

**The impact of the Israeli occupation on human development in
Palestine, A demographic perspective**

Arresting human capital deterioration of Palestinian refugees: what are the options?

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20-21 July 2017

How Israeli occupation impairs sustainable human development in Palestine through a population perspective

- My domain of expertise: demography and population/development in the Arab countries, namely Palestine.
- Recently, I contributed to report by the Palestine National Population Committee /UNFPA, included also projections of the refugee population asked for by UNRWA
- *Palestine 2030: Demographic Change: Opportunities for Development, 2016.*

The refugee's question

- Refugee direct consequence of Israeli wars and occupation.
- Millions of refugees (up to 7 millions),
- some registered other not,
- Some inside, other outside in the diaspora (Arab countries, Europe, America...),
- IDP, 335 000 -360 000 Palestinians, beyond the “Green Line” internally displaced by the 1948 war.
- Gaza, 2/3 of 2 million inhabitants are refugees
- ¼ in the West Bank of 3.1 million.
- Poverty rates, housing conditions, malnutrition higher than for the total population.

A doubling or more of the number of refugees...

- In 3 decades in 2050, the number of refugees will increase even more than total population
- Because their fertility rate and rate of growth higher than for non refugees.
- Skyrocketing in Gaza: multiplication by 2.4,
- Multiplied by 2 in the West Bank.
- Huge impact: social, educational, economic and political
- and for humanitarian aid to refugees,
- especially in a context where Israel is willing to get rid of UNRWA.
- How Israeli occupation aggravates the well-being of the Palestinians **considering their population characteristics.**

...In accordance with demographic forecasts

- Between 2017 and 2050, according to last forecasts, the population of Palestine (now 5 millions) will double (9.5 in 2050).
- Rate of increase: now 2.8% per annum, but still 2% in 2030, a record in the Arab countries and worldwide.
- In a “normal” context, economic and social development, should try to accommodate the needs of this booming population.
- They are impeded by Israeli occupation.
- Just one example:

Occupation discourages investments

- A booming population needs huge investments.
- But, who among Palestinian entrepreneurs in or out of Palestine,
- or foreign ones are ready to invest in such a distressing situation?
- Ever-increasing Israeli control over the land and people and disastrous political situation,
- has and still deters private investment, local or from foreign origin.
- Basic needs of Palestinians therefore to be met by international donors.
- But until when?

Gaza 'unliveable' (UN report) now, how then in 2050?

- Gaza's population, now 2 millions, 4.8 in 2050 will grow much more than West Bank, and lesser economic potential
- In "normal" conditions: no occupation, no settlements, no restrictions to free movements... Expect streams of internal migrations from over-crowded regions to more sparsely populated ones.
- Hence, without internal migration from Gaza (360 Km²): population density now highest in the world: 5 600 inh./km², and in 2050 13 300 inh/km².
- But, Palestinian's movements prohibited
- namely to "Area C", still under-populated but coveted by the Israeli rulers; to annex it, in case prevented from swallowing the entire West Bank.

Is Palestinian (or Israeli) fertility an issue?

- Fertility level, marriage rate, contraception prevalence, proportion of children below 15, youth bulge... are interconnected.
- Over and above proximate determinants, **political, ideological determinants of fertility**: political context in Israel/Palestine and occupation.
- **First: Israeli fertility always above “normal” fertility.**
- **Reasons ideological, religious and political. Nationalism fuels high fertility: “war of cradles”. “Negotiating babies for boundaries”.**
- **Ben Gourion: “without high and increasing birth-rate for the Jews in Israel we are condemned to become a minority even though the threats of Arab dictators are foiled by our army”.**

The mirror-effect

- By a mirror- effect, Palestinian fertility,
- considered as a weapon to counter-act Israeli occupation, - is still : 4.1 for Palestine,
- 4.5 in Gaza
- 3.7 in the West bank. (3.1 for the Israeli Jews).
- political determinants.
- Yasser Arafat declaring that “”Palestinian parents should have 12 children, 2 for themselves and 10 for the “Cause”. Therefore no normal demographic transition.
- Interestingly, even Palestinian university educated women are still highly fertile: 3.3 children, twice the rate of many Arab countries.

Heavy socio-economic consequences

- Large share of under 15 (total and especially among refugees) : 43% in Gaza...
- High demographic pressure among youngsters,
- Slow increase of the demographic dividends of first order and almost non existing DD of second order.
- “Youth bulge”, AT ITS PEAK in the Arab world (with Yemen)
- Pressure on education,
- employment and unemployment: 46% in Gaza, 60% among youth)
- Low saving rates, due to unfavorable age structure,
- Low investment ratio (12% of GNP)
- “demographic investments” to the detriment of “economic investments”
- GNP growth per capita extremely low: less than 1% (0.95%) per year in 1994-2014.

High mortality differentials among the occupiers and the occupied

- Are there any benefits to the occupation?
- Health/ mortality of Palestinians compared to Israelis?
- *Subject of propaganda David Stone :Has Israel damaged Palestinian health? “The evidence presented in this paper overwhelmingly points to a clear answer to the question posed in the title – Israel has not damaged Palestinian health. In fact, the opposite is the case”.*
- Palestine: IMR 18 p.1000 Israel’s 3 p.1000, 6 times more.
- Life expectancy Palestine 73.7 years Israel 82.7, 9 years lower.
- **Jerusalem** : Palestinians supposed to benefit from equal access to medical facilities, infant mortality rate among the annexed Palestinians: 4.9 p. 1000, twice the rate of the Jews: 2.5.
- Large difference of same order of magnitude than among blacks: 11.3 and whites: 5.1 in the United States of America.

Mental health

- The continued occupation and political instability is a major source of anxiety namely for young people.
- The closure and repeated military operations have traumatized many people
- with high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),
- high levels of depression, attention deficit disorders, bed wetting among children.

Persisting migration abroad: forced or voluntary?

The view from Israel

- Sensitive subject: projections did not take into account international migration.
- Background :
- recent poll survey in Israel (PEW Research Centre, 2016) has shown that 48% Israel Jews (46% against, 6% abstentions) favor the expulsion of the Palestinians (of WB, Gaza, Jerusalem including those of 1948).
- “Transfer” either through violence or soft, pacific means: an acceptable solution to solve the conflict.

... and from Palestine

- Palestinian youth wish to emigrate abroad (in Gaza, a staggering 47% among males).
- Occupation and political context is one of the main reasons, both directly and indirectly,
 - causing bad living conditions
 - lack of work opportunities.
- Last censuses and 2010 international migration survey shown significant negative migration abroad: 5000 net emigrants annually in the last decade,
- more among the more educated and among religious minorities.

Conclusion: What are the options?

- Capacity of Palestine to create jobs likely to remain low, due to the many constraints of the occupation.
- However, within the limited margin of maneuver available to the government,
- Palestinians can try to reap some of the fruits of the demographic transition.
- Therefore necessary to adopt a more positive approach to this transition and consider that its advantages largely counterweigh its inconvenient.
- By the policy makers and the society at large.

To realize the demographic dividends

- Investments needed to empower, educate and employ the population, particularly young people and women.
- Reduce infant , child and maternal mortality.
- Women's empowerment critical to achieving demographic dividends
- Policies to advance gender equality, promote women's employment, eliminate gender-based violence and discrimination. Increase access to quality education Promote strategies for youth employment with equal access for males and females to productive employment and active citizenship.
- Improving access to reproductive health services including family planning, allowing to decide on timing, number and spacing of children.
- To reduce child marriage and early childbearing