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Factors Influencing Youth Radicalisation in the Gaza Strip: Demographic trends, Socioeconomic Conditions, and Political Conflict

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CBR	Crude Birth Rate
CDR	Crude Death Rate
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
GNP	Gross National Product
HDI	Human Development Index
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NGR	Natural Growth Rate
NMR	Net Migration Rate
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PA	Palestinian Authority
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PCPSR	Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PIJ	Palestinian Islamic Jihad
PLA	Palestinian Liberation Army
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organisation
RLF	Replacement Level of Fertility
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
TGR	Total Growth Rate
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNCHR	United Nations Commissioner
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSCOP	United Nations Special Committee on Palestine
USCB	United States Census Bureau
WB	World Bank

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Introduction

Ignoring what happened on October 7th, 2023, is nearly impossible, nor is fair, when any type of conversation on what happens in Gaza is engaged. On that day, at 6:30 in the morning, 1500 terrorists from Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad broke the fence separating Gaza from Israel. For the Jewish State, the attack will represent the deadliest since its foundation in 1948: 1500 killed, among which numerous civilians, and another 240 taken as hostages. On that same day, the far-right government led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will commence the largest military campaign ever undertaken on the Gaza Strip. By August 2024, nearly 10 months later, the United Nations reported, based on figures from the Gaza Health Ministry, that approximately 40.000 Gazans had died[1]. Meanwhile, the level of destruction of homes and civilian infrastructures remains incalculable. The tragedy of what happened on October 7th, 2023, is the tragedy of the entire Israeli-Palestinian question which began in 1948 and that, as of now, seems nowhere near to be solved. However, this thesis does not attempt to thoroughly investigate the history between Palestine and Israel, nor it claims to offer a comprehensive overview of it. Rather, it attempts to delineate the landmark historical moments that provide the essential background for a more specific investigation: understanding the processes that may lead young people in Gaza to commit acts such as those of October 7th, 2023.

Gaza – a 41-kilometres-long strip of land bordering the Mediterranean Sea – has multiple times been defined as the world's largest open-air prison. Over 2 million people inhabit this densely packed area, where unemployment and poverty are endemic, and are exacerbated by the blockade Israel imposed in 2007. The population is strikingly young, with children and youth (aged 0-24) making up more than half of the total population[2]. Concurrently, in 2006, Hamas won the legislative elections, and since 2007, it has governed the Strip, ruling it as an authoritarian one-state party. At the same time, Hamas benefits from a solid social-welfare network which, confronted with Gaza's historically poor socio-economic conditions, has consistently stood out and served as an appealing option for the struggling population. The Islamist organisation notably has a military wing, whose young recruits are often brought up in infrastructures that Hamas sustains, including schools, mosques and sports programmes.

[1] United Nations, "Statement by Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights."
[2] United States Census Bureau, "International Database - Gaza Strip"

Given these circumstances, this thesis will investigate how the large cohort of Gazan youth, strained by severe socio-economic conditions – shaped by both Israeli policies as well as internal governance under Hamas – and enveloped in Hamas' proselytising system, is susceptible to radicalisation.

The analysis will be mainly carried out through the lenses of political demography in examining the main demographic, socio-economic and political trends of the Gaza Strip for the time-period 1948-2023.

In developing such analysis, this thesis is committed to maintain the neutrality required for the research. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, especially in light of the recent developments in 2023, remains a highly polarising and politicised issue, which at times may make it insidious to approach the subject with an objective eye. To ensure impartiality, the thesis has focused on key historical moments that have been widely and objectively documented. This has also implied that, in analysing the Hamas-Israeli conflicts over the years, this study has refrained from interpreting either side's motivations, except where they have been historically accepted. Objectivity has also been ensured through the selection of the sources. For example, in assessing the impact of Israeli economic policies on living standards and humanitarian conditions in Gaza, this thesis has relied on reports from the United Nations and its agencies. Similarly, the examination of the consequences of Hamas's internal actions on the population's human rights has drawn from international NGOs such as Amnesty International and Freedom House[3].

The research is structured in four chapters. Chapter 1 will go beyond the mere Gazan context to first establish the theoretical framework underpinning this thesis' assumptions about what drives radicalisation processes. Relying on the research agenda presented by Critical Terrorism Studies[4], the first step will be that of overviewing the literature on radicalisation's different interpretations. Much like the concept of terrorism, that of radicalisation also is an essentially contested one. Similarly to the quote according to which 'One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter', assessing what and who is radical lies in the eye of the beholder. The core questions guiding the chapter concern *how* and *why* individuals radicalise. Studies on

[3] For a more detailed overview, of the sources, see 'Methodology'.
[4] See, for example, Jackson, Smyth, and Gunning, "Critical Terrorism Studies: Framing a New Research Agenda"; Jackson and Sinclair, Contemporary Debates on Terrorism.

radicalisation, often intertwined with terrorism research, are vast, interdisciplinary, and touch upon different variables. For instance, radicalisation studies may adopt various focuses, which can be regional, ideological, and/or religious. These can be all regarded as direct and indirect causes, which are not mutually exclusive and are all relevant to the discourse regarding the radicalisation of Gazan youth. Despite recognising the importance of each of these variables, this chapter will not specifically touch upon them. Rather, it will review the literature of the main models that investigate the socio-psychological process that explain *how* individuals may radicalise[5]. After having explored this, the focus will be on the set of explanations that will be employed to grasp *why* people radicalise. To do so, this thesis will refer to the 'root causes' framework[6], as it emphasises socio-economic hardships and feelings of relative deprivation as universal key factors in radicalisation processes. To complete the review, youth bulge theories will also be considered, suggesting that societies with large youth cohorts, and strained by difficult socioeconomic conditions, are more subjected to the risk of political violence[7]. Overall, this thesis seeks to contribute to the existing literature by adopting a macro-level approach that considers how demographic factors and socio-economic hardhsips – and the grievances deriving from their intersection – are simultaneously at play in catalysing the process of radicalisation. Based on this framework, the objective will be that of clarifying how this thesis defines radicalisation. Presuming that radicalisation does not abide to a standard process nor it has a definite endpoint, it will be assumed that both joining an armed group that engages in violence, as well as expressing dissent through peaceful means, may constitute forms of radicalisation. This understanding will guide the analysis throughout the thesis.

To assess the relationship between low socio-economic hardships and the risk of radicalisation, Chapter 2 and 3 will investigate the evolution of living standards and humanitarian conditions in Gaza over time. Chapter 2 will introduce the origins of the Palestinian question by focusing on the consequences of the First Arab-Israeli 1948 war and the 1967 Six Days War – two major events which have reshaped Gaza's political and demographic landscape. The chapter will assess the socio-economic conditions in Gaza under the Israeli occupation (which began in 1967) up until the breakout of the First Intifada (erupted in 1987). Such analysis will be

[5] See Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration"; McCauley and Moskalenko, "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways toward Terrorism"; McCauley and Moskalenko, "Understanding Political Radicalization: The Two-Pyramids Model."
[6] See the seminal work of Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism."
[7] See the works of Urdal, "A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence"; Goldstone, "Population and Security: How Demographic Change Can Lead to Violent Conflict."

underpinned by the assumption that low socio-economic conditions, associated with a young, frustrated generation, may culminate in the breakout of political violence. Chapter 3 continues the examination through the period following the First Intifada, up to the eruption of the Second (in 2000). The transition period going from the Oslo Accords to the outbreak of the Second Intifada is crucial not only for understanding Hamas's emergence as a political actor but also for examining the deterioration in Israel's domestic security. During this time, Hamas, alongside other Palestinian armed groups, initiated an intense suicide bombing campaign, which reached its peak during the Second Intifada. This prompted a significant Israeli response, which included severe restrictions on the movement of goods and people in the Occupied Territories. At this juncture, the chapter will explore how Hamas, especially after the 2005 Israeli unilateral disengagement from the Strip, gradually gained popular support to the point of winning the 2006 legislative elections. The second part of Chapter 3 will examine how living conditions have evolved since Hamas assumed power in 2007 until the present-day (2023), including the impact of periodic conflicts with Israel, the ongoing blockade, and the curtail of civil and political freedoms by Hamas's authoritarian governance.

The fourth and final chapter of this thesis will delve deeper into the other variable that this thesis claims may influence the risk of radicalisation among the youth, i.e., Hamas's proselytising infrastructure centred around the institution of the *dawa*. This analysis will explore how deeply Hamas's framework permeates Gazan society, specifically examining how young people become embedded in this system. Given Hamas's primary focus on attracting youth, this chapter will assess the extent to which these young individuals can still make choices in an environment characterised not only by low socio-economic conditions but also by limited political and economic alternatives. The latter part of Chapter 4 will shift focus to youth agency, exploring how Gaza's youth, despite the pressures and the benefits provided by Hamas, combined with their own experiences of deprivation, can still assert agency. The chapter will conclude by investigating the potential of these young individuals not only as passive followers but also as actors motivated by a desire to seek alternatives to Hamas's authoritarian government, displaying their dissent towards both Israel's as well as Hamas's politics.

The conclusion of this thesis will aim to address the central questions it has posed. The premise is that a young population, subjected to low socio-economic conditions, develops grievances that may contribute to the process of radicalisation. In the case of the Gaza Strip, these

conditions are believed to be largely the result of the combination of Israeli policies and the governance of Hamas which, at the same time, is an organisation that, through its services, offers alternative means of subsistence to the youth. Finally, this thesis will purport to understand whether radicalisation solely amounts to the youth joining Hamas's social, political and military structure, or if it can also take the form of peaceful resistance as an alternative way to express their grievances.

1 Addressing Radicalisation

The following chapter will start by navigating the various problematics that the concept of radicalisation may entail. It will start by exploring the main ambiguities linked to the absence of a standard definition and the consequent potential for the politicisation of the concept.
The central questions guiding the analysis will focus on understanding *how* and *why* individuals radicalise. Studies on radicalisation may examine a wide range of factors – geographical, ideological, cultural – and span multiple academic disciplines. This literature review does not aim to comprehensively cover every contribution, but rather to offer a broad, though necessarily incomplete, overview of the main literature on radicalisation. It is important to highlight that much of the literature referenced in this chapter was produced after 2001, a watershed year for research on radicalisation and terrorism. Indeed, following 9/11 and the onset of the War on Terror, discussions on radicalisation have frequently addressed Islamic terrorism, in particular in and from the Arab world, and the way in which Islam has been interpreted or instrumentalised for violent purposes[8]. As a result, some studies in this review may specifically address Islamic radicalisation and terrorism in Europe and the United States[9].

To understand the process by which individuals radicalise, this chapter will focus on conceptual models that examine the social-psychological mechanisms of radicalisation. Most of the models referenced do not focus on specific regions or particular types of radicalisations (e.g., left-wing or religious extremism). Rather, they emphasise broader universal patterns[10]. Others, take Jihadist radicalisation as a case study[11]. This chapter also addresses the debate regarding radicalisation's endpoints. Specifically, it will examine whether it inevitably results in violence, or if it can remain purely ideological, allowing for non-violent expressions of radical beliefs. Following this discussion, the chapter will introduce the theoretical framework used in this research to explain *why* individuals radicalise. This thesis will adopt a macro-level contextual perspective that delves into how demographic, socio-economic and political hardships, and the grievances stemming from them, can act as catalysts for radicalisation. To further develop this theoretical foundation, the demographic factors that may foster radicalisation processes will be

[8] See Esposito, Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam; Kepel, Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam.
[9] See Sageman, Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century; Alonso et al., "Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism."
[10] See Lygre et al., "Terrorism as a Process: A Critical Review of Moghaddam's 'Staircase to Terrorism'"; McCauley and Moskalenko, "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways toward Terrorism."
[11] See Sageman, Understanding Terrorist Networks; Sageman, "Radicalization of Global Islamist Terrorists"; Baran, "Fighting the War of Ideas."

explored through the lens of political demography. A consistent finding is that the vast majority of individuals who radicalise are young males in their 20s, a pattern observed across different historical eras and regions of the world[12]. In this context, this thesis will rely on youth bulge theories, which suggest that societies with large and rapidly growing cohorts of young people are more prone to political instability. When such societies also face economic, social and political strains, the risk of political violence increases. A significant portion of the literature reviewed that is concerned with the combination of demography, socio-economic hardships, and political violence, focuses on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region[13]. Indeed, these areas, in contrast to advanced Western economies, have entered the demographic transition later, and have thus been or remain highly prone to political violence. Although the literature linking youth bulges, socio-economic hardships, and political violence is extensive, much of it addresses terrorism in a broader sense rather than specifically focusing on radicalisation. Nonetheless, the turn to radicalisation can be understood through two perspectives closely tied to youth bulge theories: greed and grievances. The 'greed' approach considers the opportunity cost of joining an armed group and the possibility to create an alternative source of sustainment through it; the 'grievance' approach emphasises the role of feelings of relative deprivation in motivating individuals to resort to violence or join armed organisations. While demographic factors and socio-economic vulnerabilities alone may not fully account for the shift toward violence, these perspectives provide insights into how the interaction between socio-economic strains and a specific demographic group, within a given socio-economic and political context, can create pathways to radicalisation.

1.1 Definitional Issues

1.1.1 Radicalisation and Political Radicalism

At the beginning of the 2000s, radicalisation was still a relatively new concept, with little effort made to develop a proper conceptual framework around it[14]. Following the 9/11 attacks and, more notably, after the Madrid and London attacks in 2004 and 2005, the discourse around radicalisation became more prominent. Similar to the study of terrorism, it became a priority

[12] See Goldstone, Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World.
[13] See Lia, Globalisation and the Future of Terrorism: Patterns and Predictions.; Giordano, "Youth Bulge Dynamics in the Mediterranean Region: The Geopolitical Implications of Human Capital on Security and Stability."
[14] Neumann, "Introduction", 3; Neumann, "The Trouble with Radicalization.", 273.

for policymakers to not only understand the threat, but also predict when individuals might choose to follow the path of radicalisation[15]. Additionally, discussing the 'root causes of terrorism' was considered politically charged and as way to seemingly justify the killing of civilians[16]. Therefore, to refer to the pathway conductive to terrorism – what Peter Neumann has notably referred to as "what goes on before the bomb goes off"[17] – scholars and policymakers alike began to refer to the idea of 'radicalisation'. However, one of the greatest ambiguities and challenges in conceptualising radicalisation is that the term still lacks a standard, universally accepted definition. Various interpretations of the concept have been offered, and different connotations pertaining to it have been emphasised. Some definitions view radicalisation as a pathway to terrorism[18]; others focus on radicalisation as the process of developing 'extremist beliefs'[19]; others instead frame radicalisation as a process involving political violence[20].

Perhaps the core issue surrounding the definition of radicalisation lies in the meanings and misconceptions of the terms 'radical' and 'radicalism', which refer to both legitimate political perspectives as well as to political ideologies that challenge established social norms[21]. Many scholars have pointed out the ambiguity of the term 'radical'. Rik Coolsaet notes that, up until the early 2000s, the term was used loosely and generically as a synonym for activism, protest, and extremism, before being associated with the path to terrorism[22]. The literature has indeed consistently highlighted that the term 'radical' per se has never really meant 'violent', and the association between 'violence' and radicalism' is a recent one[23]. Historically, the term 'radical' was linked to democratic and republican movements, particularly in the contexts of the French and American revolutions[24]. For instance, in the United States, radicalism is positively associated with the nation's founding principles[25]. However, in retrospect, those revolutionary

[15] McCauley and Moskalenko, "Understanding Political Radicalization: The Two-Pyramids Model.", 205.
[16] Neumann, "Introduction ", 4; Coolsaet, "'Radicalisation' and 'Countering Radicalisation': The Emergence and Expansion of a Contentious Concept.", 41.
[17] Neumann, "Introduction .", 4.
[18] Alonso et al., "Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism", 5; Coolsaet, "'Radicalisation' and 'Countering Radicalisation': The Emergence and Expansion of a Contentious Concept.", 35.
[19] Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories.", 9.
[20] Bosi, Demetriou, and Malthaner, "A Contentious Politics Approach to the Explanation of Radicalization.", 2.
[21] Alonso et al., "Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism.", 5.
[22] Coolsaet, "'Radicalisation' and 'Countering Radicalisation': The Emergence and Expansion of a Contentious Concept.", 35.
[23] Goodwin, "The Causes of Terrorism.", 259.
[24] Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review.", 6.
[25] Neumann, "The Trouble with Radicalization.", 876.

ideas were often condemned as challenges to the established status quo[26]. This illustrates how the concept of "being radical" is context-dependent and has shifted meaning throughout history[27]. This also implies that the significance and the 'degree' of radicalism may vary depending on what is considered to be mainstream within a given society. For example, being radical in non-democracies (i.e., exercising free speech or legitimately questioning the political order) may be different from being radical in a democratic society (where radicalism may amount to advocating fundamental social change). The meaning of radicalism has also evolved across historical periods. In this sense, in the 18th centiry being radical meant supporting democracy and equality, while in the 19th century it became more closely associated with revolutions and violence. Overall, being radical is being 'extremist' as opposed to what is considered to be moderate within a society[28].

Hence, the absence of a standard definition of what constitutes radicalism raises important questions about who has the legitimate authority to define it. Consequently, as Neumann has underlined, those in power can potentially criminalise and target anything they perceive as 'radical' and harmful to society, which could include any form of political dissent[29].

1.1.2 Radicalisation and Terrorism

The ambiguity surrounding the meaning of radicalisation raises a second problematic concerning radicalisation's 'point of arrival'. Many definitions of terrorism adopt the so-called 'radicalisation perspective'[30], which not only identifies radicalisation as the necessary pathway to terrorism, but also terrorism as the natural result of the radicalisation process. This perspective may be problematic. According to it, there is no distinction between ideological and behavioural radicalisation, and thus any kind of radicalisation is the necessary if not sufficient conditions to cause terrorism. Additionally, the term 'terrorism' inherently suffers from definitional issues as well. The debate over the meaning of terrorism is extensive, and although this literature review will not cover the entire discussion, it is worth noting a few key points, as this debate is intertwined with the discourse on radicalisation. Richard Jackson[31] has noted that critical discussions within terrorism research only started to emerge in 2004,

[26] Neumann, 877.
[27] Neumann, 876; Alonso et al., "Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism.", 7.
[28] Sedgwick, "The Concept of Radicalization as a Source of Confusion.", 481.
[29] Neumann, "Introduction .", 8.
[30] Goodwin, "The Causes of Terrorism.", 254.
[31] Jackson, Routledge Handbook of Critical Terrorism Studies, 20.

following Abu Ghraib scandal, which exposed the problematic aspect of counterterrorism as engaged in the War on Terror. This marked the beginning of a new research agenda within Critical Terrorism Studies. Such agenda addresses a wide range of issues[32], yet one of its primary aims is to challenge the traditional and orthodox conceptualisation of terrorism. Like 'radicalisation', the term 'terrorism' is context-dependent. As such, critical scholars (and non) have suggested to look at the history of its meaning. The term 'terror' appeared for the first time during the French Revolution to describe the Jacobin's regime of Robespierre. The words 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' emerged later, in 1794, from the new moderate ruling faction, to describe, in a denigratory sense, the period and the political protagonists of the past regime[33]. It was with this negative connotation that the word was passed on in the 19th century. During the era of nationalist movements known as the Spring of Nations, the 'terrorists' were the radical revolutionaries that were associated with the Jacobins.

Later, the use of the term was reinforced by the violent actions of the European anarchists who, by implementing the concept of 'propaganda by the deed', aimed at provoking a suppressive state reaction that would be trigger the revolution[34]. As Alex Schmid has noted: "By the late 19th century the term terrorist, originally used for those who made unjust mass murder arrests in the name of the state, became more strongly associated with anti-state violence"[35]. In the 20th century, the term underwent a triple transformation: in the first half of the century, the term 'terrorism' was criminalised, losing its earlier political connotation[36] (i.e., no longer associated with being radical and revolutionary). By mid-20th century, scholars began using it to describe the authoritarian regimes' use of terror against their own populations[37]. However, by the end of the 20th century, the discourse around terrorism shifted to a 'us versus them' narrative, framing terrorism as a threat to Western liberal democracies[38]. This discourse was further reinforced after the end of the Cold War and especially in the aftermath of 9/11, exemplified by President Bush's declaration of the War on Terror[39]. The consequences of this narrative have been

[32] Within the main questions tackled there are: the utility of the concept of terrorism; the relation of terrorism to political power; epistemology, ontology and production of knowledge of orthodox terrorism studies; more self-consciousness about the labels, categories and assumptions; state terrorism; exaggeration of the terrorism threat; the problematics posed by counterterrorism and the war on terror; gender perspectives on terrorism. See Jackson; Jackson and Sinclair, Contemporary Debates on Terrorism.

[33] See Benigno, "Terrorism"; Sire, "The Concept of Terrorism and Historical Time: Comparing 9/11 to the Terreur."

[34] See Benigno, "Terrorism.", 180.

[35] Schmid, "The Problems of Defining Terrorism.", 13.

[36] Sire, "The Concept of Terrorism and Historical Time: Comparing 9/11 to the Terreur.", 465.

[37] Wilkinson, "Is Terrorism Still a Useful Analytical Term or Should It Be Abandoned? YES: The Utility of the Concept of Terrorism.", 13.

[38] See Benigno, "Terrorism", 176.

[39] Bush, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People."

twofold: first, the fight against terrorism became an ideological battle in which violence was morally justified. Secondly, terrorism became synonymous with Islamic fundamentalism and the Muslim world more generally[40]. This narrow focus has not solely perpetuated biases in society and academia but has also revealed how the concept of terrorism has been used by security establishments to overanalyse political Islam and disproportionately target Muslims, while disregarding broader contextual factors that may actually lead to violence[41]. For the purpose of this thesis, the intersection between 'radical' and 'terrorist' is significant, as both terms are used to delegitimise political actors[42]. Thus, radicalisation and terrorism are essentially political concepts. As Neumann has underlined: "Like terrorism, the term 'radicalisation' is considered political and its frequent use – especially by governments and officials – is believed to serve political agendas rather than describe a social phenomenon that can be studied and dealt with in a dispassionate and objective manner"[43]. This observation is crucial because it underscores that the way in which the causes of radicalisation and terrorism are looked for depend on how the two terms are defined. Similarly, the methods used to combat this phenomenon – notably through counter-radicalisation and counterterrorist policies – are shaped by the interpretations given to the. As Coolsaet points out, scholars have often warned about the politicisation of counter-radicalisation methods[44]. Chukwuma and Jarvis note that variations in counter-radicalisation approaches depend on how the 'radicalisation problem' is produced[45]. While broad approaches tend to address sets of ideas perceived a radical, narrower approaches generally predict that radical ideas inevitably lead to violence, often resulting in interventionist policies[46]. Both approaches have their own challenges. In the first case, the central question concerns who has the legitimacy to decide what is radical, as this can never be entirely objective[47]; in the second case, counter-radicalisation often overlaps with counterterrorist interventions, involving the use of force by state security actors.

[40] Benigno, "Terrorism", 157,
[41] See Sedgwick, "The Concept of Radicalization as a Source of Confusion", 481; Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review.", 19.
[42] See Jackson, Smyth, and Gunning, "Critical Terrorism Studies: Framing a New Research Agenda."
[43] Neumann, "The Trouble with Radicalization.", 878.
[44] Coolsaet, "'Radicalisation' and 'Countering Radicalisation': The Emergence and Expansion of a Contentious Concept.", 34.
[45] Chukwuma and Jarvis, "Countering Violence or Ideas? The Politics of Counter-Radicalisation.", 247.
[46] Chukwuma and Jarvis, 249.
[47] Chukwuma and Jarvis, 256.

1.1.2.1 Terrorism in this thesis

Given that terrorism is an inherently political concept, this thesis will avoid using the term. Rather, when discussing radicalisation and its potential outcomes, reference will be made to the broader realm of political violence – as conceptualised by Bosi, Demetriou and Malthaner – which emerges from "broader social, political and cultural conflicts"[48]. The focus will thus be on the contextualisation of political violence, referring to 'violent' or 'armed groups' rather than 'terrorist groups'. However, this does not disregard the seriousness of deliberate attacks on civilians which obviously need to be condemned. Nonetheless, since the core issue is not a moral one (i.e., 'which violence is legitimate or acceptable?') but rather a strictly practical one (i.e. 'what may cause this violence?'), then the concept of terrorism has little to offer to the analysis, apart from unnecessary politicisation of the question.

1.2 How people radicalise – Conceptual Models

1.2.1 Conceptual Models

Since the early 2000s, different conceptuals models have been created to try to make sense of radicalisation processes. Despite being different from each other, most of these frameworks abide to the idea that 'radicalisation is not something that happens overnight[49], but rather a process in which the individual 'becomes' radicalised. The models that these thisis will explore mainly pertain to the field of social psychology, and aim at explaining radicalisation by combining individual and social attitudinal elements.

One of the landmark models coming from social psychology is Moghaddam's staircase to terrorism [50]. In developing such model, the scholar does not refer to a precise strain of radicalisation and terrorism, nor to a specific geographical area. Rather, he develops a broader pattern concerning individual psychological processes. According to this model, six floors describe the pathway towards terrorism. The ground floor represents relative feelings of deprivation; individuals then may move to the second floor to try to address what they have perceived as unfair treatment. At this juncture, they may be encouraged by their leaders to

[48] Bosi, Demetriou, and Malthaner, "A Contentious Politics Approach to the Explanation of Radicalization.", 2.
[49] Neumann, "The Trouble with Radicalization.", 874.
[50] Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration."

direct their resentment towards an enemy. The third floor concerns the moral engagement that justifies hostility towards the outgroup, which then results in joining an organisation on the fourth floor. The fifth floor (which only a few people reach, as the majority remains at the ground floor) represents indoctrination preceding the terrorist act, when the outgroup is dehumanised and becomes the legitimate target of violence. Individuals can remain on lower floors depending on their perception of the existing possibilities to solve their grievances. As individuals climb the staircase, they see fewer choices for them, and the only final option is the destruction of oneself and/or the others[51]. Perhaps, one of the criticisms addressing this model is that terrorism is seen as a rational choice against a limited set of alternatives of action on each different stage[52].

Another milestone scheme explaining the radicalisation process is McCauley and Moskalenko's pyramid model[53]. Similar to Moghaddam, the two scholars do not refer to a particular case study, but rather elaborate a model through which the psycho-social mechanisms leading to radicalisation can be explained. More specifically, they conceptualise political radicalisation as a process involving twelve mechanisms: starting from the individual level, the subsequent levels see an increase of extremity of beliefs, feelings and behaviour in support of intergroup conflict and violence[54]. Then, participation in progressively more radical acts culminate in terrorism. The levels are not thought as stages to be taken separately, but rather as mutually reinforcing mechanism[55]. Thus, not being a stairway model, individuals can skip levels but that it remains a gradual process. The two authors have furtherly developed a model illustrating how it is possible to radicalise solely at the individual level, to make sense of lone wolf terrorism[56].

Marc Sageman's four stage model shall also be mentioned[57]. However, differently from the previous scholars, Sageman examines the radicalisation into Al-Qaeda of young Western-born individuals. The scholar expands the empirical evidence started in 2004[58], by analysing a set

[51] See Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration."
[52] See Lygre et al., "Terrorism as a Process: A Critical Review of Moghaddam's 'Staircase to Terrorism.'"
[53] McCauley and Moskalenko, "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways toward Terrorism."
[54] McCauley and Moskalenko.
[55] McCauley and Moskalenko, 429.
[56] See McCauley and Moskalenko, "Toward a Profile of Lone Wolf Terrorists: What Moves an Individual From Radical Opinion to Radical Action."
[57] Sageman, "Radicalization of Global Islamist Terrorists"; Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*.
[58] See Sageman, Understanding Terrorist Networks.

of 'homegrown wannabe terrorists'[59], who convert to Islam to make sense of their lives and develop strong collective identity. In this context, he pictures radicalisation as consisting of four factors coming together to mobilise Muslims in Western countries towards violence. He underlines that these four factors are not stages in a process, nor they occur sequentially, but they simply are recurrent phases[60]. This dynamic involves moral outrage (as a reaction to moral violations) which is then interpreted in a certain way that fosters radicalisation. The common interpretation, says Sageman, is a war against Islam[61]. What follows is resonance with personal experiences, which brings in the sense of community, and then mobilisation through networks, both face-to-face and online[62]. In this phase, the group acts as an 'echo chamber' which amplify its members' grievances[63].

Randy Borum also has proposed a four-stage model[64], however drawing from a broader empirical sample that did not include only jihadi terrorism but rather a wider range of ideologies and violent extremist groups, to assess whether some common factors exist in the process of radicalisation. He identifies four stages in which grievances and the perception of unfairness may gradually turn into hatred of a target group considered responsible for that injustice. This hatred can eventually then be transformed, for some, into a justification for violence[65].

1.3 Radicalisation's Endpoints

1.3.1 Ideas versus Actions

An important debate around radicalisation is centred on its 'endpoints'. Indeed, scholars have long discussed whether radicalisation inevitably leads to violence, or if it can remain purely ideological. In this sense, the debate has extended to questioning not solely if radical ideas result in radical violent actions, but also whether violent actions necessarily stem from radical beliefs.

[59] Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*, 79.

[60] Sageman, "Radicalization of Global Islamist Terrorists.", 2.
[61] Sageman, Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century, viii.
[62] Sageman, viii.
[63] Sageman, "Radicalization of Global Islamist Terrorists.", 4.
[64] Borum, "Understanding the Terrorist Mindset."
[65] Borum.

Notably, Randy Borum has argued that many individuals holding radical and violent ideas do not eventually engage in terrorism – conversely, a significant part of terrorists may not necessarily be committed to extremist ideologies[66]. In essence, Borum contends that while ideology and actions may be sometimes connected, they are not inevitably linked. Similarly, John Horgan posits that cognitive radicalisation should not be the central focus of radicalisation studies, as such focus creates the wrong assumption according to which violent action is necessarily preceded by extremist beliefs[67].

Peter Neumann, however, argues that separating what he names 'cognitive' from 'behavioural radicalisation' (i.e., extremist ideas versus extremist actions) actually hinders a comprehensive understanding of the radicalisation process[68]. In this sense, while it is true that radical ideologies alone do not fully explain the resort to terrorism, political ideas do play an important role[69]. Overall, Neumann contends that examining the political motivations behind a violent action may reveal why some individuals resort to violence while others do not[70]. At the same time, he underlines that the cognitive radicalisation behind an act of terrorism does not amount to imply that every terrorist is a sophisticated intellectual[71].
Zeyno Baran has offered a similar perspective, picturing radical ideology as a 'conveyor belt' that automatically mobilises the individual toward violent action[72]. He specifically refers to the extremist ideologies of groups affiliated to Al-Qaeda, which are not directly involved in violent action, but that play a critical role in indoctrinanting individuals, thus acting as a conveyor belt towards radicalisation[73].

McCauley and Moskalenko have opposed this perspective and, through their two-pyramids model, they have asserted that radical opinions are separate from radical actions[74]. Notably, in order to critique the 'conveyor belt model', the two scholars have gone a step further to distinguish between activism and radicalism[75]. By interviewing a sample of U.S. and Ukrainian

[66] Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories.", 9.
[67] John Horgan, remarks at START Symposium, 'Lessons learned since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001', Washington DC, 1 Sept., quoted in Neumann, "The Trouble with Radicalization.", 878.
[68] Neumann, 879.
[69] Neumann, 879-880.
[70] Neumann, 881.
[71] Neumann, 882.
[72] Baran, "Fighting the War of Ideas."
[73] Baran, 86.
[74] McCauley and Moskalenko, "Understanding Political Radicalization: The Two-Pyramids Model.", 211.
[75] Moskalenko and McCauley, "Measuring Political Mobilization: The Distinction between Activism and Radicalism."

university students, they examined the willingness to engage in both non-violent political actions and illegal, violent acts. Their findings revealed that while activism and radicalism are related, they remain separate domains[76].

Contending that radicalisation into action requires more than just having extreme beliefs, McCauley – investigating radicalisation of opinion for Muslims in the U.S. – has sought to identify mechanisms of radicalisation that do not stem from radical beliefs[77]. These include factors like personal grievances, love, fear, status seeking, as well as group polarization and isolation[78].

1.4 Why people radicalise – Socio-economic conditions and Demographic Trends

1.4.1 Levels of Analysis

According to Alex P. Schmid[79], the study of root causes of radicalisation (leading to terrorism) can be studied at three levels.

The micro level of analysis is concerned with individual processes of radicalisation, as it may involve the scrutiny of individual feelings of alienation, marginalisation, relative deprivation, humiliation[80]. Studies at the individual level usually include the field of psychology and the role of ideology. Leena Malkki has underlined that in the 1970s, when terrorism studies began to emerge, terrorists were increasingly presented as abnormal and irrational – hence the focus would be on the psychopathological needs of the individual rather than on their socio-political background or objectives[81]. In the 1980s, the attention shifted towards trying to delineate a terrorist 'profile', thus investigating whether the psychological traits of individuals committing such violence stood out compared to the norm[82]. However, it was soon shown that the most outstanding characteristic of terrorists has always been their normality[83]. Since 9/11, even

[76] Moskalenko and McCauley.
[77] McCauley, "Ideas Versus Actions in Relation to Polls of U.S. Muslims."
[78] McCauley, 71.
[79] Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review."
[80] Schmid, 4.
[81] Malkki, "Before 'Radicalisation': Explaining Individual Involvement in Terrorism before Thew Popularisation of the Concept.", 21.
[82] Malkki, 22.
[83] See Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism.", 390.

though individual-level investigations kept receiving much attention, different scholars have pointed out the fallacies of extensively focusing on this approach. Julia Ebner and Harvey Whitehouse have underlined that psychological research on radicalisation has had limited success in establishing the underlying causes of this phenomenon, making it difficult to establish effective methods of preventing or managing them[84]; Neumann has stated that "human beings do not exist in a vacuum", hence adopting such a narrow psychological approach would mean making a mistake in not considering the social, political and cultural environment in which decision and actions are made[85]. On the same path, Schmid has delineated how such micro-level and individual-centred approach deflects attention from the role of a wider spectrum of factors[86]. McCauley & Moskalenko also have joined the criticisms by highlighting that radicalisation may need to be understood as a result of intergroup conflicts rather than the fluctuations of individual psychology[87].

This means that the focus shall include, or at least integrate, the meso-level (group dynamics, social surroundings) and the macro-level (economic, social and cultural environment).

Meso-level explanations emphasise the wider social surrounding and how this can be supportive or complicit for individuals to radicalise. This supporting, immediate social environment in which violent groups emerge and to which they remain connected is what, building on social movement theory, Malthaner and Waldmann have called 'the radical milieu'[88]. These milieus encompass activist networks that facilitate and influence pathways to joining armed groups. They also serve as environments where individuals adopt specific frameworks of interpretation and values, share objectives and experiences, mutually reinforcing their identities[89]. Additionally, these milieus also provide logistical support[90]. The authors also underline that radical milieus interact with a wider political and social environment, as they are situated in relation to broader movements, religious or ethnic

[84] Ebner and Whitehouse, "Identity and Extremism: Sorting out the Causal Pathways to Radicalisation and Violent Self-Sacrifice."
[85] Neumann, "Introduction .", 4.
[86] Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review.", 3.
[87] McCauley and Moskalenko, "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways toward Terrorism.", 415.
[88] Malthaner and Waldmann, "The Radical Milieu: Conceptualizing the Supportive Social Environment of Terrorist Groups."
[89] Malthaner and Waldmann, 983
[90] Malthaner and Waldmann, 979.

communities, but also state authorities and political opponents[91]. Alongside organisational networks, this approach also highlights the importance of social ties in creating a sense of community for those who join. With his 'bunch of guys theory' Sageman, analysing how mostly young and male individuals come to be affiliated with al-Qaeda, gave life to a social-network model of radicalisation[92]. Stressing the importance of social ties and small groups into the radicalisation process, the scholar demonstrated that friendship and kinship can explain individual trajectories towards terrorist action. Members of the group do not have a single profile but might share a common experience which brings them together in their sense of deprivation and loneliness[93]. It has thus emerged that group dynamics do play an important role in attracting new young recruits, as they can fulfil desires such as search for community as much as validation from peers[94].

When it comes to the macro-level perspective, the focus shifts on broader contextual elements. This idea suggests that individual involvement in terrorism occurs within an environment where socio-economic, political factors must be considered, as they can possibly influence decisions and actions[95]. Schmid assesses that this third level of analysis also involves the role of government and society and their relationship with minorities, whose members may at times clash against the same society that hosts them[96]. Back in the 1980s, the importance of considering the socio-economic and political environment was already highlighted. In her book, *The Causes of Terrorism,* Martha Crenshaw delivers a comprehensive summary of how the environment operates to facilitate the process that guide a person towards violence[97]. The scholar provides a wide empirical basis, drawing examples from diverse armed groups, including European anarchist terrorism of the 1980s, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the Jewish Irgun, the Algerian Front de Libération National (FLN), and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). In her study, she highlights the importance of the setting, which constitutes the broader political, social and economic background conditions that may make terrorism more likely to occur in some contexts rather than others[98]. This "situational

[91] Malthaner and Waldmann,983.
[92] See Sageman, Understanding Terror Networks.
[93] See Sageman.
[94] Alonso et al., "Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism.", 12.
[95] Neumann, "Introduction.", 4.
[96] Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review.", 4.
[97] Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism."
[98] Crenshaw, 380.

variable"[99] is crucial because the settings for terrorism include preconditions and precipitants. Preconditions are long-term factors that create opportunities and inspire terrorism; precipitants are immediate causes that directly precede terrorist acts[100], which Crenshaw recognises as including tangible socio-economic and political grievances.

Overall, one effective way to understand radicalisation processes is by contextualising them – recognising their emergence from broader environments as well as from the individual micro-level motivations and tendencies[101]. In this framework, the interaction between the so-called 'pull and push factors' can provide an explanation as to how these levels connect. Indeed, it is important to note that push and pull factors do not operate in isolation, but they interact, with individuals maintaining agency in how they navigate and respond to these influences[102]. On one hand, push factors can be identified at the macro-meso level, while pull factors tend to represent personal feelings and experiences at the micro one. Indeed, if in the first case the attention is on society, economy, and demography, in the second case pull factors are more related to 'existential issues'[103]. Viewed from another angle, push and pull factors influence each other. Push factors can contribute to feelings of deprivation and discrimination[104], while pull factors provide opportunities to alleviate the hardships provoked by these unfulfilled needs[105]. For example, push factors might spark individual grievances tied to the collective strains of a group, with which the individual may identify, potentially driving them toward terrorism[106].

Schmid has argued that there is no single cause of radicalisation, but rather a mix of "internal and external pull and push factors" that can both lead to the radicalisation of the single individual or even of entire groups scale[107]. Nonetheless, we should be aware that these lists

[99] Crenshaw, 380.
[100] Crenshaw, 383.
[101] Bosi, Demetriou, and Malthaner, "A Contentious Politics Approach to the Explanation of Radicalization.", 5.
[102] Cherney et al., "The Push and Pull of Radicalization and Extremist Disengagement: The Application of Criminological Theory to Indonesian and Australian Cases of Radicalization.", 409.
[103] Cherney et al., 411.
[104] de Roy van Zuijdewijn, "Radicalisation of 'Foreign Fighters.'", 237.
[105] Chevrier, "Exploring the Connections Between Poverty, Lack of Economic Opportunity, and Violent Extremism in Sub-Saharan Africa.", 14.
[106] See Agnew, "A General Strain Theory of Terrorism."
[107] Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review.", 5.

are not fixed nor exhaustive, and that in general the push and pull factor model is still regarded an underdeveloped framework[108].

1.4.2 Socio-economic Hardships – the Link with Radicalisation

This section will explore the extent to which structural macro socio-economic factors can explain radicalisation processes. Borrowing from Fahim Nawaz, three school of thought on the relationship between socio-economic hardships and radicalisation can be identified[109], which have been furtherly reorganised into two macro groups: (I) no link and (II) link, within which three subgroups can be found: (Ia) no link between socio-economic hardships and radicalisation; (Ib) no link between socio-economic hardships and radicalisation because it is the wealthy that radicalise; (IIa) direct and indirect links. When talking about 'socio-economic hardships' this chapter refers to a broad category of factors including poverty, unemployment, economic disparity, lack of education, discrimination, social inequality**.**

I. No link

(a) The first school consists of scholars who argue that no relationship exists between radicalisation and socio-economic conditions. For example, Crenshaw ackwoledges the significance of the socio-political environment in driving individuals toward terrorism, but dismisses poverty as a direct cause of violent action[110]. She argues that context is significant not when its characteristics affect the mass population, but rather when it concerns an elite of disaffected individuals who do not necessarily experience material deprivation stemming from that environment, but rather are influenced by their perception of such conditions[111]. Donatella della Porta dismisses explanations of violence as an effect of economic, social or political conditions as they are unable to explain the behaviour of small political organizations[112]. Ansel Rink and Kunaal Sharma, focusing on Muslim-Christian tensions in Kenya, have found that radicalisation, at the individual level, is largely unaffected by macro-level influences, assessing that there is no evidence that economic and political marginalisation have an impact. However, there is room for meso-level explanations (concerning religiosity and exposure to radical

[108] Cherney et al., "The Push and Pull of Radicalization and Extremist Disengagement: The Application of Criminological Theory to Indonesian and Australian Cases of Radicalization.", 408.
[109] Nawaz, "Socioeconomic Hardships, Religiosity, and Radicalization: A Non-Linear Exploration."
[110] Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism."
[111] Crenshaw, 384.
[112] della Porta, *Political Violence and the State*.

networks) to be a valid predictor for radicalisation[113]. Investigating on militant politics in Pakistan, Blair et al. found that poverty, especially in violent urban districts, tend to expose individuals to militant violence and thus increases sentiments of aversion towards the groups perpetrating it[114].

(b) On the other end of the spectrum are scholars who not only argue that there is no direct link between socioeconomic hardships and radicalisation, but also claim that wealthier, educated individuals are more likely to radicalise and engage in violence. As early as 1981, Crenshaw pointed out that "many terrorists today are young, well-educated, and middle class in background", referring to that elite of disaffected students with prior political experience who were frustrated with society and motivated to carry out revolutionary acts[115]. Nasra Hassan, relying on interviews with 250 terrorists and their associates, similarly reported that none of them was extremely poor or uneducated; instead, many came from a middle class background and held jobs[116]. Empirical research has further explored the profile of terrorists to test this hypothesis. In their seminal work on the relationship between poverty, low education and participation in terrorist activity, Krueger and Maleckova, examined biographical data belonging to 129 deceased Hezbollah members and found a positive correlation between being a member of the organisation and having both an above-poverty standard of living, as well as possessing secondary or higher education[117]. Similarly, Claude Berrebi, scrutinising data of deceased males from Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, found that both higher education and a better standard of living were positively associated with higher participation in both organisations[118]. Berrebi has suggested that the reasons why higher education could lead to terrorist acts are various, such as exposure to educational systems that promote religious or political ideologies, enhanced reasoning skills that make people more susceptible to moral and religious justifications for violence, and the role of education in fostering social and civic engagement[119]. In the same way, wealth can play a role in enlistment and recruitment as these organisations' leaders may choose between those recruits who can invest, with their personal capital, in the logistic and material support of the organisation[120]. Sageman, in his empirical

[113] Rink and Sharma, "The Determinants of Religious Radicalization: Evidence from Kenya."
[114] Blair et al., "Poverty and Support for Militant Politics: Evidence from Pakistan."
[115] Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism.", 384.
[116] Hassan, "An Arsenal of Believers."
[117] Krueger and Maleckova, "Education, Poverty, and Terrorism: Is There a Casual Connection?"
[118] Berrebi, "Evidence about the Link Between Education, Poverty and Terrorism among Palestinians."
[119] Berrebi, 7-8.
[120] Berrebi, 9.

analysis of 500 members of the Global Salafi Jihad, also found that the first wave of al-Qaeda members was made of largely educated men coming from a solid middle-class background[121]. However, as underlined by Berrebi, much of these research's focus has been on the leaders of such organisations, and has thus been quite unrepresentative, as it is possible to anticipate that the educational levels and wealth of any complex organisation's leader will surpass that of its members[122]. It may be perhaps useful to shift the analysis on those who are recruited, those at the organisation's lower level, who often comprise fragile, young people.

II. Links
(a) direct and indirect links

Various scholars have argued that the existing literature on the relationship between socio-economic hardships and radicalisation leading to violence lacks strong empirical evidence and has thus been inconclusive[123]. Chevrier has argued that, when analysing recruitment, the role of economic factors like poverty and lack of opportunities is often downplayed, largely because only a small fraction of those facing such hardships resort to violence[124]. Moreover, extremist groups also vary considerably in their origins and characteristics, and focusing too narrowly on socio-economic conditions risks overlooking important pull factors, such as the desire for group belonging and identity[125]

Some studies analysing this correlation have built on the assumption that a link between socio-economic strains and violent actions exists, because individuals who are poor might have less at stake, and thus may engage in riskier behaviours, including self-destructive actions like suicide terrorism[126]. However, while poverty and, more in general, socio-economic factors alone may not directly explain why individuals turn to violence, harsh conditions can act as catalysers in the environment in which radicalisation takes place. Ethan Bueno De Mesquita has posited that terrorist are not poor neither ignorant, but paradoxically, low economic opportunities and declining economies are positively correlated with terrorism. His hypothesis is that decreased economic opportunities, when interacting with ideology and opposition to

[121] Sageman, Understanding Terrorist Networks, 190.
[122] Berrebi, "Evidence about the Link Between Education, Poverty and Terrorism among Palestinians.", 4.
[123] Graff, "Poverty, Development, and Violent Extremism in Weak States", 44; Piazza, "Poverty, Minority Economic Discrimination, and Domestic Terrorism.", 339.
[124] Chevrier, "Exploring the Connections Between Poverty, Lack of Economic Opportunity, and Violent Extremism in Sub-Saharan Africa.", 3.
[125] Chevrier, 3.
[126] Berrebi, "Evidence about the Link Between Education, Poverty and Terrorism among Palestinians.", 1.

government actions, drive both the educated wealthier individuals as well as the poor uneducated ones towards terrorism[127]. Analysing the resurgence of terrorist activities in Yemen, Corine Graff concludes that impoverished weak states represent a perfect environment for terrorism to thrive, as lack of government legitimacy and failure to provide citizens with basic services create grievances that recruiters exploit to their advantage[128]

James Piazza has further argued that countries where minority groups face economic discrimination – such as employment discrimination, unequal access to health and education or housing segregation – are more vulnerable to domestic terrorism, thus recognizing socio-economic deprivation as a catalyzer for group grievances, which in turn create an environment for terrorist group to recruit[129]. In a complementary perspective, Piazza and Whan Seung Choi have studied that countries in which ethnic populations are excluded from political power also face an increased risk of terrorist casualties[130]. Abel Bennett Holla, investigating Somali Muslims' perception of marginalisation in Kenya, found that marginalised ethnic communities, and especially young people in these communities, may be more susceptible to radicalisation and turn to violent organisations to seek alternative means of sustainment, but also to redress their grievances[131]. Finally, Thomas Hegghammer, in examining the poverty-link terrorism within European jihadism, proposes five mechanisms to explain the relationship between socio-economic hardships and rebellion. These range from rebellion driven by frustration with poverty to rebellion caused by the side effects of poverty, such as an increased exposure to radical networks[132].

1.4.3 Youth Bulge Theories: A Comprehensive Explanation

To complete the theoretical framework, the focus must be directed towards political demography, specifically youth bulge theories, which suggest that when the age structure of a population is characterised by the presence of a large youth cohort, the risk of political violence in that society increases. Before proceeding, a definition of 'youth bulge' should be given. Henrik Urdal, one of the leading scholars on the matter, has defined youth bulges as "large

[127] De Mesquita, "The Quality of Terror."
[128] Graff, "Poverty, Development, and Violent Extremism in Weak States.", 47.
[129] Piazza, "Poverty, Minority Economic Discrimination, and Domestic Terrorism."
[130] Choi and Piazza, "Ethnic Groups, Political Exclusion and Domestic Terrorism."
[131] Holla, "Marginalization of Ethnic Communities and the Rise in Radicalization."
[132] Hegghammer, "Revisiting the Poverty-Terrorism Link in European Jihadism.", 11.

cohorts in the ages 15-24 relative to the total adult population"[133]; Jack Goldstone refers to the phenomenon as "an unusually high proportion of youth 15 to 24 relative to the total adult population"[134]. A youth bulge has furtherly been defined as that fraction of young adults aged 15 to 29 within a country's total working age population, aged 15 to 64[135]. David Lam also has underlined that youth bulges can be intended as the proportion of young people in the working age population, typically measured as the ratio of the population ages 15-24 to the population ages 15-64[136]. From a technical demographic perspective, the youth bulge refers to the swelling of the youth section of a population's age pyramid, a phenomenon notably occyrring between the second and the third stage of the demographic transition. In this transitional phase, mortality rates shrink simultaneously with birth rates, while life expectancy at birth increases[137]. The literature on youth bulge theories often begin their analysis at this demographic moment, predicting that countries with a large pool of young people in the working age population are particulalry subjected to instability and conflict[138].

Criticisms of youth bulge theories argue that demographic changes alone are insufficient to explain the onset of political violence, implying the importance that socio-economic factors hold in increasing the probability of conflict. In this sense, while population growth and density alone do not predict risks of political violence, factors such as rapid increases in education, youth unemployment, rapid urbanisation, uneven population growth rates between different ethnic communities as well as environmental stress may appear to increase the risk of violent internal conflict[139]. These condition can lead to prolonged dependency ratios and heightened frustrations among young people, eager to acquire social status[140]. Notably, Moller and Goldstone have associated moments of political upheavals, in 18th and 19th century Europe,

[133] Urdal, "A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence.", 608.
[134] Goldstone, "Population and Security: How Demographic Change Can Lead to Violent Conflict.", 11.
[135] Cincotta and Mesquida, "Authoritarianism as a Form of Sustained Low-Intensity Civil Conflict: Does Age Structure Provide Insights into the Democratic Transition?"; Cincotta and Doces, "The Age-Structural Maturity Thesis: The Impact of the Youth Bulge on the Advent and Stability of Liberal Democracy"; Cincotta, "Half a Chance: Youth Bulges and Transitions to Liberal."
[136] Lam, "Youth Bulges and Youth Unemployment.", 3.
[137] See Weeks, "Demographic Perspectives"; Newbold, Population Geography: Tools and Issues.
[138] Giordano, "Youth Bulge Dynamics in the Mediterranean Region: The Geopolitical Implications of Human Capital on Security and Stability.", 109.
[139] See Cincotta, "Half a Chance: Youth Bulges and Transitions to Liberal"; Cincotta, "Who's Next? Age Structure and the Prospects of Democracy and Conflict in North Africa and the Middle East"; Cincotta, "The Age-Structural Theory of State Behavior"; Urdal, "A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence"; Giordano, "Youth Bulge Dynamics in the Mediterranean Region: The Geopolitical Implications of Human Capital on Security and Stability."; Goldstone, "Population and Security: How Demographic Change Can Lead to Violent Conflict."
[140] Cincotta and Mesquida, "Authoritarianism as a Form of Sustained Low-Intensity Civil Conflict: Does Age Structure Provide Insights into the Democratic Transition?", 3.

to changing fertility rates and age structures combined with economic hardships like youth unemployment[141]. Moller has associated the rise of Nazism in 1930s Germany with the largest German youth cohort struggling with economic depression[142]. Goldstone has furtherly found that youth played a significant role in the 20th century revolutions in developing countries[143]. Hence, it is no surprise that, between 1970 and 1999, according to a report by Population Action International, 80% of civil conflicts took place in countries where at least 60% of the population was under the age of thirty[144].

The MENA region offers examples of how youth bulge dynamics influence a country's stability. Alfonso Giordano has emphasised the role of demohraphic factors in both the onset and conclusion of the Lebanese Civil War. He has noted that the large proportion of young males in the 1970s contributed to the outbreak of the conflict. Similarly, the end of hostilities by the 1990s can be attributed to the significant decline in the number of young males by that time, as Lebanese women has substantially reduced their birth rates[145]. The same demographic logic can be applied to the 1979 Iranian Revolution, where youth played a crucial role in driving the uprising[146]. Some scholars have also made a differentiation between the role of youth bulges in ethnic versus non-ethnic conflicts. Yair and Miodownik found that youth bulges only affect non-ethnic conflicts by increasing economic and educational demands in opportunity-scarce society, while ethnic civil wars tend to be driven by political and cultural motivations[147]. Youth bulge theories have been also used to predict regime stability and regime transitions. Notably, Richard Cincotta, in collaboration with John Doces and Christian Mesquida, has theorised – through cross-country trends analysis – that one of the impediments to liberal regimes' transition is the political vulnerability associated with large proportions of young adults [148]. According to this theory, liberal democracy is easier to achieve when youth bulges dissipate.

[141] Moller, "Youth as a Force in the Modern World"; Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World*; Goldstone, "Population and Security: How Demographic Change Can Lead to Violent Conflict."
[142] Moller, "Youth as a Force in the Modern World.", 240-244.
[143] Goldstone, "Population and Security: How Demographic Change Can Lead to Violent Conflict."
[144] Beehner, "The Effects of 'Youth Bulge' on Civil Conflicts."
[145] Giordano, "Youth Bulge Dynamics in the Mediterranean Region: The Geopolitical Implications of Human Capital on Security and Stability.", 111.
[146] Giordano, "Téhéran, Démographie et Géopolitique: Le Rôle Des Jeunes Générations."
[147] Yair and Miodownik, "Youth Bulge and Civil War: Why acountry's Share of Young Adults Only Non-Ethnic Wars."
[148] See Cincotta, "Half a Chance: Youth Bulges and Transitions to Liberal"; Cincotta, "Who's Next? Age Structure and the Prospects of Democracy and Conflict in North Africa and the Middle East"; Cincotta, "The Age-Structural Theory of State Behavior"; Cincotta and Doces, "The Age-Structural Maturity Thesis: The Impact of the Youth Bulge on the Advent and Stability of Liberal Democracy"; Cincotta and Mesquida, "Authoritarianism as a Form of Sustained Low-Intensity Civil Conflict: Does Age Structure Provide Insights into the Democratic Transition?"

Mesquida and Wiener have suggested sthat the relative number of young males in a population is a a key factor in explaining collective aggression, alongside the impact caused by feelings of relative deprivation and social inequality[149]. In general, it has been demonstrated that young men in particular tend to be more easily mobilised and recruited, as they generally are more vulnerable to new ideologies, challenge old forms of authority, they are susceptible to peer approval and may have risk-taking tendencies[150].

It is however important not to be deterministic. Indeed, periods of demographic transitions enter a second stage, where the number of children declines but the population remains young, with over 65% of the population being economically active[151]. This results in a bulge in the middle-age section of the population, which represents a demographic window of opportunity, provided that proper state policies concerning education, health and economy are implemented[152]. Moreover, it is important to remind that the effects of youth bulges are temporary, with political violence often declining with reduced dependency ratios[153]. A study involving attitudes towards violence of over 30.000 individuals from 27 developing countries, found that while radicalisation tends to increase in early life-stages and peaks around the age of 33, it generally declines as individuals grow older, with a negative correlation between age and radicalition[154].

1.4.3.1 Youth's Greed and Grievances

This thesis will consider those youth bulge theories focusing on how the grievances stemming from socio-economic hardships, as well as the opportunity for alternative sources of sustainnent provided by armed groups, may drive young people towards recruitment. Borrowing from

[149] See Mesquida and Wiener, "Human Collective Aggression: A Behavioral Ecology Perspective"; Mesquida and Wiener, "Male Age Composition and Severity of Conflicts."
[150] Goldstone, "Population and Security: How Demographic Change Can Lead to Violent Conflict", 11; Cincotta and Doces, "The Age-Structural Maturity Thesis: The Impact of the Youth Bulge on the Advent and Stability of Liberal Democracy.", 102.
[151] Giordano, "Youth Bulge Dynamics in the Mediterranean Region: The Geopolitical Implications of Human Capital on Security and Stability.", 121.
[152] Cincotta, "Half a Chance: Youth Bulges and Transitions to Liberal Democracies", 11; Giordano, "Youth Bulge Dynamics in the Mediterranean Region: The Geopolitical Implications of Human Capital on Security and Stability.", 121.
[153] Urdal, "A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence.", 607.
[154] Kiendrebeogo and Ianchovichina, "Who Supports Violent Extremism in Developing Countries? Analysis of Attitudes Based on Value Surveys.", 22-23.

Urdal[155], two macro-level theoretical frameworks will be applied: the grievance (or motive-oriented) and the greed (or opportunity-oriented) perspective.

The grievance perspective finds its origins in relative deprivation theory. Relative deprivation, in general, refers to the absence of opportunities relative to expectations[156]. This entails that, while poverty and unemployment may not alone drive individuals towards violence, it is the perception of deprivation that creates grievances that may lead to radicalisation. The link between relative deprivation and political violence has been explained by Robert Gurr[157]. He has explored the likelihood that feelings of relative deprivation may trigger a frustration-aggression mechanism found at the basis of political violent behaviour. Although frustration does not always lead to violence, the longer individuals experience frustration due to relative deprivation, the more the probability that such frustration will eventually lead to violence increases[158]. Martha Crenshaw underwent a complementary reasoning. She argued that it is not only the concrete material injustice that create grievances (i.e., real deprivation) but also the individual's own perception of injustice[159]. In relation to the grievance perspective Henrik Urdal has identified that the motives for committing political violence may be economic (poverty, inequality, economic downturns, unemployment) or political (lack of democracy and minority grievances like absence of representation or self-governance), but may also regard the increase in education as well as in urbanisation[160]. Another significant motive for the frustration-aggression mechanism might be the feeling of failed adulthood and masculinity, which in turn creates a sense of humiliation and exclusion while also exacerbating tensions with older elites[161]. This is especially evident in Africa and the Middle East, where young people frequently face challenges in achieving social recognition as adults[162].

The opportunity literature, originating from economic theory, emphasises the structural conditions that enable group rebellion against a government[163]. These structural and contextual opportunities can be harnessed by both recruiters as well as recruits, due to the low opportunity cost of joining a rebellion. In general, the opportunity perspective holds that rebellion is

[155] Urdal, "A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence.",
[156] Taşpinar, "Fighting Radicalism, Not 'Terrorism': Root Causes of an International Actor Redefined.", 78.
[157] Gurr, Why Men Rebel.
[158] Gurr, 223.
[159] Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism.", 383.
[160] Urdal, "A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence,", 609; Urdal, "A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence,".
[161] Sommers, "Youth and the Field of Countering Violent Extremism.", 5.
[162] Sommers, 5.
[163] Urdal, "A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence,", 609.

feasible when the potential gain form joining is higher than the expected costs, which in turn are very low[164]. Moreover, on the side of the recruiters, large youth cohorts facing scarce economic opportunities may also reduce recruitment costs. In this respect, Paul Collier has suggested that the proportion of young men between 15 and 24 is significant for the feasibility of rebellion, as those facing poverty may be inclined to join to pursue alternative income-earning opportunities[165]. This may be explained by the fact that increases in relative cohort size, flooding the labor market and exacerbating youth unemployment, result in a reduction of male relative income, and an increase the overall supply of cheap rebel labor[166].

As Urdal has suggested, the differences between the two perspectives shall not be overstated[167]. Indeed, while none of them is sufficient for explaining the eruption of political violence, the socio-economic and political factors that generate grievances and lead individuals to turn to violence can simultaneously be exploited and fuelled by armed groups, furtherly contributing to political conflict.

Drawing from the explored literature, three key factors that increase the likelihood of youth radicalisation and recruitment into armed organisations can be identified: youth unemployment, rise in education and political grievances.

1.4.3.1.1 Youth Unemployment and Rise in Education in Societies with Limited Opportunities

First and foremost, it is essential to understand the impact that a large proportion of young adults in the working age population may have on youth unemployment. Urdal has underlined that when the labour market is unable to absorb an unexpected influx of young people seeking a job, the result will be a large class of unemployed and frustrated youth[168]. Hence, high youth unemployment creates a disenchanted group of young people that is more vulnerable to recruitment by armed organisation, as they may seek social and economic validation through illegal means[169]. As Michelle Gavin, Senior Fellow for Africa Studies at the Foreign Relations Council, has noted: "If you have no other options and not much else going on, the opportunity cost of joining an armed movement may be low"[170]. Analysing a cross-country panel database,

[164] Urdal, 609.
[165] Collier, "Doing Well out of War: An Economic Perspective.", 92.
[166] Urdal, "A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence,", 610.
[167] Urdal, 610.
[168] Urdal, 611.
[169] Beehner, "The Effects of 'Youth Bulge' on Civil Conflicts."
[170] Beehner.

Adelaja and George found that there is a positive relationship between youth unemployment and domestic terrorism in regions with hugh youth population growth, such as parts of Asia, Middle East and Africa, where labour markets have been unable to fully absorb young adults, and where armed groups enjoy from a large recruitment pool[171]. However, this relation is conditioned by factors such as corruption, government ineffectiveness and absence of the rule of law[172]. The situation becomes more explosive when societies with scarce economic opportunities experience an expansion in higher education. Indeed, when the number of educated young people surpasses available jobs opportunities, frustration and dissatisfaction due to widespread unemployment can grow[173]. Brynjar Lia has argued that the significant expansion of higher education in numerous Middle Eastern countries has resulted in a surplus of educated young people facing structural unemployment, a combination that increases the likelihood of radicalisation and recruitment by militant groups[174]. Urdal substantiates this finding by pointing out that the interaction of youth bulges with economic decline and expansion in higher education appears to increase the risk of terrorism[175]. In this perspective, Benmelech, Berrebi, and Klor, analysing the universe of Palestinian suicide terrorism, found that poor economic conditions, in particular high level of unemployment, allow armed organisation to recruit educated individuals to participate in terrorist attacks[176].

1.4.3.1.2 Political Motives

Political grievances encompass a wide array of motives. A part of the literature has focused on the outbreak of political conflict and domestic terrorism as consequences of ethnoreligious minority's marginalisation, discrimination, and political exclusion[177]. However, the likelihood of political conflicts erupting may be also infouenced by the presence of significant youth cohorts within a society. Ted Robert Gurr has analysed the interaction between group marginalisation and the emergence of political violence[178]. He has found that collective disadvantages – such as the lack of state recognition and political status, as well as group discrimination, coupled with state repression and expansion – can unite minority groups[179].

[171] Adelaja and George, "Is Youth Unemployment Related to Domestic Terrorism?"
[172] Adelaja and George.
[173] Goldstone, "Population and Security: How Demographic Change Can Lead to Violent Conflict.", 10.
[174] Lia, Globalisation and the Future of Terrorism: Patterns and Predictions, 145-146.
[175] Urdal, "A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence", 607.
[176] Benmelech, Berrebi, and Klor, "Economic Conditions and the Quality of Suicide Terrorism."
[177] See Piazza, "Poverty, Minority Economic Discrimination, and Domestic Terrorism"; Choi and Piazza, "Ethnic Groups, Political Exclusion and Domestic Terrorism."
[178] Gurr, "Why Minorities Rebel: A Global Analysis of Communal Mobilization and Conflict since 1945."
[179] Gurr.

These groups, united by their grievances, are more likely to mobilise to demand political rights. Political violence can emerge under specific conditions, one being the the "demographic stress" of marginalised groups, including factors like high birth rates, poor public health conditions and land scarcity[180]. Cincotta has investigated the relationship between countries with 'persistent minority youth bulges' – youthful, political dissonant minority segregated within a country that has a more adult population – and the risk of civil or ethnoreligious conflict[181]. The scholar suggests that the demographic imbalance often arises from the socio-ecomomic and political marginalisation of that minority at the hands of the state. As marginalisation leads to lower development levels, minority groups tend to maintain traditional gender roles and higher fertility rates. Additionally, the unwillingness to integrate these minority communities strenghtens radical political organsations, who exploit the situation by providing services and governance[182]. It is possible that, in ethnonationalist conflicts, demography can serve as a strategic tool. As Giordano highlights, in conflicts involving civilians the weaker side's population frequently exhibits higher fertility late – a situation clearly exemplified by the Palestinian youth bulge as well as by the imbalance between the Turkish and Kurdish ferility rates[183].

The demand for democracy and political participation can also act as a catalyst for conflicts in youth-bulge societies. For example, the motive-oriented literature argues that the absence of political rights increases the probability of political violence[184]. In this context, Al-Jabri et al., have contened that in countries lacking democratic institutions, such as those belonging to the MENA region, youth discontent is often expressed through protests rather than through political channels[185].

Overall, this analysis has highlighted how the combination of youthful populations, limited economic opportunities and rising educational levels, compounded by lack of political rights, can create a fertile ground for political violence to erupt. In such circumstanced, the youth may not only seek to address their grievances but also search for alternative means of sustainment.

[180] Gurr, 173.
[181] Cincotta, "Minority Youth Bulges and the Future of Intrastate Conflict."
[182] Cincotta.
[183] Giordano, "Youth Bulge Dynamics in the Mediterranean Region: The Geopolitical Implications of Human Capital on Security and Stability.", 112.
[184] See Urdal, "A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence,", 613.
[185] Al-Jabri et al., "The Role of Youth Bulge on Political Instability: Cross-Country Evidence."

This dual motivation may drive young people to join armed organisations, as the latter can offer both an opportunity to readdress perceived injustices as well as a source of income.

1.5 Radicalisation in this thesis

This thesis will investigate radicalisation as a dynamic, multifaceted process that juxtaposes the individual against a precise setting. This setting can be shaped by demographic and socio-economic factors which are simultaneously at play while mutually reinforcing each other. The grievances stemming from the socio-economic hardships created by the setting will be understood as catalysers of the radicalisation process.

This thesis will analyse the risk of radicalisation for the youth in the Gaza Strip. Three are the variables that will be considered to exacerbate the risk of radicalisation: (1) the overwhelmingly young population; (2) the presence of Hamas, an armed group which authoritatively governs the Gaza Strip while also providing social-welfare; (3) the presence of Israel, who is not directly in charge of the population by adopts policies that may have a deteriorating impact on the socio-economic and humanitarian situation.

This thesis will not presume that radicalisation has a definite endpoint nor that it follows a standard process. Consequently, two assumptions will guide the research:

(a) Radicalisation may not always be driven by a desire to achieve a political goal. While young people may join armed groups that declare a political goal, their motivations may primarily stem from the necessity to secure a means of sustainment and/or the desire to redress their grievances. This assumption aligns with the greed and grievance perspectives.

(b) Radicalisation may not necessarily amount to joining armed groups. Young people may indeed redress and display their grievances through alternative peaceful means, while also pursuing political objectives. This assumption aligns with the grievance perspective.

This thesis, we will not touch upon individuals who radicalise and commit violent actions alone, such as lone wolves. Moreover, it recognises that the role that ideology and religion play in the radicalisation process shall not be disregarded. In the case of Gaza, an Islamist militant group like Hamas governs, the role that extremist interpretations of Islam may have in the

radicalisation of young people can be a topic of discussion. However, while recognising the importance of these factors, this thesis will not touch upon these aspects.

Given these premises, the aim of this thesis will be that of investigating how the large cohort of Gazan youth, strained by harsh economic conditions and extremely low possibilities of social mobility – impacted by both the presence of Hamas and Israel – is exposed to the risk of radicalisation.

1.6 Methodology

1.6.1 Time Periods

To conduct the analysis, four timespans will be identified, each defined by specific events that have impacted the socio-economic conditions of the population.

1922-1967

A brief examination of the 1922-1947 period, marked by the British Mandate in Palestine, is propaedeutic for understanding the roots of the Israeli-Palestinian question, which formally began in 1947, when UN Resolution 181 was passed. The subsequent overview of the 1948-1967 period is crucial for grasping the early history of post-1948 war Gaza, when the Strip's demographics were dramatically reshaped by the enormous influx of refugees. Then, an overview of the short-lived Egyptian administration in Gaza will lead to 1967, year in which the Six-Days War erupted, and Israel began its occupation of Gaza.

1967-1987

The period from 1967 to 1987 encompasses the first two decades of Israeli occupation in Gaza. Analysing these years is crucial for understanding the profound political and socio-economic changes that Gazan society experienced until the outbreak of the First Intifada in 1987. Ending this analysis in 1987 provides an opportunity to examine the potential link between deteriorating socio-economic conditions, a predominantly young population, and the rise of political unrest.

1987-2005

A similar approach will be applied to the analysis of the time-span 1987-2005, which includes the First Intifada (1987-1993), the period of the Oslo Accords, the outbreak of the Second Intifada (2000-2005), and Israel's unilateral disengagement from Gaza (2005). During this time, a new variable emerges: the presence of Hamas as an organized armed group, a factor that did not significantly impact the previous periods.

2006-2023

In 2006, Hamas wins the elections and subsequently gains full control of the Strip. Therefore, the period from 2006 to 2023 allows us to explore how the coexistence of Hamas and Israel—which imposed a harsh blockade in 2007—has affected the socio-economic conditions of the population up to the present day.

1.6.2 Measuring Living standards: socioeconomic and demographic indicators

To assess the link between low socio-economic conditions and the risk of youth radicalisation, this thesis will investigate the living standards and the humanitarian conditions of the Gazan population throughout the four time-periods, thus checking for their evolution or deterioration overtime.

To identify the key indicators used to define the level of living conditions, this research will mainly draw from the United Nations (UN) "International Definition and Measurement of Levels of Living"[186](from hereby defined as the 'UN Guide'). Although the UN Guide dates back to 1961, it continues to serve as a relevant analytical framework for several reasons. Subsequent reports and research, produced by both UN agencies and other international organizations such as the World Bank (WB), have consistently utilised the same indicators to measure living standards, highlighting the enduring applicability of these metrics over time. Secondly, the UN Guide holds an inherent universal character, and it is thus not limited to living standards' regional dimensions, which organisations such as the European Union (EU) or the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) may instead develop[187].

[186] United Nations, "International Definition and Measurement of Levels of Living"

[187] For reference, see OECD, "How's Life?: Measuring Well-Being,"; Eurostat, "Quality of Life Indicators-Measuring Quality of Life" Both organisations have produced relevant studies on measurement of quality of life and well-being. Yet, the limitation of these studies may be their circumscription to regional standards which may be representative of Western life style and thus not always adaptable to non-Western countries.

Finally, to reinforce the UN Guide framework, more recent models will also be employed. These are the one provided by the Human Development Index (HDI)[188]created in 1990, and, more specific to our case study, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)'s Critical Humanitarian Indicators for the Gaza Strip[189] (from hereby known as the 'OCHA's Indicators').

The UN guide identifies nine different socio-economic and demographic components that measure living standards, each associated to specific indicators. In Appendix I, the complete list of such components and their associated indicators is provided. For the sake of this thesis, only four of them will be employed, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Components of living levels

Components	Indicators	Definitions
Health	- expectation of life at birth	Life expectancy at birth is the average lifespan a newborn can be expected to live, assuming that age-specific mortality levels remain constant.[190]
	- infant mortality rate	Number of deaths per 1000 live births of children under one year of age[191]
	- crude death rate	Number of deaths per 1000 population (of the respective age group and sex), for the year indicated[192]
Education	- adult literacy rate	% of population, male and female, 15 years old and over, able to read and write[193]
	- total school enrolment ratio	Total enrolment in all schools below the level of higher education as a % ratio to the population aged 5-19 inclusive[194]
	- higher education enrolment ratio	Total enrolment in all secondary schools as a % ratio

[188] "Human Development Index.
[189] OCHA, "Gaza Strip: Critical Humanitarian Indicators".
[190] OECD, "Life Expectancy at Birth"
[191] OECD, "Infant Mortality Rates"
[192] WHO, "Crude Death Rate (per 1000 Population)".
[193] United Nations, "International Definition and Measurement of Levels of Living.", 9.
[194] United Nations.

		to the population aged 15-19 years inclusive[195]
Employment and conditions of work	- proportion of persons unemployed in the total labour force - relative real wages in selected occupations	
Housing	- Per cent of the population living in 'dwellings' - Per cent of occupied dwellings with three or more persons per room - Per cent of occupied dwellings with piped water inside the dwelling or outside the dwelling but within 100 metres - Per cent of occupied dwellings with toilets	For a housing census, a 'dwelling' is defined as a permanent structure, distinguishing it from semi-permanent rustic housing like huts and cabins, as well as mobile or improvised housing units[196]
Human freedoms	No specific indicators and cannot be measured in quantitative terms	

Source: **Author's creation with data from United Nations (1961)[197].**

For what concerns socio-economic indicators on income and expenditure, the UN Guide does not recognise them as direct components of the level of living, yet as basic background information. These are (1) National income per capita and average annual rate of growth, and (2) Private consumption expenditure per capita and average annual rate of growth. This thesis will attempt to investigate both – yet for the category (2), data may be limited for our case study.

As anticipated, this overall scheme shall be reinforced by two more recent frameworks. The HDI identifies three key dimensions measuring human development and includes, to some

[195] United Nations.

[196] United Nations, 11.

[197] While the components and indicators are reported in the UN Guide, some of the definitions presented in table 1 have been constructed on other sources.

extent, the aforementioned components of living levels. The first dimension is health and is assessed by life expectancy at birth. The second is education, and it is measured by the mean of years of school for adults aged 25 years and more and expected years of schooling for school-age children. Finally, the third dimension, i.e., the standard of living one, is measured by Gross National Income per capita (GNI).
OCHA's indicators include some of the previously mentioned ones, such as health and education. However, since they are used to assess the severity humanitarian conditions, such indicators also cover water, food, and electricity security. Given that Gaza persisting cyclical conflicts, OCHA's indicators will be integrated in the analysis.

Demographic indicators do as well feature in the measurement of levels of living, as the UN Guide reports. Indeed, besides the health component including life expectancy at birth, there are other demographic indicators that can signal the quality of life. According to the UN Guide, the demographic dimensions, like the socio-economic one, is regarded as basic background information, and not as a direct component of the living standard's measurement. However, the UN Guide recognises that demographic indicators are fundamentally correlated with living standards, both as causes and effects. In the following table 2, the type of demographic indicators suggested by the UN guide will be reported, with associated demographic rates.

Table 2: Demographic indicators

Demographic indicators	Associated rates	Definitions
Size of the population	Crude birth rate	The annual number of live births per 1000 population
	Crude Death Rate	The annual number of deaths per 1000 people
	Total Fertility Rate	The average number of children a hypothetical cohort of women would have at the end of their reproductive period if they were subject during their whole lives to the fertility rates of a given period and if they were not subject to mortality. It is expressed as children per woman.[198]

[198] WHO, "Total Fertility Rate (per Woman)".

	Replacement level of fertility	This value represents the average number of children a woman would need to have to reproduce herself by bearing a daughter who survives to childbearing age.[199]
	Net Migration Rate	Net migration is the net total of migrants during the period, that is, the number of immigrants minus the number of emigrants, including both citizens and noncitizens[200]
	Natural Growth Rate	The birth rate minus the death rate, expressed as a percentage. This value represents the estimated rate of population growth without regard for migration[201]
	Total Growth Rate	Sum of the natural growth rate and the total migration rate throughout the year.
Age structure of the population	Median age	Age that divides the population in two parts of equal size, that is, there are as many persons with ages above the median as there are with ages below the median[202]
	Dependency ratio	The dependency ratio relates the number of children (0-14 years old) and older persons (65 years or over) to the working-age population (15-64 years old)[203]
Population by size of locality	Includes the urban-rural population distribution.	

Source: **Author's creation with data from United Nations (1961)[204]**

[199] UN, "Total Fertility Rate".
[200] The World Bank, "Net Migration".
[201] Population Reference Bureau, "Rate of Natural Increase (%)".
[202] WHO, "Population Median Age (Years)"
[203] UN, "Dependency Ratio," 2007.
[204] While the demographic indicators suggested are taken from the UN Guide, associated demographic rates are an addition of the author.

1.6.2.1 The Analysis

A survey on living conditions in Palestinian society, published by FAFO in 1994 has underlined:

> "An individual' s level of living is defined not so much by the economic goods he or she possesses, but by the ability of the individual to exercise choice and to affect the course of his or her own life. Material goods are important only to the extent they provide freedom for the individual to determine his own actions."[205]

Given this premise, this research aims at investigating the evolution of the Gazan population's living conditions, to subsequently assess whether such conditions contribute to the creation of specific greed and grievances.

Following this purpose, the analysis of living levels over the four time-periods will be divided in three groups.

(a) Demographic trends

(b) Socio-economic conditions

(c) Degree of civil and political freedoms.

1.6.3 Socioeconomic and demographic data collection

Due to persistent conflict and territorial political claims, collecting meaningful, comprehensive and reliable data for the Palestinian territories has always been particularly challenging for scholars. However, the evolution of the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians has created new circumstances that have allowed Palestinian institutions to produce and deliver their own data. In this sense, emblematic is the creation of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) in the aftermath of the Oslo Accords of 1993-1994. The PCBS was created as a non-governmental organisation, with offices both Ramallah and in the Gaza Strip, and continues to represent a reliable and valuable source of information.

As outlined in Section 1.6.1, the history of Gaza will be analysed through specific time periods. However, the availability of data and sources for each time period is influenced by the different regimes that have governed that Strip and that have impacted on data production. This is

[205] Heiberg and Ovensen, Palestinian Society in Gaza, West Bank and Arab Jerusalem: A Survey of Living Conditions.

particularly true for the data and sources presented in Chapter 2, which covers the time period 1948-1987, i.e., the aftermath of the First Arab-Israeli war, the brief Egyptian administration, and the first 20 years of the Israeli occupation on Gaza. Scholars that have searched for data from this period may have suffered from a series of constrains. For example, as Sara Roy CITAZIONE (1988) reports, after 1967, the Israeli government would prohibit disclosure of information dealing with the Occupied Territories. Problems would emerge concerning Palestinian-produced sources as well, as the occupation would restrict the production of any type of research, this accompanied by the proper lack of adequate academic facilities (Roy 1988). Discrepancies and issues of reliability of data may be also due to inherent political reasons. For example, as reported by Wael R. Ennab, after 1967, Israeli statistical sources registered Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem as living in Israel rather than in the West Bank[206]. Similarly, Meron Benvenisti[207] highlights that in the years following 1967, Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics inaccurately treated the Occupied Territories as independent economic units as, despite being labelled as 'national economies', they lacked a proper territorial basis. Furthermore, the economic activity of Jewish settlers and government expenditures were accounted for in Israel's records, and not in those of the West Bank or Gaza. For what concerns official population statistics up until the 1990s, different scholars have underlined that the last official census of the West Bank and Gaza was carried out in 1967 by the Israeli military. This may imply that different population projections often relied on scholars' own estimations. This may also explain why most international organisations that currently provide comprehensive data typically start their coverage from the early 1990s. Hence, for the analysis of demographic indicators in Chapter 2, this thesis will extensively rely on a study conducted by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) published in 1994[208], which tracks population developments in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for the time span 1948-1990. The study borrows from different sources, including data collected by Egyptian, Jordanian, Israeli, and Palestinian authorities, as well as original surveys conducted by researchers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It will also serve as the primary source for refugee data from 1948 and 1967 [209]. For socio-economic data collection for the same period, Chapter 2 will rely on a set of independent studies, together with 1985 UN

[206] Ennab, "Population and Demographic Development in The West Bank Amd Gaza Strip until 1990,"
[207] Meron Benvenisti, *The West Bank Data Base 1987 Report*.
[208] Ennab, "Population and Demographic Development in The West Bank Amd Gaza Strip until 1990."
[209] Regarding data on 1967 refugees, the study itself has at times borrowed from UNRWA-produced data.

report “Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories”[210], and a 1994 survey conducted by FAFO[211]. Using a range of different studies allows for comparison of data to enhance reliability.

For Chapters 3 and 4, which cover the period from 1987 to 2023, this thesis will rely on data provided by major international organizations. Strictly demographic data will be taken from the United States Census Bureau’s (USCB) international database. For socio-economic data, the primary source will be World Bank (WB), which has been collecting data in the Palestinian territories since 1992. To ensure accuracy and complete the analysis, demographic and socio-economic data will be furtherly drawn from the PCBS and reports from UN agencies, such as OCHA, UNRWA, UNCTAD, UNICEF, UNHCR, which will also offer the source for evaluating the evolution of the humanitarian situation. Furthermore, the human rights situation in the Gaza Strip will be mainly based on reports produced by Amnesty International and Freedom House.

[210] United Nations, “Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories” (New York, 1985).
[211] Heiberg and Ovensen, Palestinian Society in Gaza, West Bank and Arab Jerusalem: A Survey of Living Conditions.

2 Displacement, Occupation, and Uprising: Socio-Political Transitions and Living Conditions in the Gaza Strip

It has been emphasised that investigating the risk of youth radicalisation requires a broader analysis of the socio-economic environment that may foster such tendencies. To thoroughly understand the features characterising the Gazan society, it is crucial to revisit the origins of the Palestinian question. Accordingly, one of the aims of this chapter is to recollect the key historical events that, beginning in the early 20th century, have significantly marked Gaza's history. The chapter starts by exploring the Gaza province during the period of British administration, followed by an analysis of the events leading up to 1947, when UN Resolution 181 was passed, marking the formal beginning of the Israeli-Palestinian question. This chapter will not explore the main phases of the 1947-48 war but will rather delve into two pivotal aspects. The first is the Nakba, the mass displacement of Palestinians from their homes and lands. The mass arrival of people fleeing from the unfolding violence would have indelible consequences on the demography of the Strip. The second aspect is the establishment of Egyptian administration over Gaza in 1949, a period that will be briefly examined to highlight the presence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Strip, and its connection to the later emergence of Hamas. Following the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel began its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, areas that, from that moment, would be known as the Occupied Territories. For Gaza, this marked the start of a 38-year occupation. Through the analysis of the living conditions for the time period 1967-1987, this chapter will examine the extent to which the Israeli occupation impacted Gaza's socio-economic and political development. The analysis will cover three areas by exploring demographic trends, economic conditions, and the degree of political and civil freedoms. The ultimate goal of this chapter is to determine whether the First Intifada that erupted in 1987 can be seen as a manifestation of grievances arising from poor socio-economic conditions.

2.1 The Palestinian Question in the Gaza Strip

2.1.1 The Gaza Strip under the British administration: 1922-1947

The Gaza Strip forms a relatively small area of about 360 square kilometres overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, between Egypt and Israel. With a coastline of about 40 kilometres, it has

no natural water basins but enjoys a good portion of arable land[212]. Its history, which stretches back millennia, has been marked by continuous contestation, likely for two key reasons. First, as part of the ancient Holy Land, it has been fiercely disputed by various civilizations throughout both ancient and modern times, with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict being the most dramatic example[213]. Second, its historical port has made it a strategic trade route for the Middle East and North Africa[214].

In the 20th Gaza, along with the rest of Palestine, began to experience significant changes, which can be understood by overviewing the origins of Zionism. In 1895, Theodor Herzl, a Hungarian-born Jewish journalist, travelled to France to cover the Dreyfus Affair[215], a scandal that exposed the growing antisemitism spreading across Europe. Deeply troubled by both the Dreyfus case and the rising antisemitism in his own city of Vienna[216], Herzl began to formulate the idea of an organized exodus of Jews to an autonomous territory which, at that time, was not necessarily envisioned as Palestine[217]. He advocated for this solution in his 1896 book, *The Jewish State*, which is believed to mark the formal beginning of the Zionist movement[218]. In 1897, Herzl convened the first Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. During the Congress, his political vision of Zionism was officially endorsed, and it was declared that the goal was to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine[219]. This aspiration gained concrete support through Chaim Weizmann, a Russian-born Jew who moved to England in 1904 and secured British backing for the Zionist cause[220]. Weizmann's negotiations with the British government intensified during World War I, as he appealed to British interests in securing a friendly alliance in a strategically important region. His efforts culminated in 1917, when British Foreign Secretary Arthur J. Balfour wrote to Lord Rothschild – one of the most prominent figures of the English-Jewish community – what became known as the Balfour Declaration[221]. The 1917 Balfour Declaration marked a pivotal moment in Palestinian history for two key reasons: it envisioned Palestine as the new homeland for the Jewish people, and it signaled to Palestinian Arabs that they would have to confront the growing reality of Jewish Zionist ambitions in their

[212] CIA, "The World Factbook - Gaza Strip."
[213] Shachar, The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics: From the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009, 1.
[214] Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 63.
[215] Shlaim, The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World, 2.
[216] Cohn, "Theodor Herzl's Conversion to Zionism.", 101.
[217] Cohn, 101.
[218] Shlaim, The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World, 3.
[219] Shlaim, 3.
[220] Shlaim, 6.
[221] Shlaim, 7.

land[222]. However, the most distinctive feature of the Declaration was its ambiguous character. First, in principle the Balfour Declaration, being a statement of intentions of a government, had no binding or legal effect[223]. Secondly, it envisaged Palestine as the national home for the Jewish people but did not explicitly talk about the creation of a state. Third, it never referred to the Arab population as such, but only to 'non-Jewish communities in Palestine'[224]. The ambiguity of the Balfour Declaration was retrieved in 1922, when the League of Nations established the British Mandate in Palestine[225]. The main aim of the Mandate was that of promoting the development of self-governing Palestinian institutions yet subordinated to the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine. This created for the British a 'dual obligation', both to the Zionist Organisation and to Palestinian Arabs[226]. Settlements of Jews have been historically present in some areas of Palestine[227], but it was in the 19th century that the first substantial waves of Jewish immigrants started to be as such to modify Palestine's demography. Between 1800 and 1890, at the time of the First Aliyah[228], the Jewish population in Palestine grew from 7000 to 43.000, while the Muslim population still was predominant (in 1890 they were 432.000)[229]. In the first half of the 20th century, the Zionist Organisation promoted large-scale Jewish immigration that once again brought fundamental change to the demographic pattern of Palestine. From 1922 to 1939, in percentage terms, the Jewish population grew more than 500%[230], out of a total population of about 1.5 million[231]. On the other hand, the Arab population, which still represented the majority, rose by 159%, amounting to more than 1 million by 1939[232]. By 1946, the total population of Palestine had further increased to circa 2 million, with the Jewish population amounting to 608.000 people[233]. The population increase in the 1930s was largely driven by waves of Jewish refugees who, fleeing persecution from Europe, as the continent was falling under the Nazi persecution, sought safety in what they viewed as their homeland. With the rise in Jewish immigration, the issue of land

[222] Shachar, The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics: From the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009, 46.
[223] United Nations, "The Palestine Question: A Brief History.", 5.
[224] "Balfour Declaration 1917 ."
[225] The League of Nations, "The Palestine Mandate."
[226] United Nations, "The Palestine Question: A Brief History.", 7-8.
[227] United Nations, 3.
[228] The first immigration of Jews in Palestine is referred to as the First Aliyah, following pogroms in Russia in 1981-82. It is reported that, in total, almost 35.000 Jews came to Palestine during the First Aliyah, but almost half of them left the country several years later. See "Immigration to Israel: The First Aliyah."
[229] Della Pergola, Israele e Palestina: La Forza Dei Numeri, 75.
[230] More precisely, it grew of 505.68%, from 88.000 Jews in 1922 to 445.000 Jews in 1939. The percentage was calculated with data taken from United Nations. "The Palestine Question: A Brief History.", 10.
[231] United Nations, "The Palestine Question: A Brief History."10.
[232] The percentage and the total Arab population of 1939 was calculated with data take from United Nations, 10.
[233] United Nations, 12.

appropriation began to emerge. By the 1920s, as Jewish immigration was on the rise, Jewish ownership in Palestine already accounted for about 2.5% of the total land area and, by 1939, these holdings had expanded to over 5.7%[234]. In 1947, when Jews represented 1/3 of the total population, it is reported that their possession of land reached 7%[235]. Nathan Shachar notes that while in 1937, about 7.4 million dunams of Arab land were being cultivated, within just two years, as Zionist citrus settlements continued to expand, that area had decreased to 6.4 million dunams[236]. Regarding Gaza, it is likely that no land transactions between Arabs and Jews occurred until at least 1930, yet the mere possibility of such possibility already influenced the political climate at the time[237]. Although the Jewish population in Gaza nearly tripled during the two decades under British administration[238]. coexistence between Arabs and Jews in the 1920s was relatively calm. Apparently, compared to the northern and central regions of the country, Gaza experienced less friction because the Jewish community in Gaza consisted of long-established residents who spoke Arabic and had not yet begun purchasing land. Additionally, the Zionist expansion did not impact wages, land prices, or labor markets in Gaza as it did in urban centers like Jaffa and Haifa[239]. In 1944, a group of Polish immigrants with left-wing socialist views established Kibbutz Yad Mordechai between Gaza and Majdal. By 1945, Zionists, who comprised only 2% of the population, owned 4% of the land in the Gaza area, while 75% of the land was owned by Palestinian individuals, and 21% belonged to the public domain[240]. From 1920 to 1939, hostilities between Palestinians and Zionists began to escalate dramatically, as the solidifying Zionist state-building project increasingly came into conflict with the political demands of the growing, yet still unorganized, Palestinian resistance movements. The 1929 riots, known as the 'Western Wall' or 'al-Buraq' disturbances that broke out in Jerusalem, marked a turning point in Arab-Jewish relations and in the definition of their communal boundaries[241], and altered Zionists' attitude towards how they could achieve their objective[242]. The riots lasted from 23 to 29 August, with 133 Jews killed and 339 wounded, mainly by Arab rioters, and 116 Arabs killed and 232 wounded, mainly by British security forces[243]. During the riots of 1929, crowds in Gaza also started to protest against Jews who had

[234] United Nations, 10.
[235] Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 63.
[236] Shachar, The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics: From the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009, 50.
[237] Shachar, 47.
[238] Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 63.
[239] Shachar, The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics: From the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009, 47-49.
[240] Filiu, Gaza: A History, 9.
[241] See Winder, "The 'Western Wall' Riots of 1929: Religious Boundaries and Communal Violence."
[242] Hughes, "Armed Terrorist Bands In Palestine.", 274.
[243] Winder, "The 'Western Wall' Riots of 1929: Religious Boundaries and Communal Violence.", 6.

taken refuge in a public building thanks to British help, yet no Jewish casualties were registered[244]. The growing tensions manifested in the 1929 riots culminated in a full-scale rebellion from 1936 to 1939, known as the "Great Arab Revolt." This uprising was triggered by a combination of factors, including the recommendation of the Peel Commission in 1937, which, after assessing the unrest, proposed the partition of Palestine. In response, Palestinian demands for national independence intensified, leading to the most vigorous challenge to British and Zionist projects up to that point[245]. During the revolt, two significant developments occurred. First, crucial for the growth of Palestinian nationalism, was the emergence of a more organized insurgency, characterized by the establishment of administrative structures (such as courts, local governments, and tax collection systems) and the formation of more structured paramilitary groups[246]. In Gaza, as elsewhere, these new organizations focused on acquiring weapons, purchasing supplies for fighters, and supporting their families[247]. Second, there was increased interaction between the paramilitary groups on both sides. Among the Palestinians, two key groups were *al-Futuwwah* (Young Chivalry), founded in the 1930s under the leadership of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, and *al-Naijjadah* (the Helpers), an independent organization[248]. On the Zionist side, the most organized and armed paramilitary groups were the Haganah (initially established to protect Jewish settlements), the Irgun (considered a Zionist terrorist organization), and the Stern Gang or Lehi, which was the most anti-British one[249]. These groups became particularly violent against both Palestinians and the British by the end of World War II[250]. During the revolts, the British also intervened to quell the uprising, enforcing strict counterinsurgency measures[251]. Simultaneously, to address Palestinian grievances, they attempted to halt Jewish immigration and restrict land acquisitions[252]. The overall toll of the revolt foreshadowed the more extensive violence that would erupt a few years later, with a reported 3,232 Arab, 329 Jewish, and 135 British fatalities by 1939[253].

[244] Shachar, The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics: From the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009, 48.
[245] See Anderson, “State Formation from below and the Great Revolt in Palestine.”
[246] Anderson, 39.
[247] Anderson, 43.
[248] Cooley, “Terrorism in The 1948-1949 Arab-Israeli War.”, 284.
[249] Hughes, “The Birth of Jewish Terrorism.”, 279.
[250] Hughes, 279.
[251] See Hughes, “Britain’s Suppression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine.”
[252] Hughes, “Armed Terrorist Bands In Palestine.”, 276.
[253] Hughes, 275.

2.1.2 From the Partition Plan to the Nakba: 1947-1948

2.1.2.1 The war

With violence escalating and the aspirations of both Zionists and Palestinians becoming too politicised [254], the British realised that it was no longer convenient for them to have control over Palestine. At the beginning of 1947 anti-British riots reached new peaks, in Gaza as elsewhere in the country. So, in February of the same year, the United Kingdom referred to the newly born United Nations to find a solution for the Jewish-Arab problem, effectively surrendering responsibility over the territory. The United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was established to examine possible solutions for post-Mandate Palestine. Among the interlocutors, there were Zionists and Shoah survivors, yet Palestinian representation was apparently lacking. According to Shachar, Palestinian official bodies refused to cooperate with the committee and only reiterated their national plan for an Arab Palestinian land[255]. On 31 August 1947, UNSCOP delivered a report to the UN, containing the proposal for the partition of Palestine, possibly in the form of a federation or into an economic union[256]. On November 22, 1947, the Partition Plan was proposed to the United Nations General Assembly. It predicted an Arab state with a population of 725.000 Arabs and 10.000 Jewish, and a Jewish state with 498.000 Jews and 407.000 Arabs. The city of Jerusalem, with 105.000 Arabs and 100.000 Jews was erected as an international zone under the supervision of the United Nations[257]. To the Jewish state, a greater share of territory was assigned: 56%.4 versus 42.9%[258]. The proposed boundaries divided Palestine into 6 areas, with each side being awarded 3. The border that was created in the never-implemented binational state was long and not easy to manage; nonetheless, it aimed at reflecting the demographic predominance of one or the other national-religious group in the different parts of the territory[259]. As for the Partition Plan, in the south, the Gaza province was to represent a central part of the assigned Arab state and had to comprise both the Gaza and Beersheva districts[260].

[254] Shachar, The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics: From the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009, 47.
[255] Shachar, 51.
[256] Filiu, Gaza: A History, 52.
[257] Hughes, "Terrorism in Palestine in 1947.", 282.
[258] United Nations, "The Palestine Question: A Brief History.", 15.
[259] Della Pergola, Israele e Palestina: La Forza Dei Numeri, 49.
[260] Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 63.

Figure 1: United Nations Partition Plan, 1947.

United Nations, *The Palestine Question: A Brief History*, United Nations, 1980, 17, figure 5.

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 for the partition of Palestine. All Arab and Muslim member states of the UN opposed the plan. Just before the vote, representatives from both sides gave speeches. The Jewish Agency representative expressed support for the UN's recommendation, yet the Palestinian representative emphasized the importance of establishing a single democratic Arab state encompassing all of Palestine, effectively rejecting the concept of a binational state [261]. The rejection and non-implementation of Resolution 181 would mark the beginning of the Palestinian question. One day after the adoption of the resolution, clashes erupted mainly in Jerusalem, Jaffa and Haifa. In Gaza, however, the situation remained relatively calm[262]. The unfolding of violence that began in 1947 and continued in 1948 can be divided in two phases. In his book *La question de Palestine,* Henry Laurens identifies the first part of the conflict going from the announcement of the Partition Plan to the proclamation of the State of Israel in

[261] Della Pergola, Israele e Palestina: La Forza Dei Numeri, 51.
[262] Filiu, Gaza: A History, 58.

May 1948 as the 'Palestinian Civil War'[263]. The second part of the conflict, which started when the Arab states launched the war against Israel, is defined by Israel as the 'War of Independence', but is also commonly referred to as the 'First Arab Israeli War'[264]. The conflict that broke out saw the well-organized Zionist forces, centred around the Haganah, facing various Palestinian militias that fought alongside Arab regular armies, which, overall, lacked a unified command and strategy[265]. The situation on the Arab side was further complicated by the differing regional ambitions of individual states. While the initial goal was to block the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, by early summer 1948, the primary aim of the Arab regular armies had shifted to preventing further Jewish expansion into the Arab-designated sectors of the partition plan[266]. Egypt and Transjordan were focused on maintaining control over the territories their armies had occupied, often at the expense of coordinated strategy. The ambitions of these latter became obvious in the summer of 1948 when Folke Bernadotte, a United Nations mediator, proposed the terms for a ceasefire. The proposal that Transjordan might have annexed Arab territories in Palestine prompted Egypt, which had already occupied a significant portion of northern Gaza, to establish a civil administration and proclaim an "All-Palestine Government" in Gaza. This brief development gave Gazan leaders hope for political recognition and legitimacy, but the plan quickly fell apart when Egypt, confronted with a series of setbacks, abandoned it. Several factors contributed to this decision: the Arab League did not intend to allow the "All-Palestine" government in Gaza to join the organization (despite earlier support), the potential of Jordan and Israel signing a separate peace treaty posed a threat, and, after Israeli forces advanced into the Sinai and encircled Gaza in December 1948, Egypt sought an armistice with Israel, much to the dismay of the All-Palestine government in Gaza[267]. However brief, the experience of the "All-Palestine" government represented a moment in which, in Gaza, Palestinian nationalists had assembled[268]. The final armistice agreement was achieved on the island of Rhodes, in 1949. The picture of Palestine at the end of the war was quite different from that presented in the Partition Plan. Indeed, while the agreement predicted that Israel had 57% of Palestinian land, by the end of 1948, the new Israeli State controlled circa 30% more of the territory initially envisaged for it; in 1949, the territory occupied by

[263] See Laurens, La Question de Palestine.
[264] Filiu, Gaza: A History, 60.
[265] Filiu, 60.
[266] Shachar, The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics: From the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009, 54.
[267] Shachar, 55-56; Filiu, Gaza: A History, 63-67.
[268] Filiu, Gaza: A History, 67.

Israel rose up to 67%[269]. Israel had incorporated western Galilee, a part of the territory between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, and a significant part of the Negev desert in the south. These zones, populated by Arabs and now annexed to Israel came under a military governate regime, then abolished in December 1966[270]. Concurrently, the West Bank and Jerusalem were annexed to Transjordan, while Egypt militarily occupied that remaining part of the Gaza sub-district.

1948 is a year that holds an ambivalent meaning in the collective memory of Israelis and Palestinians. For the first, it represents the triumph of the Zionist national ambition with the establishment of an ethnonationalist Jewish state in Palestine. For the Palestinian people, however, that same year indelibly represents the peak – yet the beginning – of Zionist colonial violence and the start of their resistance. In Arab historiography, the forced expulsion of Palestinians, displaced and dispossessed from their homes and lands, is referred to as the Nakba, literally meaning 'catastrophe'. During that campaign, 500 villages and 11 urban settlements were destroyed[271]. On that occasion, Israeli forces took over farms, factories, works of art, shops, and citrus plantations[272]. The resulting exodus of tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians saw them either fleeing to neighbouring countries or inwards, becoming internally displaced. With the 1948 war, the category of Palestinian refugees was born: the United Nations estimated that, as a result of the Nakba, Palestinian refugees amounted to 726.000[273]. On December 11, 1948, as the issue of refugees emerged as a significant obstacle to achieving a peaceful resolution, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 194, establishing the Conciliation Commission for Palestine and reaffirming the principle that refugees should have the unconditional right to return to their homes. The Resolution also offered an alternative between reparation for those who wanted to return if desired to do so, and compensation for those who did not desire to come back[274]. In Gaza, the enormous influx of refugees resulted in a dramatic change in the population composition. Most estimates for the pre-1948 population of the Gaza subdistrict report a population between 80.000 and 85.000. After the 1948 war, an influx of almost 200.000 refugees tripled the population[275]. As of 1950, it results that 82% of the population in Gaza were refugees[276], and that the Strip contained 26%

[269] United Nations, "The Palestine Question: A Brief History", 16; Cooley, "Terrorism in The 1948-1949 Arab-Israeli War.", 287.
[270] Della Pergola, Israele e Palestina: La Forza Dei Numeri, 54.
[271] Pappé, "Stato Di Negazione: La Nakba Nella Storia Israeliana e Oggi.", 72.
[272] Cooley, "Terrorism in The 1948-1949 Arab-Israeli War.", 287.
[273] United Nations, "The Palestine Question: A Brief History.", 18.
[274] United Nations General Assembly, "UN Resolution 194 (III)."
[275] Ennab, "Population and Demographic Development in The West Bank Amd Gaza Strip until 1990.", 5-7.
[276] The percentage is calculated with data taken from Ennab, 5-7.

of the post-war population who had remained within the borders of Palestine[277]. The reason why, in 1948, waves of people were fleeing towards Gaza was mainly due to the geographical unfolding of the war. While their natural escape might have been Egypt, the Egyptian government refusing the entry of refugees and the risk of perishing in the Sinai made that option unfeasible. The alternative was thus to flee to the last four Palestinian cities next to the Egyptian border in the Gaza region: Gaza, Deir al Balah, Khan Younis and Rafah[278]. Beryl Cheal recalls that, because of the war, thousands of Palestinians came from a total of 144 cities and villages towards the Strip[279]. Overall, in the aftermath of the war, the whole population of Gaza was facing a disastrous situation. Even the local inhabitants of Gaza, even if not displaced from their homes, lost their lands and activities, and thus shared with the mass of refugees the same forced deprivation[280]. The huge refugee population that entered Gaza in 1948 will leave an indelible mark in the demography of the Strip, the impact of the Nakba can indeed still be in the present day. Out of a total population that in 2023 counts approximately 2.1 million inhabitants[281], in 2023 those registered as refugees represent 70.5%[282]. In December 1949 the United Nations set up an agency tasked with giving assistance to Palestinian refugees, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The emphasis that UNRWA placed on 'work' alongside 'relief' is significant, as it reflects the agency's broader goal of integrating refugees into the workforce. This approach aimed to enable refugees to become productive members of society – working as teachers, in social services, or within UNRWA itself – thereby reducing their dependence on international aid and promoting self-sufficiency. Schools were opened and teachers employed, workshops for manual jobs were created, and basic sanitary services were provided[283]. Between 1948 and the 1950s, UNRWA established 8 refugee camps along the Strip, the largest of which was Jabalya, in the north of the Strip, which contained up to 35.000 people[284].

[277] Roy, “The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.”, 63.
[278] Shachar, The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics: From the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009, 2.
[279] Cheal, “Refugees in the Gaza Strip, December 1948-May 1950.”, 138.
[280] Filiu, Gaza: A History., 71.
[281] UNRWA, “Palestine Refugees.”
[282] Percentage calculated with data taken from UNRWA.
[283] United Nations, “The Palestine Question: A Brief History”, 19; Filiu, Gaza: A History, 76-79.
[284] Filiu, Gaza: A History, 79.

2.1.2.2 The Egyptian administration – a brief parenthesis

On January 7, 1949, the ceasefire was implemented, and just a few days later the Gaza Strip came into being as a distinct territorial unity which will be placed under the military administration of Egypt until 1967. When the Egyptian occupation began, Gaza's socioeconomic structure was disastrous. Sarah Roy reports that not only the immediate post-war situation was difficult due to the great loss of agricultural land and closure of its port, but also because the enormous number of refugees could not be absorbed by the poor labour market, predominantly rural and based on small-scale productivity[285]. The mass arrival of refugees made hourly wages crash and unemployment rose up to 50%[286]. Moreover, after the war, Gazans were no longer allowed to enter Egypt or to work there[287]. Since 1957, almost 10 years after the Egyptian occupation, more attention has been given to Gaza's economic and political needs. The port was reopened and declared a free trade zone for important consumer and industrial goods, and the territory developed commercial links with Egypt[288]. Overall, this led to the enrichment of Gaza's merchant class, yet a big discrepancy was created with refugees, who remained poor and persistently dependent upon UNRWA's aid[289]. Regarding political activities in the Gaza Strip, they were officially banned; however, this did not prevent the emergence of underground organizations, including the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood played a significant role in political activism in the region, particularly among those living in refugee camps[290]. As we will explore in the next chapter, the Muslim Brotherhood served as a foundation for the eventual development of Hamas. Additionally, during the 1950s, political activism manifested in attacks carried out by the fedayeen. Although their actions were severely punished and prohibited by Egypt[291], they still managed to launch attacks against Israel, prompting occasional retaliatory strikes by the latter on the Strip. By 1967, the situation in Gaza was far from favourable, characterized by a mix of conflicting conditions typical of a society under occupation. Economically, trade had begun to open, but the market remained unintegrated. Politically, there had been sporadic attempts at political expression: a legislative council was elected in Gaza in 1958; local elections for Palestinian representation in the Strip were held in 1962; and in 1963 and 1964, organizations such as the Palestine Student

[285] Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 64.
[286] Roy, 64; Shachar, The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics: From the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009, 59.
[287] Shachar, The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics: From the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009, 58.
[288] Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation", 65; Filiu, Gaza: A History, 119.
[289] *Filiu, Gaza: A History, 119.*
[290] Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 64.
[291] Roy, 64; Filiu, Gaza: A History, 118.

Association, a Trade Union, and a Palestinian Women's Society were established[292]. Despite these developments, Gazans lacked fundamental freedoms, including freedom of movement, both physically and socially[293].

2.1 From the Occupation to the First Intifada

2.1.3 Analysis of living conditions: 1967-1987

On June 5, 1967, Israel launched pre-emptive airstrikes against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, acting on the belief that an attack by these countries was imminent. Six days later, the war was already over, and Israel had conquered another share of the Partition Plan's original territories. It now controlled the Sinai (Egypt), the Golan Heights (Syria), the territories of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), and the Gaza Strip. If until that moment Palestinians believed that the great displacement and dispossession of the Nakba could still be reversible, with the 1967 *Naksa* – the Arabic word meaning 'calamity' – the situation was compounded[294]. While it is widely reported that the numbers of Palestinians that fled this second war are extremely high, estimations are not always precise and may differ among sources. Estimates range between 200.000 to 300.000 new refugees[295], up to half a million, as declared by the UN[296]. When the armistice line that separated Israel from the 1949 post-war borders was abolished, a period of 38year long occupation – first military, then, from 1981 to 2005 civilian – had just begun. By June 1967, after brief episodes of guerrilla warfare engaged by armed opposition groups[297], Gaza had fallen under Israel's military administration. With the imposition of its economic, social and demographic planning, the Israeli occupation was to profoundly mark the Gazan society. To evaluate the extent and consequences of this impact, the following section will examine overall living conditions by analysing demographic trends, socio-economic factors, and the level of political freedom or repression over a 20-year period, from the 1967 occupation to the outbreak of the first Intifada in 1987.

[292] Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 65.
[293] Shachar, The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics: From the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009, 65.
[294] Farsakh, "Commemorating the Naksa, Evoking the Nakba.", 10.
[295] See Mashala, A Land without a People: Israel, Transfer and the Palestinians, 1949-96; Amnesty International, "Nakba."
[296] United Nations, "Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories.", 1.
[297] Filiu, Gaza: A History, 127-128.

2.1.3.1 Demographic trends

As of May 1967, before the breakout of the war, the population of Gaza amounted to more than 400.000 people. In June, it had decreased to circa 300.000, signalling a significant population loss because of the war[298]. This number would shrink for another year, likely due to outmigration in the aftermath of the conflict. However, starting in 1969, the population began to slowly grow again, with an increasing annual growth rate that eventually outweighed the impact of migration losses by the late 1970s[299]. The occupation itself encouraged outmigration to balance potential population growth from high birth rates, while also practicing forced expulsions to stabilize the population numbers[300]. For the Gaza Strip, the annual growth rate over the period 1973-1988 was registered to be at 3%, a trend like that of the West Bank (2.11%) and East Jerusalem (3.3%)[301]. High growth rates, which remained constant during the 20-year period, resulted in a population that, by 1987 amounted to more than 560.000 in 1987[302]. Such growth can be the result of the interrelation of different factors.

Fertility levels

Between 1967 and 1987, Palestinians experienced very high fertility rates. As illustrated in Table 3, the Gaza Strip had a crude birth rate (CBR) of 43.44 in 1968, which remained relatively stable throughout this period, increasing to 47.60 by 1987. In comparison, the West Bank registered slightly lower rates having a CBR of 40.58% in the same final year. In both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the total fertility rate (TFR) has typically remained above 7 children per woman. However, in the Gaza Strip, the TFR increased to 8.5 between 1968 and 1980, while the West Bank experienced a decline during the same period (see Table 4). It has been suggested that the slightly higher TFR in the Gaza Strip may be due to the broader access to free health services offered by UNRWA and private voluntary organizations[303]. The significant fertility levels registered in the West Bank and particularly in Gaza may be the result of different factors generally attributable to low socio-economic conditions and very slow social mobility. Such societies are characterized by traditional patriarchal structures from which women struggle to emancipate, lack of family planning and absence of birth control. These dynamics

[298] Ennab, "Population and Demographic Development in The West Bank Amd Gaza Strip until 1990." See Appendix II, table 2.1.
[299] Ennab, 46.
[300] United Nations, "Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories.", 45.
[301] Ennab, "Population and Demographic Development in The West Bank Amd Gaza Strip until 1990.", 47.
[302] Ennab, table 2.1
[303] Ennab, 86.

may be reflected, for instance, in the fact that the childbearing period is distributed over a long-time span[304]. Table 4 shows that Gazan women tend to exhibit an even longer life span of childbearing than women in the West Bank. Women, especially in Arab societies, have traditionally held a subordinate role to that of men, particularly in the fields of economic and political participation. Despite this, it has been underlined that the high politicization of life in Palestinian territories might have given women a louder voice in economic and political affairs[305]. The Israeli occupation is credited with having initiated and sustained female participation in wage labour; however, it also reinforced women's traditional roles as low-paid workers by limiting the types and locations of available job opportunities[306].

Mortality levels

Mortality levels are the second key factor influencing a population's growth and size: while declining mortality rates contribute to population growth, high mortality rates can also lead to higher fertility rates as a compensatory response. As shown in Table 3, in the period 1968-1987 both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank witnessed a significant decline in crude death rates (CDR), of over 70% in 20 years. However, compared to the significantly lower CBR of 3.5 among Arabs in Israel for the year 1988, as reported by the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics[307], the CBRs in both Gaza and the West Bank were notably higher, with the West Bank's rate slightly exceeding that of Gaza. Infant mortality rates (IMRs) have decreased significantly since 1967, falling from 162 per 1,000 live births in Gaza to around 53.1-56.1 in 1985, with the West Bank showing similar trends. This decline may be attributed to a rise in the number of doctors, improved hygiene awareness, and a significant increase in hospital births, which for Gazans rose from 13% in 1968 to 55% by 1986[308]. Declines in infant mortality rates (IMRs) can also result from higher literacy rates among women. For example, the Gaza Strip recorded a decrease in illiteracy rates among married women between 1960 and 1985, which may have made them more receptive to contemporary approaches to infant care. Despite this decline, IMRs still resulted high, especially if compared with the rates of Arabs living in Israel, which were at 17.5 in 1986[309].

[304] Ennab, 55.
[305] Shadid and Seltzer, “Political Attitudes of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.”, 17.
[306] See Rockwell, “Palestinian Women Workers in the Israeli-Occupied Gaza Strip.”
[307] Ennab, “Population and Demographic Development in The West Bank Amd Gaza Strip until 1990.”, 66.
[308] Ennab, 69.
[309] Ennab, 67.

Table 3. Table 3Population growth rates in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 1968-87 (per 1,000).

Years	West Bank*					Gaza Strip				
	CBR	GFR	CDR	NI	NMR	CBR	GFR	CDR	NI	NMR
1968	44.07	214.4	21.78	22.30	-27.27	43.44	194.2	20.18	23.26	-90.53
1969	42.82	204.1	20.24	22.58	+2.17	46.17	202.2	18.69	27.43	- 7.97
1970	43.60	204.6	19.09	24.52	- 8.23	43.24	186.7	17.84	25.41	- 8.92
1971	45.46	211.2	17.67	27.79	- 4.02	46.20	194.9	16.63	29.57	- 6.34
1972	45.45	216.1	16.41	29.04	-11.52	47.28	205.4	15.50	31.78	-10.33
1973	44.91	210.5	16.71	28.20	+0.46	47.57	204.1	15.94	31.63	+4.23
1974	45.54	210.8	15.53	30.01	- 4.18	49.03	209.7	14.49	34.54	- 5.35
1975	45.17	206.8	14.66	30.51	-22.36	48.88	211.8	13.63	35.25	- 8.23
1976	46.54	210.6	13.61	32.93	-21.07	49.15	208.9	12.35	36.81	- 9.60
1977	44.98	211.9	12.36	32.62	-14.66	47.47	212.7	11.31	36.16	- 6.43
1978	42.94	196.6	12.43	30.51	-13.28	47.52	208.9	11.02	36.50	-10.15
1979	43.83	197.4	11.41	32.42	-17.53	47.67	208.9	10.57	37.10	-10.79
1980	41.97	186.1	10.36	31.62	-23.89	46.88	204.4	9.86	37.02	-11.17
1981	41.54	183.7	9.84	31.70	-21.45	46.92	206.4	9.17	37.75	-11.30
1982	41.64	192.2	8.94	32.70	-10.54	45.67	208.4	8.38	37.29	- 6.50
1983	41.46	192.5	8.81	32.65	- 3.50	45.10	210.2	8.29	36.81	- 2.02
1984	42.60	197.2	8.07	34.53	- 7.31	47.46	215.5	7.84	39.62	- 9.41
1985	40.76	-	7.48	33.23	- 6.13	44.59	-	6.83	37.76	- 5.50
1986	39.46	-	6.63	32.83	- 6.09	46.19	-	6.55	39.63	- 6.61
1987	40.58	-	6.37	34.21	+0.82	47.60	-	5.88	41.73	- 5.83

***Source*: Data from Ennab (1994)**

Table 4: Age-specific fertility rate and total fertility rate in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (various years, per 1,000)

Age Year	1968	1970	1972	1975	1977	1978	1979	1980
West Bank								
Age-specific fertility rate								
<19	51.0	62.4	109.6	127.2	123.9	112.0	108.8	69.7
20-24	253.7	241.3	293.7	305.1	290.5	289.2	274.0	280.9
25-29	350.9	339.2	373.3	384.6	384.9	347.1	354.9	372.1
30-34	336.5	315.5	319.4	275.9	315.5	305.3	315.8	296.0
35-39	320.0	303.2	279.6	237.4	235.3	235.3	233.6	245.2
40-44	151.3	142.9	93.2	79.3	81.2	88.4	84.2	96.0
45+	65.3	57.8	26.9	17.4	17.3	14.2	14.7	24.8
Total fertility rate	7.64	7.34	7.48	7.13	7.24	6.96	6.93	6.92
Gaza Strip								
Age-specific fertility rate								
<19	27.4	41.6	87.6	123.2	106.8	103.5	112.0	80.9
20-24	181.0	181.2	254.1	305.1	315.5	312.7	312.4	309.5
25-29	339.9	297.5	330.6	326.7	359.2	374.4	383.7	391.6
30-34	330.8	320.0	328.5	301.3	285.5	310.6	330.4	312.9
35-39	335.3	348.5	293.3	263.7	245.5	260.5	246.4	225.2
40-44	131.2	130.2	93.4	104.4	103.7	108.2	108.3	93.4
45+	59.1	57.4	32.2	38.8	35.1	36.4	31.0	22.5
Total fertility rate	7.02	6.88	7.10	7.32	7.25	7.53	7.62	7.18

***Source*: Data from Ennab (1994)**

Structure of the population

In the aftermath of the 1967 war, the age distribution in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank reflected a very young population. Over half of the population (50.3%) was under the age of 14, indicating that fertility and birth rates had been quite high in the Gaza Strip during the 1950s. Meanwhile, 44.5% of the population was of working age (15-64 years), with 16.6% in the youth bracket (15-24 years old), and only 4.8% were over 65[310]. The consistently high fertility and birth rates over the following 20 years meant that, by 1987, the age pyramid in Gaza had not changed significantly from its 1967 shape (see Fig. 2). Indeed, by 1987, there was only a slight increase in the 15-24 age group, which now made up 19.9% of the population,

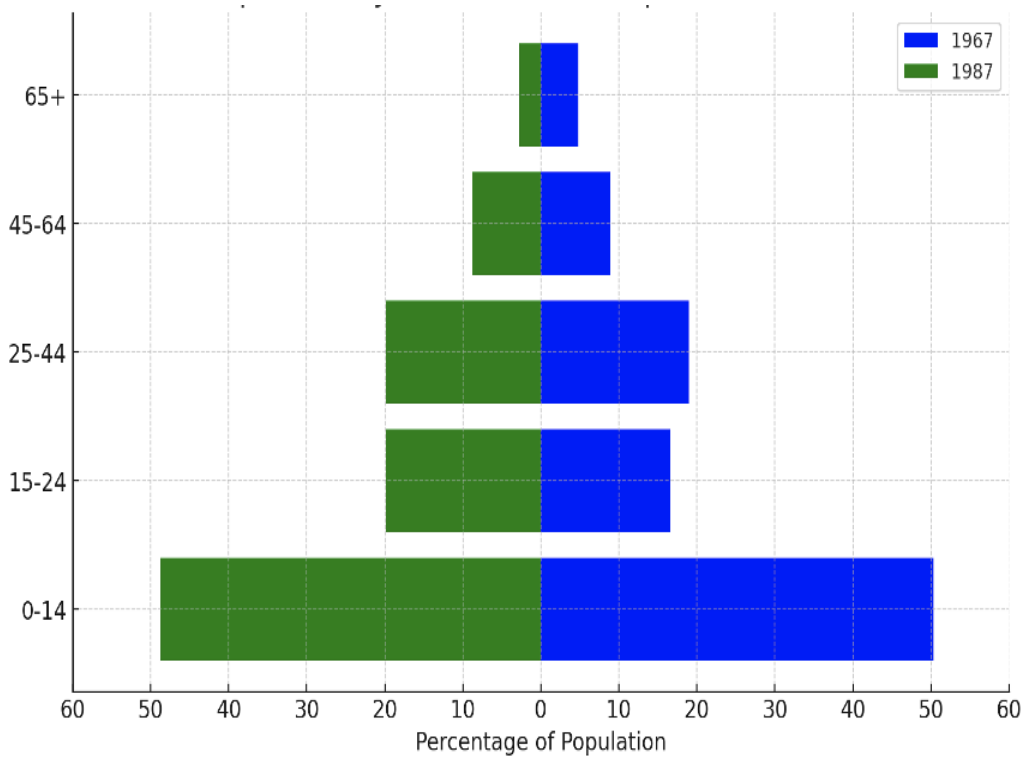
[310] Data taken from Ennab. See Appendix II, table 3.2

indicating a modest decrease in fertility rates. The gender distribution was relatively balanced, except in the 35-44 age range, where there were fewer males than females. This disparity might suggest a higher rate of male out-migration, likely due to the demand for male labor in the Gulf States[311]. The small percentage of individuals aged 65 and older (which now amounted to 2.8%, thus a decrease from 1967) likely reflects high mortality rates, particularly among men, who generally suffer from lower life expectancy compared to women[312]. However, the smaller bracket of people over 65 may be an ulterior consequence of male outmigration over the whole 1967-1987 period. By 1987, the Gaza Strip was experiencing a "children bulge," characterized by a high percentage of children aged 0-14 compared to the rest of the population. In contrast, the age group typically associated with a "youth bulge," those aged 15-24, was relatively smaller. However, for the sake of this analysis, we will employ Richard Cincotta and John A. Doces' conceptualization of youth bulge[313]. According to their thesis, a youth bulge is defined as the proportion of young adults aged 15-29 within a country's total working-age population (15-64 years). This definition excludes children aged 0-14, meaning a country can still have a substantial youth bulge relative to its working-age population, despite having a larger number of children.[314]. Cincotta and Doces consider a youth bulge significant if it exceeds 42%, or at least 42 individuals aged 15-29 per 100 people aged 15-64[315]. Drawing from UNCTAD data[316] and using Cincotta and Doces's formula[317], Gaza's youth bulge proportion in 1987 was at 40%, just below the threshold. However, given the available data, this thesis's calculation included the age range of 15-24 rather than Cincotta and Doces's suggested age bracket of 15-29, while maintaining the working-age population between 15 and 64 years old. Considering that the additional five years in the calculation would have slightly increased the youth bulge proportion, we may conclude that the youth still constituted a significant part of the working-age population in Gaza, despite the predominance of children aged 0-14. This is also true when looking at percentages. Indeed, if divided by major age groups, it results that if children 0-14 represented, by 1987, the largest population's age bracket (48.8%), the 15-24 cohort amounted to 19.9%, followed by the 25-44 age ranged which, very similarly, amounted to 19.8%,

[311] Ennab, 74.
[312] Data taken from Ennab. See Appendix II, table 3.2.
[313] Cincotta and Doces, "The Age-Structural Maturity Thesis: The Impact of the Youth Bulge on the Advent and Stability of Liberal Democracy."
[314] Cincotta and Doces, 101.
[315] Cincotta and Doces, 101.
[316] Ennab, "Population and Demographic Development in The West Bank Amd Gaza Strip until 1990". See Appendix II, table 3.1.
[317] To calculate the youth bulge relative to the working age population, the authors compute the ratio of young people (15-29 years old) to the total working age population (15-64 years old).

concluded by a population going from 45 to over 65 years old amounting to only 7,6%[318] in total. Overall, the significant proportion of children and young people may be explained by a variety of factors among which increased education possibilities may play an essential role. As the UNCTAD report suggests, during the 1970s both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip enjoyed a rise in educational institutions. These newly established institutes and universities provided Palestinian students the opportunity to continue their studies without emigrating[319]

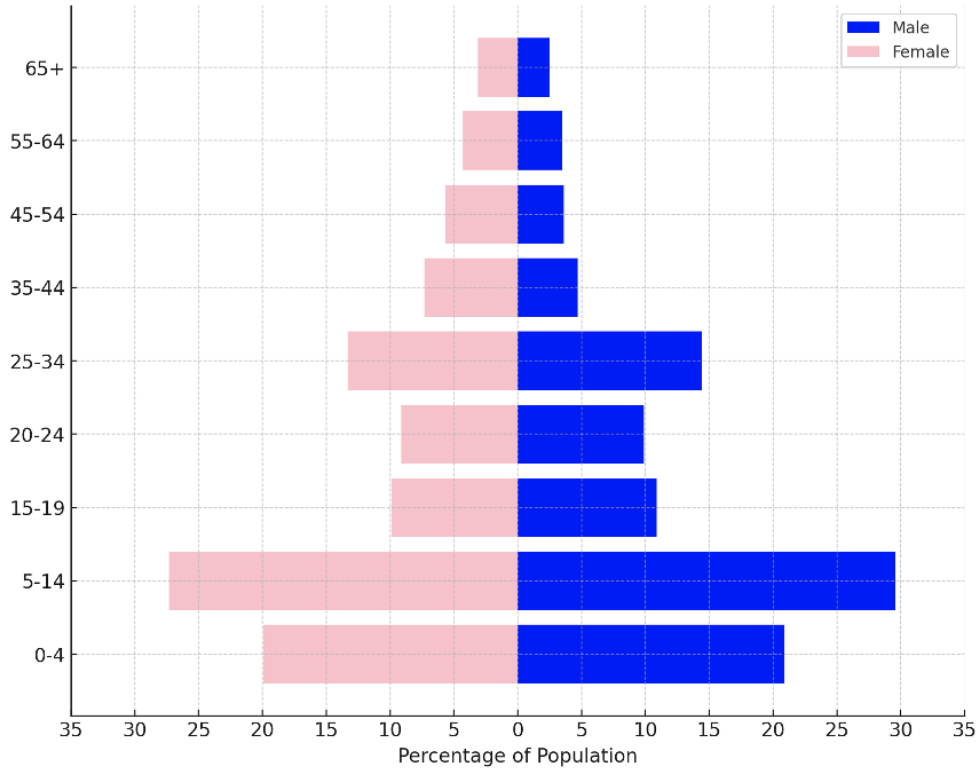
Figure 2. Population pyramid for Gaza Strip comparing age distribution in 1967 and 1987.



Source: **Author's creation with data taken from Ennab (1994)**

[318] Ennab, see Appendix II, table 3.2.
[319] Ennab, 74.

Figure 3. population pyramid for Gaza Strip (1987) distributed by sex and 5 year age groups



Source: **Author's creation with data taken from Ennab (1994)**

2.1.3.2 Socio-economic conditions

The impact of the Israeli occupation on the economic development of Gaza remains a source of debate. The decision to integrate the economies of the occupied territories with that of Israel stemmed from the 'open door policy' introduced by the government of Levi Eshkol (1963-1969). This policy brought a wealthy, advanced economy into contact with a small, impoverished, and underdeveloped one. The major source of controversy centres on how Gaza's structural dependency on Israel has impacted Gaza's own socio-economic development. Indeed, the Israeli occupation prevented Palestinians from having their own monetary and fiscal decisions and essentially lacked proper macroeconomic planning for the needs of the Palestinian economy[320]. Overall, while official economic barriers were removed, various

[320] United Nations, "Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories", 16; Arnon, "Israeli Policy towards the Occupied Palestinian Territories: The Economic Dimension, 1967-2007.", 576.

visible and hidden restrictions remained, at the disadvantage of the economic development of the Strip.

Employment in Israel

One of the major causes that resulted in the structural change of the Strip's economy concerned the increasing number of Gazans that started to work in Israel. Sara Roy reports that between 1970 and 1985 Gaza's labour force working inside Israel increased over 600%, a percentage that however does not consider the numbers of illegal workers such as children and black-market labourers[321]. The employment structure of the integration was based on the demand for semi-skilled and unskilled labour in Israeli industries. The lack of other suitable opportunities resulted in the fact that even skilled workers when looking for work in Israel and for Israel, had to accept unskilled jobs[322]. The general lack of alternative opportunities overall resulted in the "de-skilling" of the labour force, which in turn also transformed expectations on educational levels[323]. Another major feature characterising Palestinian workers in Israel was the lack of job security, long work permits and benefits, and the fact that they did not overall enjoy the same conditions as Israeli workers[324]. Perhaps the most emblematic disadvantage demonstrating Gaza's structural dependence on Israel was that the stability of Gazan jobs was closely tied to the fluctuations of the Israeli economy; during recessions, Gazans were the first to be fired and, during recoveries, the last to be rehired[325]. For its part, Israel was considerably benefitting from the influx of semi-skilled and unskilled workers. Indeed, its labour force had been restructured according to Palestinians who constituted a large reserve of cheap labour[326].

Redistribution of occupations and unemployment

Following the economic integration of 1967, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contributions of various occupations, as well as employment distribution across sectors, began to shift. To analyse these structural changes and their impact on unemployment rates in Gaza, this section will compare employment rates across different economic sectors for Gazans working in the Strip and those employed in Israel from 1970 to 1985, extensively relying on data provided by

[321] Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 74.
[322] United Nations, "Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories.", 22.
[323] Heiberg and Ovensen Geir, Palestinian Society in Gaza, West Bank and Arab Jerusalem : A Survey of Living Conditions, 25-26.
[324] United Nations, "Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories.", 22.
[325] United Nations, 22.
[326] Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 74-75.

Sara Roy[327]. Prior to 1967, the industrial sector of Gaza was highly undeveloped, made of small workshops primarily focused on traditional crafts[328]. Despite this, Gaza's industrial base continued to operate on a small scale[329]. The slow expansion of this sector can be attributable to low levels of capitalisation, low technology, unfair competition with Israeli products, and damaging policies aimed at exclusively meeting the needs of the Israeli economy[330]. Moreover, the United Nations have reported that Israeli authorities continued targeting Arab business, for instance, through the imposition of high taxes. Coercive actions of this kind have forced businesses to close due to late payment[331]. In 1970, industry in Gaza employed 12% of people, augmenting to 17.5% in 1985. On the other hand, the Gazan labour force employed in Israeli industries amounted to 8.5% in 1970 and 19% in 1985. The construction sector also had augmented its share of GDP by 1984, as the increasing residential construction in the Strip testified[332]. For the Gaza Strip, construction amounted to 12% of employment in 1970 while 23.9% in 1985; it only slightly decreased for Gazan workers in Israel, being 47,7% in 1970 but 42,3% in 1985, remaining the largest employers of Gazans in Israel[333]. For what concerns the agricultural sector, it may be regarded as the one which relatively faced the greatest losses, at least in terms of GDP. As of 1967, the Gazan economy was largely based on agriculture which, between 1948 and 1967, had been the single economic activity constituting up to 1/3 of the GDP and up to 90% of the total exports[334]. As of 1984, the agricultural share of GDP amounted to 13.4%, shrinking by more than 50% compared to the share of 1968, when it was at 28.4%. Labour force proportion also shrunk. Indeed, while by 1985 those employed in agriculture in the Gaza Strip amounted to 18% (compared to 32% in 1970), they amounted to 21% employed in Israeli agriculture in 1985 (compared to 40.7% in 1970)[335]. Percentages in the service sector also declined, but services continued to provide a large percentage of paid employment in Gaza (38% in 1985)[336]. Overall, in 1985, the number of Gazans employed in Israel was equivalent to 85% of the number employed inside Gaza itself[337]. Such a significant shift in labour force

[327] Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 73-74.
[328] Efrat, "Settlement Pattern and Economic Changes of the Gaza Strip 1947-1977", 350; Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 72.
[329] Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 83.
[330] United Nations, "Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories.", 27.
[331] United Nations, 21.
[332] Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 73.
[333] For all the percentages concerning the employment of labour force in the different economic sectors, see Roy, 73-74.
[334] Roy, 75.
[335] Roy, 73-74.
[336] Roy, 74.
[337] Roy, 74.

towards Israel inevitably resulted in a decrease in employment in Gaza. The United Nations report that, during the twenty years of the occupation, unemployment increased for the whole of the occupied territories. Israel had overall harnessed more Palestinian workers: while in 1970 only 11.9% of Palestinian workers were employed in Israel, in 1982 the share had increased to 37.8%. At the same time, the Occupied Territories experienced a decline in employment, from 88.1% in 1970 to 62.2% in 1983[338].

Land dispossession and water rights

In 1971, the Israeli Labour government led by Golda Meir started to implement its colonial project in the Occupied Territories, a project that, in the Strip, was destined to last until 2005. The project immediately appeared to be on a large scale, as it was envisaging the construction of settlements in agricultural military enclaves as much as in urban centres. Sarah Roy reports that since the occupation started, up until mid-1980s, Israel had taken, only in Gaza, over 1/3 of land[339], while the United Nations reports that in the period1977-1983, only in the Gaza Strip 11 new settlements were established[340]. Overall, by 1986, there were a total of 18 Israeli settlements in Gaza, inhabited by circa 2150 people[341]. The reversion of a significant portion of Gazan land to Israeli control inevitably resulted in a decrease in both inhabitable and workable land. Indeed, one of the major consequences of land expropriation was the shrinking of available cultivable land for Arab farmers. The presence of colonies would indeed prevent them from the exploitation even of those lands that were not directly state-controlled, overall, seriously hampering the possibility for the Strip to develop large-scale agriculture[342]. At times, the expropriation of land from Israeli settlers forced Palestinians to seek employment in settlements[343]. One major obstacle, both for economic development as much as for living conditions was the competition with Israeli settlers over water resources. Through the creation of the Israeli Water Commission – working both in Gaza and the West Bank – the Israeli government had taken full control over water allocation[344]. By the 1980s, the Israeli government had posed water restrictions on Palestinian farmers (due to high salinity in the water caused by over-pumping), but not on Israeli settlements inside the Strip, with Gaza's main water reserve being in the North of the Strip where several Israeli settlements were

[338] United Nations, "Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories.", 16.
[339] Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 60.
[340] United Nations, "Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories.", 8.
[341] Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 96.
[342] United Nations, "Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories.", 3.
[343] United Nations, 30.
[344] United Nations, 9.

located[345]. Overall, water consumption for Israeli settlers, both for domestic and agricultural purposes, exceeded that of Gazans. In the end, land confiscation and restriction of water rights damaged agricultural activities as well as living conditions[346].

Economic growth

Writing in 1977, Professor Elisha Efrat concluded that, until that moment, the Israeli occupation had improved the living standards of Gazans, while also boosting the Strip's economic development. The construction of new residential structures and road networks, as much as the establishment of new health institutions are within the achievements that, reached under the occupation, contributed to increased levels of living[347]. Furthermore, Professor Efrat recounted that unemployment for Gaza's workers in Israel decreased from 13% in 1968 to 1% in 1975[348]. In this regards, Sarah Roy has pointed out that the high under-registration of illegal workers has impacted the reliability of the unemployment rate, which resulted in being inaccurately low.[349] To try to assess whether Gaza's economy has improved, thus yielding greater living standards for its inhabitants in the period 1967-1987, the data presented in the following table will be analysed.

Table 5. Economic data on the Gaza Strip (1968-2005).

	GDP Annual Average (million $ 1994 prices)	GDP Growth Rates (Average annual % change)	GNP Per Capita Growth Rates (Average annual % change)	Employed in Israel (% of total employment)	Factor Income from Abroad (% of GDP)	Imports (% of GDP)	Exports (% of GDP)	GDP as % of Israel's GDP
1968-1972	199	11	18	17*	9	64	21	1.0
1973-1979	306	7	6	37	28	109	36	1.1
1980-1987	379	3	2	45	57	123	43	1.0
1989-1993	574	7	5	34	46	79	14	1.1
1994-1996	1042	2 **	- 9 **	6 **	7	68	4	1.6
1997-2000	1258	4	3	14	15	65	6	1.7
2001-2005	1166 ***	- 1 ***	- 7 ***	2	--	66	5	1.4

* For the years 1970-72 ** For the years 1995-96 *** For the years up to 2004

***Source*: Data from Arnon (2007)**

The most striking result is certainly that of the Gaza Strip's GDP as a percentage of Israel's GDP. As shown, despite some growth that has been registered in absolute GDP terms, Gaza's GDP as a percentage of Israel's GDP remained relatively stable throughout the period, not

[345] Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 82.
[346] See United Nations, "Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories", 10; Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 82-83.
[347] Efrat, "Settlement Pattern and Economic Changes of the Gaza Strip 1947-1977.", 355.
[348] Efrat, 355.
[349] Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 75.

showing a trend of consistent improvement relative to Israel's GDP. The GNP per capita grew since 1967[350], but showed significant decline over the periods, indicating that the average income per person was shrinking. Moreover, the reliance on employment in Israel constituted a substantial source of income from 1968 to 1993. Moreover, the potential for economic growth for Gaza is also limited by foreign trade patterns. Israel maintained control over trade protocols and unilaterally determined the terms of customs unions[351], which restricted the economic autonomy of the Gaza Strip. For example, while before 1967 Gaza's exports were mainly agricultural and mainly with Egypt, after 1967, trade with Egypt was interrupted. While Gaza was still exporting a mere percentage overseas, exports to Israel increased, making Israel Gaza's largest trading partner. On the other hand, Gaza almost exclusively imported from Israel[352]. As the table shows, imports remained high, indicating a dependency on external goods.

Education

Survey results from FAFO reveal that educational levels among Palestinians have generally improved, as number of educational facilities since 1967 also had increased. At the outset of the 1990s, more than 340 schools could be counted in the Gaza Strip[353]. This rise in literacy rates is matched by an increase in the number of school years completed by younger generations. Additionally, there has been a significant reduction in the gender gap in education, with girls attaining education levels comparable to boys. This progress is attributed to the period immediately following the occupation, when Palestinians became more confident in their ability to send their daughters to school[354]. However, advanced education for women continued to face resistance, as it is often viewed as an obstacle to marriage[355]. The traditional emphasis that Palestinians have put on education was strengthened after the 1948 and 1967 wars, as receiving education not only represented family pride but also an investment in economic security[356]. Higher educational attainment, however, failed to match available job

[350] See Roy, 72.
[351] See Arnon, "Israeli Policy towards the Occupied Palestinian Territories: The Economic Dimension, 1967-2007", 573-575; Naqib, "Economic Aspects of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: The Collapse of the Oslo Accord.", 6.
[352] United Nations, "Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories.", 28.
[353] Heiberg and Ovensen Geir, Palestinian Society in Gaza, West Bank and Arab Jerusalem : A Survey of Living Conditions., 133, 148.
[354] Heiberg and Ovensen Geir., 134-138
[355] Heiberg and Ovensen Geir., 131.
[356] Shadid and Seltzer, "Political Attitudes of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip", 17; Heiberg and Ovensen Geir, Palestinian Society in Gaza, West Bank and Arab Jerusalem : A Survey of Living Conditions, 131.

opportunities in the local labour market, an issue exacerbated by an educational system that prioritized semi-professional and professional knowledge[357]. Educational institutions are put under Israeli authority for the financing, firing, and hiring of personnel[358]. In the whole of the occupied Palestinian territories, Israeli authorities have often interfered with the proper course of education. Actions aimed at disturbing educational activities included attempts to alter curricula or censor books, as well as periodic closures of schools and universities. Universities and their students were particularly targeted. Teachers were expelled for their political views, dormitories were searched, access to facilities was restricted, and students were frequently arrested[359]. In the 1980s, Gaza had only one university, the Institute of Islamic Religious Studies. Consequently, these disruptions likely affected the West Bank more extensively during this period, as it had a greater number of educational institutions.

Access to Health

In 1985, the United Nations have stated that, at the time, it could not be claimed that accessibility and acceptability of health promotion activities were not met for the Arab population in Palestine[360]. During the 20 years since the beginning of the occupation, some improvements have indeed been made in the health infrastructure. The occupied territories saw the establishment of private clinics, government hospitals and UNRWA clinics well fairly distributed all over the territories[361]. UNRWA provided health services that were of particular importance for those living in camps and for refugees in Gaza[362]. On the other hand, medical care in the occupied territories lacked adequate funds and qualified personnel and suffered from poor equipment[363]. Moreover, a fundamental issue that prevented Palestinians from enjoying good healthcare was that many of them did not enjoy insurance coverage which makes it difficult to meet the high cost of hospitals given the income of the population[364]. According to the survey on the occupied territories carried out by FAFO in 1993, approximately 27% of the population had health insurance[365]. Furthermore, the psychological trauma experienced by

[357] Heiberg and Ovensen Geir, Palestinian Society in Gaza, West Bank and Arab Jerusalem : A Survey of Living Conditions, 25.
[358] Heiberg and Ovensen Geir, 132.
[359] United Nations, “Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories.”, 36-39.
[360] United Nations, 42.
[361] Heiberg and Ovensen Geir, Palestinian Society in Gaza, West Bank and Arab Jerusalem : A Survey of Living Conditions, 111.
[362] Heiberg and Ovensen Geir, 113.
[363] United Nations, “Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories.”, 42-44.
[364] United Nations, 42-44.
[365] Heiberg and Ovensen Geir, Palestinian Society in Gaza, West Bank and Arab Jerusalem: A Survey of Living Conditions, 117.

Palestinians should not be underestimated, as many have witnessed extreme situations involving death or the imminent threat of death due to military combat, imprisonment, and torture. The FAFO report [366], further registered that a significant portion of the population, including young people aged 15-30, reported high levels of distress, with only 26% of respondents indicating they experienced no symptoms at all. This distress was linked not only to general living conditions but also to the dynamics of the uprising[367] and the Israeli occupation. According to the Israel Information Centre, heightened water sanitation, food regulation and growing access to health services had contributed to the improvement of the health situation, as testified by the rise in life expectancy over all the occupied territories[368].

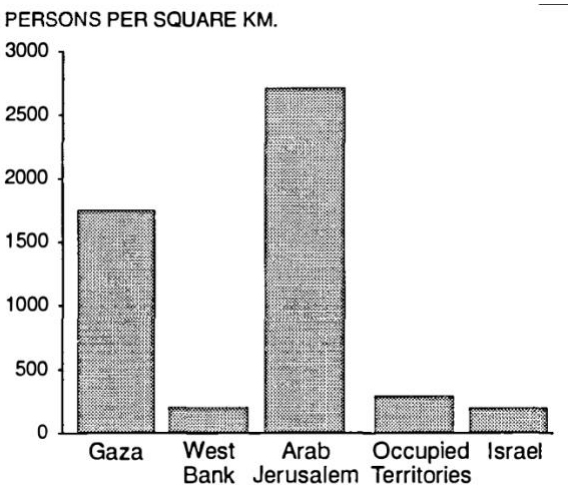
Housing

On the eve of the 1967 war, a population of more than 400.000 people was concentrated in an extremely small yet highly dense area. The Gaza Strip was already highly urbanized, with the majority of its population concentrated in the three main cities – Gaza, Khan Younis, and Rafah – which together accounted for up to 80% of the Strip's population[369]. The UNCTAD report illustrates the population in the three sub-districts of Gaza, Khan Younis and Deir el Balah[370]. As of 1985, the population density was 9,102 persons per square kilometre, slightly lower than the 1967 level of 10,256 persons per square kilometre, likely due to ongoing emigration It is thus evident that the Gaza Strip, which comprised less than 6% of the total area of the occupied territories but was home to 37% of its population[371], was already suffering from severe overcrowding. This issue was exacerbated by the high annual population growth rate, coupled with the decreasing availability of land due to the expansion of settlements. Overcrowding became a major issue after the 1967 war when construction slowed drastically, leading to a significant housing shortage. This shortage drove up rents, and with low incomes, living density increased. In contrast, newly built houses in Israeli settlements were much better equipped, featuring amenities like kitchens, bathrooms, toilets, and running water—luxuries

[366] Heiberg and Ovensen Geir, 123.
[367] The FAFO report was carried out during the First Intifada.
[368] Israel Information Centre, "Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District since 1967" (Jerusalem, 1986) quoted in Cohen-Almagor, "The Intifada: Causes, Consequences and Future Trends.", 17.
[369] Heiberg and Ovensen Geir, Palestinian Society in Gaza, West Bank and Arab Jerusalem: A Survey of Living Conditions, 24.
[370] Ennab, "Population and Demographic Development in The West Bank Amd Gaza Strip until 1990." See Appendix II, table 3.16.
[371] Heiberg and Ovensen Geir, Palestinian Society in Gaza, West Bank and Arab Jerusalem: A Survey of Living Conditions, 40.

not always guaranteed in Palestinian households[372]. Another factor contributing to overcrowding in the Gaza Strip was the large number of refugees residing there. A significant portion of the population consisted of 1948 refugees or their descendants, many of whom lived in densely populated refugee camps that gradually developed into villages or urban areas[373]. While in 1967 refugee camps in the Gaza Strip contained the greatest share of inhabitants (49.3%), in 1985 the population in refugee camps had dropped to 44.9 % while the urban population had risen to 47.4%, probably due to internal migration from refugee camps and villages to the few towns of the Gaza Strip[374]. The camps also experienced higher housing density. For instance, in 1985, the Khan Younis refugee camp had an average of 2.83 persons per room, with an average of 3.6 rooms for each household. In comparison, the average number of household rooms across the Gaza Strip was 4.3 in 1987, with circa 1.51 persons per room[375]. Overall, people living in refugee camps, which were largely considered urban slums, represented the most deprived segments of the population[376].

Figure 4. Comparative 1987 population density in the occupied territories and Israel



Marianne Heiberg and Geir Ovensen, *Palestinian Society in Gaza, West Bank and Arab Jerusalem: A Survey of Living Conditions,* FAFO, 1994, 40.

[372] United Nations, "Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories.", 12-13.
[373] See Abu-Lughod, "Demographic Consequences of the Occupation"; Heiberg and Ovensen Geir, Palestinian Society in Gaza, West Bank and Arab Jerusalem : A Survey of Living Conditions, 40.
[374] Ennab, "Population and Demographic Development in The West Bank Amd Gaza Strip until 1990.", 121.
[375] Ennab, 137-138.
[376] Heiberg and Ovensen, Palestinian Society in Gaza, West Bank and Arab Jerusalem : A Survey of Living Conditions, 25.

2.1.3.3 Degree of civil and political freedoms

The impact of Israel's presence in the Gaza Strip on the civil and political freedoms of its inhabitants can be understood through a comprehensive analysis of the interactions between various actors, events, and the typical behaviour of an occupying force focused on subjugating a population seeking independence. The post-1967 environment in Gaza was particularly complex. The military administration had been installed and, with it, a new form of Palestinian resistance began to emerge. As Rema Hammami and Salim Tamari recount, the Gaza Strip faced harsher treatment compared to the West Bank. The Israeli army had to confront an already active political space, developed under Nasserism, and the presence of the Palestinian Liberation Army (PLA), which led to an immediate and violent suppression of Palestinian resistance[377]. In 1964, during the Palestinian National Conference, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) emerged as the new representative of the liberation struggle. In 1967, after the disastrous defeat of the Six Days War, the PLO leadership advocated for irregular warfare over direct confrontation with Israel as a means to achieve Palestinian self-determination[378]. This idea was particularly sustained by the Fatah member Yasser Arafat. Head of the PLO, he belonged to the 1948-displaced generation of young men who got an education in Egypt and developed political ideas promoting the liberation of Palestine and the destruction of Israel[379]. The leadership of Arafat represented a turning point as the now Fatah-led institutions decided to move the centre of the armed struggle in the occupied territories, where other affiliated organisations also began to emerge[380]. The aim of the PLO was not only to develop a mass base of guerrilla fighters active on the whole territory, but also that of fostering resistance through acts of civil disobedience, including student demonstrations and boycotts of Israeli goods[381]. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Palestinian factions carried out international hijackings and attacks against Israel across the 'Green Line' [382]; attacks were also perpetrated from Gaza

[377] Hammami and Tamari, "Occupation Means For Territorial Ends: Rethinking Forty Years Of Israeli Rule.", 28.
[378] Ganor and Azani, "Terrorism in the Middle East.", 572.
[379] Cooley, "Arab Nationalism and the Rise of Fatah", 288; Ganor, Israel's Counterterrorism Strategy: Origins To The Present, 41.
[380] In the aftermath of the Six Days War, some secular, mostly left-wing, Marxist and anti-imperialism organizations began to emerge. Examples are the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine which split from the former. See Ganor and Azani, "Terrorism in the Middle East", 573; Ganor, Israel's Counterterrorism Strategy: Origins To The Present, 43; Partrick, "The PLO and the Arab States.", 316.
[381] Partrick, "The PLO and the Arab States", 317; Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 67.
[382] Ganor, Israel's Counterterrorism Strategy: Origins To The Present, 61; Cooley, "The Beginning of International Terrorism", 300; Partrick, "The PLO and the Arab States.", 317.

against military and civilian Israeli targets but also aimed at Palestinians who worked in Israel and suspected of cooperating with it[383]. The PLO established its headquarters in Jordan and then Lebanon. On September 17th, 1970, King Hussein sent his army to destroy the PLO strongholds in Jordan, an operation which continued up until July 1971, and that resulted in the death of thousands of Palestinian fighters[384]. These events would go down in history as the Black September. After its expulsion from Jordan, the PLO moved its headquarters to Lebanon, where it also began to step on the Beirut government authority. The increased presence of Palestinians in Lebanon – comprising both refugees and armed militias such as the PLO and Fatah, with thousands of fedayeen[385], heightened tensions with the Maronite Christians. The increasing tensions between the two factions culminated in the outbreak of the 1975 Lebanese Civil War. The war's conclusion effectively "divided" Lebanon, with areas such as West Beirut and Southern Lebanon falling under the control of Palestinian organizations[386]. In these territories, the PLO established infrastructures that went beyond military units and training camps, incorporating also civilian administrative offices, overall developing a "state within a state"[387] (Ganor and Azani, 574).

Because the PLO operated from the outside, the Israeli government tended to see Palestinian nationalism more as an external threat and thought about the Palestinian people as rather idle[388]. Following the Yom Kippur War of 1973 the Israeli government implemented a series of measures aimed at making Palestinians believe that the price of resistance would be high. On these premises, General Ariel Sharon initiated a set of punitive policies that targeted the whole population of the Strip. These included curfews, dissolution of local administrations, demolition of suspected militants' homes, and the deportation of approximately 12,000 relatives of suspected guerrillas to detention camps in the Sinai Desert[389]. The refugee camps, especially Shaati, Jabalya, and Rafah, known for their support of the resistance, faced particularly brutal reprisals, including violent raids and bulldozing. It is recorded that 2500 to 7000 houses were demolished in Jabalya, Rafah and Shati camps from July 1971 onwards and

[383] Ganor, Israel's Counterterrorism Strategy: Origins To The Present, 46.
[384] Partrick, "The Black September Organization.", 305.
[385] See Travaglio, Israele e i Palestinesi in Poche Parole, 65.
[386] Ganor and Azani, "Terrorism in the Middle East.", 574.
[387] Ganor and Azani, "Terrorism in the Middle East.", 574.
[388] Hammami and Tamari, "Occupation Means For Territorial Ends: Rethinking Forty Years Of Israeli Rule.", 28.
[389] Filiu, Gaza: A History, 141; Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 67.

up to 16.000 refugees were displaced between the North of Sinai and the West Bank[390]. The destruction of buildings was functional for the construction of wider roads inside the camps to facilitate and regain control of the area considered the hotspot of guerrilla warfare. Overall, due to the density and scale of attacks of these raids, it resulted that most casualties were civilians[391]. In 1980, Menachem Begin's government further escalated measures by conducting mass arrests and deportations, blocking external funds to Palestinian municipalities, temporarily closing universities, and imposing extensive press bans in both Gaza and the West Bank[392].

In this context, the level and nature of civilian participation in the resistance varied significantly across different segments of the population. A landmark survey conducted in 1986 by professors Mohammed Shadid and Rick Seltzer, revealed that many Palestinians in both the West Bank and Gaza believed that armed struggle, rather than civil disobedience, was the most effective means of achieving their goal of liberation[393]. A substantial portion of the militant resistance consisted of students, intellectuals and professionals, who were more likely to express radical views[394]. However, another significant portion of respondents emphasized the concept of *sumud* ("steadfastness"). This concept, while not explicitly rejecting the use of force, focused on resisting occupation by remaining in the occupied territories and developing social, economic, educational, and cultural institution[395]. In 1981, the establishment of the civil administration in the Gaza Strip meant that Israeli authorities had now responsibility over sectors such as health, education, and overall welfare[396]. This passage marked a controversial shift for Gazans who, directly or indirectly, witnessed a new degree of subjugation and dependence on Israel. Under this new system, the Israeli government not only controlled critical infrastructure, including electricity, roads, and water[397], but also wielded power over essential bureaucratic functions, such as issuing health insurance, work and travel permits,

[390]Filiu, Gaza: A History, 141-142; Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation", 67; Shachar, The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics: From the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009, 80-81.
[391] Partrick, "Israeli Raids on the PLO", 324; Ganor, Israel's Counterterrorism Strategy: Origins To The Present, 46.
[392] Hammami and Tamari, "Occupation Means For Territorial Ends: Rethinking Forty Years Of Israeli Rule", 30; Ganor, Israel's Counterterrorism Strategy: Origins To The Present, 76.
[393] Shadid and Seltzer, "Political Attitudes of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.", 28.
[394] Shadid and Seltzer, 28; Ryan, "The West Bank and Gaza: Political Consequences of Occupation.", 5.
[395] Shadid and Seltzer, "Political Attitudes of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip", 28; Nakhleh, "The West Bank and Gaza: Twenty Years Later.", 213-214.
[396] Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 70.
[397] Heiberg and Ovensen Geir, Palestinian Society in Gaza, West Bank and Arab Jerusalem : A Survey of Living Conditions., 28.

building permits, and school certificates, which were necessary for daily life[398]. As Rema Hammami and Salim Tamari describe, “much political suppression took place not through the visible threat of deportation, house or town arrest, but through the threat of bureaucratic disenfranchisement”[399]. Moreover, Gazans were deprived of political rights and lacked genuine agency. As "non-citizens," Palestinians in Gaza did not have voting rights, and their municipal mayors were appointed by the Israeli authorities. Unlike the West Bank, where the Israeli government permitted municipal elections to diminish the influence of the PLO in the occupied territories[400], Gazans were only allowed to vote in 1994 following the Oslo Agreements. The rights of trade unions were also violated through raids and the forced closure of their headquarters[401]. Restrictions on freedom of movement and assembly, notably through the imposition of frequent curfews, severely impacted business activities, education, and religious practices, hindering social and cultural development[402]. The United Nations have also reported that Palestinians faced imprisonment and incarceration without trial and were often deported for political reasons[403]. Additionally, there were documented cases of harassment by armed settlers attempting to seize Palestinian homes, often with the acquiescence of the military. Students also were accused of participating in the demonstration. The combination of these factors significantly contributed to a pervasive sense of frustration, resentment, and fear in everyday life for Palestinians in Gaza[404].

2.1.4 Review of living conditions: 1967-1987

The analysis of the Strip’s demographic trends may yield some early results about living standards. Between 1967 and 1987, fertility rates remained consistently high, with only minor fluctuations. High fertility rates are often linked to societies where socio-economic progress is limited. However, it is important to note that while Gaza's fertility rates were elevated, they were not exceptionally so when compared to regional or similar cultural trends. Indeed, by 1987, Middle Eastern and Muslim countries still exhibited high fertility rates, while rates were

[398] Hammami and Tamari, “Occupation Means For Territorial Ends: Rethinking Forty Years Of Israeli Rule.”, 28.
[399] Hammami and Tamari, 28.
[400] Hammami and Tamari, 29.
[401] United Nations, “Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories”, 36; Ryan, “The West Bank and Gaza: Political Consequences of Occupation.”, 7.
[402] United Nations, “Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories.”, 31-33.
[403] United Nations, 30-31.
[404] United Nations, 30-31.

declining in advanced economies[405]. Nevertheless, Arabs living in Israel had lower fertility rates than those in Gaza and the West Bank, suggesting that a more secular environment, better opportunities for economic growth – at least when compared to the occupied territories – and improved living standards might have led to lower fertility rates. Traditional, religious, and patriarchal family and social structures also played a significant role in maintaining high fertility rates. At the same time, improvements in living standards over the period can be observed through decreasing mortality rates. Access and availability of health services did increase during the observed period, particularly in the Gaza Strip thanks to UNRWA's efforts. While better health standards may have contributed to higher birth rates due to safer protocols, the persistently high fertility rates among Gazan women can still be linked to the occupation for at least two main reasons. First, Gazan women's weaponization of demography. During civil conflicts, it is common for the weaker side to increase fertility rates to preserve their population over time[406]. Hence, faced with dispossession, displacement and high levels of outmigration, Palestinians sought to resist annihilation by increasing their numbers. A 1987 study by A. Dahlan found that 42.5% of married women in Khan Younis believed that the population should increase to compensate for those lost in the struggle against the occupier[407]. The second reason is that, despite the initial increase in economic prosperity, Gaza did not experience sustained economic development, and thus possibilities of social mobility remained low. While Palestinian women became more involved in the labor force due to economic integration, the lack of available skilled jobs often confined them to traditional roles, hindering their economic and social emancipation. Indeed, the Gazan integration into the Israeli economy does not seem to have brought appreciable levels of economic development. Although periods of economic growth in absolute terms have been registered (as seen in the rising GDP figures displayed in Table 5), the overall economy of Gaza remained rather stagnant. As Sarah Roy clarifies, while employment in Israel resulted in Gazans earning relatively high income, such earnings were mostly spent on Israeli goods due to import regulations. As a result, the limited economic prosperity that was achieved did not benefit or stimulate the local Gazan economy because it was not generated or invested locally[408]. Moreover, the radical change in the

[405] To see comparisons between advanced economies and Middle Eastern and Muslim countries, see Ennab, "Population and Demographic Development in The West Bank Amd Gaza Strip until 1990.", 57.
[406] See Giordano, "Youth Bulge Dynamics in the Mediterranean Region: The Geopolitical Implications of Human Capital on Security and Stability.", 112.
[407] A. Dahlan, "Population Characteristics and Settlement Changes in the Gaza Strip" (University of Durham, 1987), 177-179, quoted in Ennab, "Population and Demographic Development in The West Bank Amd Gaza Strip until 1990.", 57.
[408] Roy, "The Gaza Strip: Critical Effects of the Occupation.", 98.

economic structure and occupational patterns due to integration with the Israeli economy had negative impacts on unemployment levels. In Israel, employment for Gazans increased until 1987 (see Table 5), yet those jobs primarily exploited Palestinians as a cheap labor reserve without providing decent working conditions or benefits. In Gaza, the shift of labour towards Israel resulted in increased unemployment rates. Unemployment levels were exacerbated by Gaza's extremely young age structure: by 1987, individuals under 15 made up the largest proportion of the population. This high number of dependents increased dependency ratios, placing a greater economic burden on the working-age population. Additionally, a significant portion of the population was young people (15-24), who were becoming increasingly educated. However, the problem was that higher education levels did not align with the limited blue-collar jobs available, and the educational training provided did not match the needs of the local labor market. As Boaz Ganor notes, the rise in secondary and higher education led to frustration because, upon graduating, many young people found themselves either unemployed or employed in Israel, yet in manual labor jobs that did not require the professional skills they had acquired[409]. The frustration of the youth was compounded by a sense of humiliation, particularly experienced by those working in Israel, who were exposed to the stark contrast in living standards compared to their Israeli peers, who often behaved hostilely, further fueling resentment[410]. Furthermore, the lack of economic development can be also attributed to specific actions and policies implemented by the Israeli government. As reported, Israeli authorities often targeted Arab businesses with measures such as disadvantageous taxes or curfews that disrupted business activities. Additionally, they also proceeded with land deprivation and control over water resources, which overall tremendously impacted economic activities. This situation was exacerbated by the establishment of Jewish colonies, which further deprived Gazans of land and water. Restrictions on political and social activities also played a crucial role in hindering Gaza's social and economic development. The Israeli occupation severely restricted the civil and political rights of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and imposed harsh punitive measures targeting the whole population. The presence of settlers harassing Gazans and appropriating their land, with the tacit complicity of the Israeli army, further contributed to the frustration, resentment, and fear among the Palestinian population. The political environment was one of resistance, but the leadership of the PLO was distant and, after the

[409] Ganor, Israel's Counterterrorism Strategy: Origins To The Present., 95.
[410] Ganor, 94.

1982 Lebanon war, weakened, losing legitimacy and support, especially among the younger generation, who became increasingly disillusioned with their political leaders.

2.1.5 The display of grievances: the First Intifada

By the end of 1987, the tension among Palestinians was high. On December 8, 1987, an Israeli truck crashed into a vehicle carrying Palestinian workers in the north of the Gaza Strip. Assuming that the accident was an intentional response to the stabbing of an Israeli man in a market of Gaza, which had happened a day earlier, protests broke out in the Jabalya camp, but soon were harshly and deadly repressed by the Israeli army. On December 9, 1987, the riots continued and resulted in what would be the first Intifada, the Arabic word for 'uprising'[411]. One of the striking features of the first Intifada is that the revolts emerged in an unorganized manner[412]. While it is argued that the spark of the riots may be attributed to some members of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), no proper political or armed organization was deemed as directly responsible for its beginning[413].

Frustrations originating from low socio-economic conditions shall not be regarded as the sole cause of the Intifada. In the survey conducted both in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by Shadid and Seltzer in 1986, the majority of respondents believed that their socio-economic conditions had not improved in the previous 5 years. At the same time, to the question as to whether they thought that hostilities were stemming from poverty and harsh conditions, the majority of respondents answered that it was rather the political struggle for independence that would justify violence[414]. Political activism might have indeed played an important role in building up to the Intifada. As Leila Farsakh recalls, the years preceding the uprisings were characterised by emerging social and political activism, especially among the students[415]. Moreover, the Palestinian uprising demonstrated an unprecedented level of mass mobilization across all social strata and strong cooperation among the population, who had developed a heightened political consciousness under the occupation, particularly after realizing that the PLO could not provide

[411] See Rathmell, "The Palestinian Intifada", 342; Omer-man, "The Accident That Sparked an Intifada."
[412] Abu-Amr, "The Palestinian Uprising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip", 384; Naser-Najjab, "Palestinian Leadership and the Contemporary Significance of the First Intifada.", 62.
[413] Abu-Amr, "The Palestinian Uprising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip", 384; Ganor, Israel's Counterterrorism Strategy: Origins To The Present, 96.
[414] Shadid and Seltzer, "Political Attitudes of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.", 21.
[415] Farsakh, "Commemorating the Naksa, Evoking the Nakba.", 16.

external support[416]. Brian Barber reports that large proportions of young people, including children and adolescents (males and females), were directly involved in various forms of civil disobedience, indicating considerable levels of awareness and commitment to the goal of the Intifada[417]. However, another research carried out by the Israeli army on Palestinian detainees during the 1987 revolts, found that most of them had no previous experience as political activists. While only a minority of respondents were students, most were young workers aged between 20 and 30 who emphasized the sense of injustice they felt, particularly while working in Israel. Their grievances originated from unfair pay, denial of social rights, insults, and daily humiliation by Israeli police during searches[418]. At the same time, Raphael Cohen-Almagor reports that many activists who participated in the uprising were trained while being imprisoned by Israel[419]. Overall, the Intifada was driven primarily by the youth who had grown up under occupation, frustrated not only by damaging Israeli policies but also by the failures of their own political leadership. It arose from a combination of interrelated factors, including political aspirations and anger over worsening living conditions, but was ultimately a direct response to the realities of the occupation. The participation of the "occupation generation" could also be detected by the fact that most deaths, injuries, and imprisonments did occur predominantly among the youth[420]. Concerning the leadership of the uprising, the PLO only later became involved in directing the Intifada, due to its presence in the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU), which would give directives for strikes, civil disobedience and confrontations[421]. On the other hand, Islamic groups such as Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) were slowly beginning to fill the vacuum left by PLO's gradual decline while becoming more appealing to the youth [422]. Although later assuming a more prominent role in the organisation of riots and in proper attacks, the newly emerged Islamist organisations had no distinctive role in the breakout of the uprisings, which did not emerge from a mass of armed and organized young people. However, it would not be accurate to state that the Intifada was entirely non-violent. Indeed, as the protests escalated, rioters started to resort to Molotov cocktails, explosives and stone-throwing. Additionally, some armed groups were responsible

[416] Abu-Amr, "The Palestinian Uprising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip", 385-387; Darweish, "The Intifada: Social Change.", 49.
[417] Barber, "Political Violence, Social Integration, and Youth Functioning: Palestinian Youth from the Intifada.", 260.
[418] Zeev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, Intifada (Tel Aviv: Shocken, 1990) 73-75 quoted in Cohen-Almagor, "The Intifada: Causes, Consequences and Future Trends.", 20.
[419] Cohen-Almagor, 21.
[420] Darweish, "The Intifada: Social Change.", 57.
[421] Darweish, "The Intifada: Social Change.", 49.
[422] See Levitt, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad.

for carrying out attacks as the uprisings progressed. Nevertheless, the Intifada is notable for being a wide, civilian-based armed resistance involving all social strata and introducing new forms of engagement in the liberation struggle, particularly through acts of civil disobedience such as demonstrations, refusal to pay taxes, strikes, and interruption of curfews[423]. The largely civil and unarmed nature of these popular uprisings, which showcased the strength of grassroots mobilization led by the youth who evolved in the years preceding 1987, emphasized the predominantly non-violent character of the uprisings[424].

This chapter has explored pivotal events that shaped the early stages of the Israeli-Palestinian issue and that set the groundwork for the socio-economic and demographic realities of the Gaza Strip until 1967, when the Israeli occupation began. The effects of the occupation on the living conditions of Gazans have been analysed, revealing that, by 1987, Gaza's population was predominantly young, with children making up the largest share. While the economy initially experienced some growth, it eventually stagnated. Additionally, political and civil rights were significantly curtailed due to Israeli policies and the expansion of settlements, contributing to widespread grievances by 1987. As shown, the political violence that erupted in 1987 was largely fueled by the frustration of a new generation raised under occupation, who now found themselves at the forefront of the fight for independence. While armed groups like Hamas eventually joined in, introducing an organised violent aspect to the uprising, the protests were primarily characterised by young civilians expressing their discontent with the occupation through acts of civil disobedience. The aftermath of the First Intifada and the emergence of Hamas as a political actor will be analysed in Chapter 3.

[423] Darweish, “The Intifada: Social Change”, 53; Rathmell, “The Palestinian Intifada.”, 342.
[424] Hammami and Tamari, “Occupation Means For Territorial Ends: Rethinking Forty Years Of Israeli Rule”, 16; Naser-Najjab, “Palestinian Leadership and the Contemporary Significance of the First Intifada.”, 62.

3 From the Intifadas to Hamas Governance: Socio-Political Transitions and Living Conditions in the Gaza Strip

Starting from the aftermath of the first Intifada, this chapter's first aim is to examine the socio-economic landscape and the political environment that defined the transitional period from the onset of the Oslo Agreements in 1993 to the outbreak of the second Intifada in 2000. This analysis will be guided by the premise that the eruption of political violence may be linked to deteriorating living standards. In this chapter, the focus will also include the rise of Hamas as a significant political force within the Palestinian context and its role during the second Palestinian uprising. In this sense, the goal is to explore how Hamas's influence has developed up to 2006, the year in which the Islamist movement won the Palestinian Authority's first democratic elections. The last section of this chapter will examine the living conditions of the Strip's population in the time-period 2006-2023. This analysis will thus consider how the situation has evolved since Hamas assumed power, and how its periodical violent confrontations with Israel, combined with the latter's economic restrictions on the Strip, have impacted life in Gaza up to the present-day.

3.1 From the first to the second Intifada

3.1.1 From Oslo to al-Aqsa

From the Israeli perspective, the first Intifada represented a major unexpected crisis that required harsh mobilisation in different forms. In the first weeks after the outbreak of the uprising, the Israeli army chief believed that punitive measures would lead to the acquittance of the revolts in the short term, creating a deterrent for Palestinians not to act in such a way for the future[425]. This approach included the "policy of beating", which predicted that Israeli soldiers in disguise joined demonstrations to then clash with protesters[426]. This hard-handed approach predictably led to numerous Palestinian causalities, but also to the international condemnation of the disproportionate use of force. Hence, new measures comprised administrative actions – already experienced by Palestinians way before 1987 – which included

[425] Ganor, Israel's Counterterrorism Strategy: Origins To The Present, 98-99.
[426] Ganor, 99.

detentions, demolition of houses and deportations of those participating or accused of participating in the protests[427]. At the same time, while the adoption of less aggressive measures by the Israeli government helped reduce civil unrest, armed attacks by organised groups belonging to Hamas, the PIJ, and nationalist forces began to rise. Hamas's involvement in the first Intifada further increased its visibility and influence, as the group began to attract individuals from various social strata by intertwining religious objectives with nationalist propaganda[428]. Additionally, Hamas capitalized on the "mosque youth" movement that emerged during this era—young people, mostly born after 1967, who were eager to engage in resistance activities[429]. Indeed, despite still evolving, Hamas's organizational structure included a youth division aimed at maximizing participation in protests and ensuring the delivery of basic services amid curfews and closures. Such wing, which mainly consisted of young men under the age of 18, was for instance tasked with ensuring that educational activities continued despite restrictions[430]. Inasmuch as the first Intifada provided a crucial platform for emerging Islamist groups like Hamas to recruit disaffected youths, it is however important to recognize that the 1987 uprising did not mark the beginning of a widespread increase in religious fundamentalism across Palestine, nor did it represent the peak of Hamas's influence among Palestinians. Two key points may support this view: first, as the FAFO survey shows, rather than an increase in Islamic fundamentalism across Palestine, there was a growing polarisation between religious and secular trends[431]. Secondly, public support for Hamas, while on the rise, was not overwhelmingly high. Sarah Roy reports that, by 1991, although support for Hamas was broader in Gaza than in the West Bank, it remained a minority movement [432]. It is therefore crucial to examine the aftermath of the first Intifada and the peace process leading up to the outbreak of the Second Intifada to understand the rise in Hamas's popularity. By 1991, the first Intifada was going towards is exhaustion. The moral of the people in the Occupied Territories was heavily hit not only by the Israeli repression, but also by economic hardships. Loss in working days due to strikes, closures and curfews, combined with the fact that Israel reduced the number of Palestinian workers on its soil by more than 25%, were the price that Palestinian had to pay for their revolt[433]. For Gaza, three years after the 1987 uprising began,

[427] Ganor, 102; Nakhleh, "The West Bank and Gaza: Twenty Years Later.", 214.
[428] Frisch, "Hamas: The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood", 92.
[429] Ḥarūb, Hamas : Political Thought and Practice, 38.
[430] Chehab, "Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of Militants, Martyrs and Spies.", 30-31.
[431] Heiberg and Ovensen Geir, Palestinian Society in Gaza, West Bank and Arab Jerusalem: A Survey of Living Conditions, 28-29.
[432] Roy, "The Political Economy of Despair: Changing Political and Economic Realities in the Gaza.", 65.
[433] Rathmell, "The Palestinian Intifada", 344; Cohen-Almagor, "The Intifada: Causes, Consequences and Future Trends.", 21.

the GNP had dropped by minimum 30%[434]. This decline was mainly due to reduced output in all sectors except agriculture, decreased trade with Israel, and a significant loss of income from jobs in Israel[435]. This loss was particularly severe for Gaza, where well over half of the labour force depended on jobs in Israel[436]. Peace talks between Israel and the PLO began during the 1991 Madrid Conference, where for the first time discussions on the establishment of a Palestinian state were occurring, with the PLO shifting towards the idea of a two-state solution. However, the Oslo peace process, which emerged from these talks, would prove to be a difficult path that ultimately ended in failure. In 1993, the first round of the Oslo Agreements resulted in the Declaration of Principles, according to which the PLO and Israel mutually recognised each other's existence. In 1994, Oslo II established the Palestinian Authority (PA) as an autonomous governing body led by the PLO for the Palestinian territories. By 1995, the PA was granted control over three designated areas within the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It had full civil and security authority in Area A, civil authority with Israeli military oversight in Area B, while Area C remained entirely under Israeli control. To understand the conditions that eventually led to the failure of the peace process, fostered the breakout of the second Intifada, and eventually led to the gradual rise of Hamas as a political actor, it is necessary to go through the socio-economic conditions and the political environment that marked the time-period 1993-2000.

3.1.1.1 Socio-economic conditions

The signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993 not only raised hopes for Palestinian statehood but also for economic growth and improved living standards[437]. This optimism stemmed from the Palestinian Authority's (PA) promise to implement policies more favourable to the local economy (bolstered by financial commitments from donor countries); additionally, there also was an expectation that Israel would adopt more cooperative policies toward the Palestinians[438]. However, the aftermath of the agreements was quickly overshadowed by political developments that undermined these commitments. Due to Israel's security concerns, new restrictions were imposed on the movement of goods, labour, and people between the

[434] Roy,"The Political Economy of Despair: Changing Political and Economic Realities in the Gaza.", 61.
[435] Roy, 61.
[436] Roy, 61.
[437] Shaban, "Worsening Economic Outcomes since 1994 Despite Elements of Improvement.", 17.
[438] Shaban, 17.

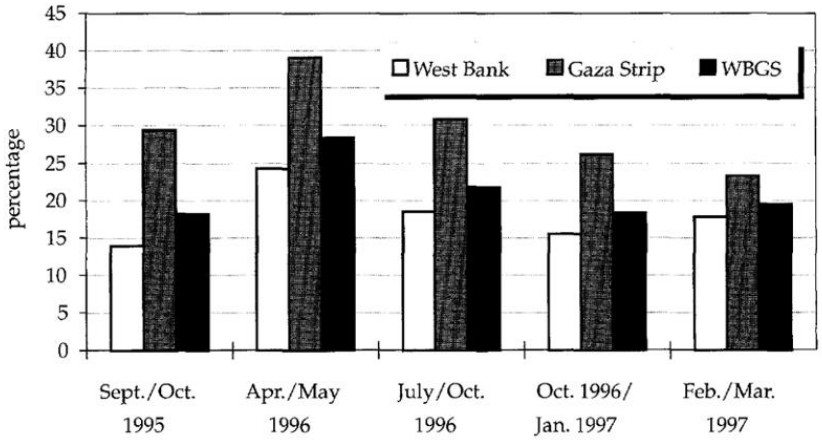
territories[439]. A 1999 report signed by the World Bank in collaboration with the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute reported Public opinion polls from June 1994 and showed that about 31% of the population in the West Bank and 45% in Gaza believed their conditions would improve because of the peace process – however, by March 1995, between 40% and 52% of respondents reported that their living conditions had actually deteriorated[440].

The Protocol on Economic Relations signed in 1994 between the PLO and the Israeli government[441] anticipated that Israel would continue to employ a significant number of Palestinian workers. However, the period following the Oslo Agreements was marked by rising political tensions and the first armed attacks by Palestinian groups. While the specifics of this period will be discussed in the next section, it is important to note that due to growing political and security concerns, Israel began issuing fewer work permits and increasingly implemented border closures[442]. As a result, within four years after 1994, the number of Palestinians employed in Israel dropped by more than 1/5 of the available Palestinian labour force[443]. To grasp the extent of such reduction, it is necessary to consider that that in 1992, an average of 116.000 Palestinians worked in Israel, but by 1996, this number had shrunk to 28.100[444]. This decline was due to both reduced work permits and frequent border closures, which in 1996, were enforced for about a third of the year[445]. Meanwhile, Israel compensated for the decreased Palestinian labour by bringing in workers from Eastern Europe and South Asia[446]. For Palestinians, this shift meant a significant loss of income, as employment levels were highly dependent on border access. Unemployment rates averaged around 20% when the borders were open but soared to 30% during closures[447], highlighting the vulnerability of the Palestinian labour market to these restrictions. Observing figure 5, it is evident that from 1995 to 1997, the Gaza Strip consistently faced higher unemployment rates than the West Bank. In April and May 1996, Gaza's unemployment rate peaked at around 40%, likely a result of a series of suicide bombings originating from Gaza, which led Israel to further restrict movement and reduce work

[439] Arnon, "Israeli Policy towards the Occupied Palestinian Territories: The Economic Dimension, 1967-2007.", 586.
[440] Shaban, "Worsening Economic Outcomes since 1994 Despite Elements of Improvement.". 17.
[441] The Protocol on Economic Relations signed in 1994 between the PLO and the Israeli government is also known as the "Paris Protocol".
[442] Diwan and Shaban, "Introduction and Background.", 5.
[443] Diwan and Shaban, 5.
[444] Shaban, "Worsening Economic Outcomes since 1994 Despite Elements of Improvement.". 25.
[445] Diwan and Shaban, 5.
[446] Diwan and Shaban, 6; Roy, "The Political Economy of Despair: Changing Political and Economic Realities in the Gaza.", 59.
[447] Stiglitz, "Foreword.", xi.

permits[448]. Conversely, during periods like July to October 1996, the unemployment rate in Gaza dropped below 30%. The reduction in unemployment rate suggest that towards the end of the 1990s Israel started to allow more movement of workers[449]. However, during the whole period (1995-1997), unemployment rate in Gaza remained relatively high compared to the West Bank.

Figure 5. Unemployment Rate Fluctuates Widely in the WBGS



Radwan A. Shaban, "Worsening Economic Outcomes Since 1994 Despite Elements of Improvement" in *Development under adversity: the Palestinian economy in transition,* The World Bank, 1999, 24.

Radwan Shaban reports that data from PCBS indicated that real GDP for both the West Bank and Gaza Strip declined by 12% in 1995 and a further 6% in 1996, while real GNP per capita decreased by 10% in 1995 and an additional 7% in 1996[450]. Notably, the decline in real per capita consumption was much sharper in the West Bank, whereas in the Gaza Strip, real per capita expenditure remained relatively stable – as a result, living standards declined more significantly in the West Bank[451]. Shaban also emphasizes that one of the most severe economic outcomes in the Occupied Territories since 1993 was the rise in poverty levels, primarily due to worsening labour market conditions. By the end of 1995, roughly 20% of the population in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip was living in poverty[452]. However, poverty was more

[448] Frisch, "Hamas: The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood.", 93.
[449] Arnon, "Israeli Policy towards the Occupied Palestinian Territories: The Economic Dimension, 1967-2007.", 587.
[450] Shaban, "Worsening Economic Outcomes since 1994 Despite Elements of Improvement.", 26.
[451] Shaban, 21.
[452] Shaban, 21.

widespread in the Gaza Strip, where over 1/3 of the population was classified as poor, compared to the West Bank, where about 10% of the population was living in poverty. Since 1995, the poverty situation deteriorated even more[453].

Furthermore, even after the establishment of the PA, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank remained highly depended on Israel. Indeed, in addition to their reliance on the Israeli labour market, the Occupied Territories also began to depend on Israel for public sector funding. According to the Paris Protocol, Israel was responsible for transferring various funds to the PA, including revenues from Palestinian taxes, excluding external aid[454]. However, following a series of bombings by Palestinian armed groups in the summer of 1997, the Israeli government, contrary to the agreement's terms, voted to withhold the tax revenues it had collected on behalf of the Palestinians, hence exploiting the control it had on such funds in a coercive manner[455]. Furthermore, the customs unions were still imposed, meaning that Palestinians continued to pay Israeli prices for major consumer goods[456]. Moreover, under Oslo – and perhaps as a direct response to ongoing violence – the demolition of Palestinian houses, especially in the West Bank, continued. Additionally, Palestinians continued to face restrictions on their freedom of movement, as they remained dependent on Israel to issue travel permits[457]. Meanwhile, population growth in all Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories along the period 1990-2000 was twice the rate of natural increase[458]. It has been reported that between 1993 and 2000, the number of Israeli settlers increased by at least 117% in Gaza and 46% in the West Bank[459]. By 2000, Israeli authorities still controlled 20% of the Gaza Strip and 59% of the West Bank, indicating that the Oslo process ultimately resulted in very limited territorial concessions[460].

[453] Shaban, 21.
[454] Arnon, 588; Pressman, "The Second Intifada: Background and Causes of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.", 120.
[455] Arnon, "Israeli Policy towards the Occupied Palestinian Territories: The Economic Dimension, 1967-2007.", 588.
[456] Pressman, "The Second Intifada: Background and Causes of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.", 120.
[457] Pressman, 121.
[458] Klein, "The Intifada: The Young Generation in the Front.", 47.
[459] Pressman, "The Second Intifada: Background and Causes of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.", 120.
[460] Pressman, 120.

3.1.1.2 Political environment

In 1994, when Arafat returned to govern the Occupied Territories, the PLO leadership regained some level of consensus, being now able to potentially challenge Hamas. Resulting from the creation of the PA, external aid led to initial improvements in Gaza, notably visible through the remodelling of its urban landscape[461]. Simultaneously, Hamas continued to benefit from a robust infrastructure network in the Strip[462]. Despite this, the PA remained the dominant political and military force, even in Gaza[463]. The deterioration of the relationship between Hamas and Fatah mainly stemmed from the former's rejection of the peace process. With the signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993, Arafat not only recognized Israel's existence but also renounced to terrorism and committed to cooperating against it, which Hamas saw as a betrayal[464]. Initially, however, the Islamist organisation opted to submit to the PA's authority while avoiding direct confrontation with Fatah and maintaining some degree of public support[465]. Beginning in 1993, the PIJ and Hamas began to use suicide bombings to disturb and oppose to the peace process[466]. Notably, in 1994 a suicide bombing attack was carried out in Hadera, to sabotage the creation of the PA, while the year 1996 witnessed an intense wave of Hamas suicide bombings[467]. These attacks caused significant confusion within the Israeli domestic arena, leading to political consequences that included the weakening of the Labour Party under Shimon Peres and the rise of the Likud party, which eventually brought Benjamin Netanyahu to the position of Prime Minister in 1996[468].

At this juncture, it may be pertinent to examine the level of support for Hamas among the civilian population, particularly in light of its disruptive role in the peace process and considering that such attacks did result in economic sanctions from Israel. According to Hillel Frisch, Palestinian polling data from the 1990s indicated that only 20% of respondents felt

[461] Shachar, The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics: From the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009, 4.
[462] Shachar, 5.
[463] Frisch, "Hamas: The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood.", 93.
[464] Frisch, "Hamas: The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood", 93; Rathmell, "Palestinian Terrorist Groups After 1988", 346; Ganor, Israel's Counterterrorism Strategy: Origins To The Present, 127; Mehr, "Hamas - How Has a Terrorist Organization Become a Political Power?", 25.
[465] Klein, "Hamas in Power.", 444.
[466] Ganor and Azani, "Terrorism in the Middle East", 581; Ganor, Israel's Counterterrorism Strategy: Origins To The Present, 129.
[467] Shachar, The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics: From the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009, 5; Frisch, "Hamas: The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood.", 92.
[468] Ḥarūb, Hamas : Political Thought and Practice, 245.

represented by Hamas, likely due to the group's absence from the 1994 elections and its failure to function as a legitimate opposition[469]. Moreover, Hamas's persistent rejection with the peace process eventually pushed the most optimistic followers away[470]. Furthermore, the growing restrictions on access to the Israeli labour market likely overshadowed the benefits provided by Hamas's social services[471]. Overall, a survey reported by Ben-Zion Mehr indicated that by 1996, only 15% of the population supported Hamas, although internal surveys also revealed widespread perceptions of corruption within the PLO[472].

The violence of the 1990s, primarily instigated by Hamas along with the PIJ and the PFLP, significantly strained the relationship between the PLO and Israel, resulting in a cycle of mutual retaliation that persisted until 2000. Throughout this period, Israel maintained its occupation of the Palestinian territories and did not extend full rights to the Palestinian population, while accusing Arafat for allegedly failing to effectively curb the violence[473]. As Jeremy Pressman has underlined, this situation fostered a classic security dilemma, where both sides perceived each other as the aggressor while viewing their own actions as purely defensive[474]. Israel's objective was to deter violence and compel the Palestinians to cease their attacks, with the Israeli army focusing on gaining control of Area A. Meanwhile, Israeli plans were also calling for an economic blockade and the arrest of PA officials, while settlers in the West Bank were increasingly being armed[475]. On the Palestinian side, preparations for violence were also underway, particularly among factions associated with Fatah. The prevailing belief was that the armed struggle could enhance the Palestinian bargaining position[476]. In this context, Hamas's attacks had a dual impact: not only they hardened Israel's security stance and led to more stringent retaliatory measures, but it also increased public frustration with Israel and the peace process. This growing dissatisfaction made it even more challenging for the Palestinian Authority to justify any concessions in the negotiation process[477]. When the Camp David Summit in 2000 marked the collapse of the Oslo process, it became clear that Israel was unwilling to lift existing restrictions, and Arafat failed to secure a compromise, being perceived as uncooperative in the negotiations. After the failure of Oslo, the PLO-led Palestinian

[469] Frisch, "Hamas: The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood.", 94.
[470] Lovlie, "Explaining Hamas's Changing Electoral Strategy, 1996-2006.", 578.
[471] Frisch, 94.
[472] Mehr, "Hamas - How Has a Terrorist Organization Become a Political Power?", 15.
[473] Mehr, 16.
[474] Pressman, "The Second Intifada: Background and Causes of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.", 123.
[475] Pressman, 124.
[476] Pressman, 125.
[477] Litvak, "The Role of Hamas in the Aqsa Intifada.", 1.

Authority, already viewed as corrupt, was also seen as increasingly unreliable[478]. Meanwhile, having anticipated the failure of Oslo from the beginning, Hamas saw an opportunity to assert itself. Glenn Robinson notes that, while the Palestinian Left (primarily led by the PLFP) had never fully recovered from the demise of Marxism and support for it had been much decreasing, Hamas now constituted the only viable option, thus becoming home not only to those ideologically aligned, but also to those disillusioned by Oslo[479].

Overall, the expectations born during Oslo had died for those Palestinians who had hoped in statehood but obtained only limited territorial concessions. Thus, by 2000, there was no real improvement in freedom of movement nor in socio-economic conditions. Meanwhile, mutual retaliation continued, increasing tensions, once again, between Israel and Palestinians.

3.1.2 The Second Intifada (2000-2005)

Similarly to the first Intifada, the breakout of the second Intifada also was triggered by a series of escalating events. In May 2000, before the Camp David Summit would take place in July, armed clashes between the Palestinians and Israeli forces occurred for three days. Meanwhile, the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak gave permission to the Israeli Defence Forces to use snipers to stop armed clashes with Palestinian forces[480]. On September 28, 2000, Ariel Sharon, then head of the opposition Likud party, provocatively visited the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Temple Mount, in Jerusalem, accompanied by 1.000 Israeli police officers[481]. Protests began the same day, followed by a harsh Israeli response, resulting in 50 Palestinians killed and over 1,000 wounded within the first five days[482]. Suspicions that Yasser Arafat instigated the Al-Aqsa Intifada, named after Sharon's visit, circulated among Israeli officials[483]. Although Arafat may have sought to position himself as the leader of the Intifada, he did not initiate the violence nor seek armed conflict, recognizing the potential backlash from Israel after the Camp David failure[484]. Instead, Arafat chose not to halt the violence and quietly supported the suicide campaign, possibly believing it would strengthen the Palestinian bargaining position[485]. Rather,

[478] Mehr, “Hamas - How Has a Terrorist Organization Become a Political Power?”, 17.
[479] Robinson, “Hamas as Social Movement.”, 126.
[480] Klein, “The Intifada: The Young Generation in the Front.”, 51.
[481] Pressman, “The Second Intifada: Background and Causes of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.”, 114.
[482] Pressman, 131.
[483]Shalom and Hendel, “The Unique Features of the Second Intifada.”, 20.
[484] Pressman, 117.
[485] Matta and Rojas, “The Second Intifada”, 88; Hammami and Tamari, “The Second Uprising: End or New Beginning?”, 18.

the breakout of the second Intifada is attributed to the Oslo Accords' failure. The second Intifada is recognised to be both similar and different from the first. Menachem Klein has underlined how, also in the Al-Aqsa intifada, the youth did play a prominent role, especially because of the growing population of Palestine[486]. By 2000, both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank had a youth population, comprised between 15 and 24 years old, of more than 19% each[487]. Moreover, the failure of the Oslo process, while creating a new opposition that criticised the political establishment, also introduced the younger generation to the national political struggle[488]. However, the Second Intifada also differed from the First. As Todd Phinney notes, the first Palestinian uprising emerged from a popular impetus stemming from repression, fought with rocks, and aimed at gaining recognition[489]. The second was a cry for statehood, stemming from a promise that had not been kept, and it emerged from a polarized environment marked by the rise of Hamas and PIJ and the territorial yet internally fragmented presence of the Palestinian Authority[490]. The Second Intifada also was much bloodier than the first, with violence coming from both sides. The use of violence during the Second Intifada limited Palestinian participation, resulting in an uprising that lacked the popular base seen in the First[491]. Hamas began detonating bombs in 2000 and launched its first suicide attack in 2001. However, they were not alone; the PFLP joined the bombing campaign in 2001, followed by the PIJ and the Al-Aqsa Brigades (associated with Fatah) in 2002[492]. Israel's response grew increasingly aggressive: initially aiming at containment, it shifted in August 2001 to direct Israely army's incursions into the Occupied Territories. By 2002, Israeli forces had reoccupied cities and refugee camps, engaging directly with militants[493]. However, in Gaza, where Hamas was particularly strong, the number of attacks from 2002 to 2004 remained steady. This was because, while the Israeli army successfully destroyed militant sanctuaries in the West Bank, they did not do so in Gaza. In this sense, Boaz Ganor explains that after the Oslo Accords, the autonomy granted to areas like Gaza and Jericho provided Islamic organizations with secure territories previously sought by secular groups[494]. Moreover, Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela

[486] Klein, "The Intifada: The Young Generation in the Front.", 54.
[487] United States Census Bureau, "International Database."
[488] Klein, "The Intifada: The Young Generation in the Front.", 55.
[489] Phinney, "The Second Palestinian Intifada.", 49.
[490] Pressman, "The Second Intifada: Background and Causes of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", 122; Junka, "The Politics of Gaza Beach", 17; Phinney, "The Second Palestinian Intifada.", 49
[491] Naser-Najjab, "Palestinian Leadership and the Contemporary Significance of the First Intifada.", 64.
[492] Matta and Rojas, "The Second Intifada.", 89.
[493] Phinney, "The Second Palestinian Intifada", 51; Naser-Najjab, "Palestinian Leadership and the Contemporary Significance of the First Intifada.", 64.
[494] Ganor, Israel's Counterterrorism Strategy: Origins To The Present, 129.

note that while Israel targeted the Palestinian Authority's institutions, Hamas's structures in Gaza, particularly within refugee camps, were largely spared due to their location in densely populated areas[495].

Hillel Frisch reports that, according to the Israeli General Security Services, Hamas was responsible for 40% of the 142 suicide attacks between 2000 and 2005, compared to 23% by Fatah[496]. Despite such attacks provoking harsh Israeli measures, Hamas managed to reach and maintain considerable levels of popular support throughout the period 2000-2005. Indeed, as Nada Matta and René Rojas argue, such an intense suicide campaign would not have been possible without strong public backing[497]. However, support for maintaining the bombing campaign did not immediately translate into exclusive support for Hamas. First, Palestinians believed that the Intifada could achieve its goals; confidence in the uprising's success grew from 53% to 65% between September 2001 and March 2002[498]. Additionally, such support emerged within a broader context of mutual violence between armed groups and Israeli authorities, not solely a backing for Hamas. A year before the second Intifada, polls indicated higher support for Fatah than for Hamas, though Hamas was a close rival[499]. Although Hamas led many attacks in 2001, its popularity remained stable. This was because dissatisfaction with all political factions was decreasing, as a seemingly unified national strategy emerged that helped restore confidence in national political leadership over narrower sectarian or factional lines[500]. By mid-2002, popular support for suicide attacks declined, reaching a low in April 2003, likely due to heavy Israeli reprisals[501]. As the costs of the conflict rose, Hamas scaled back its attacks, conducting its final one in August 2004. By 2005, despite continued attacks by the PIJ, suicide bombings largely ceased[502]. As a grassroot organisation tied to public opinion, Hamas had to consider popular backing, while also evaluating the new opportunities that were presented in the political panorama. Indeed, Ariel Sharon’s Gaza disengagement plan was announced in 2004 while the prospect for an electoral process was materialising.

Meanwhile, the economic situation was dire. According to the World Bank, the economic crisis was driven by movement restrictions on Palestinians and goods, both across borders and within the West Bank and Gaza. These restrictions were further compounded by curfews, external

[495] Mishal and Sela, The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence, xiv.
[496] Frisch, “Hamas: The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood.”, 95.
[497] Matta and Rojas, “The Second Intifada.”, 94-95.
[498] Matta and Rojas, 94-95.
[499] Matta and Rojas, 94-95.
[500] Matta and Rojas, 94-95.
[501] Matta and Rojas, 102.
[502] Matta and Rojas, 102.

border closures between Israel and the Palestinian territories, and limited access for Palestinian workers to jobs in Israel and Israeli settlements[503]. The severity of the situation became already evident two years after the second Intifada began. By the end of 2002, the World Bank reported that the GNI for both the West Bank and Gaza had dropped to 38% of its 1999 level, and unemployment had soared to 37%. With the population growing, real per capita income also fell sharply, declining by 46% compared to 1999 levels[504]. According to Arie Arnon, living standards for Palestinians dropped by 30% within the first three years, with unemployment rates in Gaza nearly reaching 40%, compared to 30% in the West Bank[505]. This economic downturn had a profound impact on poverty[506], especially in Gaza. In the Strip, poverty rate saw a dramatic increase, rising from 32% in 1999 to an alarming 65% in 2004[507]. Salem Ajluni has talked about "intentional impoverishment of an entire population" by the Sharon government[508]. Indeed, the author underlines, imposing unnecessary hardships on the entire civlian population may generate radicalisation among the young people who, by the time of the second Intidada, constituted a considerable share of the population[509]. As Matthew Levitt has pointed out, the miserable living standards experienced by the population of the Gaza Strip, as well as in the West Bank, created a vacuum that Hamas was willing to fill[510]

3.2 Hamas in Power

3.2.1 Winning the elections and power takeover

The period between 2003 and 2006 was marked by significant political developments. In 2003, in the midts of the second Intifada's peak of violence, the Middle East Quartet – composed by the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United Nations – published the Roadmap for Peace[511]. The Roadmap sought to correct some of the defects of the Olso process by focusing on three fundamental elements: the parallel implementation of mutual obligations, an indipendent monitoring system, and a final solution to the conflict. Most importantly, the

[503] The World Bank, "Twenty-Seven Months-Intifada, Closures and Palestinian Economic Crisis: An Assessment.", xii.
[504] The World Bank, xi.
[505] Arnon, "Israeli Policy towards the Occupied Palestinian Territories: The Economic Dimension, 1967-2007.", 593.
[506] The World Bank has defined the poverty line in the Palestinian context as $2.10 in per capita daily consumption. See The World Bank, "Poverty in the West Bank and Gaza."
[507] Arnon, 593.
[508] Ajluni, "The Palestinian Economy and the Second Intifada.", 71.
[509] Ajluni, 71.
[510] Levitt, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad, 5.
[511] Elgindy, "The Middle East Quartet: A Post-Mortem.", 9.

plan predicted the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian state living in peace alongside Israel[512]. Concretely, both sides were required to take immediate steps to end violence and create the conditions for a lasting peace. Israel should have dismantled its settlements in Palestinian territories; on their part, Palestinian leaders were required to curb terrorism and work towards a democratic government[513]. Although the plan has been defined as the first example of a unified international vision for resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict since the 1947 Partition Plan[514], it soon failed, as the major points of the Roadmap were never materialised. The Israeli government eventually claimed that the Palestinians failed to control Hamas and other armed groups, while the Palestinians stated that Israel was not committed to end the settlement expansion[515]. Effectively, one of the flaws of the Roadmap was its vagueness on 'final status' issues, such as defining precise borders, the question of Jerusalem, and the return of Palestinian refugees[516]. Moreover, the Israeli government rejected the concept of parallel implementation, as opposed to having Palestinians implementing their obligations first, and also the idea of an international monitoring, eventually only allowing the United States to supervise[517].

In 2004, Yasser Arafat died, and was succeeded by Mahmud Abbas, who won the presidential elections in January 2005. In September 2005, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon implemented a unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip. This move, carried out without prior agreement with the Palestinian Authority, together with discarding the Roadmap's effort[518], undermined the PA's authority while boosting Hamas's legitimacy and popular support. Indeed, the Israeli withdrawal was portrayed by Hamas as a victory of their campaign of bombings and rocket attacks, which supposedly pressured the Israeli government to evacuate settlements[519]. The Israeli disengagement thus created an opportunity for Hamas to strengthen its position in Gaza, which was already a stronghold for the group. In 2005, municipal elections had already indicated strong support for Hamas, particularly in the Gaza Strip, where it won seats in major city centres[520]. Contrarily, in the West Bank, where Hamas's presence was less

[512] Elgindy, 9.
[513] Otterman, "Middle East: The Road Map to Peace."
[514] Elgindy, "The Middle East Quartet: A Post-Mortem.", 9.
[515] Otterman, "Middle East: The Road Map to Peace."
[516] Elgindy, "The Middle East Quartet: A Post-Mortem.", 10.
[517] Elgindy, v; 10.
[518] Elgindy, v.
[519] Shachar, The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics: From the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009, 5-7.
[520] Mehr, "Hamas - How Has a Terrorist Organization Become a Political Power?", 18.

pronounced, the majority of seats was won by Fatah[521]. Encouraged by these results and by the support of the U.S. administration for Palestinian elections, Hamas participated in the 2006 legislative run. It won a decisive majority with 76 of 132 seats in the Parliament, compared to Fatah's 45 seats, thus becoming the dominant force in the PA Parliament[522].
Several factors contributed to Hamas's electoral victory. Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela attribute it to the failure of the Oslo Accords, which exposed the PA's corruption, internal rivalries, and mismanagement[523]. Additionally, Matthew Levitt suggests that Hamas's victory was not solely a protest vote against Fatah, but also a demonstration that a substantial portion of the Palestinian electorate was willing to accept Hamas rule[524]. Differently from the other armed groups that had participated in the second Intifada – which could however match its military capabilities – Hamas had built a social service system which played a crucial role in its success[525]. While Ben Zion Mehr underlines that the voters of the 2006 elections were the second generation that had been raised and educated by Hamas institutions[526], Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela contend that the victory of Hamas can be explained by social and economic considerations made by Palestinians rather than by their ideological identification with the Islamic agenda[527].

When Hamas established through the legislative council, it had to deal with the reality of a split regime. Indeed, while Hamas headed the parliamentary majority and cabinet, the presidential power was held by Fatah's Mahmud Abbas, whose party refused to join Hamas in the freely elected government[528]. The relations between Hamas and Fatah, which also refused to accept the former in the newly elected government[529], resulted strained since the beginning, While Fatah was being increasingly encouraged, predominantly by the US, to confront Hamas under the promise of western aid, Hamas was securing financial support from Iran and Qatar, and created its own Executive Forces a month into office[530]. However, the hopes of Fatah were those of maintain the predominance on security forces to keep its rule from the background,

[521] Mehr, 18.
[522] Mehr, 1; Frisch, "Hamas: The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood.", 98.
[523] Mishal and Sela, The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence, xiv.
[524] Levitt, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad, 1.
[525] Mishal and Sela, The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence, xiv.
[526] Mehr, "Hamas - How Has a Terrorist Organization Become a Political Power?", 6.
[527] Mishal and Sela, The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence, xiii.
[528] Milton-Edwards, "Hamas: Victory with Ballots and Bullets.", 302.
[529] Milton-Edwards, 302.
[530] Shachar, The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics: From the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009, 6; Frisch, "Hamas: The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood.", 99.

thus it declared Hamas's security forces illegal[531]. However, in the months following the elections, Hamas's Executive Forces were already violently confronting Fatah's security groups. Growing tensions between the two factions eventually led, between the end of 2006 and 2007, to the eruption of a civil war, which unfolded during several weeks. The fighting, which saw the Palestinian Security Forces and Fatah's militias confronting Hamas's Executive Forces and the Brigades Al-Qassim, included bombs, missiles, and targeted shootings[532]. By December 2006, in the Gaza Strip, Rafah had already become the scene of the most serious confrontations[533]. By June 2007, Hamas succeeded in ousting the presidential security forces and the Fatah militia and completely conquered Gaza, effectively wiping out the opposition party[534]. This gave life to two political entities: the Hamas-dominated Gaza, led by the government of Ismail Haniyeh, and the West Bank Palestinian Authority under President Mahmud Abbas. The latter eventually declared Hamas forces in the West Bank illegal, accusing Hamas of having operated a violent coup; on its part, Hamas outlawed Fatah's activities in Gaza, where it opened governmental office and began to operate[535].

3.3 Hamas and Israel: a difficult coexistence

3.3.1 Analysis of living conditions: 2006-2023

When Hamas came to power in Gaza, it inherited control over more than a million Palestinians in a densely populated area already facing severe socio-economic challenges. Alongside tensions with Fatah, which eventually led to the civil war that Hamas won in Gaza, neither Israel nor the international community supported Hamas's freely elected government. After the Islamist movement took power, the Middle East Quartet issued a set of demands that became prerequisites for Hamas to be recognized as a legitimate governing authority. These requests included the recognition of the state of Israel, the renunciation to violence, and the acceptance of all previous agreements, including the Roadmap for peace and the Oslo Accords[536]. However, Hamas refused, lamenting a lack of reciprocal commitment from Israel[537]. In

[531] Shachar, The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics: From the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009, 6; Frisch, "Hamas: The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood.", 99.
[532] Milton-Edwards, "Hamas: Victory with Ballots and Bullets", 301; Shachar, The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics: From the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009, 7.
[533] Frisch, "Hamas: The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood.", 99.
[534] Frisch, 99.
[535] Frisch, 100; Milton-Edwards, "Hamas: Victory with Ballots and Bullets.", 301.
[536] Elgindy, "The Middle East Quartet: A Post-Mortem.", v.
[537] Milton-Edwards, "Hamas: Victory with Ballots and Bullets.", 308.

response, international assistance to the Palestinian Authority was halted. Meanwhile, Israel had already announced the suspension of the transfer of taxes levied from Palestinian imports that accounted for a significant portion of the PA's revenues, while tightening restrictions on cross-border movement of people and goods from Gaza and into Gaza[538]. Overall, after just a few months after Hamas's victory, UNRWA had already declared that Gaza was facing a severe economic and humanitarian crisis[539]. On its side, Hamas also paved the way for a difficult coexistence with Israel. The situation escalated when, in June 2006, the armed group captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, near the border fence with Israel. In response to the abduction, Israel initiated Operation Summer Rains, the first military intervention in the Strip since the disengagement. The proportion of the operation caused immediate international concern. While Israel announced that its goal was not that of conquering the Strip but rather to release the soldier while targeting Hamas's military capabilities[540], the back-then United Nation's Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 claimed that the Israeli actions amounted to collective punishment[541]. Overall, as of August 2006, the toll of deaths and infrastructure damages was tragic for the Strip. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that by that time 184 Palestinians, including 42 children, had been killed. Additionally, it estimated millions of dollars in damages to Gaza's infrastructures caused by the Israeli army incursions, including the destruction of the only power plan present in Gaza, causing electricity and water shortages for households [542].

Overall, the combination of international aid suspension, Israel's economic restrictions together with its disproportionate military intervention, set the stage for even greater challenges for the Gazan population in the years to come. To evaluate how Hamas's rule on Gaza combined with Israeli policies have impacted on the Strip's population's living conditions, the following section will examine the evolution of demographic trends, socio-economic factors, and degree of political and civil freedoms for the time period 2006-2023.

[538] Elgindy, "The Middle East Quartet: A Post-Mortem.", v.
[539] See United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), "Prolonged Crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Socio-Economic Developments in 2007."
[540] IDF editorial team, "Operation Summer Rains"; Economic Cooperation Foundation, "Operation Summer Rains (2006)."
[541] Human Rights Council, "Human Rights Situation in Palestine and Other OATs/Israeli Operation 'Summer Rains', Abduction of Shalit – HRC First Special Session Debate - Summary Record."
[542] The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Gaza Strip: Situation Report."

3.3.1.1 Demographic trends

As of 2006, the population of the Gaza Strip was approximately 1.3 million. The annual growth rate for that year was registered at 2.74%, a decline from 2000, when it was over 3%[543]. In the West Bank, the growth rate in 2006 was slightly above 2%. Interestingly, in 2010, Gaza's growth rate spiked to nearly 4%, but has since gradually decreased, reaching a low between 2018 and 2019, to then stabilise at above 2% for the rest of the time period. By 2023, it had reached 2.02%[544], marking a decline of over 26% since 2006, but still being relatively high. Overall, by 2023, the population of the Gaza Strip amounted to more than 2 million people[545], meaning that in only 17 years the population has grown of more than 1 million. Palestine's high annual growth rate places it among the fastest-growing populations in the Arab world, with the exception of Jordan – which however holds a significant Palestinian refugee population since 1967—and oil-rich Gulf countries[546]. There are different factors that can impact population growth. While fertility and mortality levels will be further explored later, analysing migration trends may offer us an early insight on the demographics. Indeed, in the Palestinian context, lasting dire socio-economic conditions have pushed Palestinians, especially the youth, to search for opportunities elsewhere. It has been reported that 6.7% of Palestinian households in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have at least one family member who has emigrated, primarily to Arab and Gulf countries where they typically find employment. Hence, education and training are cited as the main reasons for emigration, followed by economic factors, indicating that for many emigration is a temporary situation[547]. Negative net migration rates may indeed suggest a relatively large amount of Gazans emigrating from the Strip during the years. As of 2006, the net migration rate in the Gaza Strip was -11%, perhaps reflecting high emigration levels, especially when compared to its -5.02% in 2000, and a decrease to -3.8% by 2023[548]. This shift may suggest that, over the years, less people have been leaving the Gaza Strip, possibly due to increased border restrictions, or increased education and job possibilities within the area.

[543] United States Census Bureau, "International Database - Gaza Strip"
[544] United States Census Bureau.
[545] United States Census Bureau.
[546] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, "Palestine 2030, Demographic Change: Opportunities for Development.", 55.
[547] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, 80.
[548] United States Census Bureau, "International Database - Gaza Strip"

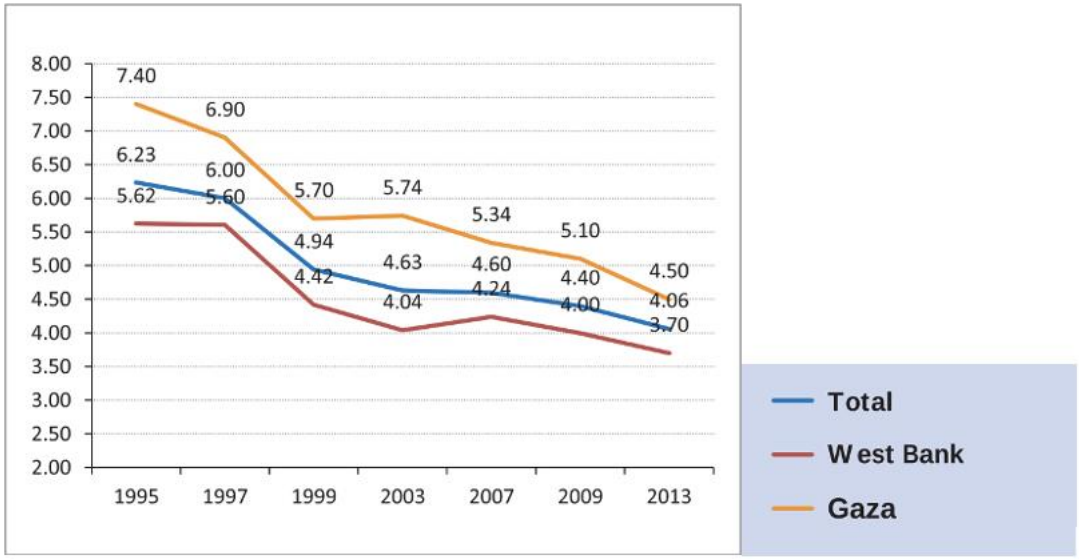
Fertility levels

Between 2006 and 2023, Gaza experienced consistently high fertility levels. In 2006, the crude birth rate (CBR) in the Gaza Strip was 42.3, notably higher than the West Bank's CBR of 30.5[549]. This difference was also reflected in the total fertility rates (TFR), with Gaza's TFR at 6.20 compared to 4.10 in the West Bank for the same year. In 17 years, the TFR in Gaza had shrunk to 3.49 rapidly decreasing to match the West Bank's pace, whose rate was at 3.26 in 2023[550]. While fertility rates have declined, they are still elevated compared to regional trends. For instance, in 2023, Egypt and Jordan had TFRs of 2.76 and 2.91, respectively, with Lebanon at the lower end with 1.71, and Israel registering 2.94, which is relatively high given its higher socioeconomic conditions[551]. The high fertility trend can be explained by a range of factors spanning from religion and culture to low levels of living standards. As Courbage, Hamad and Zagha observe, in Gaza's patriarchal society elders and men hold authority and largely influence the household decision-making process[552]. This structure renders it difficult for women to emancipate: their traditional role, relegated to that of caregivers and wives, obstacles time for education and recreational activities, as much as it hinders women's participation the labour market[553]. It also entails that marriage is highly valued, with the median age of marriage for Palestinian women being at 20.3 years. As of 2016, 56% of women in Palestine were married by the age of 15, reinforcing the tradition of early family formation[554]. Patriarchal norms also contribute to gender-based violence, with 51% of married women in Gaza reporting abuse, compared to 29.9% in the West Bank, though many remain silent about this phenomenon[555]. High fertility rates are further driven by low contraceptive use, which, although improving, was still only at 53% in Gaza by 2014, along with limited family planning[556]. Fertility differentials may also depend on religion. For example, in 1996, a Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics' survey showed that fertility rates were higher among Muslim women (6.34) compared to Christian women (2.71), underscoring the role of religion in demographic patterns[557]. However, rising education levels, particularly among women, have somewhat mitigated these high fertility rates, as education—especially at the university level—

[549] United States Census Bureau, "International Database."
[550] United States Census Bureau.
[551] United States Census Bureau.
[552] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, "Palestine 2030, Demographic Change: Opportunities for Development.", 51.
[553] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, 46.
[554] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, 47.
[555] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, 48.
[556] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, 102.
[557] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, 64.

is a significant factor in reducing fertility[558]. Indeed, while women participation in the labour market is low and limited due to gender roles, schools and universities are fully open to girls, thus making these institutions a more powerful agent of demographic transition[559]. Additionally, a noteworthy element to consider when understanding demographic patterns may be the presence of Israel and the associated frequent military conflicts in the Strip. As underlined by Courbage, Hamad and Zagha, many Palestinians view large families as a form of social security and protection against the outside threat[560]. Moreover, the frequent political violence and consequent loss of family members may well influence the reproduction pattern. This may be evident in the extended childbearing period for women in Gaza compared to the West Bank[561], where lethal military interventions have happened less frequently in the last 17 years. Furthermore, access to healthcare has improved over time, which also plays a role in sustaining higher fertility rates.

Figure 6. Trends in the total fertility rate (TFR) in Palestine by region (1995-2013)



Yussed Courbage, Bassam Abu Hamad, and Adel Zagha, *Palestine 2030, Demographic Change: Opportunities for Development,* 2016, 65, figure II.6

[558] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, 64.
[559] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, 76.
[560] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, 51.
[561] United States Census Bureau, "International Database.". See Appendix III, table 1.

Mortality levels

Between 2006 and 2023, the Gaza Strip saw a notable decline in mortality rates. In 2006, the crude death rate (CDR) was 4, the same as in the West Bank. By 2023, the CDR in Gaza had dropped to 3, while the West Bank's rate was slightly higher at 3.3[562], marking a 25% reduction in Gaza over 17 years. Infant mortality rates (IMRs) also decreased during this period. In 2006, Gaza's IMR was 22.7, slightly superiod to that in the West Bank's. However, by 2023, the IMR fell to 15 for both regions[563]. Courbage, Hamad and Zagha observe that the Palestinian IMR is among the lowest in the Arab world, excluding smaller emirate countries and Lebanon[564]. This decline can be attributed to several factors, including increased hygiene awareness and more hospital births. These improvements may also be linked to the rise in women's education during this time, which likely contributed to better infant care practices. It has also been observed that there is a strong connection between maternal education and reduced child mortality, highlighting a significant reduction of IMRs compared to mothers holding a basic education[565].

Structure of the population

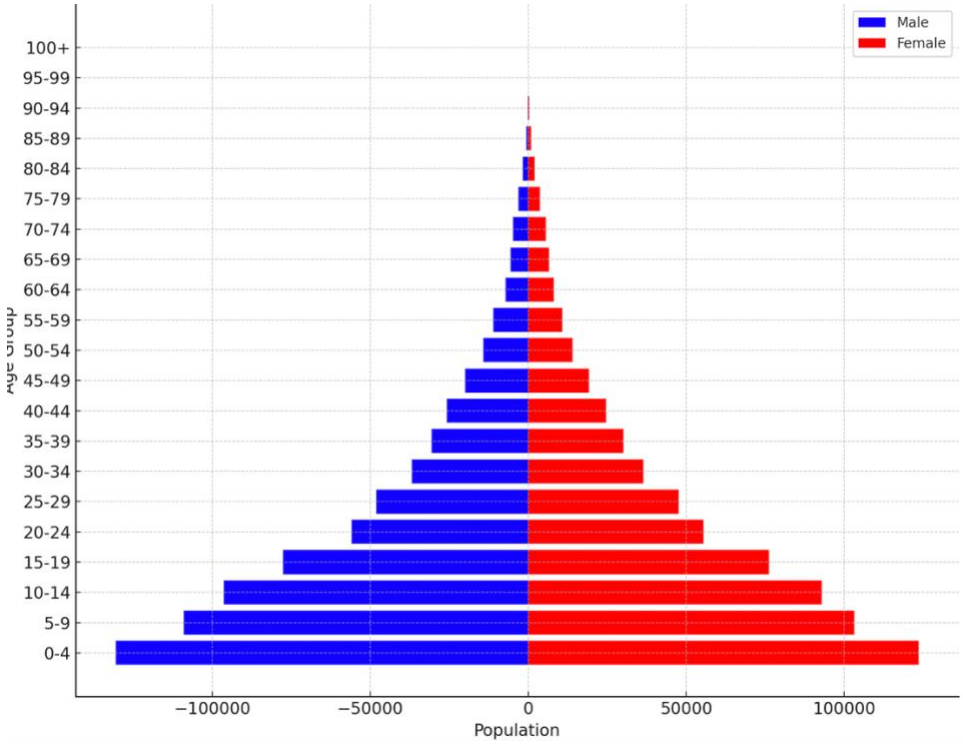
As of 2006, the demographic picture of the Gaza Strip was that of a very young population. Nearly half of the population (48.9%) was under the age of 14, reflecting the high birth rates of the early 2000s, with children aged 0-4 making up for almost the 19%. Meanwhile, youth aged 15-24 accounted for 19.8%, contributing to a total working-age population of 48.5%[566]. This high but declining fertility, coupled with decreasing mortality rates, is reflected in the population pyramids over time. As showcased in figure 7, in 2006, the Gaza Strip was experiencing a "children bulge," with the population under 14 representing the largest age group. By 2023, the population pyramid of the Gaza Strip, as illustrated in figure 8, shows a noticeable shift: the proportion of children under 14 has decreased to 39.7%, down significantly from 2006 but remaining high, with those aged 0-4 now comprising 13.3% of the population. The working-age population (15-64) has instead increased to over 57%. Concurrently, the age group associated with a youth bulge – the age bracket 15-24 – has risen to 22.3%[567]. To assess whether, since 2023, the Gaza Strip is experiencing a youth bulge, we will once again refer to Cincotta and Doces's definition, which considers a youth bulge significant when young adults

[562] United States Census Bureau.
[563] United States Census Bureau.
[564] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, "Palestine 2030, Demographic Change: Opportunities for Development.", 60.
[565] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, 61.
[566] United States Census Bureau, "International Database – Gaza Strip". See Appendix III, table 2.
[567] United States Census Bureau. See Appendix III, table 2.

(15-29) constitute more than 42% of the working-age population (15-64)[568]. Drawing from United States Central Bureau (USCB)'s data according to which in 2023 the 15-29 age group amounted to over 30%[569], and using Cincotta and Doces's formula, it results that Gaza's youth bulge proportion in 2023 was 53%, thus exceeding the 43% threshold. Additionally, the 30-44 age group made up 16.8%, and those aged 45-64 comprised 9.8% of the population[570]. Thus, by 2023, the youth has become a prominent demographic within the working-age group and a serious developmental issue for the Gaza Strip, with main consequences on the education and the labour market. Furthernore, the gender distribution remained relatively balanced throughout the 2006-2023 period, though with a slight trend: up to age 19, the male-to-female ratio was even, but from age 20 onwards, the percentage of males slightly declines compared to females, before balancing out again later in life[571]. As Courbage, Hamad and Zagha notice, adult emigration and immigration likely influenced the population structure, leading to a smaller proportion of males aged 30-40 and a higher proportion in the 45-64 age group[572]. On the other hand, the consistently low percentage of people over 65 (never exceeding 3% during the whole time-period) indicates high mortality rates among the eldest, although an increase in life expectancy has been registered, from 71.8 in 2006 to 75.5 in 2023[573].

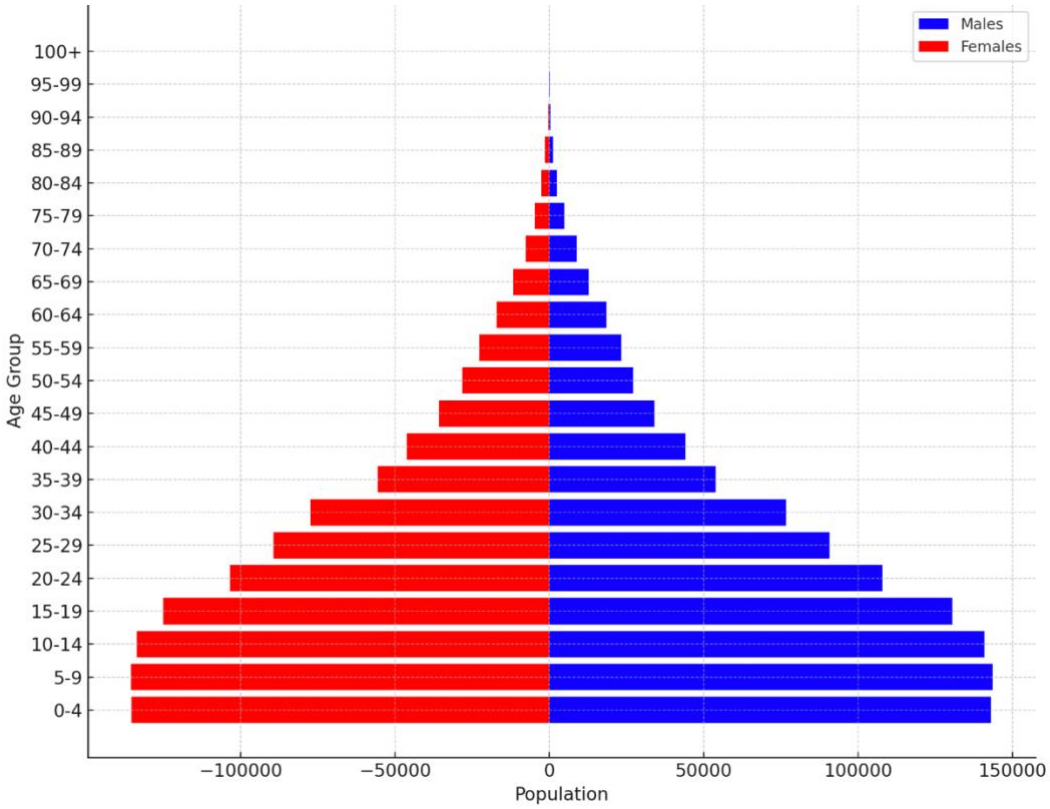
[568] Cincotta and Doces, "The Age-Structural Maturity Thesis: The Impact of the Youth Bulge on the Advent and Stability of Liberal Democracy.", 101.
[569] United States Census Bureau. See Appendix III, table 2.
[570] United States Census Bureau. See Appendix III, table 2.
[571] United States Census Bureau. See Appendix III, table 2
[572] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, "Palestine 2030, Demographic Change: Opportunities for Development.", 58.
[573] United States Census Bureau, "International Database – Gaza Strip"

Figure 7. Population pyramid for Gaza Strip (2006) distributed by sex and 5-year age groups



***Source*: Author's creation with data from United States Census Bureau (USCB)**

Figure 8. Population pyramid for Gaza Strip (2023) distributed by sex and 5-year age groups



***Source*: Author's creation with data from United States Census Bureau (USCB)**

3.3.1.2 Socio-economic conditions

Following Hamas takeover in Gaza in June 2007, Israel intensified its restriction on the movement of both goods and people, virtually isolating the Gaza Strip from the rest of the world. These policies marked the beginning of the blockade which, officially effective since January 2009, implied the Israeli control on land borders, maritime territorial waters cyberspace, airspace, and telecommunications[574]. The immediate aftermath of the blockade has severely impacted every aspect of Gazan society, drastically lowering living standard. The World Bank has reported that between 2007 and 2015, the GDP had dropped by more than 50%[575]. Through Israel-controlled crossings, only those type of goods considered as 'basic humanitarian products' have been allowed for the first two years of the blockade. Then, since 2009, a few additional types of goods have been allowed into Gaza[576]. Another aspect to

[574] CIA, "The World Factbook - Gaza Strip."
[575] "Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee.", 6.
[576] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory, "Easing The Blockade: Assessing the Humanitarian Impact on the Population of the Gaza Strip.", 11.

consider when analysing the evolution of Gazans living condition are the different military interventions that have occurred in the Strip since 2006. The Israeli Policy Forum counts a total of 9[577], however different in their lethality, intensity and duration. Each of these operations resulted, even if to different degrees, to the death of civilians and/or damages in civilian infrastructures. Excluding the conflict that began on October 7, 2023, two major conflicts stand out. The first is Operation Cast Least: undertaken between December 2008 and January 2009, it lasted 22 days and resulted in the death of at least 1400 Palestinians, including 300 children and countless unarmed civilians, among which women and elders. In southern Israel, Hamas's rocket fire killed 3 civilians[578]. The second was Operation Protective Edge. Implemented in the summer of 2014 and lasted circa 50 days, its humanitarian cost was even more disastrous. It has been reported that up to 2000 Palestinians have been killed in the hostilities, and more than 10.000 injured. The deaths included up to 500 children[579]. Both conflicts caused extensive damage to civilian infrastructure, displaced thousands, and left long-term socio-economic impacts on Gaza[580].

State of the economy

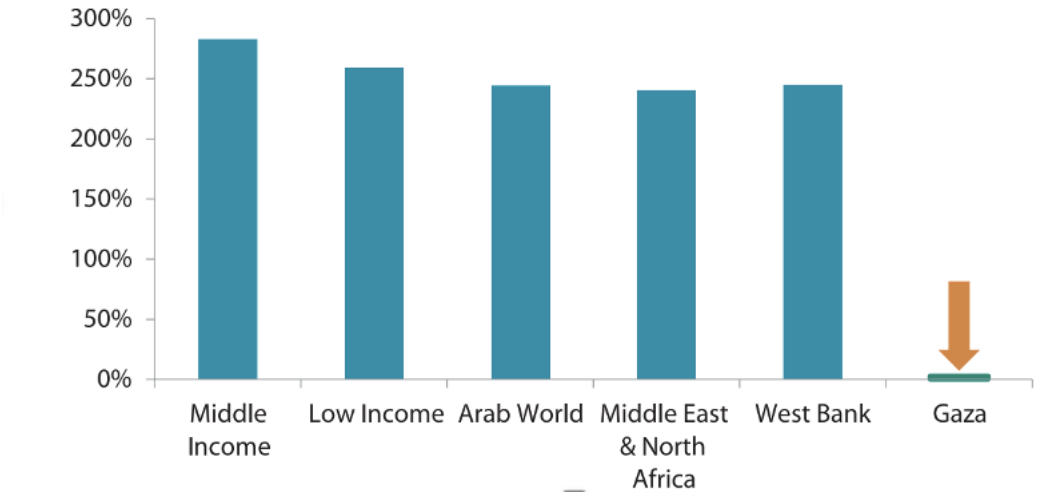
The World Bank recorded that between 2005 and 2008, following the onset of the conflict, Gaza's GDP dropped by a third[581]. This decline can be attributed to multiple factors, including significantly reduced employment opportunities in Israel, a sharp drop in output across various economic sectors, and the resulting rise in unemployment within these sectors. While the end of economic sanctions imposed in 2007 resulted in some economic growth for the West Bank, Gaza experienced no such recovery. Manufacturing and agriculture, in particular, saw reduced output and reduced unemployment[582]. In contrast, the public services sector emerged as the safest employment option, filling the vacuum left by the diminishing opportunities in the private sector[583]. The decline in manufacturing is largely attributable to the blockade, which restricted the import of raw materials essential for production. This, in turn, gave rise to the

[577] To see the different military operations undertaken by Israel in Gaza from 2006 to 2023, see Appendix IV.
[578] Amnesty International, "Israel/Gaza: Operation 'Cast Lead' - 22 Days of Death and Destruction: Facts and Figures."
[579] B'Tselem, "Hostilities in Gaza and Southern Israel - 'Protective Edge', July-August 2014"; United Nations Relief and Work Agency in the Near East (UNRWA), "2014 Gaza Conflict."
[580] United Nations Relief and Work Agency for the Near East (UNRWA), "Emergency Operations in Gaza"; United Nations Relief and Work Agency in the Near East (UNRWA), "2014 Gaza Conflict."
[581] The World Bank, "Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee.", 20.
[582] Social and Economic Development Group Middle East and North Africa Region, "West Bank and Gaza: Coping With Conflict?", xxii.
[583] Social and Economic Development Group Middle East and North Africa Region, xxiv.

business of the so-called 'tunnel industry': hundreds of tunnels were built under the border with Egypt to smuggle goods into the Gazan market, becoming a critical source of both products and jobs in Gaza's closed economy[584]. However, continued restrictions on capital inputs and building materials still hampered the post-2008 conflict recovery and reconstruction efforts[585]. By late 2009 and especially after the 2010 Mavi Marmara Flotilla disaster – when the flotilla attempted to break the blockade – Israel began easing some restrictions on the category of goods that could enter Gaza. This partial lifting increased the availability of consumer goods and of some raw materials[586]. This allowed the manufacturing sector to experience some improvements by accessing formerly restricted goods. However, this sector recovery remained limited due to restrictions limiting exports, raw materials, and equipment[587], overall maintaining industrial activities at an extremely small scale. The construction sector also saw some reactivation, thanks to the approval and implementation of a number of housing and infrastructure's projects funded by international organisations and the supply of construction material smuggled into Gaza through Egypt, which led to a decline in prices[588]. However, agriculture remained severely impacted. Even though the 2010 easing of the blockade allowed limited exports of agricultural products, together with furniture and textiles[589], this was insufficient to offset the damage caused by export restrictions imposed since 2007. Research carried out by OCHA and the World Food Program showed that since late 2008, farmers have been fully or partially prevented from accessing land within 1000-1500 meters from the fence with Israel. This land-restricted area comprises 17% of Gaza's total land mass and 35% of its agricultural land[590]. Similarly, fishermen were prohibited from accessing waters beyond three nautical miles from the shore[591], and as of 2022, Israeli forces allowed access to only 50% of the fishing waters designated under the Oslo Accords[592]. Overall, by 2022, services had become the largest employer in both the West Bank and Gaza, followed by commerce and construction. Agriculture, however, remained the smallest sector was the less[593]

[584] Social and Economic Development Group Middle East and North Africa Region, 8.
[585] Social and Economic Development Group Middle East and North Africa Region, xxiii.
[586] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory, "Easing The Blockade: Assessing the Humanitarian Impact on the Population of the Gaza Strip.", 2.
[587] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory, 6.
[588] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory, 7.
[589] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory, 4.
[590] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory, 9.
[591] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory, 9.
[592] UNICEF, "The Gaza Strip: The Humanitarian Impact of the Blockade."
[593] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), "Palestine in Figures, 2023.", 36.

Figure 9. Aggregate real GDP growth in Gaza and comparator countries (1994-2013 for comparators and 1994-2014 for Gaza)



The World Bank, *Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee,* 2015, 15, figure 3.

The World Bank reported that by 2014, the economy of Gaza was devasted, as it experienced negative growth for that year[594]. In 2013, the tunnels with Egypt – by then a critical supply route for Gaza's construction sector and the main driver of growth and employment– had been closed[595]. Additionally, the 2014 war halted the private sector, as many enterprises were destroyed, and agricultural output also was significantly impacted due to the destruction of large portions of Gaza's arable land by military activity[596]. Overall, the war in the summer of 2014 caused a 15% contraction of Gaza's GDP[597]. By 2015, the real per capita income in the Gaza Strip was lower by 31% compared to the 20 previous years, while the per capita income disparity with the West Bank increased from 14% to a staggering 141%[598]. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the 2014 escalation, some economic activity resumed. Commercial transfers from Gaza to the West Bank recommenced, and, in March 2015, exports to Israel also restored. In August 2021, Gaza began exporting to Egypt started for the first time since the blockade, leading to an average monthly export volume of 787 in the first five months of 2022[599].

[594] The World Bank, "Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee.", 5.
[595] The World Bank, 7.
[596] The World Bank, 7.
[597] The World Bank, 5.
[598] The World Bank, 6.
[599] UNICEF, "The Gaza Strip: The Humanitarian Impact of the Blockade."

In 2020, Palestinian territories were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in a sharp economic activities' contraction. Not only did the economy shrink by more than 11% in 2020, but the systematic barriers imposed by Israel prevented any possibility to mitigate the damage. The pandemic's impact extended beyond just the poor, with 72% of households in the West Bank reporting income losses compared to 57% in Gaza. While there was some GDP growth in 2021, its extent was limited by reduced foreign aid as well as by the 11-day military operation in Gaza in May 2021[600], known as Operation Guardian of the Wall. Overall, since 2007, Gaza has faced persistently high poverty levels, driven by soaring unemployment and low wages. UNRWA reported that, already by 2007, deep household poverty (measured by income rather than consumption) affected 69.9% households in the Gaza Strip and 34.1% in the West Bank[601]. According to the World Bank, 46% of Gaza's population was living below the poverty line in 2016/17, compared to just 9% in the West Bank[602]. Relying on World Bank simulations, UNCTAD reported that the recent economic deterioration, combined with the pandemic, has increased poverty levels to the point that, by 2022, 60% of the Gazan population lived below the poverty line[603]. This poverty rate is particularly stark, given that, at least as of 2015, nearly 80% of Gazans relied on aid[604]. Despite these challenges, Gaza's economy, and Palestine's economy in general, began to rebound post-pandemic, partly due to an increase in the number of Palestinians allowed to work in Israel[605]. As anticipated in the previous section, following the second Intifada, the share of Gazans working in Israel sharply decreased, from a high of 17% in 1999 to 0 in 2005[606]. For the first seven years of the blockade, only about 4000 Gazans, primarily workers, were allowed to exit monthly, which later rose to over 10.000 for the next eight years[607]. In September 2021, the Bennet-Lapid government issued 7000 entry permits to allow Gazans to work in Israel, increasing the number to 20.000 by the following month[608]. As of 2022, the increase in the number of Palestinians working in Israel had

[600] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, "Report on UNCTAD Assistance to the Palestinian People: Developments in the Economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory."2.
[601] United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), "Prolonged Crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Socio-Economic Developments in 2007.", 51.
[602] The World Bank, "Palestinian Territories' Economic Update, 2021.", 171.
[603] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, "Report on UNCTAD Assistance to the Palestinian People: Developments in the Economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.", 4.
[604] The World Bank, "Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee.", 6.
[605] The World Bank, "World Bank Economic Monitoring Report.", 7.
[606] Social and Economic Development Group Middle East and North Africa Region, "West Bank and Gaza: Coping With Conflict?", xxv.
[607] UNICEF, "The Gaza Strip: The Humanitarian Impact of the Blockade."
[608] Israel Policy Forum, "Israel, Hamas and the Gaza Arena: A Timeline."

effectively risen. However, as a percentage of those in employment in Israel, while Palestinians from the West Bank accounted for the 22.5%, Gazans amounted to only 0.8%[609].

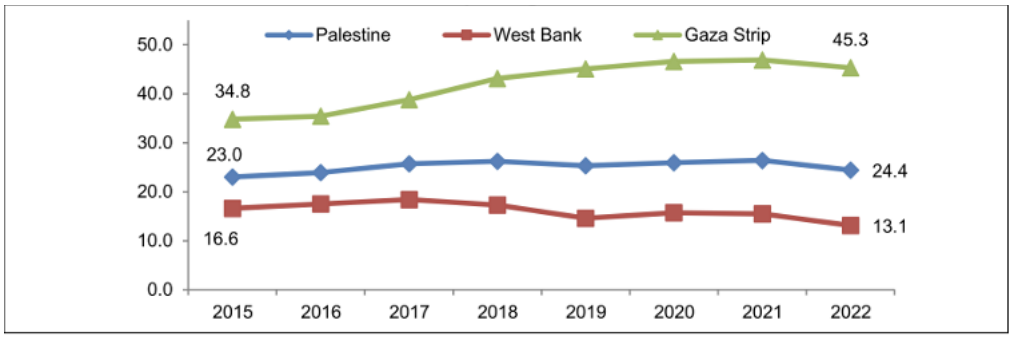
Unemployment rates

Unemployment rates in the Gaza Strip have always been peculiarly high. In the end of 2006 – before the full implementation of the blockade – unemployment rates in the Gaza Strip amounted to 34.8%[610]. The unemployment figures in 2006 were particularly alarming among youth aged 20-24, with rates soaring to 53.7% in the Gaza Strip and 32.3% in the West Bank[611]. After the blockade was imposed, these already high numbers skyrocketed, placing Gaza among the regions with the highest unemployment rates globally. According to the World Bank, by 2008, the overall unemployment rate in Gaza reached 41%, with youth joblessness still exceeding 50%[612]. In 2010, despite a partial easing of the blockade, only 6.100 people found job in Gaza, leading to a modest 2% reduction in unemployment, which remained at a staggering 37.4%, one of the highest rates worldwide[613]. OCHA has furtherly reported that the combination of high unemployment levels and a large demand for construction materials, forced thousands of individuals to risk their lives working in smuggling tunnels along the Egyptian border or in access-restricted areas near the Gaza fence[614].In 2014, Gaza's unemployment rate reached 43%, one of the highest globally, according to the World Bank[615]. By 2015, the situation was even more dire for young people, with unemployment for those aged 15-29 exceeding 60%[616]. From 2019 to 2022, the Gaza Strip's unemployment rate averaged 46%, significantly higher than the West Bank's average of 14.7% (derived from PSCB data, 2023 p.32) due to Israel's stringent movement restrictions[617]. In 2022, youth unemployment remained the highest, reaching 61.1%[618]. Two important observations arise from these high unemployment figures. First, it has been reported that unemployment

[609] The World Bank, "World Bank Economic Monitoring Report.", 7.
[610] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), "Palestine in Figures, 2006.", 20.
[611] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), "Demographic and Socioeconomic Status of the Palestinian People at the End of 2006.", 5.
[612] Social and Economic Development Group Middle East and North Africa Region, "West Bank and Gaza: Coping With Conflict?", xii.
[613] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory, "Easing The Blockade: Assessing the Humanitarian Impact on the Population of the Gaza Strip .", 10.
[614] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory, 2.
[615] The World Bank, "Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee.", 5.
[616] The World Bank, 14.
[617] The World Bank, "World Bank Economic Monitoring Report.", 7.
[618] The World Bank, 8.

disproportionately affects new graduates, with rates at 26.5% in the West Bank and 57.2% in Gaza, where women suffer the most from this phenomenon[619].

Figure 10. Unemployment rate among labour force participants (15 years and above) in Palestine by region: 2015-2022



Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *Unleashing the power of gender equality: Uplifting the voices of women and girls to unlock our world's infinite possibilities,* 2023, 3.

The second key feature is that unemployment rates tend to be higher for women than men. Indeed, in the Palestinian territories, overall female unemployment (61%) far exceeds that of males (34%)[620]. This is directly linked to the lower participation of women in the labor market. For instance, as of 2009, Palestinian women's labour force participation rates have been consistently below 16%[621]. The World Bank highlights that these numbers are exceptionally high even when compared to the regional trends. This is likely due to a combination of social and cultural norms common in the MENA region, as well as mobility restrictions and safety concerns proper to Palestine, which further hinder women's participation in the workforce[622]. In 2010, male youth participation in the labour force, in both the West Bank and Gaza, stood at 88%, while only 13% of female youth were registered as labour participants[623]. Women who do participate in the labour market are however confined to a highly segmented labour market which, due to gender rigidities in Palestinian society, relegates them to only two sectors: that of services, including education, health and social work, and agriculture, overall, severely

[619] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, "Palestine 2030, Demographic Change: Opportunities for Development.", 117.
[620] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), "Unleashing the Power of Gender Equality: Uplifting the Voices of Women and Girls to Unlock Our World's Infinite Possibilities.", 3.
[621] Social and Economic Development Group Middle East and North Africa Region, "West Bank and Gaza: Coping With Conflict?", xxii.
[622] Social and Economic Development Group Middle East and North Africa Region, xxii.
[623] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, "Palestine 2030, Demographic Change: Opportunities for Development.", 117.

limiting women's ability to engage in trade or business activities[624]. On the other hand, although women's participation in the labour market has been increasing since 2003 – as dire socio-economic conditions may have pushed them to look for jobs – female unemployment rates have augmented as well[625]. In 2022, the unemployment rate among Palestinian women in the workforce was around 40%, compared to 20% for men. This has occurred despite a rise in female participation compared to 2021[626]. In Gaza, among the youth, male unemployment rate amounted to 54.3%, while the female one was at 83.7%[627].

Education

As of 2016, Palestinian literacy rates for those over the age of 15 were remarkably high, with 98.4% of males and 94.4% of females being literate[628]. As Courbage, Hamad and Zagha, point out, high literacy rates reflect the importance that Palestinians place among education, which is considered as a durable and movable asset[629]. In 2016, 37.9% of youth in Gaza were enrolled in education, compared to 36.3% in the West Bank[630]. However, by 2015, the percentage of youth completing university education was slightly higher in the West Bank than in Gaza[631]. In turn, illiteracy rates are very low. As of 2023, illiteracy in most of Gaza's governorates ranged between 1.5% and 1.6%, lower rates compared to the West Bank[632]. Enrolment favours females and the proportion of females that completed university education is higher than that of males, both in the West Bank and Gaza Strip[633]. In 2022, completion rates for lower and upper secondary education were significantly higher for females, at 97% and 78% respectively, compared to 90% and 53% for males[634]. This trend is true even though gender norms still hinder women's access to education, as families prefer to invest in their sons rather than in their daughters[635]. In this context, female access to higher education is hampered by societal expectations placed on women, ranging for marrying at very young age to maintained of the

[624] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, 49.
[625] Social and Economic Development Group Middle East and North Africa Region, "West Bank and Gaza: Coping With Conflict?", xxii.
[626] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), "Unleashing the Power of Gender Equality: Uplifting the Voices of Women and Girls to Unlock Our World's Infinite Possibilities.", 3.
[627] The World Bank, "World Bank Economic Monitoring Report.", 8.
[628] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, "Palestine 2030, Demographic Change: Opportunities for Development.", 48.
[629] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, 48.
[630] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, 116.
[631] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, 116.
[632] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), "Palestine in Figures, 2023.", 42.
[633] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, "Palestine 2030, Demographic Change: Opportunities for Development.", 47.
[634] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), "Unleashing the Power of Gender Equality: Uplifting the Voices of Women and Girls to Unlock Our World's Infinite Possibilities.", 2.
[635] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, "Palestine 2030, Demographic Change: Opportunities for Development.", 47.

traditional reproductive role. Moreover, especially in Gaza, women's pursuit of higher education is hindered by very limited work opportunities after graduation[636]. Despite the benefits of youth enrolment, challenges remain. National planning often fails to align education with labour market needs, with an overemphasis on human and social science over applied sciences, and inadequate vocational training programmes. This results in universities producing graduates who are ill-prepared for the job market, contributing to high unemployment among educated youth[637].

The political situation in Gaza has also impacted education. After Hamas took control, it introduced a more conservative Islamic influence in schools. This shift included the introduction of designated prayer times during class, as well as the commemoration of martyrs. However, the curriculum remained largely unchanged, as Hamas kept coordinating with UNRWA[638]. The highest price for this conservative turn has been paid by girls: in 2013, the Hamas government passed a law requiring separate classes for boys and girls in public and private schools from the age of 9, while also barring male teachers from teaching in girls' schools[639].

Access to health

Leveraging its experience in social services, Hamas kept Gaza's healthcare system operational, managing 13 of 27 hospitals and 56 primary clinics, while UNRWA and NGOs ran 67 additional clinics. Public hospitals provided most hospital beds and treated the majority of patients[640]. However, since the onset of economic hostilities, healthcare quality has worsened, as Gaza's health system has struggled to function due to years of infrastructure neglect. Since the easing of restrictions, Israel approved ten international projects, including UNRWA's construction of four clinics and renovations of clinics and hospitals through the aid of the U.S., France, and Belgium. However, key challenges remain, such as limited access to medical

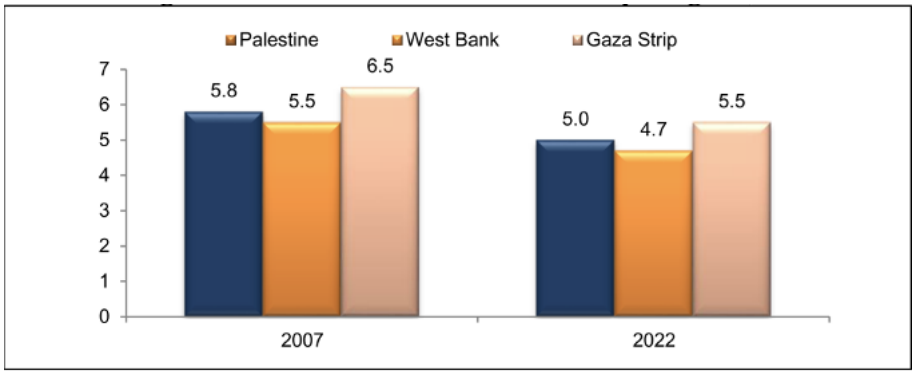
[636] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, 116.
[637] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, 116.
[638] Berti, "Non-State Actors as Providers of Governance: The Hamas Government in Gaza between Effective Sovereignty, Centralized Authority, and Resistance.", 25.
[639] Reuters, "Hamas Law Promotes Gender Segregation in Gaza Schools"; Al-Jazeera, "Hamas Orders Gender Segregation at Schools."
[640] Berti, "Non-State Actors as Providers of Governance: The Hamas Government in Gaza between Effective Sovereignty, Centralized Authority, and Resistance.", 25.

equipment and supply of medicines[641]. Additionally, gaps in specialized care have often forced patients to seek treatment outside Gaza[642]. However, due to restrictions on movements, the process to obtain an exit permit is often long and stressful. UNICEF reports that, in 2022, , the Israeli authorities have approved only 64% of patients' requests to exit Gaza – mainly for specialized treatment in the West Bank and East Jerusalem – by the time of the scheduled medical appointment. However, in previous years, patients have died while awaiting a response to their application[643].

Housing

In 2006, the population density in the Gaza Strip amounted to nearly 4000 persons per km^2. By 2023, it had augmented to 6000 persons per km^2, whereas the West Bank, in comparison, recorded a population density of just over 500 persons per km^2 in the same year[644]. Despite growing density, the average household size in Gaza has slightly decreased, from 6.6 in 2006 to 5.5 in 2023[645].

Figure 11. The average household size in Palestine by region, 2007-2022



Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *Unleashing the power of gender equality: Uplifting the voices of women and girls to unlock our world's infinite possibilities,* 2023, 2.

However, continued population growth has meant that many Gazans still live in cramped and overcrowded conditions. Dwellers are indeed confronted with problematic living conditions

[641] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Easing The Blockade: Assessing the Humanitarian Impact on the Population of the Gaza Strip .", 19.
[642] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 20.
[643] UNICEF, "The Gaza Strip: The Humanitarian Impact of the Blockade."
[644] United States Census Bureau, "International Database - Gaza Strip."
[645] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), "Palestine in Figures, 2006", 10; Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), "Palestine in Figures, 2023.", 11.

such as the loss of privacy, poor hygiene, and also an increase in domestic violence, particularly affecting women[646].

The blockade has greatly impacted both the quality and availability of housing in Gaza. Restrictions on the importation of construction materials, combined with limitations on building near the Israeli border, have triggered a severe housing shortage for Gaza's fast-growing population, exacerbating overcrowding issues[647]. Additionally, the destruction of houses following periodic escalations of violence between Hamas and Israel, combined with the slow pace of reconstruction, leaves many families without adequate shelter[648]. For instance, after Operation Cast Lead in 2008, widespread destruction of homes triggered a significant housing crisis with dire humanitarian consequences[649]. Another example comes from the aftermath of the 2014 war, when it was reported that a total of 62,000 housing units were either damaged or destroyed, resulting in the displacement 12,000 people[650].

Food, water, and electricity security

Since the beginning of the blockade, living conditions for Palestinians in Gaza have worsened [651]significantly due to shortages of nutritious food, clean water, and lack of electricity.

Within a year after Hamas's rise to power, more than half of Palestinians were declared food insecure. OCHA reported that in the first half of 2010, 52% of Gaza's households were food insecure. Even after the partial easing of blockade restrictions in 2010, food insecurity remained widespread, with 29% of households unable to secure an adequate diet, and many remaining reliant on food assistance[652]. By 2022, 1.3 million out of Gaza's 2.1 million residents (62%) required food aid[653].

Gazans also suffer from the lack of drinkable and clean water. Gaza's sole source of water, its aquifer, was already overdrawn by 2008, leading to seawater intrusion and thus delivering only

[646] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory, "Easing The Blockade: Assessing the Humanitarian Impact on the Population of the Gaza Strip.", 16.
[647] The World Bank, "Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee.", 22.
[648] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Humanitarian Needs Overview: Occupied Territories.", 27.
[649] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Easing The Blockade: Assessing the Humanitarian Impact on the Population of the Gaza Strip.", 13.
[650] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Humanitarian Needs Overview: Occupied Territories.", 27.
[651] Milton-Edwards, "Hamas: Victory with Ballots and Bullets.", 309.
[652] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Easing The Blockade: Assessing the Humanitarian Impact on the Population of the Gaza Strip .", 5; 10.
[653] UNICEF, "The Gaza Strip: The Humanitarian Impact of the Blockade."

a small percentage of drinkable water[654]. In 2011, the World Health Organisation (WHO) had declared that over 90% of water extracted from the Gaza aquifer and supplied through the network did not meet WHO standards[655]. While the percentage of undrinkable water had dropped to 78% by 2022[656], access remained limited. For instance, it has been reported that as of May 2014, around 1/3 of Gaza's residents had access to water for only 6 to 8 hours once in four days[657]. Shortages in water have also resulted from damages done to water infrastructures, for example during the 2014 war, which also impacted electricity networks[658]. Overall, in 2023, the water crisis in Gaza affected 90% of households, with severe impacts on health and hygiene, contributing to more than a quarter of all childhood diseases[659]. Concurrently, electricity shortage further strains daily life. By 2022, Gaza's power plant, partly supplemented by Israel, covered only about 50% of the Strip's electricity demand. In 2021, daily power cuts averaged 11 hours, compounding the humanitarian crisis[660].

3.3.1.3 Degree of civil and political freedoms

In 2006, Hamas won the parliamentary elections, securing a majority of seats. However, following the 2007 civil war with Fatah, Hamas eliminated its political opposition, gaining uncontested control over Gaza. Professor Yezid Sayigh notes that upon coming to power, the Haniyeh-led Hamas government denied any authoritarian tendencies, claiming its governance would resemble "Turkey under the AK Party, not the Taliban in Afghanistan"[661]. Yet, this did not entirely hold true. Firstly, internal rivalries within Hamas led to the removal of several political leaders, suggesting that the movement's internal structure was less democratic than it claimed[662]. Secondly, Hamas quickly sought to control key sectors of the state and its bureaucratic apparatus, especially education and healthcare. In 2008, during a teachers' strike, Hamas replaced much of the teaching staff with its own members and sympathizers and made

[654] The World Bank, "Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee.", 22.
[655] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Easing the Blockade: Assessing the Humanitarian Impact on the Population of the Gaza Strip.", 17.
[656] UNICEF, "The Gaza Strip: The Humanitarian Impact of the Blockade."
[657] The World Bank, "Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee.", 22.
[658] The World Bank, 7.
[659] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Humanitarian Needs Overview: Occupied Territories.", 27.
[660] UNICEF, "The Gaza Strip: The Humanitarian Impact of the Blockade."
[661] Sayigh, "Hamas Rule in Gaza: Three Years On.", 3.
[662] Milton-Edwards, "Hamas: Victory with Ballots and Bullets", 303; Sayigh, "Hamas Rule in Gaza: Three Years On.", 2.

similar changes within the healthcare system[663]. The judicial system also fell under Hamas's influence, with the group establishing its own legal framework and appointing judges, many of whom came from Sharia courts[664]. Predictably, Hamas also took over law enforcement, creating an auxiliary armed force, the Executive Force (EF), ostensibly to counterbalance Mahmoud Abbas's security control. However, as Milton-Edwards points out, most EF leaders were drawn from the al-Qassam Brigades, blurring the line between domestic policy and armed militancy[665]. The most striking example of Hamas's authoritarianism, however, has been its actions against civil society and grassroots organisations, particularly NGOs. Upon taking power, the Haniyeh government closed down many associations it believed to be associated to Fatah[666]. According to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, in July 2008 alone, Hamas attacked 152 civil society organizations, some even without any Fatah ties[667]. Control over NGOs increased after Operation Cast Lead in 2008, as Hamas began requiring them to register with the Ministry of Interior and obtain permission for all activities[668]. By 2011, attacks on human rights organizations had intensified: with raids on foreign-based and local NGOS, as much as UN-affiliated organizations, some of which were ordered to suspend their programmes[669]. Care centres for women and children also were cracked down[670]. Public and peaceful displays of dissent or support for other political factions have been punished. Retaliation has not been pursued solely towards Fatah supporters, but also against other political parties, like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine[671]. As of 2023, political tolerance in Gaza remains limited. While some groups are occasionally allowed public activities, Fatah supporters continue to face persecution[672]. Hamas also restricts freedom of speech and assembly, especially concerning Fatah-affiliated groups women's rights associations[673]. Arbitrary detention also remains a widespread issue: in 2018, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) reported frequent human rights violations,

[663] Berti, "Non-State Actors as Providers of Governance: The Hamas Government in Gaza between Effective Sovereignty, Centralized Authority, and Resistance.", 25.
[664] Sayigh, "Hamas Rule in Gaza: Three Years On.", 2.
[665] Milton-Edwards, "Hamas: Victory with Ballots and Bullets.", 314.
[666] Sayigh, "Hamas Rule in Gaza: Three Years On.", 2.
[667] Roy, Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza, 216.
[668] Sayigh, "Hamas Rule in Gaza: Three Years On.", 2.
[669] Sayigh, "Policing The People, Building the State: Authoritarian Transformation in the West Bank and Gaza", 21; Roy, Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza, 220.
[670] Roy, Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza, 220.
[671] Sayigh, "Hamas Rule in Gaza: Three Years On", 4; Sayigh, "Policing The People, Building the State: Authoritarian Transformation in the West Bank and Gaza.", 2.
[672] Freedom House, "Gaza Strip."
[673] United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), "Country of Origin Information on the Situation in the Gaza Strip, Including on Restrictions on Exit and Return.", 19.

overcrowded detention centres, and the use of torture[674]. In 2023, 61 Palestinians were reportedly detained arbitrarily in Gaza[675].

Hamas's increasingly conservative social policies have also affected daily life, and its interference with public freedoms has targeted women in particular. Although the group has not drastically altered women's legal status, it has curtailed public and civil liberties, monitoring women's dress codes and promoting gender segregation[676]. Hamas's assertive control has assumed the form of a patrolling. In 2009, The Guardian reported that Hamas was patrolling beaches in Gaza: officers stopped men from sitting shirtless on the beach, dispersed groups of unmarried men and women, and ordered shopkeepers not to display lingerie in their windows[677]. In the same year, Minister of Interior Fathi Hammad launched a campaign to impose stricter dress codes, banning women from riding motorcycles and requiring female lawyers to wear the hijab in court[678]. As of 2018, Hamas authorities were reportedly involved in harassing, fining, and punishing individuals for violating traditional or Islamic norms and engaging in behaviour deemed "un-Islamic." They were also said to enforce gender segregation and conservative dress codes in public spaces[679]. Despite these restrictions, women's political participation has slightly improved due to a 2005 quota that increased the proportion of female members of the legislature[680]. However, the paralysis of the Palestinian Legislative Council has rendered women presence in the legislature a mere façade. Furthermore, while Palestinian women in Gaza are active in civil society, they remain largely excluded from leadership positions in Hamas, and public political participation is limited[681].

To the present day, Gaza have been denied the opportunity to hold new free elections, as the political division between Fatah and Hamas has led to continued postponements. No elections have been held in Gaza since 2006, and decisions remain highly politicized and made internally[682]. Moreover, the Palestinian Legislative Council has been unable to function due to the ongoing schism between Fatah and Hamas. However, a Hamas-led legislature continues to

[674] United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), 18.
[675] Amnesty International, "Palestine (State of) 2023."
[676] Berti, "Non-State Actors as Providers of Governance: The Hamas Government in Gaza between Effective Sovereignty, Centralized Authority, and Resistance.", 28.
[677] McCarthy, "Hamas Patrols Beaches in Gaza to Enforce Conservative Dress Code."
[678] Sayigh, "Hamas Rule in Gaza: Three Years On.", 5.
[679] United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), "Country of Origin Information on the Situation in the Gaza Strip, Including on Restrictions on Exit and Return.", 20.
[680] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, "Palestine 2030, Demographic Change: Opportunities for Development.", 50.
[681] Freedom House, "Gaza Strip."
[682] Freedom House.

operate in Gaza[683] (Freedom House). The media are also not free. By 2010 only two newspapers were circulated, respectively published by Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad[684]. Freedom House and Amnesty report that as of 2023 media are still not free, and this also concerns the targeting of journalists who have faced violent repression from Hamas as much as from Israeli forces. In 2021, Israel has also shut down NGOs and human rights organisation defined as 'terrorist'[685].

In this regard, Israeli policies towards the Strip account for severe violations of human rights and civil freedoms as well. Due to the ongoing blockade, travel to and from the Gaza Strip is subject to severe restrictions and is only possible via the territory's two land crossing points, namely the Erez Crossing and the Rafah Crossing. The severe limitations on the movement of goods and people in Gaza have long hampered the development of normal civilian political participation, and Israeli control on the daily life of Palestinians in the Strip has left them with virtually no ability to shape policies affecting them[686]. Under this regime, the possibility to exit Gaza is entirely prohibited unless a person meets the Israeli criteria for an exceptional permit[687]. The permit application process is time consuming, arduous and uncertain. Applications by people meeting the established criteria can be denied on security grounds, without any further detail on the specifics of each denial[688]. Temporary permits may be issued for family visits to the West Bank, Israel, or other locations. However, eligibility is limited to situations involving serious illness, death, or the wedding of a close relative[689]. As university students have had difficulty acquiring the necessary permits to leave the territory, this policy is particularly detrimental for those who wish to study academic disciplines available in West Bank universities or abroad, but not in Gaza[690]. According to what reported by OCHA, since early June 2010, the crossing has been open regularly six days a week, though this was later reduced to five days. This adjustment enhanced access to the outside world for the population, but primarily benefited those classified as 'humanitarian cases,' such as patients, students, and

[683] Freedom House.
[684] Sayigh, "Hamas Rule in Gaza: Three Years On.", 4.
[685] Freedom House, "Gaza Strip."
[686] Freedom House.
[687] Freedom House.
[688] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Easing The Blockade: Assessing the Humanitarian Impact on the Population of the Gaza Strip .", 20.
[689] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 20.
[690] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 20; Freedom House, "Gaza Strip."

holders of foreign passports[691]. Following political unrest in Egypt after 2014, the Egyptian authorities shut the Rafah border crossing with Gaza for extended periods. Since mid-2018, Rafah has been largely operational, and during the first five months of 2022, it was open for 95 days out of 151[692].

3.3.2 Review of living conditions: 2006-2023

Analysing the Gaza Strip's demographic trends may offer early insights into living standards. Between 2006 and 2023, despite a decline in fertility rates, they have remained notably high. In contrast, the West Bank's fertility rates were consistently about two percentage points lower during the period. However, since 2018, a decrease in Gaza's fertility rate and an increase in that of the West Bank, has resulted in very similar trends. Meanwhile, countries like Egypt and Jordan also showed lower rates more similar to those of the West Bank. As of 2023, Gaza still stands out for exhibiting very high fertility rates. Several factors may contribute to this trend. Gazan society, for instance, still harness demography as a weapon against the risk of annihilation. Additionally, Palestinian society is highly patriarchal, with societal structures that foster expectations on women's traditional reproductive roles. Since its establishment in power, Hamas's has asserted a conservative influence which has furtherly limited the possibility for women's social emancipation while reinforcing their traditional roles as mothers and caregivers. The rigid traditional structure and quasi-non-existent opportunities for social mobility have contributed to the dire living standards. Although life in the Gaza Strip has always been tragic, since the blockade was imposed in 2007, conditions have significantly worsened. The tight restrictions on the movement of goods and people have severely impacted economic development, leading to contractions in GDP and increased poverty. Consequently, Gazans have become heavily dependent on external aid, particularly for food. Food insecurity, along with shortages of essential services like clean water and reliable electricity, has inevitably exacerbated living conditions. Unemployment, particularly among the youth who constitute the largest segment of the working-age population, is alarmingly high. This demographic, making up for the largest age-group in the working age population, faces a saturated labour market, with many highly educated yet unemployed youths who are increasingly disillusioned

[691] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Easing The Blockade: Assessing the Humanitarian Impact on the Population of the Gaza Strip .", 20.
[692] UNICEF, "The Gaza Strip: The Humanitarian Impact of the Blockade."

and frustrated, potentially leading to social unrest[693]. Besides economic restrictions, the Gaza Strip has suffered from repeated military interventions, due to Hamas and Israel cyclical confrontations. These operations have caused severe damages to infrastructures and homes, and have resulted in numerous civilian causalities, including children. The psychological impact of these interventions is profound, with many youths in Gaza experiencing fear, trauma, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)[694]. Between 2022 and 2023, excluding the military operation that began on October 7, 2023, Gaza experienced two major military operations: Operation Breaking Dawn in the summer of 2022 and Operation Shield and Arrow in May 2023. OCHA has reported that, prior to these escalations, almost 500.000 children in Gaza were already in need of mental health and psychosocial support services, a number expected to have increased with the recent hostilities[695]. The humanitarian situation is compounded by Hamas's authoritarian governance, which hampers as well as violates civil and political freedoms. These policies have targeted women in particular, hindering their freedom of movement, access to education, and participation to public life (UNCHR 20). As of 2018, the UNHRC reported a worsening situation in Gaza, with human rights violations primarily resulting from Israeli actions and abuses by Hamas authorities, occurring in an environment of impunity[696]. Indeed, Hamas restricts the population's civil and political rights through its authoritarian rule, the Israeli government has severely infringed upon human rights through its stringent economic policies, tight restrictions on freedom of movement, and excessive use of force against Gazan civilians.

The aim of this chapter has been twofold. Firstly, we began by examining the transitional period between the end of the First Intifada and the onset of the Second. We approached this with the premise that the escalation of political violence might be linked to worsening living conditions, analysing the socio-economic and political landscape at the eve of 2000. Although there was notable public discontent during these years, primarily due to the failure of the Oslo Accords, we observed that the second Intifada was marked by significantly less civilian engagement compared to the First, with a shift towards the violence perpetrated by armed groups. It was

[693] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, "Palestine 2030, Demographic Change: Opportunities for Development.", 114.
[694] Courbage, Hamad, and Zagha, 121.
[695] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Humanitarian Needs Overview: Occupied Territories.", 37.
[696] United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), "Country of Origin Information on the Situation in the Gaza Strip, Including on Restrictions on Exit and Return.", 17.

within this context that we examined the rise of Hamas as a political entity, noting its gradual yet increasing popularity, primarily boosted by public disillusionment with the existing political elite and frustration with Israeli policies. This analysis laid the groundwork for understanding how, by the 2006 legislative elections, Hamas managed to surpass Fatah. Following this, we explored the aftermath of such elections, including the suspension of funding to the Palestinian Authority due to international economic sanctions, and the subsequent civil conflict that led to Hamas's complete control over the Gaza Strip. At this juncture, the second aim of this chapter emerged: to assess the evolution of living conditions in Gaza from the establishment of Hamas's power between 2006 and 2007 up to 2023. Our findings indicate a persistent deterioration in living conditions, resulting in a severe humanitarian crisis and economic hardships. The primary factors contributing to this crisis have been the stringent Israeli blockade and various military interventions throughout the period. The overall humanitarian situation, especially affecting the large population of children and youth in Gaza, has sharply declined and shows no sign of improvement. In the final chapter, we will explore how Hamas, as a provider of social welfare, has harnessed these dire socio-economic conditions to attract and integrate the population, particularly the youth, into its social, political and military apparatus.

4 Aid, Radicalisation and Youth Agency

The previous chapters have primarily examined the unfolding of the events between Israel and Palestine, the evolving relationships between political actors, and the evolution of the living conditions in the Gaza Strip at the eve of major breakouts of political violence like the two Intifadas. This final chapter will focus specifically on the intersection between aid, radicalisation, and youth agency. The analysis will proceed along the following path. First, it aims at exploring what factors, beyond dire socio-economic hardships, drive young people towards joining Hamas. To understand this, it is first necessary to delve into Hamas's intricate social welfare infrastructure which, in the Gaza Strip, encompasses several aspects of communal life. This will involve tracing the origins of Hamas back to the Muslim Brotherhood, exploring its creation and evolution over the years. The focus will then turn to a detailed examination of the *dawa*, the core of Hamas's social welfare system, which facilitates recruitment through its network of benefits. In this context, the role of the youth will be investigated, questioning to what extent young people exercise choice in an environment where not only socio-economic conditions are low, but also where meaningful political as well as sustenance alternatives are limited. However, it is crucial to avoid a deterministic view and instead consider how young people, despite the pressures exerted by Hamas's social framework and feelings of deprivation, can still assert agency. Finally, this chapter will investigate the potential of youth not merely as passive followers, but as individuals driven by a social and political desire to seek alternatives. By doing so, youth will be analysed as peaceful agents of change, expressing their grievances not necessarily through violence or joining Hamas, but rather by resisting both political factionalism as well as the Israeli occupation.

4.1 Hamas: Aid and Radicalisation

4.1.1 Origins and creation

A few days after the breakout of the first Intifada, Ahmad Yasin – also known as Sheikh Yassin in Western media – changed the name of his local charity from *al-Mujamma'al-Islami* to *Harikat al-Muqawme al-Muslamiya* (i.e., Islamic Movement of Resistance)[697]. The acronym of the new name corresponded to "Hamas", the Arabic word meaning "zeal". The charity from

[697] Shachar, The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics: From the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009, 4.

which Hamas emerged in 1987 was part of a broader network of social welfare programs that the Islamist organisation of the Muslim Brotherhood had been building in the Gaza Strip since 1946[698]. The Brotherhood emerged in Egypt in 1928 as a small religious charity organisation[699]. Its religious core lies in Sunni revivalism and predicts that the return to pure Islam is the key to any country's moral and social renewal through a system combining governance and values based on Sharia[700]. According to the Brotherhood, to achieve a society founded on moral purity, it was necessary to rebuild the social framework based on Islamic principles[701]. The transformation of the new community primarily required a strict Islamic education for its members[702]. To develop such a community, the Brotherhood sponsored local social services including the establishment of schools, clinics, and charitable organizations, all of which contributed to public and social welfare[703]. The overarching goal of the Muslim Brotherhood was to initiate a comprehensive social reform process through a grassroots approach to spiritual development, which would eventually lead to the formation of an Islamic state, even though the specifics of what constituted proper Islamic governance were not clearly defined[704]. For a long time, most of the Brotherhood's efforts were focused on bottom-up societal reform. However, the Egyptian leadership of the organisation also adopted the concept of jihad, understood as the legitimate use of force to expand and protect the Muslim community, particularly against Western imperialists and Zionists who had colonized Muslim territories[705]. It was within this framework that the organization showed strong support for the Palestinian cause. During the Great Arab Revolt of 1936-1939, the Brotherhood began providing both moral and material support, under the praise of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem[706]. By 1946, the Brotherhood had established a presence in the Gaza Strip, and their involvement reached its height in the 1948 war[707]. This peak in activity occurred as the Brotherhood, alongside its social initiatives, became more politically conscious and nationalistic, which led to an active campaign against Zionist propaganda[708]. When Nasser came to power, they were declared illegal in Egypt. Consequently, because since 1949 Gaza had been under Egyptian military

[698] Frisch, "Hamas: The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood.", 89.
[699] Wickham, The Muslim Brotherhood, 20.
[700] Wickham, 20-23.
[701] Wickham, 22.
[702] Wickham, 23.
[703] Wickham, 23.
[704] Wickham, 24.
[705] Wickham, 25.
[706] Ḥarūb, Hamas: Political Thought and Practice, 12-13
[707] Ḥarūb, Hamas: Political Thought and Practice, 14.
[708] Ḥarūb, 17.

occupation, the organisation had to operate covertly there as well, leading to its decentralization and engagement in clandestine activities[709]. Perhaps, one of the reasons why the Brotherhood's growth in Gaza was stronger than in the West Bank, where it also had a presence, was partly because in the Strip it began interacting with nationalist militant movements, especially following the emergence of Fatah[710]. However, the Muslim Brotherhood abstained from any organised military activity for a long time and played no role in the area of the armed struggle undertaken by Fatah and the PFLP after the 1967 war[711]. Instead, up until the 1980s, it prioritised addressing social issues rather than pursuing political objectives[712]. One could argue that the Brotherhood's reluctance to engage in armed conflict earlier was due to its belief that social development must precede political change. This fundamental difference set the Brotherhood apart from Fatah: while the latter embodied the armed struggle, the Muslim Brotherhood focused on a cultural revival aimed at instilling true Islamic values in individuals, which they believed would pave the way for future revolution[713]. It was indeed in the 1960s and 1970s, a period marked by secular armed resistance, that the Brotherhood began to put the basis for its social foundation in Gaza, particularly targeting the youth for recruitment. This time frame is considered as the time of the Brotherhood's social institution building in which a generation of high school and university students was mobilised[714]. Indeed, through student societies, clubs, and charitable organizations, this new 'Islamic youth' soon competed with peers who supported the PLO[715]. Notably, during this time, the Israeli government also supported the Muslim Brotherhood as a tactic to weaken the PLO, which it viewed as its primary adversary[716]. To understand why the Brotherhood was successful in gaining influence within Gazan society and among the youth, it is necessary to consider the new political consciousness that involved the Arab-Muslim world after 1979. The secular Arab regimes' failure to establish strong economies and welfare systems, coupled with rising urbanization and education levels, alongside the inability of Marxist movements to achieve their goals, coincided with the Iranian Revolution, triggering a region-wide revival of political Islam[717]. The

[709] Ḥarūb, 23; Robinson, "Hamas as Social Movement.", 120.
[710] Robinson, "Hamas as Social Movement.", 120.
[711] Frisch, "Hamas: The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood.", 90.
[712] Ḥarūb, Hamas: Political Thought and Practice, 234.
[713] Ḥarūb, 28.
[714] Ḥarūb, 31.
[715] Ḥarūb, 31.
[716] Robinson, "Hamas as Social Movement.", 119.
[717] Ḥarūb, Hamas: Political Thought and Practice, 31; Robinson, "Hamas as Social Movement", 119; Mehr, "Hamas - How Has a Terrorist Organization Become a Political Power?", 3; Ganor and Azani, "Terrorism in the Middle East.", 576

Islamization of the Palestinian political landscape may have also been triggered by factors specific to the Palestinian cause, such as the rise of the conservative and religious Likud party in Israel, which further framed the ongoing conflict in religious terms[718]. By the 1980s, Islamist movements were gaining momentum, increasingly framing the Arab-Israeli conflict not as a national struggle, but as a religious fight and a battle against Western imperialism. These ideas were disseminated through mosques, articles, and even within Israeli prisons[719]. The most visible sign of the growing Islamist movement was the sharp increase in the number of mosques in the Occupied Territories, which more than doubled in Gaza between 1967 and 1987, becoming centres for both religious and social activities, along with a rise in the number of educational and healthcare facilities[720]. The result was the birth of "Palestinian Islamism"[721]. In 1987, *al-Mujamma'al-Islami* was the major welfare organisation associated with the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza. It was funded mainly by donations from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, along with local zakat collections, and it managed clinics, kindergartens, and educational facilities[722]. *Al-Mujamma* also had a very solid student association basis, through which it became more politically committed[723]. This influence was evident as the Islamic University of Gaza took a more Islamist direction, often imposed through coercive measures. This shift included enforcing the wearing of the hijab for staff and students and targeting secular establishments such as cinemas, clubs, and places that sold alcohol[724]. The Islamist turn reflected the broader conservative revival of the period and also expressed the disillusionment of a younger generation seeking new hope for a better society and liberation through Islam. However, this shift also led to a decline in civil and political freedoms, particularly for women. As Nathan Shachar recalls, until that moment, the Palestinian society did not have a tradition of extreme Islamism; it was secular principles that had instead guided an entire generation[725]. Now, the embrace of Islamic fundamentalism disappointed those young people who had hoped for democracy and gender equality[726]. When the Intifada erupted in 1987, the Muslim Brotherhood's dominance was challenged for the first time by *al-Jihad al-Islami* (Islamic Jihad), an offshoot that had already adopted armed resistance, contrasting with the

[718] Robinson, "Hamas as Social Movement", 119.
[719] Ganor and Azani, "Terrorism in the Middle East.", 579.
[720] Robinson, "Hamas as Social Movement.", 126.
[721] Ḥarūb, Hamas: Political Thought and Practice, 2.
[722] Frisch, "Hamas: The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood.", 90.
[723] Frisch, 90.
[724] Frisch, 90-91.
[725] Shachar, The Gaza Strip: Its History and Politics: From the Pharaohs to the Israeli Invasion of 2009, 4.
[726] Shachar, 4.

Brotherhood's initial reluctance to engage in military conflict[727]. This rivalry pushed Sheikh Yassin to realize that staying relevant required a more active role in the uprising, leading to the creation of Hamas[728]. In January 1988, in response to a draft declaration of independence circulated by PLO leaders, Hamas released the charter that officially consecrated its foundation[729]. What emerged from the 1988 Hamas charter is a combination of Palestinian nationalism mixed with Islamic doctrinal elements, with the final aim being the construction of an independent Palestinian state based on Sharia law – a perspective vacillating between an ideological battle and resistance fight against the occupier[730]. Thus, the concept of jihad advocated by Hamas seems to take on a complex and sometimes ambiguous meaning. Palestine is regarded as the land of Islam – home of the first *Qibla* and of the third holiest sanctuary[731] – over which no authority should prevail. This stance suggests that jihad shall not be fought against infidels in general, but specifically against occupying forces. By referring to Zionism, Hamas assumed an anti-colonial stance strictly linked to the occupation of their land. Indeed, in their Introductory Memorandum, Hamas asserted that their struggle would only end when the Zionist colonisers, seen as part of a Western imperial project, ceased their settlement in Palestine[732]. Hamas also aimed to mobilise Muslim masses, emphasizing their obligation to undertake jihad for the Palestinian cause[733]. According to some interpretations of Hamas literature, as noted by Khalid Ḥarūb, Hamas linked the liberation of Palestine to the duty of the entire transnational umma, donating to the cause an Islamic universal character[734]. As a matter of fact, during the first years after its creation, Hamas believed that the burden of liberation should be carried by the broader Arab and Islamic community, asserting that a solution to the Palestinian issue could only be found after establishing an Islamic state outside Palestine[735]. While interpreting Hamas's foundational discourse solely through an ideological lens might be simplistic, certain references do suggest a conflict framed as a struggle between Islam and Judaism. In the introduction to its charter, Hamas explicitly mentions a “battle against the

[727] Ḥarūb, Hamas: Political Thought and Practice, 32.
[728] Ganor and Azani, “Terrorism in the Middle East.”, 581.
[729] Frisch, “Hamas: The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood.”, 91.
[730] Ḥarūb, Hamas: Political Thought and Practice, 43.
[731] In Islam, the Qibla is the direction where to point when praying. The Al-Aqsa Mosque was the first Qibla in Islam and now the third holiest site. Jerusalem. See Maqdsi, “Charter of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) of Palestine.”, 126.
[732] See Ḥarūb, Hamas: Political Thought and Practice, 292.
[733] See Ḥarūb, 44; Article 12 in Maqdsi, “Charter of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) of Palestine., 125.
[734] Ḥarūb, Hamas: Political Thought and Practice, 44.
[735] Ḥarūb. 48; Ganor, Israel’s Counterterrorism Strategy: Origins to The Present, 580.

Jews"[736]. The antisemitic undertones in Hamas's ideology are evident in Article 32, which quotes the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a notorious antisemitic text that claims a Jewish plot for global domination[737]. Article 22 further refers to the "enemy" and discusses the supposed Jewish control of world powers through financial means, implicating them in major global events like World Wars I and II, and the creation of the United Nations to manipulate world affairs[738]. These ideological positions, which also frame the conflict as a battle between Muslims and Jews, have at times gained prominence when Israelis have assaulted Muslims in their holy sites, such as the 1990 al-Aqsa Mosque massacre, where 20 Palestinians died in clashes with a right-wing Zionist group[739].From this perspective, the conflict with Israeli Jews can be seen more as a response to aggressive actions rather than simply ideological differences[740]. As reported by Ḥarūb, in 1990, Hamas leadership stated that their hostility was not based on ideology alone but would only manifest when such ideologies resulted in actions against the umma and the nation[741]. Notably, since the 1990s, Hamas's doctrinal rhetoric has softened, with fewer references to the charter. The group's discourse has increasingly focused on the occupation of Palestinian land and the struggle to end it, prioritizing this over broader Islamic concerns and concentrating more on opposition to Zionism and its alliance with Western imperialism[742]. Indeed, as Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela have underlined, Hamas is not "a prisoner of its own dogmas" but rather operates in a dynamic context characterised by the tensions of the real political world while also adjusting to the consensus and desires of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories[743]. Over the years, it has shown a clear willingness to shift its stance on key issues and has even taken public positions that contradict its Islamic Charter[744]. However, this does not mean that Hamas has become a 'moderate' force, but rather that it has espoused pragmatism as well, demonstrated by its proneness to consider negotiations with Israel[745]. In 2017, Hamas published the "Document of General Principles and Policies"[746] which, as Paola Caridi underlines, is a crucial document for the Islamist movement explaining the change of the movement since its birth[747]. Compared to the 1988 charter, the new document

[736] Maqdsi, "Charter of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) of Palestine.", 122.
[737] See Maqdsi, 132.
[738] Maqdsi, 129.
[739] Ḥarūb, Hamas: Political Thought and Practice, 45.
[740] Ḥarūb, 45.
[741] Ḥarūb, 45.
[742] Ḥarūb, 44.
[743] Mishal and Sela, The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence, viii.
[744] Ḥarūb, Hamas: Political Thought and Practice, 44.
[745] Klein, "Hamas in Power.", 442.
[746] "Hamas: General Principles and Policies."
[747] Caridi, Hamas. Dalla Resistenza al Regime, 340.

still unveils the goals of national unity and understanding of the Palestinian cause, but it leaves less room for the "[F]lexibility used to interpret it"[748] thus avoiding the doctrinal character of the 1988 charter while underlying the movement's shared political stance[749]. Moreover, clearly drifting away from its 1988 stances, the new document makes clear that the struggle with Israeli Zionism has nothing to do with religion – thus trying to counteract the antisemitic undertones of the past[750]. The greatest novelty perhaps it's Hamas consensus of the two-state solution based on the 1967 lines, revealing the movement's acceptance of the only viable solution for the establishment of a Palestinian state[751].

4.1.2 Functioning of the *dawa*

To grasp the way in which Hamas aims at carrying out its nationalistic goal while also providing pragmatic governance to the population of Gaza it is crucial to examine its core structure. The altogether of the activities held by Hamas are the essence of the *dawa*, i.e., the religious preaching and education system that underpins its social welfare services and proselytizing efforts[752]. Through the *dawa*, Hamas not only promotes its ideological agenda but also provides essential services, blending its religious mission with practical governance. This section will not specifically deal with Hamas internal hierarchy or organisational structure; however, to grasp the broader functioning of *dawa*, it is essential to understand that Hamas operates through three distinct branches: political, social, and military. The military wing, known as the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, was established in 1990 and takes the name after one of the first Palestinian Islamist martyrs, killed in 1935 while fighting Jewish settlers[753]. While originally the Brigades had an unclear role, they became more active in the later stages of the first Intifada, when civil protests waned and armed confrontations increased. Initially committed to targeting only military personnel, the Brigades shifted their strategy following the 1994 Hebron massacre when, as vengeance and according to the principle of reciprocity, they started to attack civilians as well[754]. The political wing manages all activities, while the social welfare wing is dedicated to community support. The relationship between the three branches – particularly how the

[748] "Hamas: General Principles and Policies."
[749] Caridi, Hamas. Dalla Resistenza al Regime, 340.
[750] Ḥarūb, "A Newer Hamas? The Revised Charter.", 102.
[751] See "Hamas: General Principles and Policies"; Ḥarūb, "A Newer Hamas? The Revised Charter.", 102.
[752] Levitt, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad, 3; Mehr, "Hamas - How Has a Terrorist Organization Become a Political Power?", 4; Mishal and Sela, The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence, 9.
[753] Chaliand and Blin, The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to Al Qaeda, 356.
[754] Ḥarūb, Hamas: Political Thought and Practice, 244.

social and political wings serve as foundational to the military wing's operations – has been a topic of debate. For instance, Glenn Robinson has maintained that Hamas can be defined as a broad social movement encompassing numerous activists and social activities that are to be considered as removed from its association with suicide bombings[755]. On the other hand, scholars like Matthew Levitt are convinced that, while the distinction between the three branches points at the good that Hamas has done, this approach overlooks the relationship between welfare activities and attacks on civilians[756]. Additionally, scholars like Mishal and Sela have undertaken a more nuanced perspective and have underlined that Hamas is "essentially a social movement" and that, as such, it has allocated energy and resources primarily to providing community services, particularly in addressing the population's immediate needs and concerns[757]. At the same time, the two scholars share the idea that these three branches are interrelated to the extent that Hamas's communal infrastructure of mosques and social welfare associations created a fertile ground from which its military squads emerged and upon which they relied for moral and organizational support[758]. Moreover, while Levitt argues that Hamas' social welfare organisations report to the same political leaders who organise the attacks[759], Mishal and Sela note that Hamas' political leadership in the West Bank and Gaza is sometimes unaware of military actions against Israel[760]. This lack of coordination is due to Hamas' challenges in functioning as a hierarchical organisation, where grassroots activists, often young, educated, and militant, have significant influence. As a result, military members, differing in age and background from political leaders, may act independently, sometimes violating leadership policies, leading to decentralized, locally driven initiatives[761].
Hamas's comprehensive network of recruitment and proselytisation belongs to the social philosophy according to which social development must precede political change – a principle directly linked to its Muslim Brotherhood origins. As emphasised in its charter, the struggle should primarily be fought through education, involving the dedication of scholars, teachers, journalists, and particularly the youth[762]. Simultaneously, advancing Islamic education should go hand in hand with providing social welfare and aid to those in need, fulfilling the responsibility of caring for the whole population[763]. This outreach effort is embodied in the

[755] Robinson, "Hamas as Social Movement.", 112.
[756] Levitt, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad, 3.
[757] Mishal and Sela, The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence, vii.
[758] Mishal and Sela, 82.
[759] Levitt, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad, 3.
[760] Mishal and Sela, The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence, 159.
[761] Mishal and Sela, 159.
[762] Article 15. See Maqdsi, "Charter of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) of Palestine.", 127.
[763] Article 21. See Maqdsi, 129.

extensive network of charitable social services that Hamas has developed, including schools, kindergartens, health clinics, mosques, and vocational training centres[764].

The abundance and the maintenance of Hamas infrastructure, especially in the Gaza Strip, is to attribute to its generous funding. A great share comes from states like Iran and Saudi Arabia[765]. According to reports from 2008, the Israeli intelligence estimated that the organization raised around $50 million annually, primarily from Iranian sources. Most of this funding was allocated to *dawa* activities, with only a small fraction directed towards military operations[766]. Money can also derive from charitable giving, as well as from individual donors who do not necessarily support the movement politically. For instance, in a 1994 interview cited by Ḥarūb, attendees at a Hamas-organized charity event donated generously, regardless of their political views, as they perceived that the cause purported by Hamas was distinct from political matters[767]. Effectively Hamas, with its expanding social-welfare infrastructure of social services network, has been able to reach the whole population. This achievement can be attributed to two significant features of the Palestinian and Gazan society. First, its infrastructures particularly stood out when compared to the services and management of the PLO, often criticised by the public for being inefficient[768]. Secondly, the fact that Palestinians, especially in Gaza, have constantly been in dire socioeconomic conditions, has rendered them much more susceptible to need of assistance. Studying such context, Eli Berman has underlined how Hamas arose in an environment with no strong local government nor a functioning market by providing local public goods[769]. More precisely, the movement's assistance ranges from providing food, child and medical care, and possibilities of employment[770]. Matthew Levitt recounts that Hamas offers daily jobs that are integrated into a sort of closed economy only open to the organisation's activists who are part of the community[771]. Studying how radical political factions can secure and receive support, Loewenthal, Miaari, and Hoeffler have found

[764] Mehr, "Hamas - How Has a Terrorist Organization Become a Political Power?", 4.
[765] Levitt, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad, 6.
[766] Mehr, "Hamas - How Has a Terrorist Organization Become a Political Power?", 5.
[767] Ḥarūb, Hamas: Political Thought and Practice, 236.
[768] Frisch, "Hamas: The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood", 92; Ḥarūb, Hamas: Political Thought and Practice, 235.
[769] Berman, "Hamas, Taliban and The Jewish Underground: An Economist's View of Radical Religious Militias.", 9.
[770] Levitt, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad, 6.
[771] Levitt, 86; 119.

that support for Hamas increases with the share of households receiving aid from charities, especially for low-income individuals[772].

Hamas's institutions and services form a complex system that encompasses nearly every aspect of society, designed to create a core foundation for communal life. These institutions span a wide range of sectors. Some focus on social and charitable work[773]; while others provide health services, such as the Scientific Medical Association, which coordinates medical services and offers free care to those in need[774]. Educational and cultural associations, like the Association for Science and Culture, oversee education from kindergarten through secondary school, ensuring the integration of Islamic religious values at every level[775]. For media and propaganda, Hamas operates the Supreme Council for Islamic Information[776]. Additionally, the organization manages workers' unions, sports clubs, and women's associations, all of which contribute to its pervasive influence across society.[777]. By the time of the 2006 elections, Hamas aimed at portraying itself as an organisation that would pragmatically provide social-welfare-based governance. As Ḥarūb has underlined, Hamas presented a program that displayed the broad vision that it had for Palestinian life[778]. Its programme included, among other initiatives, of youth-focused platforms such as sports clubs and infrastructure as well as efforts to generate job opportunities, particularly for university graduates[779]. The program also pledged to address housing projects and develop villages for low-income individuals, particularly those whose homes had been demolished by Israel while also focusing on environmental issues, committing to prevent further deterioration.[780]. Benedetta Berti has furtherly pointed out that, during the electoral campaign of 2006, Hamas particularly invested in propaganda against corruption, promoting social justice, increasing development, and alleviating poverty[781]. Although these promises may not have been fully realized, given the ongoing harsh living conditions in Gaza, the support and trust Hamas has garnered – particularly since 2006 – appears to have remained relatively high in the Strip, despite some fluctuations. A Palestinian Centre for Policy and

[772] Loewenthal, Miaari, and Hoeffler, "Aid and Radicalization: The Case of Hamas in the West Bank and Gaza.", 26.
[773] Levitt, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad, 82.
[774] Mishal and Sela, The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence, 157.
[775] Mishal and Sela, 157; Levitt, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad, 82.
[776] Mishal and Sela, The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence, 157.
[777] Levitt, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad, 82.
[778] Hroub, "A 'New Hamas' through Its New Documents.", 9.
[779] Hroub, 14.
[780] Hroub, 14.
[781] Berti, "Non-State Actors as Providers of Governance: The Hamas Government in Gaza between Effective Sovereignty, Centralized Authority, and Resistance.", 12.

Survey Research (PCPSR) poll from September 2014[782], taken in the aftermath of Operation Protective Edge in Gaza and in a phase of successful implementation of the ceasefire, shows that results were quite favourable for Hamas, even though positive evaluations of the conditions in the Gaza Strip had dropped. The survey reports that, despite a drop in support for Islamists, Hamas and its back-then political leader Ismail Haniyeh, remained more popular than Mohammed Abbas's Fatah. The toll furtherly demonstrated that if presidential elections had been held in September 2014 and only Hamas and Fatah had participated, in the Gaza Strip Haniyeh would receive 50% of the votes, against 47% for Fatah. In the West Bank, support had also increased for Hamas, standing at 57% versus Fatah's 33%. Notably, votes for Haniyeh were higher in cities and refugee camps (57% each) compared to villages and towns (41%) and among women (56%) compared to men (53%). Moreover, Hamas was popular among the youth, as 58% of people between 18 and 29 years had expressed their support for Haniyeh. If legislative elections had been held and all factions had participated, in the Gaza Strip, a 40% share of those interviewed would have voted for Hamas, and 39% for Fatah. If legislative elections including all factions that participated in the 2006 were held in 2022[783], votes for Hamas in the Gaza Strip would have stood at 47%. Concerning presidential elections, if only Haniyeh and Abbas participated, votes for Hamas in the Gaza Strip would be at 62%. In the same year, positive evaluations of conditions in the Gaza Strip stood at 7%. Remarkably, both in 2014 and 2022, if Fatah-affiliated Marwan Barghouti had participated in presidential elections, he would have likely defeated Hamas's Ismail Haniyeh, considering both the West Bank and Gaza. It derives that these polls need to be interpreted with caution. Gazans do not enjoy full democratic freedoms, nor do they have significant political alternatives. The case of Barghouti in 2022 suggests that if Gazans had a viable alternative to Hamas, they would likely support it. Nonetheless, Hamas still appears to garner more votes than Fatah in the Gaza Strip, reflecting a higher level of support, partly due to Fatah's weaker presence in Gaza compared to the West Bank.

4.1.3 Youth recruitment

Hamas's social network and infrastructure encompass the entire population, but it is particularly focused on engaging and influencing youth. Indeed, the organization strategically targets young people, aiming to integrate them into its propaganda framework from an early age. This

[782] "Public Opinion Poll No (53)."
[783] "Public Opinion Poll No (83)."

approach emphasizes the youth as a central component of its long-term agenda. In this context, Janette Habashi has pointed out that the integration of religion in Palestinian life and its politicization through the broader community is crucial in understanding the early political socialization of Palestinian youth[784]. This, which in Palestinian society happens through religious education and through political parties endorsing religious themes, is the way in which the youth demonstrate their political agency[785]. Hamas has effectively created and sustained a dense network of youth-centred communal activities, through which youth socialisation occurs, spanning from religion and education to recreational and sports activities. It is thus in this "institutions for mobilisation"[786] that the youth is recruited to become either *dawa* activists themselves or perpetrators of attacks[787]. To gain a comprehensive understanding of this mechanism, we must first examine the environment in which mobilization occurs, followed by an analysis of the role and agency of youth within this process.

4.1.3.1 The environment

In Gaza, the youth is immersed in a deeply polarized and politicized environment from an early age. Matthew Levitt reports the case of the 2003 "al-Aqsa Martyrs Summer Camp," held in Gaza, which combined recreational activities with indoctrination, including Islamic sermons and displays of suicide bombers' portraits[788]. Reports on the nature of these camps vary depending on the source. In 2021, *The Times of Israel* claimed that Hamas used summer camps in the Gaza Strip to train children in weaponry and indoctrination against the "Zionist enemy"[789]. Similarly, *The Jerusalem Post* has asserted that these camps are meant to indoctrinate children into "evil"[790]. As of August 2023, The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Centre reported that camps in Khan Yunis, attended by children and teenagers, involved both military training and religious education[791]. On the other hand, while some partisan blogs acknowledge the camps' militant aspects, they emphasize themes of 'resistance' rather than 'terrorism'. These sources argue that the camps offer Gazan children a sense of normalcy amidst the blockade, providing entertainment and education to alleviate the

[784] Habashi, "Geopolitics of Religion and Its Role in Youth Agency.", 86.
[785] Habashi, 86.
[786] Robinson, "Hamas as Social Movement.", 128.
[787] Levitt, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad, 83.
[788] Levitt, 126.
[789] Staff, "At Annual Summer Camps, Hamas Trains Kids to Fire Guns, Kidnap Soldiers."
[790] The Jerusalem Post Staff, "Terror Summer Camps in Gaza, Hamas Indoctrinates Children into Evil."
[791] The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Centre, "Hamas Summer Camps in the Gaza Strip."

psychological effects of the siege[792]. Meanwhile, columnists from *Al-Jazeera* stress that Palestinians are learning self-defence, drawing comparisons to Israeli camps that feature similar military-themed activities[793]. As reported by Israel's *CTech* in 2019, Israeli summer campers recreate airstrikes and join activities named "counterterrorism 101"[794]. Despite partisan views which more broadly concern the political understanding of the entire Israeli Palestinian question, the political nature of these camps is undeniable. *The Times of Israel* noted that the 2021 camp was called "Pioneers of Liberation"[795], while Hamas's Higher Council for Youth and Sports' website announced that the 2022 camp would be titled "The Night Journey and the Prisoners"[796]. In 2023, the camp was named "Defenders of Jerusalem", thus focusing on Palestinian national identity, with a logo featuring the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Palestinian flag[797]. The Meir Amit Centre also published images from the camp's now-deleted Facebook page showing children supposedly learning how to shoot while also practicing civil defence training, alongside Quran studies. However, the prominence of Hamas and Izz al-Din Qassam Brigade's symbols had been downplayed for that year[798]. Prof. Yezid Sayigh has reported that in the summer of 2008, *dawa* activists denounced UNRWA for carrying out mixed-gender youth summer camps, and as a response organised their own segregated program[799]. As of the summer of 2023, UNRWA also organised camps throughout the Gaza Strip, which Hamas still views as its main competitors[800]

Hamas's educational institutions are also deeply embedded in a highly politicized environment, involving children from a very young age. Reporting a 1992 document, Mishal and Sela detailed Hamas's annual program for teaching Islam to schoolchildren, which included recreational activities like competitions and free-time events, as well as monthly publications[801]. The political atmosphere in higher-level schools and universities is notably charged as well, as these institutions have become key sites of political mobilization. Robinson notes that, starting in the 1980s, Hamas explicitly established student political parties in

[792] We for Gaza, "Summer Camps Help Gaza's Children Feel Life."
[793] Fernàndez, "Who's Afraid of Hamas Summer Camps?"
[794] Bahur-Nir, " Fun and Games and Shooting Down Enemy Planes."
[795] Staff, "At Annual Summer Camps, Hamas Trains Kids to Fire Guns, Kidnap Soldiers."
[796] "Higher Council for Youth and Sports-Palestine".
[797] The pictures of the camp have been published by The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Centre, "Hamas Summer Camps in the Gaza Strip."
[798] The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Centre.
[799] Sayigh et al., "Hamas Rule in Gaza: Three Years On.", 5.
[800] The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Centre, "Hamas Summer Camps in the Gaza Strip."
[801] Mishal and Sela, The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence, 157.

Palestinian universities and secondary schools as the most crucial political institutions[802]. Moreover, according to the research carried out by Levitt, about 20% of the respondents reported that their "pre-recruitment" into Hamas occurred in schools or universities[803]. It derives that, despite modernizing its approach, Hamas has consistently promoted Islamic values in education. For instance, Guy Burton highlights how Hamas's 2006 political manifesto represented a shift from its 1988 charter, with fewer Islamic references and a stronger focus on governance and civil reform[804]. Nonetheless, Islam was still emphasized in key areas such as children's and women's rights, social policies, and, indeed, education, thus reflecting its enduring dedication to those areas[805]. Finally, religious study groups in Hamas-affiliated mosques were also identified as recruitment channels[806]. Hamas has also recognized the importance of media. In 2006, it launched al-Aqsa television, complementing its al-Aqsa radio station, both of which spread its message across Palestine[807]. The group has also expanded its online presence, using the Internet to engage youth and increase its outreach capacity. This included launching a children's online magazine in 2002, featuring stories and articles promoting attacks[808]. With the development of internet and online communication, Hamas has furtherly adapted its agenda to digital platforms, using social media as a key tool for political mobilization[809].

The financial benefits that come with being a *dawa* activist or a member of the military branch are not to be underestimated. For example, Hamas provides financial aid to the families of suicide bombers and does it publicly, so that potential recruits are reassured that the families' livelihood will be secured[810]. Additionally, the group supports the families of militants killed or injured by Israel, providing both financial and material support, including reconstructing homes destroyed by the Israeli military under terrorism suspicions[811]. This type of assistance is also extended to prisoners, with a prisoners' committee established to support their families, fund legal defence, and transfer money to those incarcerated[812].

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[802] Robinson, "Hamas as Social Movement.", 128.
[803] Levitt, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad, 83.
[804] Burton, "Hamas and Its Vision of Development.", 535.
[805] Burton, 535.
[806] Levitt, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad, 36.
[807] Levitt, 140.
[808] Levitt, 141-142.
[809] Halewa, "Collectivindualism and Shadow Players: Palestinian Youth, Social Media, and Hamas's Communications Strategies.", 2.
[810] Mehr, "Hamas - How Has a Terrorist Organization Become a Political Power?", 6.
[811] Levitt, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad, 120-121.
[812] Mishal and Sela, The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence, 157.

4.1.3.2 The agency

After having analysed the structure through which Hamas aims at proselytising youth, it is necessary to now consider what kind of role does the youth play, and to what extent they exercise their agency in such context. Specifically, what drives young individuals, in an environment with extremely low socioeconomic conditions and limited social mobility, to commit to Hamas. Regarding youth radicalisation, Cherney et al., note that some of the key pull factors driving youth radicalisation are existential, and they may include the search for identity and purpose[813]. This is echoed by Kruglanski et al., who describe radicalization as a "quest for significance" that triggers radical behaviours[814]. For many, the pursuit of violence may offer an opportunity to gain a sense of importance, secure a place in history, and achieve the status of a hero or martyr within their community[815]. A significant part of the literature on radicalization and violence as a quest for recognition focuses on Islamic martyrdom, particularly among Muslim youth in European countries who, due to failed integration, face grievances and frustrations that can lead to extreme acts. Notable examples of scholars who have explored the phenomenon in these terms are the 2017 works of Oliver Roy and Farhad Khosrokhavar[816]. Delving into martyrdom would be out of the scope of this thesis. The motivations that may push a young person to commit suicide bombing are complex and often extend well beyond grievances deriving from socio-economic deprivation and may also vary across societies and religions. However, in the context of Palestinian society, examining martyrdom provides insights that go beyond the financial and welfare benefits associated with involvement in Hamas. Instead, it sheds light on the lived experiences of Palestinian youth.

In the Palestinian society, martyrdom has been revived by groups like Hamas[817] and integrated into daily life activities. From a very young age, children are exposed to the message and value of martyrdom through the displays of martyrs' portraits around neighbourhoods and in schools[818]. Jerrold Post has underlined the concept of the "breeding bone", which refers to how, in kindergartens as well as in summer camps, children are taught that self-sacrifice for the cause

[813] Cherney et al., "The Push and Pull of Radicalization and Extremist Disengagement: The Application of Criminological Theory to Indonesian and Australian Cases of Radicalization.", 411.
[814] Kruglanski et al., "The Psychology of Radicalization and Deradicalization: How Significance Quest Impacts Violent Extremism.", 73.
[815] Kruglanski et al, 75.
[816] Roy, Jihad and Death; Khosrokhavar, Radicalisation.
[817] Chaliand and Blin, The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to Al Qaeda, 378.
[818] Levitt, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad, 126.

brings glory and significance[819]. The pursuit of significance is often rooted in the harsh socio-economic conditions faced by Palestinians. Khosrokhavar notes that, especially after the failure of the Oslo Accords, many Palestinian youths lost hope in a political solution for nation-building, turning instead to the afterlife as a source of new hope[820]. Similarly, Nasser Abufarha describes martyrdom as a form of social resistance, representing an alternative to life under occupation[821]. Khosrokhavar also reports that some of the martyrs' testimonies indicate factors like economic decline and political subjugation, and the subsequent loss of dignity, contributed to their decisions to die[822]. However, he also highlights that not all suicide bombers came from impoverished or refugee backgrounds; rather, many were highly educated yet lived in a society that could not offer limited employment opportunities[823]. In a 2001 interview with Hamas volunteers, Nasra Hassan has reported that the suicide bombers, aged between 18 and 38, were mostly middle-class with paying jobs, though over half were refugees from what is now Israel[824]. Levitt discusses about how the children who grew up during the Second Intifada under Israeli occupation, had their lives disrupted by closures and violence, thus becoming more vulnerable to negative influences[825]. In this sense, continued experiences of wars and military incursions seem to have almost normalised violence in the Palestinian territories. From 2006 to 2023, excluding Operation Iron Sword after Hamas's attacks on October 7, 2023, the Gaza Strip experienced 8 military incursions and raids, varying in lethality, casualties, and duration[826]. Moreover, many young Palestinian men have spent significant parts of their lives in prison, with Israeli army arrests during incursions making it nearly impossible for young people to lead normal lives, as even minimal activism can lead to imprisonment[827]. Focusing on male youth, Maria Frederika Malmström has analysed the question through the lens of the quest for manhood and political agency[828]. While it is argued that Palestinian women have acquired limited political agency through violence for liberation[829], the Palestinian society remains patriarchal, with rigid gender roles. In this sense, the inability of Palestinian men to

[819] Post, *The Mind of the Terrorist: The Psychology of Terrorism from the IRA to Al Qaeda*.
[820] Khosrokhavar Farhad, Suicide Bombers: Allah's New Martyrs, 111-112.
[821] Abufarha, The Making of a Human Bomb: An Ethnography of Palestinian Resistance, 233.
[822] Khosrokhavar Farhad, Suicide Bombers: Allah's New Martyrs, 113.
[823] Khosrokhavar Farhad, 129.
[824] Hassan, "An Arsenal of Believers.", 40.
[825] Levitt, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad, 112.
[826] To see the different military operations undertaken by Israel in Gaza from 2006 to 2023, see Appendix IV.
[827] Khosrokhavar Farhad, Suicide Bombers: Allah's New Martyrs, 114-116.
[828] Malmström, "Porous Masculinities: Agential Political Bodies among Male Hamas Youth"; Malmström "Making Uncertain Manhood: Masculinities, Embodiment and Agency among Male Hamas Youth."
[829] See Berko and Erez, "Gender, Palestinian Women, and Terrorism: Women's Liberation or Oppression?"; Margolin, "A Palestinian Woman's Place in Terrorism: Organized Perpetrators or Individual Actors?"

provide for their families, coupled with confrontations with the Israeli army, underscores feelings of inferiority, humiliation, and worthlessness[830]. In this context, masculinity is revealed through the ability to protect, defend and sustain the household, with this protection demanding militancy[831]. It derives that acts of violence and the endurance of it are locally encouraged and viewed as forms of political resistance, perceived as the rightful role of Palestinian men, who might otherwise be seen as failures by their peers[832]. These ideals of manhood are reinforced daily by various societal actors and institutions. Malmström reports that one of the key groups influencing these ideals are mothers, who instil core values of resistance in their children[833]. From this perspective, Levitt recalls an interview with *National Geographic* in which Miriam Farhat, elected to Parliament for the Hamas share in January 2006, admitted that she had instilled the desire for martyrdom in her son[834]. Similarly, Nasra Hassan reported in 2001 that one of the attackers involved in a 1993 Hamas attack on Israeli civilians was celebrated as a hero upon returning to Gaza after waking from a coma[835].

Overall, while martyrdom remains an extreme act that only a minority of young recruits pursue, it is evident that the collective grievances of young Palestinians play a significant role in their initial recruitment. Hamas, for its part, fosters an almost totalizing and polarized environment that is difficult to escape and, for many, hard to renounce due to the tangible benefits it offers. On the other hand, Palestinian youth are raised in an atmosphere where socio-economic grievances, combined with political humiliation, cultivate a deep sense of frustration. This frustration can often find resolution through the social recognition provided by the community, which, for young men, also defines their status and worth as valuable males. In areas like Gaza, where political alternatives and opportunities for social mobility are nearly non-existent, community recognition becomes essential for gaining political agency. In this context, joining Hamas may seem like the most viable path for young men seeking to assert their identity, gain respect, and secure a sense of purpose.

[830] Khosrokhavar Farhad, Suicide Bombers: Allah's New Martyrs, 116.
[831] Peteet, "Icons and Militants: Mothering in the Danger Zone.", 107.
[832] Malmström, "Making Uncertain Manhood: Masculinities, Embodiment and Agency among Male Hamas Youth", 53.
[833] Malmström, "Making Uncertain Manhood: Masculinities, Embodiment and Agency among Male Hamas Youth.", 57.
[834] Levitt, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad, 111.
[835] Hassan, "An Arsenal of Believers.", 37.

4.2 Alternative modes of resistance

4.2.1 The youth as a peaceful agent for change

Youth is often central to discussions about the risks of political violence and radicalisation, particularly during times of economic and political turmoil when they are frequently identified as vulnerable targets. As anticipated in Chapter 1, where we explored demographic "youth bulge theories" and their intersection with drivers of radicalisation, the combination of a large, young population facing low socio-economic conditions increases both the risk of political violence and the likelihood of youth recruitment into armed groups, where such groups may offer disaffected youth a way to address their grievances as well as provide alternative means of sustainment. In Chapter 1, we have identified this recruitment process, driven by the need for one's survival, as one of the key pathways to radicalisation. In the context of the Arab-Muslim world in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, much has been written about the risks of youth recruitment and radicalisation. The prevalent argument suggesting that the youth in the region may pose a direct threat of terrorism tends to revolve around some focal points. By 2011, most MENA countries were experiencing youth bulges. However, rising levels of education yet low employment possibilities created a class of frustrated and unemployed young people. In this context, it has been argued that the turn to fundamentalist Islam may offer a sense of purpose to such idle youth, who feel alienated and cannot find an alternative in their traditional authoritarian governments. Hence, according to this literature, a congested demographic, coupled with economic hardships and absent governance, combined with religious extremism, creates an environment ripe for radicalisation[836].

However, not all literature portrays youth as passive victims or recipients of an inevitable fate. Indeed, some scholars have recognised the potential of youth as frontliners of political change and peacebuilding within their own communities[837]. Hence, if young people shall not be regarded as mere perpetrators of violence, then when they do resort to violent actions, it is necessary to recognise that it is less an inherent inclination and more a byproduct dictated by

[836] For the literature, see Al-Badayneh, Al-Assasfeh, and Nisreen A. Al-Bhri, "Social Causes of Arab Youth Radicalizing"; Al-Badayneh and Elhasan, "Determinant Factors of Radicalization Among Arab University Students"; Al-Badayneh et al., "Religious Observance and Youth Violent Extremisms Among Young Arab Students: Implications for Youth Religious De-Radicalization"; "The Challenge of the Youth Bulge in Africa and the Middle East: Empowerment and Radicalisation"; Fuller, "The Youth Crisis in Middle Eastern Society"; Gouda and Marktanner, "Muslim Youth Unemployment and Expat Jihadism: Bored to Death?"; Schomaker, "Youth Bulges, Poor Institutional Quality and Missing Migration Opportunities-Triggers of and Potential Counter-Measures for Terrorism in MENA."

[837] Agbiboa, "Youth As Tactical Agents Of Peacebuilding and Development in The Sahel.", 31.

societal conditions[838]. It also derives that despite being subjected to the same 'preconditions for terrorism', it is important to note that only a small fraction of youth actually engage in such acts[839]. Indeed, while it is true that the majority of violent extremists are young, mostly male, it is equally true that most youth remain peaceful[840]. As Marc Sommers has underlined, what these young people need is not more violence, but rather a voice in the decisions that directly impact their lives[841].

When the Arab Springs erupted between late 2010 and 2011, the political agency and potential of the youth in the MENA region was showcased. As a matter of fact, young men and women played pivotal roles in peacefully mobilizing entire societies and became integral to the transformative movements of the Arab Spring[842]. In this sense, Leila Austin emphasizes that by 2011, a new generation of Middle Eastern youth was rejecting authoritarianism through non-violent means, capitalizing on the decline of traditional institutions to create new spaces for political expression[843]. Additionally, Francesca M. Corrao highlights that the fundamentally peaceful nature of youth involvement in the Arab Springs can be traced to a new generation that was not only better educated but also more exposed to cultural influences such as theatre and cinema. These elements of civil society made them more aware of their rights and motivated them to seek peaceful change[844].

4.2.2 The Palestinian youth: between marginalisation and participation

When the Arab Spring broke out, its echo reached Palestinian youth in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, inspiring them to embrace the regional call for change. Although no sustained uprising took place in the Occupied Territories, on March 15, 2011, young people from the West Bank and Gaza peacefully took to the streets. Unlike their peers in other countries who demanded regime change, these youths called for an end to the division between Fatah and Hamas, which had weakened efforts toward resistance[845]. Young people also organised return

[838] Obaje and Uzodike-Okeke, "The Question of Youth Participation in Peacebuilding Processesin Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria.", 1.
[839] Bux, "Muslim Youths, Islam and Violent Radicalisation: Addressing Some Myths.", 270.
[840] Sommers, "Youth and the Field of Countering Violent Extremism.", 2.
[841] Sommers, 12.
[842] Sugita, "Introduction.", 4.
[843] Austin, "The Young and the Old: Demography and Generations in International Relations.", 81-82.
[844] Corrao, "Arab Revolutions: The Cultural Background.", 9-10.
[845] Jacob Høigilt, "The Palestinian Spring That Was Not: The Youth and Political Activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.", 344.

marches for Palestinian refugees in Syria and Jordan, in Syria, as well as in the West Bank and Gaza, where they called for an end of the political schism. However, these protests were suppressed by local authorities[846]. The movement, sparked by Facebook mobilization, marked the first well-organized protests in these areas since 2007[847]. In Gaza, the protests were initially met with violent repression by Hamas, and despite early indications of a willingness to negotiate with the youth's demands, the movement was exhausted within a year[848]. This brief yet notable experience, which Jacob Høigilt dubbed "the Palestinian Spring that was not"[849], was not the last attempt by Palestinian youth to challenge traditional political authorities and create a civil-based mass movement. On March 30, 2018, a human wave of 40.000 to 50.000 people – comprising men, women and children – began the Great March of Return (GMR) from Gaza towards the fence separating the Strip from Israel. Their demand regarded the end of the Israeli blockade on Gaza and the right to return for refugees, as stated in UN Resolution 194[850]. The protests began on "Land Day," a celebration commemorating the 1976 Galilean Palestinian protests against Israeli land appropriation[851]. In addition to deteriorating living conditions in Gaza, the protesters were furtherly fuelled by the Trump administration's decisions to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem and defund UNRWA in 2017[852]. Moreover, the shifting priorities of Arab states' discourses, which had marginalized the Palestinian cause, also played a role[853]. At the beginning, the atmosphere of the march was festival-like: it saw the presence of multigenerational families representing the richness of Palestinian culture, and it included food vendors, dancing, acrobats, and chanting[854]. This initial environment fostered a sense of agency and unprecedented community mobilisation[855]. However, on the same day, Israeli snipers killed 17 Palestinians and injured 1,400 others[856]. From that moment, what began as a joyful, youth-led, peaceful movement was defined by bloodshed[857]. Despite subsequent demoralisation, Gazans persisted in peaceful encampments, gathering at five sites along the

[846] Abusalim, "The Great March of Return: An Organizer's Perspective.", 92.
[847] Natil, "Palestinian Youth Movements and 'the Arab Spring.'", 37.
[848] Høigilt, "The Palestinian Spring That Was Not: The Youth and Political Activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.", 344; 350.
[849] Høigilt".
[850] UNRWA, "Gaza's 'Great March of Return', One Year On."
[851] Wispelwey and Jamei, "The Great March of Return: Lessons from Gaza on Mass Resistance and Mental Health.", 180.
[852] Wispelwey and Jamei, 180.
[853] Abusalim, "The Great March of Return: An Organizer's Perspective.", 91.
[854] Wispelwey and Jamei, "The Great March of Return: Lessons from Gaza on Mass Resistance and Mental Health.", 180.
[855] Wispelwey and Jamei, 179.
[856] Abusalim, "The Great March of Return: An Organizer's Perspective.", 95.
[857] Abusalim, 95.

fence every Friday for nearly a year[858]. All along the period, the protests remained largely nonviolent, with most participants being unarmed, though some incidents of stone-throwing, tire-burning, and the use of flaming kites being flown across the fence occurred. On their side, Israeli security forces responded, even on that large portion of civilian demonstrations, with tear gas, rubber bullets, and live ammunition[859]. Eventually, demonstrations had to be suspended at the end of 2019. By 2020, OCHA reported that the explosion of violence during the GMR resulted in 214 demonstrators, including 46 children, who have been killed, and over 36,100, including approximately 8.800 children, who have been injured by Israeli live fire[860]. The disproportionate violent turn that the march took since the first day shook those on the ground, especially those who were far from the fence[861]. As a result of the severe injuries, many became disabled and subsequently lost their jobs, and the violence perpetrated during the GMR also had widespread mental health and psychological consequences, including many children[862]. Overall, what began as a mass peaceful demonstration descended into violence, with Israeli forces using indiscriminate and disproportionate force. According to Ahmed Abu Artema, a 34-year-old organizer of the march, media attention on youth throwing stones was unjustified, as it overlooked the massacre that followed[863]. At the same time, Hamas was criticized for failing to protect children at the demonstrations, leaving them vulnerable to political instrumentalization[864]. Concerning its role during the GMR demonstrations, Hamas sought to appear aligned with popular efforts; however, this eventually led to political factionalism within the movement organisations, and to the attempt to claim credit for the movement's grassroots nature[865]. As Ahmed Abu Artema – a young activist organiser of the March – noted, the political leadership of Gaza, a place devastated by armed struggle, concluded that there was a need to articulate alternatives, and thus welcomed nonviolent mass protests as a valid new approach[866]

[858] UNRWA, "Gaza's 'Great March of Return', One Year On."
[859] UNRWA.
[860] "OCHA Two Years on: People Injured and Traumatized during the 'Great March of Return' Are Still Struggling."
[861] Abusalim, "The Great March of Return: An Organizer's Perspective.", 95-96.
[862] "OCHA Two Years on: People Injured and Traumatized during the 'Great March of Return' Are Still Struggling"; UNRWA, "Gaza's 'Great March of Return', One Year On."
[863] Abusalim, "The Great March of Return: An Organizer's Perspective.", 97.
[864] "OCHA Two Years on: People Injured and Traumatized during the 'Great March of Return' Are Still Struggling."
[865] Abusalim, "The Great March of Return: An Organizer's Perspective.", 97.
[866] Abusalim, 93-94.

Both the 2011 Palestinian demonstrations during the Arab Spring and the 2018-2019 Great March of Return reveal much about young Palestinians' agency and the powerful forces that they have to confront. These two significant mass-based, youth-led demonstrations demonstrate that, despite years of political fragmentation and violence, Palestinian youth have managed to express a degree of dissent, either vis-à-vis Israel, or towards their own governments[867]. Hence, challenging the idea of Palestinian youth as politically inactive, we shall rely on the perspective exposed by Jacob Høigilt[868]. The scholar has indeed emphasised that the seemingly small involvement of Palestinian youth in the political process of their country is caused by the limitations posed by the Israeli occupation, Fatah and Hamas's oppression, and the political paralysis caused by the two[869]. Drawing from these considerations and in light of the two youth-led mass mobilizations (the Palestinian Arab Spring and the Great March of Return) the next section aims to understand the degree of young Palestinians' political agency in an environment where traditional political elites and the Israeli occupation pull in the youth's opposite direction.

4.2.2.1 Youth marginalisation

The very nature of the occupation is perhaps what is commonly thought as having made the youth politically active and at the forefront of resistance efforts. Additionally, the establishment of distinct and opposed political factions, later even separated by geographical lines has, to some extent, inevitably 'politicised' the youth. On one hand, this is true. The Gaza Strip, for example, where the generation that grew up under the Israeli occupation developed a new political awareness, became the birthplace of the first Intifada, as well as a key centre of mobilisation for the Second[870]. However, youth participation shifted significantly between the two uprisings. As Jacob Høigilt observes, "Unlike the first Intifada, then the Second was a confrontation between elites"[871]. Indeed, the grassroots organisations that had been led largely by youth through their committees in the 1987 uprising, were mostly absent during the Second Intifada, which was far more militarised. This "political structure of mobilization" not only failed to make the Second Intifada non-violent but also sidelined youth involvement[872]. The

[867] Abusalim, 91.
[868] Høigilt, "The Palestinian Spring That Was Not: The Youth and Political Activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories."
[869] Høigilt, 348.
[870] Abusalim, "The Great March of Return: An Organizer's Perspective.", 91.
[871] Høigilt, "The Palestinian Spring That Was Not: The Youth and Political Activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.", 349.
[872] Høigilt, 349.

established political structures of both Hamas and Fatah, which defined the unfolding of the second Intifada, continue to play a decisive role today, affecting both youth and grassroots activists by stifling civil liberties and silencing internal dissent[873]. These hierarchical, old, and rigid political structures – dominated primarily by older men[874] – have limited youth self-determination. In both Gaza under Hamas and the West Bank under Fatah, youth are constrained, not necessarily through the violent suppression of protests, but through the exclusion from any decision-making processes that concern them. A survey conducted by Ola Alkahlout in the Gaza Strip reveals that young respondents felt excluded from decisions affecting youth, as well as from community development projects and peacebuilding efforts[875]. In the same survey, a young Hamas supporter echoed this sentiment, stating that the youth's voice meant little to those in power[876]. Moreover, when and if youth are involved, it is often in an instrumentalized way, serving the interests of the political parties that control their activities[877]. Statistics reflect youth dissatisfaction with their involvement in politics: in 2016, over 65% of respondents in Gaza reported that youth participation in national decision-making was inadequate[878]. As Interpeace highlights, the exclusion of the youth from of any decision-making process, community development and peace-building effort, has left young people without the opportunity to enhance their role in society in the face of growing unemployment, limited educational opportunities, and declining public participation[879]. For example, after the 2014 war, youth were excluded from reconstruction plans, which were controlled by Hamas, humanitarian organisations or Israel[880]. Youth influence seems to be limited to the roles assigned to them within society, in which patriarchal structures do play a role. As Ayed Ahmad notes, in addition to the mistreatment of women, the patriarchy embedded in the Palestinian society also includes the mistreatment of young males by the eldest, and it demands that the youth follow the leaders' directives, which stifles their independence[881]. This, for example, affects election outcomes, as elders, mostly males, tend to heavily influence young people's preferences[882]. Political factions also extend their influence into civil society organisations (CSOs). In Gaza, where humanitarian needs are acute, CSOs provide immediate relief, yet the

[873] Høigilt, 350.
[874] Ahmad, "Palestinian Youth: Between Patriarchy and Politics.", 5.
[875] Alkahlout, "Youth Engagement in Local Peacebuilding in the Gaza Strip.", 20.
[876] Alkahlout, 21.
[877] Interpeace, "Palestinian Youth Challenges and Aspirations.", 24.
[878] AWARD, "Youth Survey: Political Activism and Awareness."
[879] Interpeace, "Palestinian Youth Challenges and Aspirations.", 5-6.
[880] Alarabeed, "Youth in Post-Conflict Reconstruction: The Case of the Gaza Strip.", 102.
[881] Ahmad, "Palestinian Youth: Between Patriarchy and Politics.", 5.
[882] Ahmad, 8.

youth report distrust in these organisations due to their political affiliations with either Hamas or Fatah[883]. Indeed, many believe CSOs serve their own interests or only work for the benefit one faction's youth[884]. This political infiltration is also evident in universities and schools. While student election participation remains relatively high, many youths perceive these elections as influenced by political parties, with candidates seen as participating for personal gain and future party careers[885]. Even grassroots organizations are hampered, as they require permission from authorities to implement initiatives, which, when approved, are often disregarded[886]. Moreover, Hamas tightly supervises grassroots organizations in Gaza. As Høigilt notes, Hamas is even less tolerant of youth activism compared to the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank[887]. For instance, Hamas authorities have closed the offices of major non-partisan youth organisations without providing any explanation[888]. The widespread discontent among the youth does not translate into increased political interest or engagement. Instead, most have abandoned organized politics, viewing it as dominated either by Fatah or Hamas[889].

Beyond the role of Hamas and Fatah in suppressing youth self-determination and dissent, the Israeli occupation also plays a significant role in curbing youth participation. Polls consistently show the negative impact of the Israeli conflict on Palestinian youth, who feel disillusioned by the failed peace process, their ineffective political leadership, and the international community's inaction[890]. Indeed, the generation that grew up post-Second Intifada has experienced nothing but escalating conflicts, even during peaceful youth-led mobilizations. The heavy violence that characterized the Great March of Return (GMR) traumatized many youths and deterred their future participation. OCHA reported that, after witnessing the violence, a 14-year-old stated that he would no longer follow his friends to demonstrations and wanted to focus solely on his studies[891]. This reluctance to participate in politics reflects a pervasive pessimism among young Palestinians. The initial enthusiasm with which the youth

[883] Alkahlout, "Youth Engagement in Local Peacebuilding in the Gaza Strip.", 17.
[884] Alkahlout, 17.
[885] Høigilt, Atallah, and El-Dada, "Palestinian Youth Activism: New Actors, New Possibilities?", 2.
[886] Alarabeed, "Youth in Post-Conflict Reconstruction: The Case of the Gaza Strip.", 104.
[887] Høigilt, Atallah, and El-Dada, "Palestinian Youth Activism:New Actors, New Possibilities?", 4.
[888] Høigilt, Atallah, and El-Dada, 4.
[889] Høigilt, Atallah, and El-Dada, 1.
[890] Høigilt, Atallah, and El-Dada, 1; Wispelwey and Jamei, "The Great March of Return: Lessons from Gaza on Mass Resistance and Mental Health.", 102.
[891] "OCHA Two Years on: People Injured and Traumatized during the 'Great March of Return' Are Still Struggling."

embraced the GMR in 2018, which had a positive impact by providing a sense of agency, was ultimately overshadowed by the heavy toll of death, disability, and trauma among protesters[892]. As Interpeace reports, Palestinian youth assert that the violence they experience has led to feelings of fear, frustration, confusion, and pessimism about their future[893]. According to a 2016 AWARD survey on political participation, 2/3 of Palestinian youth believe the country is heading in the wrong direction, with a majority describing the future as "bleak." In Gaza, 56% of respondents were classified as "pessimistic," while nearly 80% foresaw a grim future[894].

Overall, the youth has a weak voice and are prevented from exercising political agency. Their participation is undermined by numerous challenges, spanning from a repressive political class to the violence of the Israeli occupation which, over time, have eroded their ability as well as their desire to engage fully in the political process.

4.2.2.2 Youth participation

Despite being the main age group affected by the conflict, the youth in Gaza also hold the potential to be the most active force for peace[895]. Alkahlout reports interviews with young Gazans who, despite their pessimism about achieving peace, acknowledge their leaders' responsibility for the situation[896]. At the same time, they remained optimistic about a local peace process as youth factions were working toward reconciliation[897]. Indeed, it emerges that Palestinian youth are acutely aware not only of the intentional exclusion from decision-making processes from their political leaders, but also of the fundamental role they play as partners in the nation-building project[898]. Contrary to claims that Palestinian youth are politically idle and more focused on economic and educational concerns than on liberation, a 2011 FAFO survey cited by Høigilt reveals that only 26% of 400 youth interviewed across the Occupied Territories agreed that Palestinian youth were uninterested in politics[899]. On one hand, it is true that the political schism between Hamas and Fatah, along with their methods of suppressing dissent and the presence of a rigid, hierarchical political structure, has discouraged youth involvement

[892] Wispelwey and Jamei, "The Great March of Return: Lessons from Gaza on Mass Resistance and Mental Health.", 179.
[893] Interpeace, "Palestinian Youth Challenges and Aspirations.", 16.
[894] AWARD, "Youth Survey: Political Activism and Awareness."
[895] Alkahlout, "Youth Engagement in Local Peacebuilding in the Gaza Strip.", 13.
[896] Alkahlout, 16.
[897] Alkahlout, 16.
[898] Interpeace, "Palestinian Youth Challenges and Aspirations.", 24.
[899] Høigilt, "The Palestinian Spring That Was Not: The Youth and Political Activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.", 348.

in local politics and has also contributed to their growing disinterest in factional struggles. In 2008, 81% of youth in both the Gaza Strip and West Bank intended to vote in upcoming national elections[900]. By 2016, however, the majority were not even registered to vote, and among those who were not, less than half intended to eventually register. Notably, a higher percentage of youth in Gaza (more than half of the interviewed) still planned to vote compared to their peers in the West Bank[901]. This shift in political engagement may reflect increasing frustration among young people with the political system and a declining belief in their capacity to impact governance. Disaffection, however, may also translate in a loss of legitimacy for the leadership. In 2016, in terms of political orientation, over one-third of the Palestinian youth favoured Fatah's approach to resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It has been registered that, in general, Fatah enjoys the largest support among youth followed by Hamas. Despite Hamas traditionally enjoying a broader support base in Gaza, by 2016 Fatah and other nationalist groups registered 51.3% support among the Strip's youth, compared to 21.6% for Hamas and other Islamist groups[902]. Hamas seemingly shares this concern about legitimacy, as evidenced by its violent crackdown on dissent and youth movements[903]. Additionally, this legitimacy crisis may also explain its involvement in the 2018 Great March of Return. In a podcast interview, Tareq Baconi, a young Gazan writer and author of *Hamas Contained: The Rise and Pacification of Palestinian Resistance*, noted that Hamas recognised the potential of the march, as civil resistance achieved what Hamas had aimed to accomplish with rocket fire – bringing the Palestinian cause back to the international stage[904]. Initially – Baconi continued – Hamas presented itself as the party that supported the march by providing infrastructure, food, entertainment, and sustaining people at the fence. While even before the beginning of the protests Israel had pre-emptively labelled the march as the 'Hamas movement', Hamas seized this opportunity to maintain its image as Gaza's governing authority by securing the population's participation[905].

On the other hand, although only a minority of youth defined themselves as politically active in 2016, with nearly 17% in Gaza, a higher percentage of the interviewed youth identified themselves as part of youth groups (in the Strip, over 24%), social-community work (in the

[900] AWARD, "Palestinian Youth: Politics, Information and Media: Results of an Opinion Poll."
[901] AWARD, "Youth Survey: Political Activism and Awareness."
[902] AWARD.
[903] Høigilt, "The Palestinian Spring That Was Not: The Youth and Political Activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.", 355.
[904] Unsettled Podcast, "The Great March (Gaza, Ep. 1)."
[905] Unsettled Podcast, "The Great March (Gaza, Ep. 1)."

Strip, more than 35%), and voluntary work (in the Strip, over 45%)[906]. This data suggests that, for Palestinian youth, political activity does not necessarily equate to participation in party politics. Instead, they thrive in both reclaiming local agency as well as developing a transnational voice for Palestinian liberation. At the local level, several youth-led projects exemplify this agency. For instance, We Are Not Numbers, a nonprofit organisation established in Gaza in 2014 to share human stories from Palestinian life[907]. Another example is provided by the *Sharek Youth Forum*, which organises activities to empower young people in Gaza as potential leaders for Palestinian nation-building[908]. However, Hamas shut down its Gaza office in 2010[909]. The Palestinian Youth Legislative Council is another significant initiative that provides a platform for youth to assert their presence and influence change. Despite the obstacles posed by political divisions, geographical separation, lack of funds, and blocked elections by Hamas[910], the youth behind it remained committed and the initiative helped connect young people across cities in the West Bank and Gaza[911]. Youth movements composed of politically independent groups, further highlight the youth's commitment to non-violence and popular resistance. For instance, the Independent Youth Movement *(Hirak Shebabi)*, is an umbrella organization composed of politically independent youth groups, across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, driven by national concerns[912]. As Høigilt underlines, these young activists stress their non-affiliation with any political party, which is a significant stance to take in a society where political affiliation nearly makes for the individual or family identity[913]. These also demand the end of the political schism, the revival of the Palestinian National Council, and reject normalization with Israel, while also committing to non-violence and rather to popular resistance[914]. These young activists, distributed between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, played a central role in the 2011 March 15 movement[915]. As Ibrahim Natil recalls, in February 2011 a group of young people met in Ramallah and arranged a Skype conversation with activists from the Gaza Strip, starting to organise the protests through social media[916].

[906] AWARD, "Youth Survey: Political Activism and Awareness."
[907] "We Are Not Numbers."
[908] "Sharek Youth Forum."
[909] Høigilt, "The Palestinian Spring That Was Not: The Youth and Political Activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.", 352.
[910] Høigilt, Atallah, and El-Dada, "Palestinian Youth Activism: New Actors, New Possibilities?", 3.
[911] Interpeace, "Palestinian Youth Challenges and Aspirations.", 25.
[912] Natil, "Palestinian Youth Movements and 'the Arab Spring.'", 35.
[913] Høigilt, "The Palestinian Spring That Was Not: The Youth and Political Activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.", 353.
[914] Høigilt, Atallah, and El-Dada, "Palestinian Youth Activism: New Actors, New Possibilities?", 2.
[915] Høigilt, Atallah, and El-Dada, 2; Jacob Høigilt, "The Palestinian Spring That Was Not: The Youth and Political Activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.", 353.
[916] Natil, "Palestinian Youth Movements and 'the Arab Spring.'", 37.

Inspired by peaceful resistance as taught by Gandhi and Martin Luther King, the young people at the origins of the 15 March Movement had also previously been part of a series of peaceful protests against the occupation in the Gaza Strip as well as in the West Bank[917]. Despite the repression, this youth-led consciousness that emerged in 2011 marked a turning point in the future organisation of both physical and online resistance[918]. In January 2018, Ahmed Abu Artema, a young activist from Gaza, called for a peaceful march in a Facebook post. In the post, he encouraged the people to participate, convincing that Israel could not suppress a mass of human beings peacefully advancing[919]. In March 2018, a young organiser of the march initiated an online call to participation by live broadcasting from a tent he had built and that he had called "the tent of return", planted on the Gazan side of the 1948 armistice line with Israel, which was largely shared by Palestinians on social media[920]. The organisation and the participation of the youth during the Great March of Return (GMR) demonstrated that the effort continued despite years of alienation, driven by the desire to move beyond the armed struggle approach favoured by both Hamas and Fatah, which had not only incited retaliation but also kept the youth disengaged[921]. Despite the immediate violence, the GMR fostered a renewed sense of political participation among Gaza's youth, many of whom were engaging in political action for the first time in their lives after spending years being confined by the blockade, traumatised psychologically and physically by Israeli strikes[922]. According to Abu Artema, the march restored hope in a generation that had been emotionally devasted by the dire humanitarian situation[923]. As Ahmed Alnaouq, a young Gazan journalist and co-founder of 'We Are Not Numbers', expressed regarding the GMR, "[W]e might be at risk, we might lose our life, but the next generation might have a chance to live free."[924].

This chapter has first attempted to explore the origins of Hamas, tracing its roots to the Muslim Brotherhood's establishment in the Gaza Strip. It examined its gradual evolution, particularly during the 1980s, when disillusioned youth in Gaza, like elsewhere in the Arab-Muslim world, turned to Islam seeking a new meaning in a society they increasingly viewed as corrupt. The

[917] Natil, 38.
[918] Abusalim, "The Great March of Return: An Organizer's Perspective.", 92.
[919] "Ahmed Abu Artema's Facebook Post."
[920] Abusalim, "The Great March of Return: An Organizer's Perspective.", 90.
[921] Abusalim, "The Great March of Return: An Organizer's Perspective.", 93.
[922] Abusalim, "The Great March of Return: An Organizer's Perspective.", 96.
[923] Abusalim, "The Great March of Return: An Organizer's Perspective.", 93.
[924] Unsettled Podcast, "The Great March (Gaza, Ep. 1)."

Muslim Brotherhood laid the foundation for Hamas' extensive social network by creating youth centres, mosques, and gaining influence in universities, engaging politically through student participation. In 1987, in the middle of the first Intifada, Hamas was born, merging the Muslim Brotherhood's social philosophy with the nationalistic goal of liberating Palestine from Israeli domination. After having examined its creation and the main connotation of its ideology combining doctrinal elements of Islam with anti-colonial stances, we have delved into the functioning of the *dawa,* Hamas' social welfare system. Analysing the *dawa* has allowed for the understanding of how the Islamist organisation has garnered loyalty, particularly among the poorest segments of Gaza's population. By providing critical social services in an area plagued by humanitarian crises, Hamas successfully managed to secure widespread support. The youth has been found to play a central role in Hamas' mission. Through sports, education, and recreational programs, the organization attracts young people in an environment where alternatives are limited. However, the notion according to which youth are passive victims of their circumstances has been rejected. Instead, their agency has been explored in two ways. First, through the examination of why some youth consciously choose Hamas. Driven by a quest for significance, young people may find Hamas's polarising propaganda a way to redress their grievances and find purpose in their lives. This is particularly true for young men, who identify the presence of the occupation and the daily humiliations that it entails as a threat to their masculinity. Through violence, they do not only assert their manhood in society, but also reclaim their political agency as individuals. Second, rather than mere perpetrators of violence, the youth's role as peaceful agents of change has been highlighted. There is indeed a significant portion of Palestinian youth who resist both the authoritarianism of their traditional leadership as well as Israeli violence, as both entities work to suppress youth aspirations. In Gaza, Hamas feels threatened by the potential of young people and their demand to end the political division with Fatah, while Israel employs forced deprivation and indiscriminate violence to discourage youth from pursuing liberation. However, this analysis, which references the youth activism seen in the 2011 Palestinian Arab Spring and the 2018 Great March of Return, reveals a resilient generation. Despite facing immense challenges, these youth are determined to assert their agency, resisting both political oppression and occupation, striving to create a better future for themselves and the generations to come.

Conclusion

In 2006, Professor Beverley Milton-Edwards interviewed a senior Palestinian intelligence chief in Gaza, who asserted: "They give the young man a gun today and the promise of a job tomorrow and that is enough to buy his loyalty to whichever faction does the bidding"[925]. This starkly cynical statement reflected the reality that Gazans, especially the youth, were beginning to face: Hamas had just established power, international aid was halted, and the Israeli government was withholding the funds intended for the Palestinian Authority. The socio-economic conditions of the Strip were already dire, and about to ulteriorly deteriorate. The message underlying that statement is clear: desperate socio-economic conditions may push the youth, and especially young males, to join armed groups to secure a source of sustainment. This perspective has been integral to the research question that this thesis has attempted to investigate, i.e., how the large cohort of Gazan youth, strained by severe socio-economic conditions – shaped by both Israeli policies as well as internal governance under Hamas – and enveloped in Hamas' proselytising system, is susceptible to radicalisation.

In Chapter 1, radicalisation has been defined as a dynamic process juxtaposing the individual against a precise setting shaped by socio-economic and demographic structures. In the case of the Gaza Strip, three variables characterising this setting have been identified. First, its demographics: as of 2023, the Gaza Strip's population is overwhelmingly young, with the 0-24 age group constituting more than half of the population. Second, Israel's restrictive economic policies and cyclical military operations have significantly affected living standards in the Strip. Third, Hamas, the armed political organisation that governs the Strip with authoritarian control, engages in conflict with Israel, and also provides social-welfare services and infrastructures to the population. It has been furtherly assumed that this environment may produce two main scenarios through which radicalisation may occur. The development of feelings of deprivation, where young individuals may seek to redress their hardships (the grievance perspective); and the search for extra-legal means of sustenance given limited possibilities of social mobility (the greed perspective). These scenarios are not mutually exclusive and may reinforce each other. Accordingly, presuming that radicalisation does not abide to a standard process, nor it has a definite point of arrival, this thesis has assumed that:

[925] Milton-Edwards, "Hamas: Victory with Ballots and Bullets.", 309.

(a) Radicalisation may not always be driven by a desire to achieve a political goal. While young people may join armed groups that declare a political objective, their motivations may primarily stem from the necessity to secure a means of sustainment and/or the desire to redress grievances. This assumption aligns with the greed and grievance perspectives.

(b) Radicalisation may not necessarily amount to joining armed groups. Young people may indeed redress and display their grievances through alternative non-violent means, while also pursuing political objectives. This assumption aligns with the grievance perspective.

These two assumptions, accompanied by the approach according to which dire socio-economic conditions may exacerbate youth radicalisation, have guided the research. Accordingly, some considerations can be made.

Assumption (a):

The likelihood of Gaza's youth joining Hamas can be primarily attributed to the severe socio-economic hardships that they experience. As shown through the analysis of the Gaza Strip's living conditions in Chapters 2 and 3, covering the time-periods 1967-1987 and 2006-2023 (with a brief overview of the period 1987-2000), the Gaza Strip has consistently faced low socio-economic standards. By 1987, Gaza's population was predominantly young, with children representing the largest share of the population (children bulge). During this time period, the socio-economic deterioration was largely a consequence of the Israeli occupation. Although the Gazan economy initially benefited from integration with Israeli market – especially due to increased request of Palestinian cheap labour in Israel – it eventually stagnated. Furthermore, political and civil rights were severely restricted by the Israeli occupation's policies, notably through curfews, movement restrictions, land confiscation, and settlements's expansion, resulting in widespread grievances among the population on the eve of the 1987 First Intifada. Chapter 3 examines the period following the First Intifada and the pathway to the Second. By 2000, socio-economic conditions had sharply deteriorated, primarily due to Israel's escalating restrictions on the movememt of people and goods from and within both Gaza and the West Bank. These restrictions were rooted in Israel's declining domestic security since the mid 1990s, when Hamas, which was by then emerging as a political actor, began launching suicide bombing attacks, alongside other Palestinian armed groups, to disrupt the Peace Process. These attacks had a dual effect: they hardened Israel's security measures while also amplifying Palestinian frustration with both Israel and the Peace Process.

The failure of the Peace Process, in 2000 – stemming from the inability of both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to meet mutual expectations and exacerbated by the perpetration of suicide bombing attacks against Israeli civilians – increased Hamas's popularity while, among Palestinians, discontent stemming from the unmet promise of statehood was growing. As the Second Intifada erupted, Hamas, along with other armed groups, continued to perpertrate suicide bombings, becoming responsible for a significant portion of them. In response, Israel intensified movement restrictions in Gaza and the West Bank – including the almost complete reduction of Palestinians allowed to work in Israel – which overall resulted in a sharp decline in GDP and rising unemploment. Despite these harsh measures, Hamas maintained substantial public support between 2000 and 2005, largely because Palestinians believed the Intifada could achieve its goals. Moreover, resentment towards Israel's retaliatory policies furtherly fueled this support. The 2005 Israel's unilateral disengagenent from Gaza presented the opportunity for Hamas to present itself as the driving force behind the Israeli withdrawal. The rise in support was demonstrated by Hamas's victory in the 2006 legislative elections. Since 2007, after the civil war with Fatah, it assumed complete control over the Strip, where it has ever since uncontestably governed. The analysis of the living conditions for 2006-2023 – the time-period characterised by Hamas governance – has not yielded positive results. The mutual hostile relationship that would characterise Israel's and Hamas's coexistence became evident from the start. Despite Hamas's democratic election victory, Israel withheld the revenues due to the Palestinian Authority – causing an increase in poverty within the first months of Hamas governance; on its part, Hamas abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in 2006, furtherly straining any chance of peaceful coexistence. What followed from Israel was the imposition of a tight land, sea, and air blockade, ongoing since 2007. The blockade has been the primary source of Gaza's disastrous socio-economic conditions, resulting in soaring poverty and worryingly high unemployment rates. Moreoever, humanitarian needs remain critical, with at least half of the population necessitating food aid. Additionally, in contrast to significantly high literacy rates and educational attainments, youth unemployment in the Strip remains alarming high. While fertility rates have gradually declined, they remain elevated, reflecting both a low degree of societal development as well as a reinforced patriarchal structure, compounded by Hamas' conservative influence, which has seriously impacted women's possibility for emancipation. Given this situation, the substantial proportion of children in Gaza's population as of 2023 could pose significant developmental challenges for the future. Furthermore, Israeli military operations – most notably Cast Lead (2008) and Protective Edge (2014) – have led to severe

infrastructures' damage, an extremely high number of civilian casualties, and deep psychological trauma among Gaza's population, particularly in its children and youth.
Domestically, Hamas's authoritarian governance has further eroded civil and political freedoms, with persistent violations of human rights and repression of any type of political dissent. Women, in particular, have faced increased gender segregation and a shrinking public role under Hamas's conservative rule.

Alongside worsened socio-economic conditions, the second factor likely to influence youth radicalisation in the Gaza Strip is the proselytising network of social-welfare services and infrastructures provided by Hamas, investigated in Chapter 4.
Hamas was founded in 1987, during the First Intifada, combining the social philosophy of the Muslim Brotherhood with the nationalistic goal of liberating Palestine from the Israeli occupation. The analysis of the *dawa*, the core of Hamas's social welfare system, highlighted how the organisation manages to attract the population and gain its loyalty, particularly among the poorest segments of Gaza's population. Most importantly, it has been underlined how the youth play a central role in this system, being drawn in and supported through sports, education, and recreational programs. Overall, Hamas creates a highly politicised environment that not only fosters propaganda for the movement and against Israel, but also offers critical sources of sustenance. The jobs provided within the *dawa* system and financial incentives tied to being a *dawa* activist or a member of the military wing are not to be underestimated, especially in a poor place like Gaza.

The analysis also examined the extent to which the youth can exercise agency in such environment, where alternatives to Hamas are limited. Driven by a quest for significance, young people may find in Hamas's propaganda the solution to address their grievances and find purpose in a life marked by quasi-non-existent possibilities of social revenge. For many young men in particular, the presence of Israel and its daily humiliations are perceived as threats to their masculinity, which can be regained through the 'glory' that working for Hamas offers in the Gazan society.

Hence, it may be reasonable to consider that the youth, integrated into Hamas infrastructure, may be inclined to join the organisation as a means of sustenance, given the absence of alternative opportunities for social mobility. However, two other points should not be overlooked: first, having been born into and socialised within this environment from an early

age, young individuals may have little choice but to engage with Hamas institutions. Secondly, their involvement may not necessarily be motivated by a strong political commitment to Hamas' objectives, but rather by the necessity to address personal grievances and find a sense of purpose, reclaiming their agency as individuals.

Assumption (b):

The youth may seek to address their grievances and express dissent through alternative means other than joining armed groups. The First Intifada offers an early example of youth political participation. The political violence that erupted in 1987 was largely driven by the frustrations of a new generation raised under the Israeli occupation, which found itself at the forefront of the political struggle. The First Intifada was not entirely non-violent: stone-throwing and the use of Molotov cocktails against Israeli soldiers were common. Additionally, armed groups like Hamas eventually joined, introducing a more violent dimension to the uprising. However, the protests initially emerged from a loosely organized group of young people and were characterized primarily by acts of civil disobedience. The goal of the protesters was political: to make their voices heard and convey the tragedy of living under occupation while demanding national recognition. However, it is important to consider that, at that time, Hamas was just beginning to emerge, hence it had not yet gained the level of popularity among the general population, including the youth, that it would later achieve, nor it had any governing role. The dynamics of the Second Intifada were notably different. By 2000, Gaza's youth constituted a significant proportion of the population. The failure of the Oslo Peace Process disillusioned many young people with the political leadership of the PLO, and also imposed on them the burden of the national struggle. However, youth peaceful political participation was curtailed during the Second Intifada; rather, Hamas and other armed groups played a prominent role, making the second Palestinian uprising significantly more violent and marked by a notable reduction in civil and popular participation compared to the First. When Hamas established power in Gaza between 2006 and 2007, the youth's political role would be completely disregarded. Hamas's authoritarian governance has since then silenced any form of dissent, closed youth grassroot organisations, and marginalised young people from any decision-making process. However, it has been observed that, despite the repression of dissent, the youth still exercise agency by actively rejecting Hamas' authoritarian modes of governance while also opposing Israeli policies. The brief experience of the 2011 Palestinian Arab Spring and, more notably, the 2018 Great March of Return, offer significant examples of widespread peaceful

youth participation and organisation, opposing both the governing political class and Israeli policies towards Gaza.

It is important to underline that assumptions (a) and (b) are not mutually exclusive. Some youth may join Hamas motivated by the political claims it supports, while others may participate in peaceful protests or grassroots organizations not as part to the political struggle, but as a way to redress grievances and reclaim agency in a society where their self-determination is limited.

Hence, building on the insights from this thesis to address the research question – whether Gaza's youth, facing economic hardship, limited social mobility, and enveloped by Hamas's infrastructure, is vulnerable to radicalisation – some considerations can be made.

First, as argued throughout this thesis, radicalisation is not a uniform process with a predetermined outcome. It may amount to join armed groups like Hamas to address personal grievances, pursue political goals, or simply ensure a source of sustainment. At the same time, radicalisation may not always involve violence or joining an armed group; it can manifest in non-violent forms. For instance, it could mean advocating for something understood as 'radical' in representing a fundamental change. For example, demanding the end of the Israeli blockade, requesting national independence, dismantle Hamas's authoritarian rule, or reclaim one's role in society. Hence, it may be that it is the specific context in which radicalisation takes place that shapes what radicalisation may amount to, without relegating it to a standard process or endpoint. Overall, radicalisation is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon, and as this thesis has attempted to show, a full understanding of the dynamics that foster it may necessitate considering the 'bigger picture', by tackling the demographic, political and socio-economic environment in which it takes place.

Second, radicalisation may indeed also amount to violence, as observed in the Gaza's example. If, as this thesis suggests, understanding the phenomenon requires considering the wider context, then preventing it also demands addressing the root causes within that context. In Gaza, these include Israel's disruptive policies and Hamas's authoritarian governance and proselytising structure. The mutual retaliation between these two forces has severe, long-term impacts on the civilian population – particularly the youth – by perpetuating destruction, trauma, and poverty, and thus fostering a highly politicised environment in which the probabilities of radicalisation, also in its violent form, increase.

To conclude, it is necessary to underline that assessing the true extent of Gazan youth's susceptibility to radicalisation remains challenging. A limitation of this thesis is the absence of direct interviews with Gazan youth, which would have provided a clearer evaluation of their likelihood to join Hamas or engage in non-violent demonstrations against Hamas or Israel. Additionally, this thesis does not explore the ideological, religious, or psychological factors that may contribute to radicalisation and potential violent behaviour.

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APPENDIX

Appendix I

Remaining components of living levels

Components	Indicators	Definitions
Food consumption and nutrition	- national average food supplied in terms of calories and the 'retail' level compared with estimated calories requirements - national average food supplies in terms of total proteins at the retail level - national average food supplies in terms of animal protein at the retail level - Per cent of total calories delivered from cereals, roots, tubers and sugars	
Social security	No specific indicators	
Clothing	No specific indicators	
Recreation and entertainment	No specific indicators	

Source: **Author's creation with data from United Nations (1961)**

Appendix II
UNCTAD 1994 tables

Table 2.1. Palestinian population of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, 1967-1988 (thousands and percentages).

Years	West Bank b/	East Jerusalem c/	Sub-total	% Change	Index (1967 base)	Gaza Strip d/	% Change	Index (1967 base)
1967 a/	585.7	65.9	651.6	-23.4	76.6	352.3	-20.3	79.7
1968	583.1	68.7	651.8	+0.03	76.6	334.0	-6.8	75.5
1969	597.9	71.1	669.0	+2.6	78.7	340.5	+1.9	77.0
1970	607.8	72.9	680.7	+1.7	80.0	346.0	+1.6	78.3
1971	622.6	75.7	698.3	+2.6	82.1	354.2	+2.4	80.1
1972	633.7	78.3	712.0	+2.0	83.7	361.9	+2.2	81.9
1973	652.4	81.7	734.1	+3.1	86.3	375.7	+3.8	85.0
1974	669.7	89.6	759.3	+3.4	89.3	387.6	+3.2	87.7
1975	675.2	92.4	767.6	+1.1	90.3	398.5	+2.8	90.1
1976	683.3	96.5	779.8	+1.6	91.7	409.7	+2.8	92.7
1977	695.8	99.8	795.6	+2.0	93.5	422.4	+3.1	95.5
1978	708.0	103.2	811.2	+2.0	95.4	433.8	+2.7	98.1
1979	718.7	106.6	825.3	+1.7	97.0	444.7	+2.5	100.6
1980	724.3	110.6	834.9	+1.2	98.2	456.5	+2.7	103.3
1981	731.8	113.0	844.8	+1.2	99.3	468.9	+2.7	106.1
1982	749.3	115.8	865.1	+2.4	101.7	477.3	+1.8	108.0
1983	771.8	117.5	889.3	+2.8	104.6	494.5	+3.6	111.9
1984	793.4	121.7	915.1	+2.9	107.6	509.9	+3.1	115.5
1985	815.5	125.1	940.6	+2.8	110.6	527.0	+3.4	119.2
1986	837.7	128.4	966.1	+2.7	113.6	545.0	+3.4	123.3
1987	868.1	131.3	999.4	+3.5	117.5	565.6	+3.8	127.9
1988	895.0	134.2	1 029.2	+3.0	121.0	589.0	+4.1	133.2

Source: **Data from Ennab (1994)**

Table 3.1. Population, 1987 and 1988, end of year (thousands)

Age Group	Gaza Strip 1987				West Bank 1987*				East Jerusalem 1988
	T	M	F	SR	T	M	F	SR	T
0-4	115.6	59.4	56.2	105.7	170.2	87.3	82.9	105.3	19.9
5-14	160.9	83.9	77.0	109.0	238.6	123.7	114.9	107.7	37.7
15-19	58.8	30.9	27.9	110.8	90.5	48.0	42.5	112.9	15.4
20-24	53.9	28.2	25.7	109.7	89.5	46.7	42.8	109.1	13.1
25-34	78.5	41.0	37.5	109.3	122.2	63.0	59.2	106.4	20.0
35-44	33.9	13.4	20.5	65.4	44.6	18.3	26.3	69.3	12.6
45-54	26.2	10.1	16.1	62.7	42.0	17.0	25.5	68.0	7.8
55-64	22.0	9.9	12.2	81.1	38.4	16.7	21.7	77.0	6.0
65+	15.7	7.1	8.6	82.6	32.1	14.9	17.2	86.6	5.7
Total	565.6	283.9	281.7	100.8	868.1	435.6	432.5	100.7	138.1
Percentages									
0-4	20.4	20.9	19.9		19.7	20.0	19.2		14.4
5-14	28.4	29.6	27.3		27.5	28.4	26.6		27.3
15-19	10.4	10.9	9.9		10.4	11.0	9.8		11.1
20-24	9.5	9.9	9.1		10.3	10.7	9.9		9.5
25-34	13.9	14.4	13.3		14.0	14.5	13.7		14.4
35-44	5.9	4.7	7.3		5.1	4.2	6.1		9.1
45-54	4.7	3.6	5.7		4.8	3.9	5.8		5.6
55-64	4.0	3.5	4.3		4.5	3.8	5.0		4.3
65+	2.8	2.5	3.1		3.7	3.4	4.0		4.1
Total	100	100	100		100	100	100		100

T: Total M: Male F: Female SR: Sex Ratio: M/F

Source: **Data from Ennab (1994)**

Table 3.2. Distribution of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip population, by major age groups, various years (percentages)

Age Group	West Bank			East Jerusalem			Gaza Strip	
	1961 a/	1967 b/	1987 b/	1961 a/	1967 b/	1988 b/	1967 b/	1987 b/
0-14	45.2	48.1	47.2	43.7	44.4	41.7	50.3	48.8
15-24	18.7	15.2	20.7	19.1	18.1	20.6	16.6	19.9
25-44	19.7	18.8	19.1	20.5	20.9	23.5	19.0	19.8
45-64	11.2	10.8	9.3	11.4	11.1	9.9	8.9	8.7
65+	5.2	6.6	3.7	5.2	5.5	4.1	4.8	2.8

Source: **Data from Ennab (1994)**

Table 3.16. Built-up areas and population density in the Gaza Strip

Subdistrict	Built-up area (km2)		Population Density (per km2)		
	1967 a/	1987 b/	1967 c/	1979 c/	1985 c/
Gaza	13.4	22.3	12 994	10 071	12 289
Deir el Balah	5.5	9.2	9 900	7 927	7 389
Khan Yunis	15.8	26.4	8 058	5 576	7 007
Total	34.7	57.9	10 256	7 680	9 102

Source: **Data from Ennab (1994)**

Appendix III

USCB tables

Table 1. Age-specific fertility rate and total fertility rate in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (2006-2020, every 3 years)

Name	Year	TFR	Age-specific Fertility Rate 15-19	Age-specific Fertility Rate 20-24	Age-specific Fertility Rate 25-29	Age-specific Fertility Rate 30-34
	2006					
Gaza Strip		6.20	113.10	302.60	308.90	250.50
West Bank		4.10	50.90	212.00	228.60	178.00
	2009					
Gaza Strip		5.70	98.10	282.00	291.30	227.80
West Bank		3.90	42.70	202.30	223.30	172.50
	2012					
Gaza Strip		4.95	75.40	251.20	264.90	193.80
West Bank		3.70	34.40	192.60	218.10	166.90
	2015					
Gaza Strip		4.41	59.20	229.10	245.90	169.40
West Bank		3.76	36.70	195.30	219.50	168.50
	2018					
Gaza Strip		3.88	43.00	207.00	227.00	145.00
West Bank		3.81	39.00	198.00	221.00	170.00
	2020					
Gaza Strip		3.60	39.50	188.40	210.90	139.30
West Bank		3.70	37.30	190.50	216.30	166.80

(continued)

Age-specific Fertility Rate 35-39	Age-specific Fertility Rate 40-44	Age-specific Fertility Rate 45-49	Crude Birth Rate	Life Expectancy at Birth, Both Sexes
181.40	76.30	7.20	42.3	71.8
115.00	32.30	2.10	30.5	73.2
166.70	67.70	6.50	39.6	72.4
110.80	26.50	1.30	29.4	73.8
144.60	54.60	5.50	35.7	73.0
106.70	20.80	0.60	28.6	74.4
128.80	45.30	4.70	33.1	73.7
107.80	22.40	0.80	29.8	74.9
113.00	36.00	4.00	30.1	74.4
109.00	24.00	1.00	30.6	75.5
105.00	33.00	3.90	28.4	72.7
105.10	23.50	1.10	29.7	74.0

Source: **Author's creation with data from USCB**

Table 2. Five year age groups in the Gaza Strip (2006 and 2023)

Country/Area Name	Year	GROUP	Population	% of Population	Male Population	% of Males	Female Population	% of Females	Sex ratio of the population
Gaza Strip	**2006**	**TOTAL**	**1341475**	**100**	**679892**	**100**	**661583**	**100**	**1.03**
		0 - 4	254097	18.9	130575	19.2	123522	18.7	1.06
		5 - 9	212318	15.8	109004	16.0	103314	15.6	1.06
		10 - 14	189322	14.1	96439	14.2	92883	14.0	1.04
		15 - 19	153941	11.5	77740	11.4	76201	11.5	1.02
		20 - 24	111366	8.3	55956	8.2	55410	8.4	1.01
		25 - 29	95837	7.1	48140	71.	47697	7.2	1.01
		30 - 34	73242	5.5	36821	5.4	36421	5.5	1.01
		35 - 39	60789	4.5	30634	4.5	30155	4.6	1.02
		40 - 44	50557	3.8	25868	3.8	24689	3.7	1.05
		45 - 49	39175	2.9	19979	2.9	19196	2.9	1.04
		50 - 54	28327	2.1	14267	2.1	14060	2.1	1.01
		55 - 59	21844	1.6	11054	1.6	10790	1.6	1.02
		60 - 64	15327	1.1	7270	1.1	8057	1.2	0.90
		65 - 69	12245	0.9	5636	0.8	6609	1.0	0.85
		70 - 74	10562	0.8	4890	0.7	5672	0.9	0.86
		75 - 79	6885	0.5	3148	0.5	3737	0.6	0.84
		80 - 84	3741	0.3	1671	0.2	2070	0.3	0.81
		85 - 89	1473	0.1	629	0.1	844	0.1	0.75
		90 - 94	372	0.0	151	0.0	221	0.0	0.68
		95 - 99	50	0.0	18	0.0	32	0.0	0.56
		100+	5	0.0	2	0.0	3	0.0	0.67
Gaza Strip	**2023**	**TOTAL**	**2098389**	**100**	**1064348**	**100**	**1034041**	**100**	**1.03**
		0 - 4	278511	13.3	143109	13.4	135402	13.1	1.06
		5 - 9	279047	13.3	143583	13.5	135464	13.1	1.06
		10 - 14	274493	13.1	140861	13.2	133632	12.9	1.05
		15 - 19	255642	12.2	130586	12.3	125056	12.1	1.04
		20 - 24	211361	10.1	107887	10.1	103474	10.0	1.04
		25 - 29	180167	8.6	90837	8.5	89330	8.6	1.02
		30 - 34	154037	7.3	76690	7.2	77347	7.5	0.99
		35 - 39	109552	5.2	53884	5.1	55668	5.4	0.97
		40 - 44	90302	4.3	44106	4.1	46196	4.5	0.95
		45 - 49	69733	3.3	34025	3.2	35708	3.5	0.95
		50 - 54	55364	2.6	27103	2.5	28261	2.7	0.96
		55 - 59	45962	2.2	23303	2.2	22659	2.2	1.03
		60 - 64	35604	1.7	18430	1.7	17174	1.7	1.07
		65 - 69	24244	1.2	12596	1.2	11648	1.1	1.08
		70 - 74	16471	0.8	8758	0.8	7713	0.7	1.14
		75 - 79	9523	0.5	4844	0.5	4679	0.5	1.04
		80 - 84	4947	0.2	2321	0.2	2626	0.3	0.88
		85 - 89	2492	0.1	1071	0.1	1421	0.1	0.75
		90 - 94	782	0.0	303	0.0	479	0.0	0.63
		95 - 99	141	0.0	47	0.0	94	0.0	0.50
		100+	14	0.0	4	0.0	10	0.0	0.4

***Source*: Author's creation with data from USCB**

Appendix IV

Israel's military operations in Gaza, 2006-2023

June 2006 – Operation Summer Rains

December 2008 – Operation Cast Lead

March 2012 – Operation Returning Echo

November 2012 – Operation Pillar of Defense

July 2014 – Operation Protective Edge

May 2021 – Operation Guardian of the Walls

August 2022 – Operation Breaking Dawn

May 2023 – Operation Shield and Arrow

October 2023 – Operation Iron Sword

Source: **Israeli Policy Forum (2023)**