CHAPTER — III

PROBLEM OF STATELESS PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IN FRONT LINE ARAB STATES AND OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

As a result of the conflict in Palestinian almost of the whole of the Arab population fled or was expelled from the area under Jewish Occupation. Following the first Arab-Israel War in 1948, the exact number of stateless Palestinians refugees created by the 1948-49 hostilities has been matter of dispute. The number of Palestinian refugees who fled to Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, West Bank and Gaza Strip. In 1967, 12,80,823 were registered with UNRWA whom 54% lived in Jordan; 25% lived in Gaza Strip and West Bank. Lebanon with 11% was not in a strong position. Syria has host about 15% of refugees mostly homeless and unproductive. Many Palestinians subsequently found their way to other Arab countries and later some immigrated to the West.

There were few Palestinians generally upper class, who left on their own initiative immediately after the UN partition vote instead of being forced out of their homes. Many in these groups were able to join family members already living abroad and found it economically easier to rebuild their lives. But they are still in exile.

Although the Arab states tried to help the refugee as best as they could but the number of destitute was so enormous that they finally referred the problem to the UN. The UN mediator Count Bernadotte appealed to
Israel to accept repatriation of some of the refugees. But Israel rejected the Bernadotte proposal on the ground it could not accept the refugee back in view of the continuance of the state of war. Bernadotte disappointed with Israel's response reported to the UN:

“No settlement can be just and complete if recognition is not accorded to the right of the Arab refugees to return to the home from which he has been dislodged by the hazards and strategy of the armed conflict”

He submitted a progress report outlining officially for the first time the dimensions of the refugee's problem:

“The Arab inhabitants of Palestine are not citizens or subjects of Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Trans Jordan, the state which are at present providing them with a refugee status. As residents of Palestine, a former mandated territory for which the international community has a continuing responsibility until a final settlement is achieved these Palestinian refugees understandably look to the United Nations for effective assistance”

In other words, the situation created two distinct problems, the problem of emergency relief and the problem of permanently, re-establishing the homeless people. A relief programme was initiated under the supervision of a UN Director of Disaster and Relief and with the assistance of the World Health Organization (WHO) and other specialized Agencies of the United Nations. The Disaster Relief project initiated by Count Bernadotte was soon replaced by United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRPP), established under a General Assembly Resolution on November 19, 1948 in
which the Secretary General of the UN was requested to "take all necessary steps to extend aid to Palestinian refugees and to establish such administrative organization as may be required for this purpose, inviting the assistance of several governments, the specialized agency of the UN, and other voluntary agencies. In this resolution it was estimated that $29,500,000 was needed for relief of 500,000 refugees over a nine month period plus $5,000,000 from the working capital fund of the United Nations and member states were urged to make voluntary contribution. On 11 December, 1948, the UN passed another resolution GA Resolution 194 (III) and established a conciliation commission and instructed it, to "take steps to assist the Government and authorities concerned to achieve a final peace settlement of all questions outstanding between them" and to "facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and payment of adequate compensation to them." An important section of this resolution with respect of refugees said that: those refugees:

"Wishing to return to their homes and live in peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for the loss or damage to property which under the principle of international law or in equity should be made good by the governments or authorities responsible".

The Conciliation Commission had three members one each from France, Turkey and United States of America. It sought to implement repatriation, compensation and promote resettlement. The commission believed that:
"A solution of refugees problem would help not only to relieve human suffering but also to open other avenues to progress for other conflicting points."\(^{11}\)

But the commission found the Israel sides inflexible. Repatriation was almost impossible in view of the lack of security for Arabs in Israeli controlled areas and the lack of guarantees of protection of minorities called for under the partition plan. The Arab complained also that Israel had blocked the refugee account and had liquidated their real and personal property. The Israeli absentee law was strongly protested. The commission was requested to obtained positive clarification of Israel's position.\(^{12}\)

Israel replied that since the resolution specified that refugees who wished to return to their homes should "live at peace with their neighbour's," repatriation was contingent on the establishment of peace. Israel did not exclude the possibility of the repatriation of limited numbers of refugees, but consistently look the view that the solution of the major part of the refugees question lay in resettlement in Arab states.\(^{13}\) The Arab States made it clear that until there was a satisfactory resolution of the refugees issue, they would not discuss other issues. They wanted the refugees to be given an opportunity to choose between repatriation and compensation.\(^{14}\)

Under pressure from the Conciliation Commission Israel offered to take back 100,000 refugees and where to put them. This offer was contingent upon the Arabs agreeing to a final peace settlement. The Commission found this offer unacceptable, as did the Arab States having failed to make substantial headway by political means the Conciliation
Commission adopted an economic approach. In August 1949, it set up an Economic Survey Mission under the chairmanship of Gordan Clapp to:

"Examine the economic situation arising from the recent hostilities and recommend to the Conciliation Commission means of overcoming resultant economic dislocation, reintegrating the refugees into the economic life of the area, and of creating the economic conditions which will be conducive to the establishment of permanent peace."\(^6\)

The Economic Survey Mission soon found many obstacles, particularly, political and psychological to economic development.\(^6\) In an interim report, November 16, 1949, the mission stated that the refugees themselves were the most serious manifestation of economic dislocation created by the Palestine hostilities. The mission suggested that the most constructive course immediately available was to give the refugee an opportunities to find work under existing conditions.\(^7\) It recommended setting up a special agency for these purpose. Accordingly within a month the General Assembly passed a resolution to establish the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to take over the function of UNRPR In the enabling resolution it was said that:

"Without prejudice to the provision of paragraph II of the General Assembly Resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948, continued assistance for the relief of the Palestinian refugees is necessary to prevent conditions of starvation and that constructive measure should be undertaken at an early date with a view to the termination of international assistance for relief."\(^8\)
The Second Phase of Palestinian Exodus:

The Arab-Israel conflict of June 1967 once more threw West Asian tensions into sharp relief and escalated the nineteen years old refugee problem. The refugee problem became further complicated with the Israeli aggression. During the War, Israel Occupied all of the territory commonly referred to as the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In the aftermath of the June War no less than 300,000 Palestinian who had been living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were exiled. Most fleeing West Bank residents relocated on the East Bank, although some of these displaced persons continued on second settlement areas mostly in Lebanon.

Whereas just before the June War, some 63% of all Palestinians still lived in Palestine, by the end of 1967 this percentage had dropped to only 50%. The losses were experienced primarily on the West Bank and secondarily in Gaza. The immediate effect of 1967 war was an increasing the dispersion of the Palestinian population. While the East Bank of Jordan received the largest number of new expellees about 5% of the population scattered in other Arab countries. Some were refugees from 1948 war who had been living in camps the newly Occupied territory, who were forced to flee for the second time in their lives. Thousand of other left as the military occupation and the expansions of the Jewish settlements deprived them of their homes and livelihoods and left them vulnerable to economic stagnation and political oppression.
In this connection, the UN Secretary General U. Thant’s report of August 18, 1967 argued that more than 200,000 Palestinian residents had been displaced as a result of 1967 war. He noted that the densely populated Gaza Strip had suffered considerably more civilian causalities and property damage than any other areas. In the aftermath of the June War Israel had followed a systematic pattern of expulsion encouraging Arab residents to leave certain areas. Most Israelis were keen on the Arabs going away for the few the Arabs in the country, the easier the governance. It would also facilitate annexation of the newly acquired territory. But the refugees have unfortunately become a sort of political football. Israel accuses the Arab states, of publicizing the plight of the refugee to would World opinion against the Israelis. In course of time Israel started using the refugee as a debating point with the Arabs. Settlement of the refugees problem was convetiably made contingent on a final peace settlement. At one point Israel offered to take back all the refugees in Gaza, if the Gaza Strip itself were also included in the deal. The Palestinian themselves have also put pressure on the various Arab host governments to take extreme and hostile position for instance, to bypass the provisions stipulating peaceful repatriation.

Israel insisted that the refugee problem could be solved only in the broad context of peace. She offered a general outline of plan in which she proposed that Consultations should immediately be initiated between Israel and the Arab host countries, together with the main contributing countries, to negotiate a five year plan for the rehabilitation of the refugees and their final
integration into the economic life of the region. She would contribute to a reintegration and compensation fund to provide the financial means for solution of refugee problem in all its aspect. She expressed willingness to consider repatriating number of newly displaced persons on compassionate ground. However, Israel opposed repatriation of old and argued that there is no room for them. At the same time, Israel continued to call for more Jewish immigration.

The Arab states on the other hand insisted that the absorption of the refugee into adjacent lands would imply Arab approval of continued retention by Israel of refugee property and would indicate a tacit Arab recognition of Israel. The hopeless Palestinian refugees thus became a sort of political football in the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Arab states with neither side showing genuine willingness to solve the problem.

**Stateless Palestinians Refugees in Jordan:**

After the 1948 struggle for Palestine, Jordan approached the refugee problem in a manner that was abhorred by her Arab neighbours. Jordan’s King Abdullah envisaged a settlement with Israel as a method of improving his country economic outlook and as opportunity to open up new development possibilities by means of the assistance obtained from the UN towards the rehabilitation of the refugees.

From May 1948 to 1967, hundred of thousand of Palestinians Arabs moved to the West Bank of the Jordan River, which had come under the control of Jordan. About 300,000 Palestinians crossed the river Jordan after
the June 1967 War. Jordan became a dual society with two main political communities Palestinians Arabs and Jordanians. This situation set the background for conflict, tension, and allegiance for the next decades.27 Today half of the Jordan's population is Palestinians, most of them refugees after 1948 and 1967 wars. The presence of Palestinians in the population influences and constrains Jordanian policy more than any other domestic factor. They comprise an important and influential component.28

Palestinian refugees in Jordan have a unique legal position. Unlike, the other state hosting Palestinians, many Palestinians in Jordan have been permitted to become host country citizen automatically. Many Palestinians in Jordan have been granted full citizenship right including right to vote. They could vote in elections most of which were manipulated by the government. In general Palestinian refugees with Jordanian citizenship are treated equally with other Jordanian citizens. Jordan does not offer citizenship to those Palestinians who originated in Gaza Strip, over which Jordan never claimed sovereignty. The few who wanted to travel abroad could obtain Jordanian passports. Instead of using travel documents of stateless persons, Palestinians refugees not only vote in elections but some hold public office. Other Palestinians achieved high posts in Jordanian government. Many regarded the privilege with skepticism since there was little reasons for loyalty to the Hashemite regime.29

Palestinians who benefited from the right of Jordanian citizenship were indigenous West Bank inhabitants. After formal incorporation into the
Hashemite Kingdom in 1950, increasing number of West Bank Palestinians received high government appointments. Since then they have held most important cabinet positions including the Premiership, Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Defence. Hashemite policy at one time was to designate half the parliament and half the Cabinet from Palestinians. Therefore, in 1950, after annexing the Arab Occupied portion of Palestine West of Jordan river, King Abdullah willingly integrated its native and refugee populations into his kingdom on the basis of constitutional representative government and equality of rights and duties of all citizens. But the Palestinians had no loyalty for the Hashemite Kingdom and neither intellectual, emotional or ideological attachment to monarchial rule. The Palestinians characterized King Abdullah's annexation of West Bank as a calculated scheme executed with Zionist approval. Abdullah dilemma was clear he had to devise policies which would win Palestinians acquiesce and advance their integration without upsetting the original Jordanian people and endangering his own power base. At the same time he had to make the Palestinians feel that they had taken on a Jordanian identity. While simultaneously supporting their demand to return to their pre-1948 homes, Abdullah, therefore, encouraged 'his Palestinians' refugees and non-refugees to take part in political life of the Jordan. Except the army, which the Hashemite have always regarded as the corner stone of their regime, practically all avenues were open to the Palestinian. The Jordanian political system allowed the Palestinian area of the West Bank its share of representation, at least when Parliament
functioned and Palestinian had an equal share with Jordanian system neither created specifically Palestinian political parties not did they engage actively in dissenting ethnic politics.

The number of UNRWA registered Palestinian refugees in Jordan stood at 1,358,706 in 1996 and Jordan estimated that another 800,000 Palestinian “displaced persons” were residing in Jordan. Jordan also boasted the lowest percentage of Palestinian refugee living in camps. Although, Jordan maintained ten camps that sheltered 258,204 refugees during the years, 81 percent of the registered refugees in Jordan lived outside camps.

The Jordanian government unofficially estimates that it hosts 800,000 Palestinian displaced because of the 1967 war. The government called the 1967 arrivals “displaced persons” rather than refugee because at that time, Jordan claimed sovereignty on both the East and West Bank of the Jordan River.

With the advent of the Palestinian guerilla movement in late 1960’s, Palestinians started to acquire great power and influence within Jordan and began to develop a state within state over which the Jordanian monarchy had virtually to control. Thus Palestinians were free to attack Israeli troops in the West Bank without restraint, and cross border attacks by both Israelis and Palestinian guerillas became more frequent. The growing military might of the Palestinian guerillas was perceived as a source of threat by the Jordanian monarch and in September 1970 King Hussain ordered his army to attack move against the Palestinian guerillas. In ten days of intense fighting, thousands of Palestinians were killed and the guerilla movement in
Jordan was broken. Within a year of “Black September”, virtually all the Palestinian fighters had been expelled from Jordan and forced to seek refugee in neighbouring Arab countries like Lebanon and Syria.33

After 1970, those Palestinians who sought a way out of the camps into more amenable jobs or into educational institutions found themselves forced to give up all political activity and to acquiesce innumerable restrictions, which the regime imposed on them.34

Israel’s Likud Government has declared many times that Palestinian state already exists, namely, Jordan with her large Palestinian population. Ariel Sharon has long (since 1967) advocated the demise of the Hashemite monarchy so that the Palestinian may establish their own state in East Jordan. There would then be no need to form a Palestinian state in the West Bank which he and other Israelis claim as part of ‘Eretz Israel’.35 Ariel Sharon has stated that “Jordan is Palestine, the capital of Palestine is Amman if Palestinian Arabs want to find their political expression they will have to do it in Amman.36

In this context, the Israeli leaders justified their claims that Palestine is a Jordan, by indicating that approximately three quarters of the inhabitants of Amman came from Western Palestine. Many of Jordan, Cabinet Ministers and members of Parliament are originally from Western Palestine the major part of the country’s economy and government administration is in the hands of former residents of Western Palestine. Their conclusion is that Kingdom of
Jordan is actually a Palestinian state and that any solution of Israel’s Palestinian problem must come at Jordanian expense.\textsuperscript{37}

King Hussain has warned against attempts to turn Jordan into a replacement homeland for Palestinians. He challenged Israel’s position, which tries to present the Palestine issue as if it were that of people without land, a people who are searching for land. He maintained that Jordanians are one people and their destiny was one and the same. In addition, Palestinians were not interested in turning Jordan into a Palestinian homeland; they favored the West Bank and Gaza Strip for a Palestinian state.\textsuperscript{38}

**Stateless Palestinians Arabs in Lebanon:**

After the first Arab-Israeli conflict more than 1000,00 refugees from Palestine came to according to some Lebanese estimate, the number was 170,000.\textsuperscript{39}

In 1950, about 1000,000 certainly not many more unemployed Palestinian refugees had to be cared for by humanitarian aid organization, but by 1975 the number of refugee in Lebanon who were cared for by UNRWA had almost doubled.\textsuperscript{40}

The Palestinians who took refugee in Lebanon lived in legal void. They were neither citizens nor were they classified as foreigners. The first two decades of exile in Lebanon were marked by economic exploitation political and social marginality and officially sanctioned repression. Social and political control over Palestinians by the Lebanese government was maintained through a variety of measures: work permits requirement, the
presence of Lebanese police and intelligence force in the camps. The government response to political expression and activity was often arrest. Palestinians were subject to restrictions on their travel abroad and within Lebanon. The refugees were placed under the jurisdiction of the section of the Ministry of Interior, called the General Bureau of Palestinian Affairs. The General Bureau, in conjunction with the religious courts of each sect governed personal status matters such as marriage, divorce, custody and inheritance. Within the camps the Lebanese police and Lebanese intelligence exercised strict control over the population,contempting to prevent any form of political expression or organizing.

Such measure not only discriminated against the poorer Palestinians who sought refuge in Lebanon but also made it difficult for broken families to be reunited with their kin and kith. Palestinians Christians were also separated from their Muslim compatriots: Movements from one camps to another or from camp to the city was forbidden without express permission from the government authorities.

In Lebanon, because of official restriction on their employment, refugees often provided black market labour at wages below the minimum established by government. The Palestinians in Lebanese refugee camps became centers of political and social unrest. Their situation was complicated by the fact that some 90% were Muslims. If the Lebanese government had officially sanctioned their permanent residence, the delicate balance between Christians and Muslims, which determined the country's political system
would have been upset. The rise of the Palestinian Resistance Movement after the June 1967 War led to a transformation of the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon into strong holds of the guerilla organization. A small number of Christians Palestinian were able to acquire citizenship through devious means such as producing forged birth certificate or Christians Lebanese family connection.43

Of course, not all Palestinians in the Lebanon remained in camps. Many of the well qualified and the enterprising achieved successful careers outside. Palestinians doctors built up successful practices and when conditions deteriorated left for the richer pastures of the Gulf. Hundreds exploited their intelligence, their industry, their education to achieve wealth. The Lebanese administration however, always actively discouraged the employment of Palestinians in remunerative jobs.44 One of the largest financial institutions the Intra-Bank was established and handed by the Palestinian Arabs until it collapsed in 1966.45

In Lebanon, the refugees in the camps were forbidden to own land and the nature of existing land tenure system, which differed considerably from that of Mandate Palestine made it almost impossible to obtain a tenancy or shareholding. However, some refugee could obtain seasonal work in the citrus and banana groves along the coast, in the vegetable and wheat fields of the eastern Baqqa valley and in the Orchards and tobacco growing areas of southern Lebanon.46
In brief, it can be stated that economic conditions of Palestinians camps in Lebanon was very depressed and harsh and the standard of living in general was very low. In the first place no permanent employment was available for a large number of people. Secondly, wages were generally low. The economic situation of poor Palestinians in Lebanon reflected all the distortions of advanced forms of underdeveloped capitalism. Public services to the rural areas, roads, electricity, water, medical care, education, remained almost zero. Almost quarter of Palestinian work force in Lebanon is still engaged in agriculture. Relations between employees and worker remain highly feudal and exploitative in he rural sectors. Palestinians in Urban camps have greater opportunities and economic exploitation with them takes different forms. Unlike, the other host countries Palestinian in Lebanon are not permitted to work in government services and they are permitted in certain private jobs like in banks, hotels and large foreign companies.

According to Lebanese survey of 1971, the level of education, among Palestinian camps was very low. The over-whelming majority of refugees in the camps never get beyond the elementary stage 76,020 persons above the age of 5 received one to six years of schooling. In comparison, only 2,310 completed preparatory school and 1,020 secondary school levels. A mere 300 residents possessed University education. Another factor to be noted and one which may have serious repercussions in the immediate future is the high discrepancy between male and female illiteracy, 48.7% and 68.7%
respectively. Even allowing for traditional attitudes to girls education, the existence of this discrepancy is significant.48

The health care situation has not deteriorated as badly as once feared. The health needs of the refugees are exacerbated since Lebanese hospitals charge for treating Palestinian. But even more important than the shelter and health needs, are the physical and legal protection of the Palestinian refugee in Lebanon it is the problem of their permanent status.

In judicial matter, the police tended not to interfere in small disputes within Palestinians camps in Lebanon, usually doing so only when there, was potential for violence. If violent crime, such as murder was committed or in case of theft the police arrested the accused who was processed through the Lebanese judicial system. But quarrels over such things as boundaries between houses, sewage overflow, trespassing and family problems were usually settled in the manner customary in rural Palestine, where neutral parties or village elders were asked by the supporters of the disputants to mediate. Usually, settlement was reached through compromise and the payment of compensation.50

In December, 1968, the Israelis reacted to the military operations of Palestinian guerrillas from South Lebanon with a surprise attack on Beirut airport and Israeli airborne troops destroyed the greater part of Lebanon’s civil aviation fleet. This first retaliation on Lebanese territory gave a fore taste of the problems raised by the new guerrilla activity of the Palestinians, who were now operating from Lebanon without the permission or even the
knowledge of the Lebanese army. The Palestinian resistance movement established its open, armed presence in the camps in Lebanon in 1969, after a year long series of battles with the Lebanese army. Concomitantly, the Lebanese authorities withdrew from the camps. With this newly acquired freedom to organize the PLO over the next several years proceeded to construct a number of social institutions in the camps under its control.

After their expulsion from Jordan, PLO headquarters were transferred to Lebanon. Since 1970 southern Lebanon became the main military base for the Palestinian resistance. The sizable Palestinian presence in Lebanon contributed heavily to the government immobilism as Lebanese political groups became increasingly polarized. Most Muslim supported the Palestinians and wanted the army to prevent Israeli attacks on southern Lebanon and on the Palestinian camps. Most Christians wanted government to restore Sovereignty to Lebanon and control the Palestinians who seemed to form state within state. The army seemed unable to do so. Therefore, there was no effective centralized authority over the armed Palestinians in Lebanon. Palestinians dragged Lebanon virtually into the Arab-Israeli conflict and gave money and weapons to Muslim and leftist parties sympathetic to their cause. Many Arab countries particularly Syria pressured the Lebanese government into tolerating this development. Almost the entire Muslim community sided with the PLO as well.

Growing polarization ultimately plunged the country into a bloody civil war in April 1975 which came to an end in October 1976. While violence
subsided in much of Lebanon after October 1976, peace continued to elude the south Lebanon throughout the following year. Palestinian guerillas regularly carried out raids against Israel from their bases to Southern Lebanon. Israeli responded in its usual heavy handed manner by carrying out massive retaliatory attacks against PLO and Lebanese targets in the south culminating in the March 1978 Israel's limited invasion of Southern Lebanon. A buffer zone ranging a depth from five to twenty km. Stretching from the coast to the foothills of Mount Harmon came under Israeli occupation. After the Israelis invasion guerilla raids into northern Israel declined sharply but the Palestinian fighters continued to shell northern Israel from their positions outside the Israel controlled territory.

In 1982 Israel launched yet another invasion of Lebanon with the specific aim of crushing and destroying the PLO as a political and military force in Lebanon. During the 1982 invasion the PLO was expelled from Lebanon and most of its civilian as well as military institution in the country collapsed.

Approximately 60,000 Palestinians were left homeless as a result of the Israeli invasion of 1982. After their camp homes had been destroyed, they took shelter in apartment garages, storefronts, unfinished apartment buildings and shelters built from scrap. With the signing of the Taif Agreement (1989) and the return of civil harmony to Lebanon, some attempts have been made to rehabilitate the Palestinian camps in the South Lebanon. In South Lebanon, the campgrounds have been cleared and infrastructure of
water and sanitary facilities and erection of new concrete homes were started in 1990. Hospitals and schools that were destroyed in 1982 were rebuilt. However thousands of Palestinians refugees who had fled to the Bekka Valley in 1982 are still in a poor condition with inadequate resources.  

Stateless Palestinians in Syria:

In 1948 the Palestinian community in Syria was estimated at 75,00. Since then it has rapidly increased reaching an estimated 270,000 in 1987. This is still less than 3 percent of the country’s total population and in terms of overall size of the Palestinian community is smaller than the number of Palestinians residing in the other Arab states and regions bordering Israel. Palestinians have not been given citizenship (although they are eligible for military service) and the Laissez-passer which they are granted for travel can also be used to restrict movement. Palestinian registered with UNRWA, live in ten camps. The largest concentration of more than three-quarters of the total Palestinian population is residing in the camps around Damascus the remainder are mostly concentrated around Homs, Hama and Aleppo.

In Syria, where economic restrictions and control of socialist government made free enterprising difficult, business minded Palestinians were much more restricted in money making. There were thus fewer gaps in the social structure of the Syrian Palestinian community.  

The conditions of Palestinians were better in Syria, where the government set up its own organization, the Palestine Arab Refugee Institute (PARI). The PARI made conscious efforts to assists the Palestinians both
economically and politically. PARI attempted to find employment for Palestinians at prevailing wage scales and to organize them in a ways useful to Syrian policy. The PARI also provides food, clothing and housing to the refugees. The camps run by PARI were equipped with better educational, social and health services than those available in the UNRWA and special cash subsidies were granted to those refugees most in need. Housing grants for each family were also provided.69

However, the Palestinians as in other Arab countries were forbidden to carry arms until the mid 1960s and for most of the period, since 1948 have been forbidden to form political parties or associations without the permission of the government. Syria was the first Arab government to assist guerrilla organization after 1948, although the Syrian military and security authorities exercised the strict control over all Palestinian groups within their borders. One form of control were through assistance in organizing, supplying and training. Palestinian military and para-military groups such as Palestine Liberation Army and Saiqa have been established and are controlled by Syria. One pre-Bathist regime appointed Ahmad Shuqairi, a Palestinian leader as Chief Syrian representative at the United Nations.60

Within the host countries the gradual expansion of the local economies after 1948 and development of their infrastructure and industrial base provided other opportunities for Palestinian seeking work in the 1960s and 1970's. In Syria, the rapid growth of the residential areas in and around Damascus and other major cities, together with the demand for new factory
and office accommodation, led to a rapid increase in the number of Palestinians employed in the building trades. By 1981 some 7,800 Palestinians refugees about 18% of the Palestinian labour force in the country were employed in construction and related field. Many of the skilled workers were trained at UNRWA's vocational center in Damascus, which opened in 1961. By 1981, 40,00 Palestinians had graduated from the center. While most had trained as bricklayers, plumbers, carpenters, building technicians and draftsman, others had finished courses in auto-mechanics, radio and television repair and pharmacy. 

The high number of Palestinian refugee who found work in the building trades was direct result of official government policy, which aimed to channel Palestinian labour. While some refugees still complain that they are discouraged from taking more advanced or from finding more amendable jobs in the services sectors or as self-employed workers, others have accepted the opportunities because of the need to support large families or to finance the high cost of education.

Despite its relatively small size, the Palestinian community has always been regarded as important potential threat to Syrian stability especially with the growth of the Palestinian nationalist movement after 1968. There has also been the possibility that the action of Syrian based Palestinian commandos might increase the danger of Israeli retaliation against Syrian targets.

Between 1970 and 1973 Palestinian military operation against Israel triggered Israeli retaliation against commands camps and Syrian villages.
Syria restricted Palestinian commando operations from its territory and encouraged raids from Lebanon and Jordan instead. By 1973 Palestinian resistance activities had been severely curtailed and subsequently in 1974 Israel-Syria Disengagement Agreement seems to have been accompanied by tacit Syrian undertaking to stop commandos raids altogether.⁶⁴

**TABLE – 1**

**Distribution of Palestinian Refugees**

**UNRWA-registered (30 June 1987)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>In camps</th>
<th>Not in camps</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>14,3809</td>
<td>134,800</td>
<td>278,609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>75,208</td>
<td>182,781</td>
<td>257,989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>208,716</td>
<td>636,826</td>
<td>845,542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bank</td>
<td>94,824</td>
<td>278,762</td>
<td>373,586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaza Strip</td>
<td>244,416</td>
<td>200,981</td>
<td>445,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>766,973</td>
<td>1434,150</td>
<td>2,201,123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Stateless Palestinian Refugees in Gaza and West Bank:**

As result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, thousands of Palestinian from some 144 cities, towns and villages came to Gaza. Refugees flooded into the tiny area, with estimates of their numbers ranging between 83,000 (September 1948) and 250,000 (December 1948). By December 1949 a
thorough census by village and town of origin had been taken and the number of refugees was established at 202,606. The large refugee numbers combined with those of the native Gazans resulted in a population density of 1,800 people per square mile.65

The UNRWA records show that there were 212,600 refugees in the Gaza Strip from the 1948 war. These people added to the original population gravely overcrowding the 362 square kilometers of the Strip.66 Both refugee and non-refugee Palestinians in Gaza have lived in international limbo since 1948. The Gaza Strip formally part of mandated Palestine was Occupied by Egypt in 1948, but never annexed.

Annexation would have implied that Egypt rejected the unanimous Arab demand for the refugees return to their pre-1948 homes.67 The Gaza region was governed by local Arabs who continued to administer the laws of Mandatory Palestine. Palestinian judges gave decisions in Palestinian courts and towns of the Strip were administered by Palestinian notables. But in most cases appointments were made or had to be approved by the Egyptian military authorities.68

Before 1948, Gaza was a small district in Palestine, which did not play a central role in the socio-economic or political life of the country.69 Today, the population of Gaza Strip is 9,50,000 of whom three quarter is refugees. The population grew gradually from 260,000 in 1948-1949 to 385,000 in 1967. Following the 1967 war, the population decreased to 325, 900 as result of Israeli policy of encouraging residents to leave.70 The Strip has only
125,000 indigenous residents i.e. those who lived there before 1948. These includes a small number of large scale landowners and merchants who have invested in citrus, hold the major interests in trading firms and Palestine Bank, and established few industries that exist in the Strip. The families dominate Gaza politically as well as economically. Indigenous, residents of the middle class own shops in the towns, work as teachers, doctors, lawyers, or operate small firms. The condition of the poorest are materially worse than in the eight refugee camps, where UNRWA provided basic social and medical services.\(^7\)

As the Gaza Strip was isolated, its people went through no process of partial assimilation. They are distinct through no less a part of the Palestinian people. This distinctiveness was the result of a whole generation of time under Egyptian administration but without incorporation. There was some democratic freedom but no freedom of movement into Egypt to relieve the severely overcrowded condition of the Strip.\(^7\) Gaza population lived in isolated, overcrowded and economically deprived conditions separated from other Palestinian communities. They were also cut off from Egypt. As a contribution to the solution of refugee problem the Egyptian government trained several thousand Palestinian youths in Cairo and permitted a few to settle in various part of the country. A number of Palestinian also represented Gaza in the Arab Socialist Union and some professionals developed a strong Pro-Egyptian political orientation.\(^7\)
During nineteen years of Egyptian rule, the economy of Gaza never developed and could not support its resident. The refugee could find low paying seasonal jobs in the orange grooves but at least half of the adult were unemployed and per capita gross national product was only $80 in 1966. Citrus was the only growth sector and its profits accrued mainly to the indigenous landed elite. The produce was exported largely to Eastern Europe.74

The West Bank was also mandated Palestine until 1948. It was invaded and annexed by Jordan in 1950s. It remained integral part of Jordan until 1967 when it was taken by Israel. West Bank Palestinians have always envisaged themselves as an integral part of the larger Palestinian and Arab communities. But growing sense of psychological, political and physical vulnerability to Israel has made them turn to outsiders for political leadership and ideological guidance. The local elites lack of resources and regions economic dependence on outside forces – whether Jordan, the PLO, Israel or the Arab countries have obstructed the emergence of viable local leadership.75 Until the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, elite control local politics remained a primary feature of West Bank political life.76

After 1967, the West Bank and Gaza Strip political arena broadened substantially. Conspicuous growth in higher education, exposure to mass media, labour mobility and emergence of new mass based social forces brought for reaching changes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip social fabric. In particular the expansion the University education, the politicization of the
student movement, the formation of several youth, women's and professional organization, Israel licensing of several Arabic newspapers and labour mobility resulting from employment inside Israel widened participatory politics.77

The West Bank and Gaza Strip area as whole was primarily rural. The economy is based on agriculture, bolstered by income from tourism and by UNRWA payments and remittances from abroad. In all approximately 85% of the West Bank's gross domestic product came from the agriculture and service sectors. The economies of West Bank have been transformed since 1967. This especially in agriculture and an associated profession such as transport, construction, and evolution of small-scale industries in urban and even refugees' camp area.78

In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Palestinian refugees had been integrated in the economy and the camps were becoming urban working class neighborhood. Most camps were incorporated in towns. The camp population is mobile and now includes many non-refugees.79 In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the camp population did not only comprise the 1948 refugees. There was continuous stream of new arrivals. Some people moved from an outlying camp to one situated close to a larger city, in order to improve their chances of employment. But most of the new comers while officially designated as a refugee have never been in camps.80 Typically, they had been living in towns and their circumstances have changed. Some have lost their livelihood. They moved in camps because there were
advantage to gain in the camp. They paid no rent and no municipal taxes and their water supply and sanitation were free.

Health clinics for instance, were mostly located in camps and their free services available mainly to the inhabitants. The monthly food rations, which the head of refugee household had to collect personally, were distributed in camps.

In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, education has been the most potent source of influence. The concentration of refugee population has made it possible for every boy and girl to have the first nine years of schooling. Some 40% of the both sexes reach the secondary education. The 9,000 teachers employed in the pre secondary phase, organized by UNESCO are Palestinians. All are well qualified and many of them are graduates. The education staff in each region is headed by Palestinian field education officer working under the guidance of the UNESCO directorate of education. In the West Bank 57 UNRWA schools have to operate in double shifts with complete duplicate staff and 75 schools in the Gaza Strip have the same provision. The literacy rate of the refugees is approximately same as that of the rest of the population. About 50% of the adult male and 80% of the female are functionally illiterate and UNRWA hoped that the schooling could give at least the children of refugees a good head start. They put great efforts into building up a good system of elementary school. They also established a few vocational schools and two teachers colleges.
Under Israeli occupation, there has been greater social mobility among refugees in both Gaza and West Bank. Because of labour shortages in Israel after 1967 due to rapid rate of economic growth and influx of foreign capital, the government took a conscious decision to use Arab labour from the Occupied areas. Arab transients were critically needed in certain vital sectors of the Jewish economy, although they provided only about six percent of total Israel work force. No breakdown of Arab labour employed in Israel as to who are refugees and non-refugees is available but it may be assumed that refugees provide the largest source, since they are the most mobile, they least attacked to permanent occupations and subsequently the most readily available for part time or seasonal jobs. Wage rates usually daily basis have been higher than those existing before the occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, although the benefit are diminished because of high inflation that has spread from Israel to Occupied areas.84

One of the ironies of the establishment of the Palestinian authority was the continued existence of Palestinian refugees camps under its jurisdiction and the continuation of refugees status for Palestinian living under the jurisdiction of Palestinian governing authority. Although the Palestinian Authority (PA) issues passport and other travel documents to the Palestinian residing in the areas under its jurisdiction, during most of 1996, the Israeli authorities prevented most Palestinian from traveling into Israel or East Jerusalem from the West Bank and Gaza Strip without specific travel permits. The Interim Agreement provides for free passage between the Gaza Strip and West Bank but no such corridor was agreed upon in 1996 and
movement between two was exceeding difficult throughout the year. Israeli authorities rarely permitted Gazans to travel to the West Bank and made it difficult for Palestinian residents of Jerusalem to travel to PA controlled areas of the West Bank. Travel restrictions were particularly severe for young Palestinian males, considered by the authorities to be security risks. Palestinian often does not travel abroad for fear of being denied re-entry to the Gaza Strip or the West Bank. Israeli authorities do not permit adult Palestinian males traveling to Jordan to return less than nine months after leaving yet generally forbid them from returning permanently, if they spend more than three years abroad. The Israeli authorities require all Palestinians residing in the areas under Israeli control to obtain travel permits before traveling to other countries. Visitors to the PA self-rule areas such as from Egypt to Gaza or Jordan to Jericho, must first obtain Israeli visas.85

Even if the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestinians were considered solely under the term of Refugee convention, they would still qualify as refugees. Although, a Palestinian authority has been established in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, it does not have sovereignty. The Oslo and Cairo agreements explicitly state that during the interim period the territory of Palestinian authority is not a state. Although, the PA issues passports it does not confer citizenship. In order to obtain a Palestinian passport, an applicant must produce an identity card and Israel controls the issuance of identity cards. Israel continues to be occupying power under international humanitarian law. The territories even the Palestinian self-rule areas remain
subject to Israeli military government and according to Oslo II, Israel retains the over riding responsibility for security.⁸⁶
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