Ms. Ola Awad, President of the PCBS, reviews the conditions of the Palestinian people via statistical figures and findings, on the eve of the sixty ninth anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba.

The Number of Palestinians Worldwide has Multiplied about Nine-Fold Israeli Occupation Controls More than 85% of the Land of Historical Palestine

Ms. Ola Awad, President of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), via figures, historical and current data, reviewed the geographical, demographical and economic situation of the Palestinian People on the eve of the sixty ninth anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba, which occur takes place on May, 15th; and those figures and data run as the following:

The *Nakba*: Ethnic cleansing and displacement of the native population

Nakba in literary terms means a natural catastrophe such as an earthquake, volcano, or hurricane. However, the *Nakba* in Palestine describes a process of ethnic cleansing in which an unarmed nation was destroyed and its population displaced to be replaced systematically by another nation. Unlike a natural catastrophe, the Palestinian *Nakba* was the result of a man-made military plan with the consent of other states, leading to a major tragedy for the Palestinian people. The subsequent occupation of the remaining land of Palestine in 1967 resulted in an additional tragedy.

In 1948, of 1.4 million Palestinians lived in 1,300 Palestinian towns and villages all over historical Palestine in 1948, more than 800,000 of the population were driven out of their homeland to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, neighboring Arab countries, and other countries of the world.

Thousands of Palestinians were displaced from their homes but stayed within the Israeli-controlled 1948 territory. According to documentary evidence, the Israelis controlled 774 towns and villages and destroyed 531 Palestinian towns and villages during the *Nakba*. The atrocities of Zionist forces also included more than 70 massacres in which more than 15 thousand Palestinians were killed.

The Demographic Reality: Palestinian population has increased more than 9-fold since the *Nakba*

The estimated Palestinian world population totaled 12.70 million by the end of 2016. This indicates that the number of Palestinians worldwide has multiplied more than 9.1 fold since the *Nakba*. According to statistics, the total number of Palestinians living in historical Palestine (between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean) by the end of 2016 was 6.41 million and this number is expected to rise to 7.12 million by the end of 2020 based on current growth rates.

Statistical data also show that refugees constitute 42% of the total Palestinian population in Palestine. UNRWA records showed that there were 5.59 million Palestinian refugees registered at the beginning of 2016. Around 29% of Palestinian registered refugees live in 58 refugee camps, of which 10 are in Jordan, 9 in Syria, 12 in Lebanon, 19 in the West Bank, and 8 in Gaza Strip. These estimates represent the minimum number of Palestinian refugees, given the presence of non- registered refugees. These estimates also do not include Palestinians who were displaced between 1949 and the 1967 war, according to the UNRWA definition, and do not include the non-refugees who left or were forced to leave as a result of the 1967 war.

The number of Palestinians who remained in their homeland in the 1948 territory after the *Nakba* was estimated at 154 thousand persons, but 2016 estimations show that it has grown to 1.53 million on the 69th anniversary of the *Nakba*. In the 1948 territories, the sex ratio is 102.2 males per 100 females, while 34% of the population are below 15 years of age and 4% are aged 65 years and over, based on available statistics relating to Palestinians living in Israel in 2015. This illustrates that the composition of the Palestinian population in the 1948 territory is young, as it is in Palestinian society as a whole.

The number of Palestinians in Palestine was estimated at 4.88 million at the end of 2016: 2.97 million in the West Bank and 1.91 million in Gaza Strip, the number of Palestinians in Jerusalem Governorate at the end of 2016 was around 432 thousand, of whom 62% live in the areas of Jerusalem forcibly annexed by Israel in 1967 (J1). The fertility rate in Palestine is high compared to other countries. The total fertility rate in the period 2011-2013 was 4.1 births per woman (3.7 births per woman in the West Bank and 4.5 births per woman in Gaza Strip).

Population Density: Gaza Strip is the most crowded place in the world

The population density in Palestine at the end of 2016 was 811 individuals per square kilometer (km^2): 526 individuals/km^2 in the West Bank and 5,239 individuals/km^2 in Gaza Strip.

48% of the Built-Up area of Israeli settlements on Palestinian private owned land

There were 413 Israeli Occupation constructions in the West Bank (including 150 settlements and 119 outposts) by the end of 2015. Furthermore, about 48% of the built-up area of Israeli settlements are located on Palestinian private property. In 2016, the Israeli Occupation Authorities ratified 115 new settlement master plan, which included the construction of over 5,000 housing units in Israeli settlements in the West Bank. These same authorities deprived Palestinians of their right to build and laid obstacles, undermining any potential urban expansion, especially for the Palestinians in Jerusalem and Area "C", which is under full Israeli Occupation control. It should be noted that Area “C” constitutes over 60% of the West Bank area; while only four master plans were approved by the Israeli Occupation Authorities, out of 97 Palestinian master plans submitted for Israeli Authorities' approval, during the last 5 years. The Expansion and Annexation Wall, also isolates more than 12% of the West Bank land. Data findings indicate that the total number of settlers in the West Bank was 617,291 by the end of 2015, data indicated that about 292,555 of settlers live in Jerusalem governorate, 214,135 of these were living in Jerusalem J1 (that

part of Jerusalem, which was annexed forcefully by Israeli Occupation Authorities following its occupation of the West Bank in 1967). In demographic terms, the proportion of settlers to the Palestinian population in the West Bank is around 21 settlers per 100 Palestinians compared to 69 settlers per 100 Palestinians in Jerusalem governorate.

Historical Palestine: Israeli Occupation controls more than 85% of its land

The area of the historical land of Palestine totals about 27,000 km^2. Israeli Occupation conrols more than 85% of the total area of land. The Palestinians comprise 48% of the total population and utilize less than 15% of the land.

40% of the West Bank Area Have Been Converted to State Land by Israeli Occupation

Following Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, the Israeli Occupation Authorities laid hand on land registries, which were previously managed by the Jordanian administration. Large areas of land were defined as state land since the Ottoman era; consequently, the Israeli Occupation expropriated this land and froze and land registration or settlement for the Palestinians. Furthermore, the occupation authorities suspended all incomplete Palestinian registries depriving the Palestinians of any property title or deed.

Citizens were deprived of the right of land ownership. The area of land reached in that time, about 527 thousand dunums, and by the end of 1973, the Israeli Occupation Authorities have added more than 160 thousand dunums to what they classified as state land. Israeli Occupation Authorities proceeded with a policy, which aimed at plundering the Palestinian land. In addition, the Israeli Occupation Authorities announced more than 900 thousand dunums as a state land in the period from 1979 to 2002, in a continuation of the Israeli Occupation policy of looting Palestinian land by announcing more than 660 thousand dunums of the Palestinian land to be as a state land. The total land classified as Israeli Occupation state land in the West Bank reached more than 2,247 thousand dunums, representing about 40% of the total area of the West Bank.

Water: Israeli Occupation controls more than 85% of Palestinian water

Palestinians suffer from scarcity of water and resources. The situation is further complicated by the prolonged Israeli occupation, which controls most of the existing water sources (85%) and prevents the Palestinians from their right to access their water sources or any alternative sources, Consequently, the Palestinians are compelled to buy water from the Israeli Water Company (Mekorot), purchasing around 70.2 Million Cubic Meters (MCM) in 2015.

The Israeli Occupation controls the majority of renewable water resources totaling 750 MCM, while Palestinians receive only about 110 MCM. The Palestinian share from the three ground water aquifers should be 118 MCM according to Oslo Agreement. This share was supposed to increase to 200 MCM by the year 2000 had the Interim Agreement been fully implemented.

The daily allocation per capita from consumed water for domestic purposes was 82.2 letter/capita/day (l/c/d) in Palestine in 2015, while it was 84.3 l/c/d in the West Bank. This

rate reached 79.2 l/c/d in Gaza Strip in 2015, however, 97% of drinking water in Gaza Strip does not meet the World Health Organization (WHO) standards and is also less than the minimum quantities recommended by WHO (100 l/c/d).

Martyrs: Continuous efforts to build a state

The number of martyrs killed in the al Aqsa Intifada between September 29th, 2000 and December 31st, 2016 was 10,369. The bloodiest year was 2014 with 2,240 Palestinian martyrs, including 2,181 from Gaza Strip, followed by 2009 with 1,219 martyrs. In addition, 306 martyrs were killed in 2012, 15 of whom were from the West Bank, and 291 from Gaza Strip; 189 of them were killed during the Israeli attack on Gaza Strip in November 2012, and 126 martyrs, were killed during 2016, 42 of them under 18 years.

Detainees

Data from the the Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs show that Israeli Occupation has arrested about a million Palestinians since 1967: more than 100 thousand were arrested since the Al-Aqsa Intifada. There are around 6,500 Palestinians in detention. Of these, 57 Palestinian female prisoners, (including 13 female minors), in addition to more than 300 are children. More than 500 Palestinians are held under administrative detention (without trial). The Israeli Occupation authorities have intensified detention of Palestinians since October 2015, arresting over ten thousand people in the West Bank, mostly from Holy Jerusalem. One third of these detainees were children.

210 Palestinians have died in Israeli jails since 1967 due to torture, denial of health treatment or deliberate killing. It should be noted that the prisoners who received a release order from the occupation authorities following deteriorated health conditions martyred short time after they were released. They are namely Fayez Zeidat, Murad Abu Sakout, Zakaria Issa, Zuheir Labadah, Ashraf Abu Dhrie', Jafar Awad and Naeem Al-Shawamrah

Jerusalem 2016; The Israeli Occupation policy continues the demolition of the Palestinian buildings

At the time that the Israeli Occupation Authorities demolish Palestinian buildings, and put obstacles and impediments to the issuance of building permits, they approve licenses to construct thousands of housing units in Israeli settlements on the Palestinian lands of Jerusalem, where the Occupation Authorities demolished about 309 buildings (housing and establishment) during the year 2016, in addition to issuing about 227 demolition orders. The major demolitions carried out by the Israeli Occupation Authorities in Jerusalem, was in Abu Nawar locality, targeting the only school there, which consisted of six classrooms; in addition to the demolition of an under-construction mosque in Sur Bahir.

Policy of Ethnic Cleansing Against Palestinians in the West Bank

The Israeli Occupation Authorities have continued their policy of ethnic cleansing against Palestinian citizens in the West Bank through the policy of demolishing houses and establishments in order to uproot citizens of their land. During the year 2016, Israeli Occupation Authorities demolished 1,023 houses and establishments in the West Bank. In

addition, the Israeli authorities issued 657 demolition orders. The demolitions led to the displacement of more than 1,620 Palestinian citizens, half of them are children.

Environment: Continuing Degradation

Israeli settlements cause direct damage to the Palestinian environment. They actually discharge 40 million cubic meters (MCM) of wastewater annually into Palestinian valleys and agricultural land. Only 10% of such water is treated. If compared to the wastewater produced by Palestinians in the West Bank, which stands at 34 MCM per year, the Israeli settlers produce five times the Palestinians. Moreover, the Israeli authorities prevent Palestinians from building their own wastewater treatment plants. On another level, they allocated part of the Palestinian land in Jordan Valley to an Israeli dumpsite of industrial waste. Consequently, Palestinian agricultural land endured enormous damage not to mention impact on health animals and biodiversity; furthermore, the Israeli authorities bulldozed and burned more than 15,300 trees of Palestinian farmers in 2015.

Tourism: Falsification of the culture, civilization and history of Palestine

The Israeli Occupation narrative is based on falsification of the culture, civilization and history of Palestine. Therefore, the occupation authorities alter Palestinian national treasures and monuments of ancient times. In figures, 53% of the archeological sites in Palestine are in Area "C", which is under full Israeli control. The Israel occupation prevents any excavating or restoration of these sites for the building of recreational and tourist attractions. They also create obstacles to prevent Palestinian tourism agencies from organizing proper visits of the Holy Land. With these restrictions, they give a competitive edge to the Israeli companies that market the Nativity Church in Bethlehem and *Deir Quruntol* (The Mount of Temptation) in Jericho, for instance, as part of tourism in Israel. By granting more facilities to Israeli companies, tourists are 'advised' to stay in Israeli hotels as Palestinian areas are 'denounced as unsafe'. According to data from the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism, the number of visitors to Bethlehem Governorate (which constitutes 40% of the total number of inbound tourists to the West Bank) during the year 2014 was about 1 million visitors, who came through Israeli tourism companies and agents, Palestinians are deprived of over 75% of potential touristic services revenues.

Sources:

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