusalemites contribute to growing deterioration, as seen in poverty, low standards of living, low school enrolment rates, low levels and quality of health services, and the lack of entertainment and cultural centres. This deterioration is compounded by the isolation, geographic alteration, and confiscation of land that has come hand-in-hand with Israel's annexation and expansion wall. Social, physical and psychological ills are up, including the spread of crime, corruption, deviance, hatred and mental illness. Some studies have shown that 38.3% of families polled in Jerusalem believe that someone in their locality is doing drugs, and 16.1% say members of their family have been harassed by these people. Twenty percent of families attribute the spread of this phenomenon to the deteriorating economic situation.⁸

Results also show that 84.6% of families report being unable to visit socially with their relatives that live beyond the wall. Another 56.3% of families report being unable to participate in entertainment, cultural and social activities because of the wall.

Political Intervention

The passing of PLO leader Faisal Husseini from Jerusalem's social and political scene left a vacuum, followed by the closure of official Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem by Israeli authorities. Recent statistics point to a dire need for support for Jerusalemites in all areas of life as they struggle to maintain residency in the city, particularly after the building of the wall. Most Palestinian families (87%) expressed the need for basic services; 85% said there was a need for infrastructure development. Seventy-seven percent expressed a need for social security, and 73% said they needed job opportunities in order to maintain their current place of residence. These results demonstrate Jerusalem residents' difficult conditions and the adverse affects of Israeli policies, as well as current Palestinian shortcomings in meeting those needs.

Luay Shabbaneh is head of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in Ramallah.

Endnotes

¹ Special thanks to Mohammed al-Amari and Mustapha al-Khawaja for their help in preparing this essay.

² B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories.

³ The UN has categorized the Arab states into three kinds according to the extent of their advancement in stages of demographic transformation: The first kind is in an advanced stage of demographic transformation, whereby the overall fertility indicator is less than three children to every woman; in the second type, the overall fertility rate is between 3 to 5 children to every woman; the third type combines all the countries still in the first stages of demographic transformation where the overall fertility indicator exceeds five children.

⁴ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and the Badil Center/ Palestinian Center for Citizens and Refugee Rights, 2006. Survey on the impact of the annexation and expansion wall and its ramifications on the forced expulsion of Palestinians from Jerusalem.

⁵ Meir Margalit, 2003. Discrimination in the heart of the holy city, Jerusalem.

⁶ According to some local and Israeli studies and the Jerusalem Center for Social and Economic Rights.

⁷ Jerusalem Center for Social and Economic Rights.

⁸ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2005, Social Survey of Jerusalem Governorate, 2005.

References

- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *Jerusalem Statistical Abstract* No. 8, Ramallah, Palestine, 2006.
- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *Jerusalem Statistical Abstract* No. 7, Ramallah, Palestine, 2006.
- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force Survey Database 2000-2004*, Ramallah, Palestine, 2006.
- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *Palestinian Statistical Abstract* No. 6, Ramallah, Palestine, 2005.
- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *Social Survey of Jerusalem Database 2005*. Ramallah, Palestine, 2005.
- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics & Badil, *Impact of the Wall and its Associated Regime on the Forced Displacement of the Palestinians in Jerusalem*, June, 2006.
- Al-Shamishi, Maytha'. *Population Policies and Demographic Transformation in the Arab Homeland*, United Arab Emirates University, 2004 (Arabic).
- Mohammed, Shtayyeh. *The Possibility of Economic Development under Siege*, 2005 (Arabic).
- Tufakji, Khalil. *Jerusalem: The Key to Peace and Freedom*, 2005 (Arabic).
- Ghneim, Ahmad. *Jerusalem and the Zionist Movement*, 2005 (Arabic).
- Margalit, Meir. *Discrimination in the Heart of the Holy City*, Jerusalem, 2003.