



Palestinian Youth: Identity, Participation, and Space



June 2020



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“Palestinian Youth Together for Change”.



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Introduction

This report complements the survey and the research conducted at the end of 2015 and in early 2018 to monitor the changes that took place over the span of the three years.¹ These changes affected the political and socioeconomic life of all Palestinian communities in different places of residency in general and shook the orientations and opinions of youth over a range of issues including trust in political actors, im/migration, the state and resistance.

The Center for Development Studies (CDS) at Birzeit University collaborated with the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) to conduct a survey to monitor these transformations in Palestinian society. The purpose of the survey was to identify the issues to focus on in the next stage. It also underlines the strategic nature of youth issues, their political realities, identity and available spaces. Thus, under CDS and AFSC's program "Palestinian Youth Together for Change", and building on past experiences a reading of the findings of the survey is provided below to inform future action.

It is not possible to offer a reading of the findings of the survey without understanding the general Palestinian context, including the economic and political structures in the different Palestinian communities and their effects on young people. Thus, it is important to understand the details of the historical narrative and the changes inflicted by the Zionist colonial project², which is based on eliminating everything that is Palestinian.

The pessimistic attitudes and critical vision of the current political and socioeconomic reality, as well as the lack of trust in the Palestinian institutions and political parties, expressed by the youth in the focus groups, stem from the structural ramifications of this situation and its repercussions on every single aspect of their lives.

In general, the findings pinpointed a number of economic, political and social effects of the current state of fragmentation on Palestinians and youth. These unbearable conditions reinforced the tendency toward immigration and clan or familial affiliation. The major concerns expressed by youth and different Palestinian communities included transfer, settlement activities, Zionist acculturation of school curricula and annexation of land, together with worsening economic conditions and restrictions on mobility. These conditions created a huge gap in the relationship between the Palestinian communities and their political leaders and the national movement, reflected in declining trust towards the latter.

The findings also tracked the ramifications of Palestinian fragmentation on economic, political and social life, focusing on its effects on youth in particular. The most worrying impact was a tendency towards immigration and a shift towards family sub-identifications over national belonging.

The findings also reiterated that the colonial project is still controlling the Palestinians by segregating and fragmenting their communities, which harms their political and social relations. Youth believe it is important to promote a sense of collectiveness among the Palestinians, by shifting the focus toward the homeland, i.e the common ground for all Palestinians. In this sense, their sociopolitical relations can be enhanced through involvement in the liberation project to emancipate and put an end to the colonization.

Despite the post-Oslo frustration and political split, most of the youth still consider "being Palestinian" as their main identity. They further exhibited a commitment to social responsibility through volunteering to serve their communities, and political participation to support the Palestinian question.

¹ The report includes indicative changes based on years, gender, and age.

² For more details on the conceptual framework, refer to the papers published following the first survey, gathered in a book, *Palestinian Youth: Studies on Identity, Place and Community Participation* (2017), CDS, Birzeit University, Birzeit (edited by Jamil Hilal).

The report comprises two parts; the first part presents the key findings of the survey with analytical conclusions. The survey included a sample of 2386 Palestinians who reside in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, the Palestinian areas occupied in 1948 and Palestinian camps in Lebanon. The second part suggests policy recommendation for action with the youth.³

³ For more details about methodology see Annex.

First Section: Key Findings⁴

First part: Key challenges, concerns and threats facing youth in different Palestinian communities

The main personal concern for most youth lies in their economic situation

- 60% of the participants expressed deep concerns related to their economic and living conditions, while 15% considered that the major challenge they face is the constraints on their movement and mobility.
- Youth aged (18-29 years) view their economic realities as the most serious problem (as reported by 54%), while the older age group (30 years and above) considered it a major challenge (as explained by 64% of them).
- 16% of youth reported that humiliation by security services represented a major issue for them, while 9-10% of the older group shared the same opinion.
- Youth also believed that the constraints on their movement and mobility represented a challenge for 16% of them, while it represented a challenge for 11% of the older age group.
- 28% of the survey participants described their families' economic conditions as difficult, or very difficult, while 30% described it as good or very good, while the majority (42%) described it as moderate.
- The findings of the current survey did not show any substantial changes in the participants' assessment of their economic conditions among the different communities, compared to 2015. However, the rate of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip who viewed their economic situation as difficult or very difficult increased from 43% in 2015 to 55% in 2018.
- The findings did not report any difference between men and women regarding these issues.

Transfer represents a major threat for Palestinians in Jerusalem

- 58% of the surveyed participants considered that the major threat facing the Palestinian Jerusalemites was transfer.
- The results also indicated that the majority of youth (56%) viewed transfer as the greatest threat facing the Palestinians in Jerusalem.

Palestinians in the areas occupied in 1948 (the 1948 areas) reported three-tiered challenges

At very close percentages, youth reported three major challenges facing the Palestinians in the 1948 areas.

- The major threat is transfer, as stated by 39%.
- 32% considered their status as second-class citizens as a major challenge.
- 28% considered that the third threat is related to the Zionist acculturation of the Palestinian society in 1948 areas.

Settlement expansion and Judaization are major threats facing the Palestinians in the West Bank

- 59% of the survey participants considered that the major threats facing the Palestinians in the West Bank is settlement activity and Judaization.

⁴ The report presents the main findings and changes with statistical significance from one survey to another based on gender and/or age. For detailed findings, please refer to the detailed matrices or visit CDS website: <https://www.birzeit.edu/en/community-affairs/institutes-centers/centre-development-studies>

- 56% of youth aged (30-44) and 65% of the (45-55) viewed settlement activity and Judaization as the major threat.
- 22% of youth viewed the restriction on their mobility as the second major issue facing them; this is consistent with the overall sample percentage.
- The third major concern according to the youth was the collapse of the PNA (11%)

Economic risks and war against Palestinians in Gaza

The findings of the youth survey showed no significant difference between the youth and other age groups regarding their opinion of the risks facing the Palestinians in Gaza.

- 32% thought that the major risk was the deterioration in their economic and living conditions, the rise of poverty and unemployment rates.
- 25% expected the occupation authorities to launch a new war against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.
- 23% thought that Gaza would become a political entity separate from the West Bank.
- 19% believed that the Palestinian political split would persist with a long cease-fire without the approval of the authorities in Ramallah.

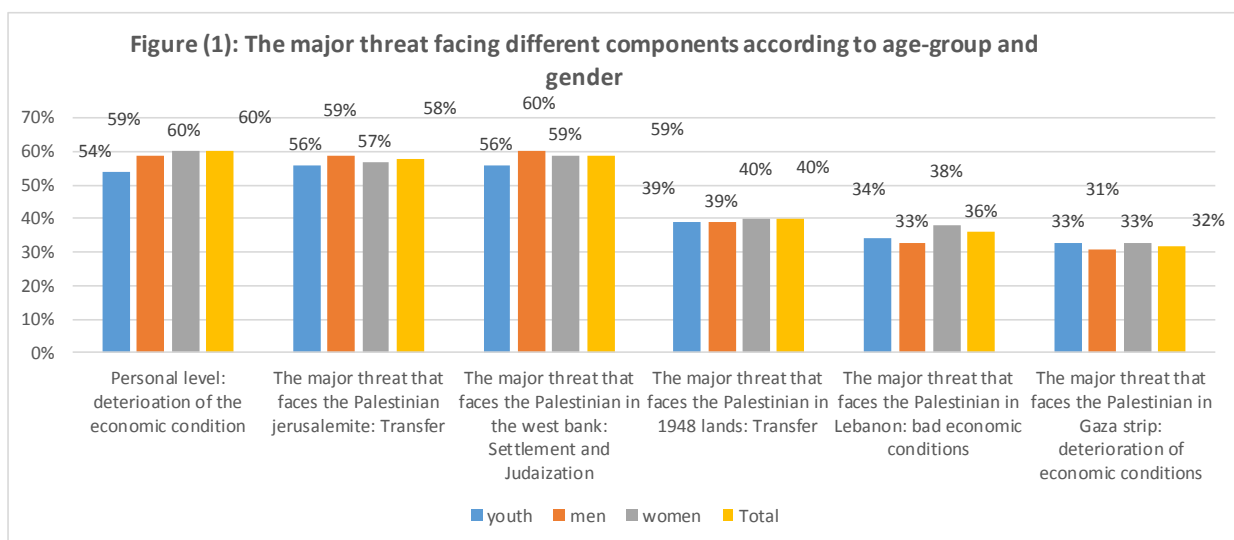
Economic deterioration and transfer are the main threats for the Palestinians in Lebanon

The attitudes vis-à-vis the challenges and threats facing the Palestinians in Lebanon varied according to age groups, but were generally as follows:

- (36%) viewed the deterioration of living and economic conditions as the major challenge.
- (23%) considered the potential transfer of the Palestinians from Lebanon as the second major threat.
- (22%) regarded the deepening division and polarization in the camps as the third major threat.
- (19%) considered the increasing restrictions imposed upon the Palestinians by the Lebanese government as the fourth major threat.

The findings also revealed a gender gap regarding the threats facing the Palestinians in Lebanon:

- (38%) of women compared to (33%) of men viewed the economic and living condition as the major threat.
- (20%) of women compared to (24%) of men thought the division and polarization among the Palestinians is a major threat.



Box (1): Challenges and Threats

The findings showed that different Palestinian communities faced different personal and collective threats. However, the economic and living conditions represented a major threat for the majority, 60% of the overall sample. This challenge is compounded by the specific living conditions in each community that vary based on social, political and cultural structures. These particular structures imposed further challenges within each geo-political context. Furthermore, the Occupation continues to impose its control, policies and conditions on the Palestinian people following the Oslo Accords. It uses different measures to increase the state of fragmentation and undermine any possible Palestinian collective political act. Consequently, the Palestinians, each within their particular community, feel the strategic threat posed by this policy.

The economic and social changes and development had a clear effect on the type of challenges facing the Palestinians in their different places of residence. The findings revealed that each community, especially the youth, sensed a number of challenges and insecurities because of persistent Israeli policies of transfer and systematic zionization of all Palestinian areas. Indeed, the transfer policies are not exclusive to the Palestinians of Jerusalem and the areas occupied in 1948, but also affect the Palestinians of the West Bank through settlement expansion. More specifically, 59% of respondents viewed transfer as a major threat for the Palestinians in Jerusalem, 39% considered transfer a threat to the Palestinians in the areas occupied in 1948, and 59% expressed their concern about settlement expansion and jeudization in the West Bank. As for the Palestinians in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip, each within their particular context, they expressed their worries about the deteriorating living and economic conditions as a result of the Israeli blockade (in the case of Gaza) and exclusion by the Lebanese government (in the case of Lebanon). All of these challenges increase the vulnerability of the Palestinians, under a relapse of political action and representation among the different Palestinian communities>

Second Part: Assessing the Palestinian general and domestic situation

Attitudes towards social and political issues

- The results indicated that (46%) of the overall respondents believed that the Palestinian society is not moving in the right direction, (compared to 50% in 2015). Moreover, 38% considered that the vision of Palestinian society is unclear, and only 12% of the participants believed that Palestinian society was heading in the right direction.
- Findings also showed that youth aged (18-29) are the group that believed most that Palestinian society is not moving in the right direction, as expressed by 50% of them, compared to 44% of the older generations who shared this view.
- The majority of participants (69%) stated that inter-Palestinian relations are worsening (compared to 73% who believed the same in 2015). Youth from different generations support the view that inter-Palestinian relations are worsening.
- When disaggregated by gender, the findings showed that males (73%) put more emphasis on the worsening relations among the Palestinians, compared to (65%) of females.
- **When asked about their opinion on the current political situation**, most survey participants

(51%) answered that the current situation is bad. The findings did not show any age variance in this assessment. Still, the percentage of respondents supporting this view dropped by 7%, compared to 2015.

- The exception nevertheless appeared in the assessment of the clarity of the current political situation whereby 39% of the older generations (30 years and over) thought the situation was not clear, compared to 33% of the younger group (18-29 years).
- It should be noted that the Palestinians in Lebanon and Gaza Strip were more pessimistic with reference to the current political situation (66% Palestinians in Lebanon, 64% Gaza Strip).

Sense of safety and security: 35% of youth lack the feeling of safety and security in the present times

- 30% of the participants indicated that they did not feel safe and secure in the current situation. The rate was double among the Palestinians of Lebanon, where (62%) expressed this view.
- On the other hand, 65% of youth (aged 18-29 years) feel safe and secure, compared to 70% of the older group (45-55).
- The findings also showed a slight gender gap as relating to the feeling of safety and security (66% of men felt safe and secure, compared to 69% of women).
- The findings also revealed variance in this perception among the different Palestinian communities, as follows:
 - The West Bank: 40% reported they felt unsafe and insecure in 2015, and the rate dropped to 29% in 2018.
 - Palestinians in 1948 areas: 40% felt unsafe and insecure in 2015, compared to 33% in 2018.
 - The findings for all respondents showed a general rise in the feeling of safety and security from 59% in 2015 to 67% in 2018. When distributed by gender and age, the rate increased by 8 and 9 points respectively.

Restrictions on freedom: 42% of youth believe that the margin of freedom is narrowing

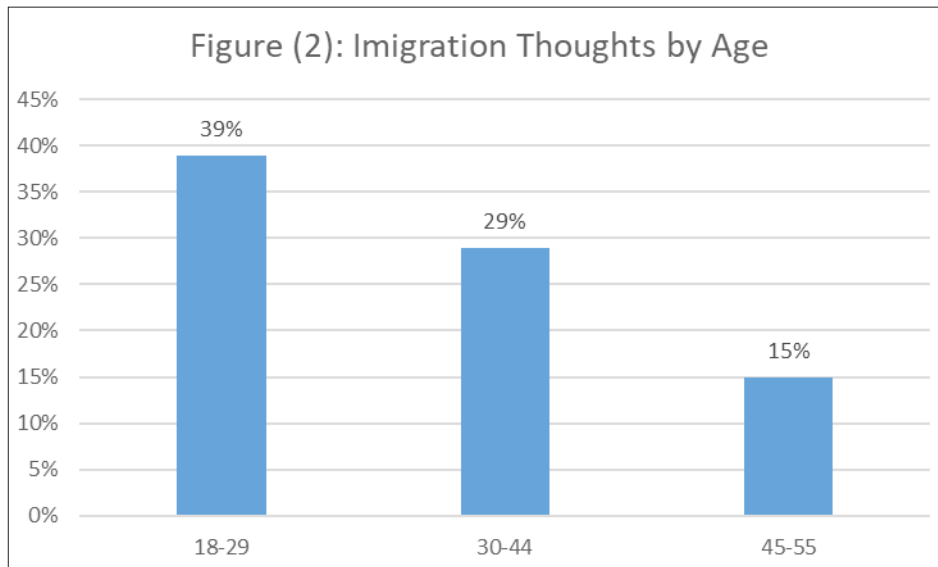
- 43% of the Palestinians thought that the margin of freedom was narrowing as pertaining to freedom of expression on issues related to the Palestinian situation; while 31% did not feel there is any margin or room of freedom, 22% stated that there was room for freedom of expression.
- Findings distributed by area showed the following:
 - Palestinians from Gaza Strip were the group that most reported no room or margin of freedom (47%)
 - Palestinians in 1948 areas were the most that reported a narrowing margin or room of freedom (55%)
- There are no differences in the results according to gender, as the attitudes per gender are close to the overall rate.

Immigration and transfer: 29% of Palestinians have seriously thought about immigrating

- Youth are the group that most seriously considers immigrating: under repressive living conditions and narrowing spaces for freedom, the findings revealed that 39% of youth (aged 18-29) were seriously considering immigrating, and this represents the highest rate among the other groups.⁵
- The findings also indicated that in comparison only 15% of the age group (45-55) are considering immigration.
- There was no significant variance in the rate of youth considering immigrating compared to the 2015 survey.

⁵ For in-depth understanding of the tendency to immigration, see section I: the major issues and challenges that face youth and the different Palestinian communities.

- When disaggregated by gender, the findings revealed that men thought more about immigration: 36% of men, compared to 22% of women.
- The results also showed that the majority of Palestinians in Lebanon consider immigration (72%), noting that this is an increase compared to 2015 (67%).



Box (2): Hope

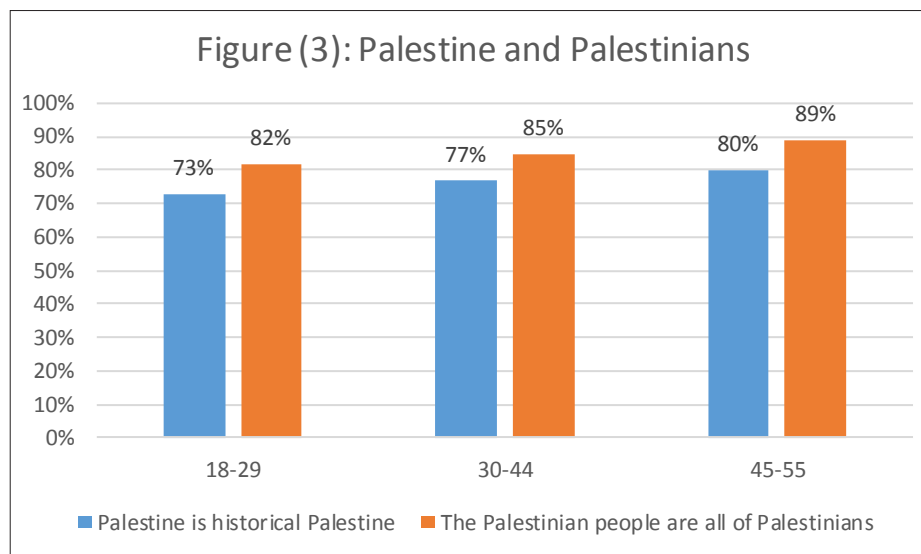
Fragmentation and division have negatively impacted the different Palestinian communities whose situation is worsening under recent economic, living, political and social developments. Consequently, pessimism is spreading among the Palestinians, as reinforced by the dramatic deterioration of the Palestinian political situation (described by the majority of respondents as bad). Another indicator is found in the relapse of the socioeconomic conditions and increased consideration of immigration among youth (39%). Participants also expressed serious concerns about worsening living conditions and stricter restrictions on their mobility. Nonetheless, and in spite of these exceptionally bad conditions, the majority still feel safe and secure. Thus, we can deduce that the increased tendency towards immigrating is a forced condition that is the result of existing Palestinian structures and prolonged colonial control, and policies that affect every detail of the life of Palestinians in general, and youth in particular. It is thus expected that if the living conditions were marked by greater hope and employment prospects – especially in the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian camps in Lebanon – the number of Palestinians who consider immigrating would drop gradually. As evidence of this reading, the findings of the survey did not reveal any increase in the rate of youth who seriously consider immigrating, compared to 2015.

Moreover, in spite of the worsening political, social and economic conditions, young people have not lost hope. Indeed, the findings showed that 61% of them do not consider immigrating at all. The findings indicate that they still view the occupied Palestinian Territory and refugee camps as a safe place (65%). More importantly, the findings revealed positive attitudes that can be instrumental in making the change if proper investment is made to build on them and create a space for youth action on the one hand, and expand the margin of freedom, on the other.

Third Part: The Vision of Palestine and Political Representation

The majority of youth and survey participants define Palestine as historical Palestine

- The majority of youth still consider Palestine to be historical Palestine with all its defined borders and traits (73%).
- Findings presented in the figure below show that the more senior group considers Palestine to be historical Palestine in its full territory, and defines the Palestinians as every person living in historical Palestine or in the diaspora. It should be noted that variances in living conditions do not have substantial effects on the perception of respondents, regardless of their age or place of residency.



- While over 76% of the Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon define Palestine as all of historical Palestine, the Palestinians in the 1948 areas had a different perception, with only 37% of them sharing the same view, marking a drop from the 2015 rate of (50%).
- The general findings also indicated that 85% of the survey participants considered the Palestinian people to be all the Palestinians wherever they are.
- This rate increased for the Palestinians in the West Bank (from 84% in 2015 to 89% in 2018) and for the Palestinians in Lebanon (from 93% in 2015 to 96% in 2018).
- However, the number of respondents in the 1948 areas who shared this view dropped by 18 points (from 78% in 2015 to 60% in 2018).

Political representation: (57%) of youth and 56% of women believe that no one represents them at the current stage

- 51% of the survey participants stated that no party represented them, compared to 46% in 2015: the highest percentage was in Lebanon 60%, on the contrary 60% in Gaza Strip agreed that there were no political bodies and institutions that represented them.
- Additionally, 57% of youth reported that no one represented them at the current stage, and 51% of the age group (30-44 years) shared this perspective, while 44% of the age group (45-55 years) supported this view. It should however be noted that, 48% of youth expressed this view in 2015.
- Gender distribution showed that more women (56%) considered that no one represented them, compared to (46%) of men who shared this opinion.
- When disaggregated by representative bodies, the results read as follows:
 - 22% of the survey participants considered the PNA to be their representative, compared to 18% of youth. The percentage was higher in the West Bank as stated by 31% of this group.

- A gender gap also appeared with 26% of men considering the PNA as their representative, compared to 18% of women.
- 14% of respondents indicated that the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was their representative, 11% of youth considered the PLO as their representative. Gaza marked the highest rate in regard to considering the PLO to be their representative, with 27% affirming this view, followed by the Palestinians in Lebanon with 20%.

Trust in and support for political parties: increased lack of trust in political parties and movements among the youth

- Because of the lack of representation, the trust in Palestinian political movements decreased. 74% of youth explained they did not trust the Palestinian political parties or movements. No significant changes appeared compared to the 2015 survey.
- There was no change pertaining to the lack of trust in political parties from 2015 to 2018. The majority (72%) do not trust the Palestinian political parties and movements. Distributed by region, the rate was 78% for the Gaza Strip and 62% for the 1948 areas.
- Variances according to gender showed that men have more trust in political parties (34%), compared to only 23% of women who shared the same opinion.

Box (3): Lack of Trust

Considering that 57% of youth responded that no party represented them politically, and that 74% of them distrusted the political parties, these attitudes reflect a sharp criticism of the Palestinian political arena and all its components (PLO, political parties, Palestinian factions and the PLO). This is an indicator of the gap in political relations between society and the political parties, and reflects the lack of trust in them. This is also a vital indicator of the level of politicization in the Palestinian communities, where politics continues to be a subject of debate among youth and the Palestinians

The criticisms raised are not random or arbitrary but are rather due to obsolete political parties that have lost their *raison d'être* and now serve individual interests. As a result, the Palestinian political arena is fractured and split into two poles with two authorities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The main struggle has shifted towards establishing the legitimacy of each party at the expense of the other. On another note, youth in Lebanon also referred to the widespread corruption in the Palestinian organizations. The result was increased individualism and self-exclusion, especially as the Palestinian cause, under the leadership of these parties, lost its unifying and representative force.

It is worth noting that the percentage of youth who stated that the PLO or PNA represented them was limited (11% and 18% respectively). The findings confirm widespread criticism of the existing system and specifically the political division between Fateh and Hamas, which has led to increased political repression towards those who do not support either of the two entities. The margin of freedom has narrowed leading to further disillusionment and a deepening of the fragmentation of the Palestinian people.

On another level, the majority (76%) still define Palestine as all of historical Palestine, and consider that the Palestinians include all its residents and the diaspora (as expressed by 85%). The findings also revealed that the emancipation and liberation project was viewed as the main vehicle to put an end to the fragmentation of the Palestinian people.

The Palestinian political and demographic scene requires a discourse that challenges the fragmentation of Palestinian communities and rejects the reduction of Palestine to the sociopolitical and geographic space of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Fourth part: Identity, Belonging and Collective and Individual Factors

The findings showed slight changes, compared to previous years, in regard to individuals' main identity. However, changes varied according to the communities as shown here:

The primary identity: Most youth still define their primary identity as Palestinian

- Overall, findings showed that 47% of respondents viewed their primary identity as Palestinian, while 30% defined their identity as religious and 16% considered themselves as Pan-Arabs, and 7% viewed themselves as world (human) citizens.
- There was a consensus among youth on the definition of their primary identity as Palestinians (47%), followed by 25% who viewed their religion as their primary identity. However, the older age group (45-55) expressed different opinions, with 34% defining their identity as religious and 43% of considering being a Palestinian as their primary identity.

The variances in youth attitudes toward this matter remained insignificant.

- The findings also revealed a gender gap in this regard, with 52% of men identifying themselves as Palestinian first, compared to 41% of women. On the other hand, the primary identity was religious for 23% of men, compared to 37% of women.
- Results also showed variances among different areas in the years from 2015 to 2018.
 - **Gaza Strip:** there was an increase in the number of respondents, who consider their primary identity as Palestinians from 34% in 2015 to 49% in 2018. On the other hand, self-definition through religious identity declined from 56% in 2015 to 39% in 2018.
 - **The West Bank:** The primary identity was Palestinian for 59% in 2018, marking a decrease compared to 67% in 2015. However, preference for religious identity increased from 23% in 2015 to 30% in 2018.
 - **Palestinians in Lebanon:** The primary identification as Palestinian dropped from 59% in 2015 to 23% in 2018 while the religious identity rose from 23% in 2015 to 44% in 2018.
 - **Palestinians in 1948 areas:** Clear changes were observed in the Palestinian society in 1948 Palestinian areas, undermining the definition of the primary identity as Palestinian from 30% in 2015 to 21% in 2018; the same applies to the religious identity, which fell from 22% in 2015 to 17% in 2018. The primary affiliation was the pan-Arab identity for 53%, compared to 42% in 2015.

The secondary (sub) identity: Primary Affiliation to Family and Kin

- The findings did not reveal substantial variations with regard to individuals' secondary identity, which remained largely family and/or kin.
- Respondents mentioned that their second affiliation was to their secondary identity, which is their families/kin (71%), while 19% considered their secondary identity to be Palestinian.

When disaggregated by communities and years, the changes read as follows:

- **Palestinians in Lebanon:** Affiliation to family and kin increased from 70% in 2015 to 75% in 2018. Preference of the Palestinian sub-identity declined from 28% in 2015 to 22% in 2018.

- Palestinians of 1948 areas: Preference of the family or kin sub-identity decreased from 79% in 2015 to 68% in 2018. However, affiliation to the local identity (to the place of residence: the village or city) increased from 7% in 2015 to 15% in 2018.

The Sense of Collectiveness among Palestinians: 43% of youth see land and homeland as factors uniting all the Palestinians

- The majority of youth (43%) still considered that territory (mostly defined as *watan* or homeland) was the common denominator of the Palestinians (noting that 47% held this view in 2015). There were no significant variances compared to other generations, as the majority of survey participants (44%) also consider that land (or homeland) was the common denominator.
- 25% of youth considered that the collective conscience among the Palestinians (their national identity) was a uniting factor (compared to 18% in 2015), while 17% believed that history united the Palestinians.
- Findings for the overall sample showed that more Palestinians view their national identity as their common denominator (with 17% expressing this view in 2015 compared to 23% in 2018)
- Moreover, 17% of the survey participants indicated that religion was their factor of unity, although at a declining rate from 20% in 2015 to 17% in 2018.

Discrimination against Palestinians: 40% of Palestinians experienced discrimination, while the older generation are more vulnerable

- The findings suggested that the senior generation were more vulnerable to discrimination, as reported by 45% of the age group (45-55 years), who experienced negative discrimination based on their nationality as Palestinians, compared to 37% who experienced this in the age group 30-44 years. On another note, 39% of the age group (18-29 years) explained that they faced the same discrimination.
- When distributed by gender, findings showed that men faced more discrimination than women with 48% and 32% respectively.
- It should be noted that variances according to age and from the first to the second survey were minor. A key finding showed that the feeling of discrimination increased among youth from 35% in 2015 to 39% in 2018.

Box (4): Palestinian Identity

The findings showed that the shaken Palestinian political structure pushed Palestinians toward further withdrawal especially after recurrent frustrations throughout the post-Oslo years. This situation harmed youth in particular, as their political, community and economic roles were marginalized. The situation was exacerbated by the political division. Nevertheless, participants resisted this tendency towards fragmentation and the majority stressed that their main identity was “being a Palestinian”. With this response, they conveyed their rejection of the geo-political division.

The state of fragmentation and division disoriented attitudes at the level of sub-identities, which were marked by clear tribalism and kin affiliation for most Palestinians. The family or tribe became the safe shelter under weak political representation and social protection structures in the Palestinian political system.

It is not possible to read these narrow identity inclinations without an understanding of the lack of trust in the Palestinian national political movement and the weakening sense

of collectiveness. Indeed, this situation, along with widespread favoritism and nepotism in the Palestinian governance system, marginalized the role of youth and women in participation and political decision-making.

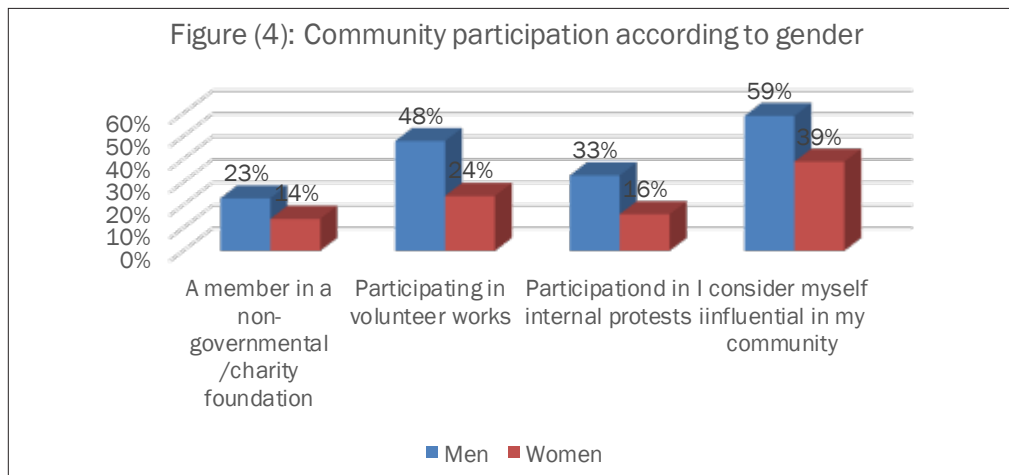
A search for common grounds among the geographically separated Palestinian communities was one of the ways through which the respondents tried to circumvent the state of fragmentation. The land, (in the sense of national home “watan”), and the common ground and history were asserted as common denominators that link all of the fragmented segments of the Palestinian people. This is also a political message about the importance of collective Palestinian national identity, the indivisible unity of the Palestinian people and a statement that the problem lies in the stagnation of the Palestinian political leadership and authority. In a way, these perspectives put pressure on the leadership to be accountable and promote active youth participation, while deepening connections and ties across geographically separated Palestinian communities.

It is important to build on these perspectives with a Palestinian and youth vision that overrides the state of fragmentation and moves toward emancipation from excessive individualism toward collective and solidarity action among all of the segments of the Palestinian people. In this regard, fostering youth steadfastness and resilience becomes central to achieve this vision.

Fifth part: Participation and Gender Equality

Participation in public sphere

- Looking at the scope of participation in the public sphere between 2015 and 2018, the survey found that variances according to age group and year of survey results were minor (did not exceed 3%), while there were clear gender variances.
- The results indicated that men participate and are present in the public sphere much more than women. While 23% of men considered themselves members of non-governmental and charity organizations, this percentage reached 14% for women, which also represents a slight by 3-4 points compared to 2015.
- Moreover, 48% of men participated in volunteer work compared to 24% of women, noting that male participation increased by 7 points, while female participation decreased by 3 points compared to 2015.
- In addition, 33% of men participated in political protests against the situation in Palestine, while 16% of women participated in similar protests.
- The results also showed that men considered themselves more influential in their communities (59%), compared to 39% of women. This is an increase by 11 points for men, and 5 points for women, compared to 2015.



Areas of Proactive participation: Youth and Palestinians in Lebanon Showed the Highest Participation Rate

- 49% of participants in the survey viewed themselves as influential in their local communities, noting that the rate of respondents who expressed this view in 2015 was 41%. This opinion was more prevalent among the older age group as 52% expressed it compared to 46% of the youth.
- The findings showed that youth participated more than other groups in volunteer community service, as reported by 40% of them, compared to 31-35% for the older age groups.
- The general findings showed that 36% of respondents volunteered in community services and that the Palestinians in Lebanon scored the highest volunteering rate (44%).
- Furthermore, 21% of youth said they were active members of charitable associations, and scored a slightly higher rate compared to other generations, as for instance for the group older than 30 years, the rate of participation was 17-18%.
- The overall results showed a slight regression in participation over time, as it reached 22% in 2015 and fell to 19% in 2018. However, such participation remained high for the Palestinians in Lebanon (33%).
- General findings also showed that 25% took part in protests and demonstrations, with the highest rate in Lebanon (53%).
- The results further revealed that youth had higher participation rates in demonstrations and protests relating to their issues and to the Palestinian question. The rate of youth participation reached 27% compared to 23% for the older age groups.

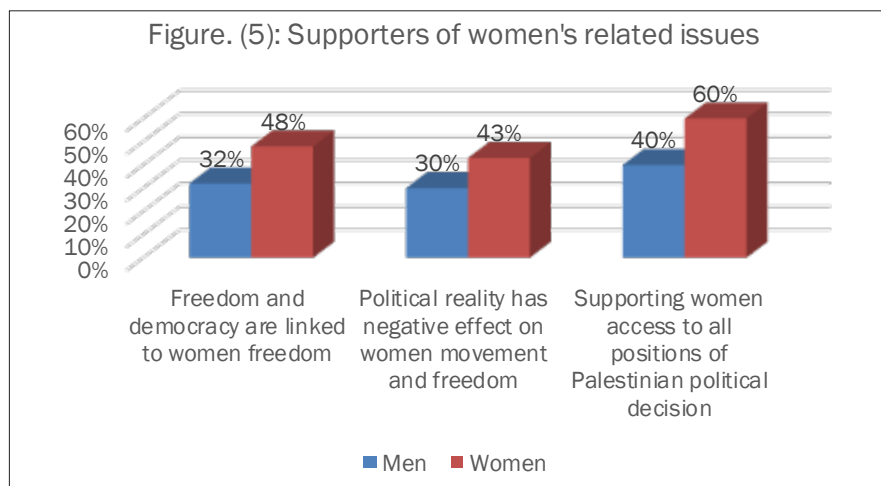
Spaces of participating in organizational and community spheres (Palestinians in Lebanon participate more)

- 21% of youth stated that they participated as members of a charity organization, representing a higher rate compared to other generations, whereby the rate was 17-18% for the age group above 30 years.
- The findings revealed a minor decline in the participation rate over years, dropping from 22% in 2015 to 19% in 2018. Participation rate was highest for the Palestinians in Lebanon and reached 33%.
- The findings showed that 25% took part in demonstrations and protests; with the highest rate for the Palestinians in Lebanon (53%).
- The findings also showed that youth had higher rates of participation in demonstrations and

protests about issues related to the Palestinian cause: 27% of youth reported participating in such protests, compared to 23% for older groups.

The Public's View of Palestinian Women's Participation and Gender Equality

- The results showed that 60% of women supported women's access to all political decision-making positions in the Palestinian political system, while 40% of men supported this view.
- Moreover, 48% of women believed that freedom and democracy were linked to women's freedom, while 32% of men supported this opinion.
- In addition, 43% of women thought that the political situation affected their freedom and mobility (marking a decrease by 5 points compared to 2015), and 30% of men believed this (with a decline by 7 points compared to 2015).

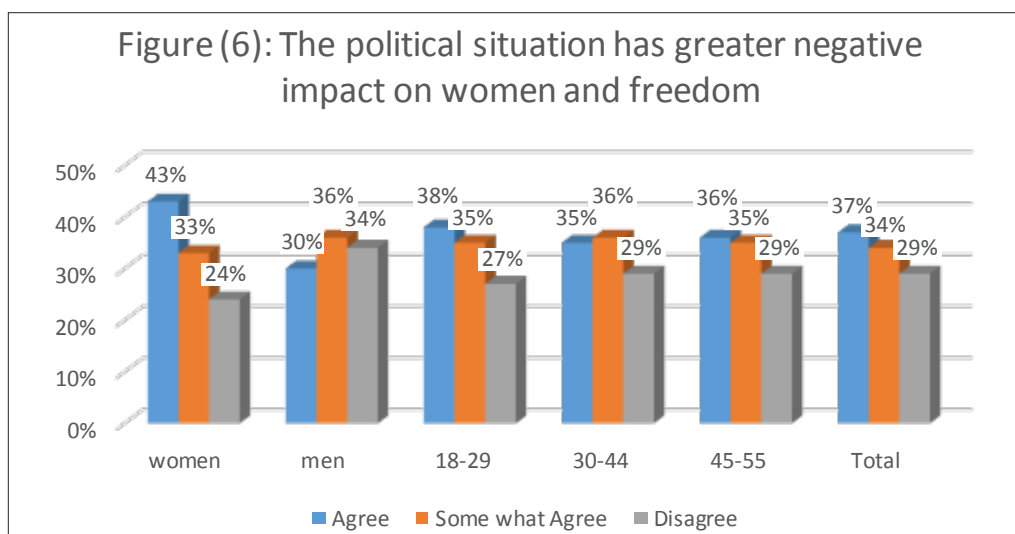


- Distributed by age, the general findings revealed that less youth and respondents believed that family relations were fairer to women, the rate of supporters of the view that family relations were fair to women dropped from 58% in 2015 to 51% in 2018, with no significant variances across generations.
- Findings also showed that 51% of youth supported women's access to all political decision-making positions, markedly higher than the average rate of 31% for other groups. However, the older group (22%) opposed women's access to political decision-making positions, compared to 18% of youth.
- It should however be noted that support of women's access to political decision-making dropped in the overall results from 53% in 2015 to 50% in 2018.
- The group that most supported women's access to decision-making positions were the Palestinians in Lebanon (70%). The rate was also high for the Palestinians in 1948 areas (61%), while in the Gaza Strip it was 53% and the lowest rate was in the West Bank 40%.

40% of respondents thought that democracy and freedom were linked to women's freedom

- Regarding the correlation between democracy, freedom and women's freedom, no changes were noted in youth and other generations' views over the years. 42% of youth still recognize this correlation, while 35% of the older generations support this view.
- 29% of the older age group (45-55) opposed the view that there is a correlation between democracy, freedom and women's freedom, compared to 27% of the age group (30-44), and 23% for the youth group aged (18-29).
- Concerning the effects of the current political situation (the Zionist occupation and the national division) on women's participation, 37% of survey participants considered that the political

reality had a negative impact on women's mobility and freedom, as compared to 43% in 2015. The findings did not reveal any significant variances across different generations on this issue.



Box (5): Palestinian Woman and participation

Palestinian youth's disaffection toward existing structures and their lack of trust in political actors was evident in declining participation in political organizations. The majority of youth opted for activities away from these structures; the results showed they prefer to engage in volunteer work to serve their local communities or being involved in struggles to support the Palestinian cause, more broadly outside the mediation of the parties. This form participation at the community level and in the national struggle is an indicator of their commitment towards their sociopolitical reality and the Palestinian cause in spite of the challenges, which restrict spaces for freedom of opinion and expression. For them, this sociopolitical participation is an attempt to break these chains.

Understanding and building on these youth attitudes toward participation is important in order to reinforce a collective vision and shared strategies for change. It is also essential to advance the breakthroughs achieved by young women and devise preferential policies to enhance their socioeconomic and political participation.

Regarding women's issues, it is important to situate and understand their sociopolitical participation within their lived context, especially as their trust in the political sphere was shaken much more than men. The same applies to the indicators relating to women's representation in Palestinian political institutions.

Women face double challenges because of existing patriarchal structures whereby their economic participation, for instance, is often restricted by the household and social responsibilities placed upon them. Sociopolitical participation is often limited by what are perceived as acceptable patriarchal gender roles. Such participation has not produced any real changes in Palestinian women's access to public life and the political sphere.

The variances between young women's and young men's attitude towards the issues covered in the survey points to the challenges that lie ahead. The public sphere is shaped

by patriarchal restrictions and the roles it assigns women mainly in the political and private spheres.

The attitudes toward women's issues – in spite of increased female participation – still show that the colonial reality still compromises women's participation. The traditional patriarchal social structures use this reality as a pretext to keep the situation as is and prevent women's advancement towards equality, often under the pretext of 'protecting' women, hindering their participation in Palestinian decision-making and/ or social participation at all levels. It is therefore important to prioritize gender equality and promote young women's issues and their representation in central cross-sectoral strategies to strengthen youth participation.

Sixth Part: Division, fragmentation, and Palestinian strategies for resistance

Causes behind the deepened fragmentation and division

In general, youth and women's attitudes did not vary regarding the key reasons behind deepening Palestinian fragmentation; the findings were as follows:

- First issue: Palestinian inter-factional conflict: 30% of respondents viewed this conflict as a key reason behind the fragmentation of the Palestinians; this is true for 44% of the Palestinians in Lebanon and 42% of the Palestinians in 1948 areas.
- Second issue: Prolonged Israeli colonial occupation: 17% of respondents thought that the continuation of colonialism triggered the state of fragmentation while 21% of the West Bank respondents thought the same.
- Third issue: 13% believed that the difficult economic conditions led to this situation.
- Fourth issue: 11% blame the Oslo Agreement for the state fragmentation and division.
- For the Palestinians in 1948 areas, two factors were seen as having caused this fragmentation:
 - Weakening of the PLO: 12%
 - Increasing religiosity: 10%.
- The gender gap was minor: 15% of women thought that the economic conditions were behind the fragmentation compared to 11% of men; on the other hand, 14% of men considered the Oslo Accord a cause of the fragmentation compared to 8% of women.
- Comparison with the findings of the 2015 survey showed that: the economic conditions and signing of the Oslo Accords, rather than favoritism and nepotism, were thought to be the main causes behind the fragmentation.

Liberation and ending occupation: a pessimistic view among the majority of youth

- The findings showed a dramatic decline by 20 points in the number of those who believed that liberation was closer than before, the rate dropped from 43% in 2015 to 23% in 2018.
- The majority of youth (59%) believed liberation was more out of reach than before, compared to 46% in 2015.
- It should be noted that the no-opinion respondents in this issue increased from 11% in 2015 to 16% in 2018.

Overcoming inter-Palestinian fragmentation: community and political reconciliation as the solution

- Youth and other generations shared the view that reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas was crucial to redress the Palestinian situation and end disunity. The overall trend was close to the youth's views as (25%) supported this position. Palestinians in the Gaza Strip supported this view the most (36%).
- The second route toward unity is through social reconciliation among the different Palestinian communities (as reported by 23% of respondents, who considered this a step toward political reconciliation). The Palestinians in Lebanon were the group that most supported this view.

Additional pathways to reconciliation: reform the PLO and elections

- 15% of youth supported reelecting male and female representatives for the Palestinian people in all localities and considered it a necessity to return to the correct track. They were close to the overall rate who shared this position (14%).
- Moreover, 13% supported reviving the PLO to reconnect with the objective of liberation; 12% of youth supported this view.
- Future of the PLO: Half of the respondents (50%) believe that it is not possible to reactivate the PLO, while 28% think there is still a possibility, compared to 22% who still believe that the opportunity is there to revive the PLO.
- Noting that the Palestinians in Lebanon and 1948 areas were the most pessimistic about the possibility of reactivating the PLO.
- As relates to the future of the PNA and the failure of the peace process: 45% of youth supported a unilateral declaration of a State of Palestine and an escalation of resistance. The general findings showed that 41% of all respondents supported this trend, noting that the Palestinians in Lebanon were the group that most supported this opinion (53%)

Strategies to manage the national struggle against occupation in light of fragmentation, division, and pessimism

- The findings revealed a general drop in the support for armed struggle as a key strategy for the national struggle against the occupation (the rate dropped from 38% in 2015 to 29% in 2018)
- Findings also showed increased support for boycotting the Israeli occupation as a strategy for the national struggle (the rate increased from 13% in 2015 to 18% in 2018)
- Also, support for negotiations increased from 19% in 2015 to 23% in 2018.
- The Palestinian youth (18-29 years), were supportive of armed struggle as a way to manage the national struggle against the occupation, as expressed by 34% of them, while 26% of older age groups supported this strategy, noting that youth support for armed struggle dropped by 5 points compared to 2015.
- The older generation (above thirty years) were more in favor of negotiations (24%), compared with 20% of youth. The oldest age group surveyed (45-55 years) were more in favor of civil resistance, compared to 12% of youth (18-29) who shared the same views.
- It should be noted that youth support for the boycott of the occupation increased by 6 points from 13% in 2015 to 19% in 2018.

Towards collective communication: relations under the state of fragmentation and division

- The findings showed higher levels of communication among the Palestinians notwithstanding the existing fragmentation and division. Indeed, 48% of respondents reported communicating

with Palestinians in other areas, noting that the rate was 34% in 2015. These relations were the result of personal and individual initiatives.

- Findings did not reveal any variances as regards youth or other generations' communication with Palestinians in other areas; the variances appeared in to the topics of discussion:
 - o Half of the respondents (51%) with such relations explained that they built these relations by their own means, while 34% reported establishing such relations via social media compared to only 4% who explained they built such relations through youth organizations.
 - o Youth communicated more through social media: 43% against a relative average of 26% for the older age groups (above thirty years).
 - o It should be noted that communication focused more on general issues, as stated by 67% of respondents. When disaggregated by topics, the dialogue focused on Palestinian affairs for 14% of respondents, on youth issues for 11%, noting that 23% of youth underscored that youth issues were the main topic of discussion in these dialogues.
- Distributed by gender, men entered into communication with Palestinians in other areas more than women did (57% for men compared to 39% for women).

Box (6): Fragmentation and struggling

Under the current state of fragmentation, youth and other groups shifted their attention towards a number of pressing issues related to the liberation project, strategies for dealing with the national struggle against the Occupation as well as the objective and subjective factors behind the ongoing fragmentation.

The fragmentation and its subjective repercussions were attributed to internal political and societal relations among the Palestinians. On the other hand, the objective reasons behind the fragmentation were considered to be the Israeli Occupation and the Oslo Accords.

Furthermore, critical perspectives on the PLO evolved to encompass the need for political representation of all of the Palestinian people. The frustration about the absence of a Palestinian representative body and the PLO's paralysis stems from people's rejection of the status quo and the expressed desire to return to the liberation track by promoting strategies such as a full boycott of the Israeli the occupation, backed by international solidarity.

The findings also showed that communication among Palestinian youth has grown, though on an individual basis. This individualism should be understood in the contest of the retreat and absence of societal, political or institutional bodies that once boosted and enabled this collective communication, notwithstanding the restrictions imposed on this social interaction during the 1980s and 1990s.

The survey respondents and those who took part in the focus groups proposed methods to exit the crisis (which will be detailed in the second part of this report), most importantly the development of a new understanding of the colonial realities imposed on the Palestinians. This also included support for several strategies to revive the national liberation struggle, with the view of ending political parties' focus on their individual interests, and the marginalization of youth in these parties and the Palestinian public space in general. It is necessary to build on the existing communication strategies adopted

by youth and transform them from individual initiatives into collective initiatives in order to raise awareness of the common denominators unifying Palestinians and boost the sense of collectiveness.

Attitudes of youth and other age groups towards the means to exit the crisis included reinforcement of the grassroots and the internal Palestinian front, along with the promotion of political dialogue and national reconciliation. This step is important to restore the Palestinian liberation project to its intended track and strengthen resilience and resistance.

Second Section: A framework and vision for policy recommendations

The findings revealed a number of serious challenges and problems that require attention, which in turn should be addressed by building future policies and interventions for youth activism in Palestine and the diaspora. Such actions need to build on youth experiences and efforts to build a collective consciousness that can confront the status quo. The vision is also based on the survey's key findings and focus group discussions held with youth. Based on these findings we propose the following policy tracks:

First Track:

The first policy track relates to the current colonial lived condition and the subsequent problems produced by the inter-Palestinian fragmentation. It examines how these problems were reflected in the political, social and economic relations among the Palestinians without proposing any counter-mechanism. Interventions that combat fragmentation can be achieved through the following parameters:

- Building coalitions and dialogues that encompass different youth initiatives and groups across all sections of the Palestinian people. As such, this joint and united effort may reinforce collective action and provide room to put an end to the current political fragmentation.
- Raise youth awareness through extracurricular educational interventions for students in schools and universities, which focus on rejecting the hegemonic colonial map of Palestine. This includes combatting labels like "West Bank and Gaza", which has become the restricted geopolitical and demographic definition of Palestine.
- Raise youth's collective awareness of conscious political messages on Palestinian identity and common denominators by struggling toward reviving the PLO and/or other all-in bodies that offer a participatory vision open to the youth.
- Open youth platforms and spaces to gather young men and women from all Palestinian communities to lobby and advocate for the creation of a broader committee to reform and activate the PLO. The survey showed consensus on such a move to accelerate reconciliation and reform of Palestinian political institutions.
- Initiate dialogue and discussions on cyber platforms and grassroots meetings to break the stereotypes reinforced as a result of colonization and inter-Palestinian fragmentation.
- Consolidate popular actions and initiatives to support young leaders and promote international solidarity campaigns in addition to boosting a total boycott of the occupation and organizing domestic and global campaigns to support this boycott as a national strategy.
- Develop an awareness program for Palestinian youth in the 1948 areas to confront Zionization and false consciousness created by such policies. Perform activities to break the stagnation and stereotypes development about self and others within the same group or among different Palestinian communities.

Second Track:

The second track is associated with the problematic shifts in identity with the divergence, one the hand, and overlap on the other, between the primary identity and affiliations and sub-identifications for youth and members of Palestinian communities. The shift toward family or clan

reflects the fact that respondents are submerged by individual and collective concerns, including enforced Zionist controls over their land and lives, displacement (immigration) and settlement expansion as well as isolation of each one of their communities, in a manner that exacerbates their fragmentation. In this context, the following actions must be considered:

- The track of identity and sense of collectiveness requires a redefinition of the Palestinian geopolitical and demographic realities. This entails a rejection of the currently lived fragmented system and building on youth proposals to establish dialogue, debate and awareness raising initiatives, in addition to holding community discussions based on youth visions to promote change on the level of identity and Palestinian national project.
- Provide a critical and conscious reading of the colonial project and its effects on identity, as well as its ramifications on different Palestinian communities and the liberation project in general.
- Initiate dialogue with youth and older generations to analyze youth's rupture with the Palestinian political movement. Launch critical discussions of the Palestinian political movement and link this with historical milestones to monitor the changes post-Oslo and provide a critical assessment of each stage.
- Raise awareness and a sense of collectiveness among youth towards national issues to resist the decline in national awareness and the tendency towards immigration as a personal salvation. Build on joint interests and social responsibility at the community-level to reinforce dialogue and initiatives linking youth of different communities.
- Raise youth awareness about the consequences of the colonial project in the Arab area in general to combat the factional and political polarization return to the project of the liberation and emancipation from colonization.
- Raise awareness of the factors of forced fragmentation that affect all Palestinian communities, change the stereotypes and value judgments held by youth about identity and belonging to the homeland. These issues require serious dialogue to solve the contradictions lived by youth toward each other.

Third Track:

The third track relates to inter-Palestinian social relations, which have worsened and shifted toward excessive individualism. Palestinian youth nowadays weave their relations and communication through individual ties to discuss issues that do often not relate to the Palestinian political context. For this track, the following parameters are necessary:

- Establish community youth entities to encompass all types of youth (since youth are not a homogenous group when it comes to their political views and positions), and/or build on existing structures to ensure that young men and women are the key players. These entities need to adopt a critical and conscious discourse on national issues and liberation.
- Build on and invest in the increasing communication among the Palestinians, mainly the youth. For this purpose, dialogues, collective awareness-raising discussions need to be launched and cyber platforms opened with initiatives on the ground that stem from Palestinian realities and the role youth can play to lead change. These efforts can develop into a collective attitude that contributes to ending the state of fragmentation.
- Reinforce the role of Palestinian networks and institutions to respond to youth in different communities and raise their collective awareness to build young leaders.
- Develop programs and awareness-raising meetings across the different Palestinian communities to address issues of Palestinian refugees in Palestine and abroad and sustain their struggle through a critical discourse that is not captive to the memories of the Nakba.

Fourth Track:

This track covers youth vulnerability to different threats and challenges and their tendency to immigrate. It examines the interwoven social, political and economic factors that impact youth from different communities. For this purpose, the work vision must focus on:

- Promoting youth collective consciousness to understand the threats resulting from Palestinian economic and political lived realities, combat individualist responses to these threats. Displacement, settlement expansion and restrictions are the product of the colonial map and its ramifications on youth and on the Palestinians in general.
- Establish youth cooperatives to strengthen their economic productivity and help them realize their ambitions by building on their experiences and economic productive skills as well as attachment to the land and agriculture.
- Comprehend the youth base and its priorities, experience, suffering and grievances to create a youth leadership to lead changes, based on their needs, experiences and daily concerns. As such, they will be socially empowered to overcome these threats.
- Devise strategies and production programs to foster youth steadfastness and empower them for full economic, social and political participation in a way that contributes to change.

Fifth Track:

This track is linked to the issues and rights of Palestinian women and to patriarchal relations. Patriarchy still represents a challenge for women, especially at the level of sociopolitical participation. It is therefore necessary to cover the following parameters:

- Initiate youth dialogues on the Palestinian project as a liberation project that encompasses all Palestinians. The liberation project must carry a social agenda, which views women's issues as a central dimension of liberation.
- Build youth coalitions and women's leadership to integrate the class struggle into the national struggle and combat economic and political hegemonic elites. The objective is to foster women's and youth participation.
- Involve youth in dialogues to help them understand the feminist discourse and help them find spaces and participatory dialogue to construct women's rights as emancipatory issues.
- Develop manuals and databases to document the experiences of women and young women visually through the media, community activities as well as discussions with youth to empower them to be part of Palestinian political decision-making.

Sixth Track:

This relates to youth participation at political and social levels, as well as the gap and lack of trust towards political parties and movements. Youth participation is still invisible and needs to be transformed into a collective act, via the following:

- Reinforce volunteerism and liberate it from the hegemony of funding to boost youth initiatives that help youth shoulder their responsibilities toward social solidarity and collective action. This may include volunteering initiated by youth in different communities, which must be made visible to achieve long-term effects in their local communities.
- Encourage youth to initiate social mobilization to commemorate national occasions like the events that confront the colonizer or organize for economic, social and political rights. Youth models active at this level must be documented to create experience-based awareness.
- Reconnect with the original values of production to create social and economic alternatives. Youth need to develop a critical reading of the economic and political elites who give precedence to personal interests based on corruption and private investments.

- Document and build on criticisms raised by youth towards political parties to launch broad discussions with the parties, mobilize to pursue change and build strategies to deal with the current paralysis.

The tracks presented above outline a detailed set of programs and activities. They need to be broadly discussed with youth to help them penetrate the existing systems and launch campaigns and initiatives as a collective, assembling youth in Palestine and abroad. The discussions may be initiated via CDS and AFSC program “Palestinian Youth Together for Change” across the three geographic areas in order to formulate action plans in the next three year program.

Annex: Methodology

Identity survey – work methodology

Survey background:

The study was conducted in four areas of residency of the Palestinian people in Mandatory Palestine (West Bank, Gaza Strip, the area occupied in 1948) and in refugee camps in Lebanon.

Methodology:

Preparatory phase:

- 1) The survey relied mainly on a questionnaire developed in 2015. The first part covers the assessment of current Palestinian condition, and the Palestinian liberation projects and resistance strategies in addition to identity, belonging and social participation as well as the situation of Palestinian women. A part was added to cover the threats faced by different Palestinian communities following discussions with partners in different areas.

Field Research:

- 1) After discussion of questionnaire with different stakeholders, the survey was conducted for the four communities in the last week of November till mid-December 2018.
- 2) The sample included 2386 male and female Palestinians in all four areas. Two interviews were held with different generations from the same households (age group 18-55 years)
- 3) The sample included 1600 Palestinian households.
- 4) The results of the sample were weighted according to the areas of the survey in order to be representative and scientific.

Analysis Phase

- 1) Analysis workshops: Eight focus group discussions were organized in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and 1948 areas as well as in Lebanon to interpret the findings and youth views of the findings (January and February 2019).
- 2) A report was written with analysis of findings to ensure optimal use and smooth accessibility to all segments.

Demographic and social background of survey respondents:⁶

Percentile distribution of sample	Percentile distribution by gender	Percentile distribution by age group
West Bank: 25.1%	Male: 50.8%	18 – 29: 38.3%
Gaza Strip: 25.1%	Female: 49.2%	30-44: 33.8%
Area occupied in 1948: 24.7%		45-55: 27.8%
Palestinians in Lebanon: 25.1%		
Percentile distribution according to residential area	Percentile distribution according to size of household	Percentile distribution according to educational attainment
Urban: 50.1%	1-3: 18.3%	Illiterate/ literate: 4.5%
Rural: 18.7%	4-6: 55.4%	Basic: 29.8%
Camps: 31.2%	7-10: 21.9%	Secondary: 34.5%
	Over 10 members: 4.4%	
Percentile distribution according to marital status	Percentile distribution according to employment status	Percentile distribution according to refugee status
Single: 23.4%	Full-time employment: 32.8%	Refugee or displaced: 55.4%
Engaged: 4.5%	Part-time employment: 13.9%	Non- refugee or displaced: 44.4%
Married: 68%	Full time student: 8.2%	Percentile distribution according to type of housing
Divorced or separated: 1.4%	Full time housewife: 27.8% (mostly women)	Apartment in building: 44.7%
Widow: 2.2%	Unemployed: 11.2%	Independent house: 52.8%
	Unemployed and does not seek job: 2.5%	Tent, barracks: 2.5%
	Other (retired, unable to work, etc.): 3.7%	

⁶ Findings for participants before weighting (actual participation depends on different variables). It should be noted that the overall results were analyzed later and constructed through weighting.