

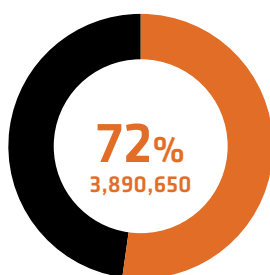


Diaspora engagement mapping PALESTINE¹

Facts & figures

Emigration

% of emigrants in total population



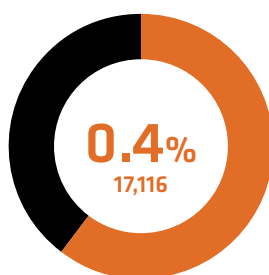
♂ 52.4%
♀ 47.6%



Remittances as a share of GDP: -
Remittances inflow (USD million): -



% of which in the EU²



♂ 60.5%
♀ 39.5%



Top countries of destination



Jordan	2,118,267
Syria	595,847
Lebanon	487,270
Libya	303,601
Egypt	134,080

Political rights



Dual citizenship³



Voting from abroad



Palestine does not have a diaspora engagement policy.

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2016** ● **National Policy Agenda 2017-2022:**⁴ Policy priority number three, “One Land, One People”, recalls that most Palestinians currently live outside Palestine’s borders and that a significant portion of them are registered as refugees. In light of these realities, the Agenda advocates for improving service delivery to displaced populations in neighbouring countries (mainly via humanitarian and socio-economic assistance) and providing opportunities for expatriates to participate in the state-building process via “investment, financial assistance, expertise or advocacy”.

1 This designation shall not be construed as a recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of EU Member States on this issue.

2 This number is in all likelihood a significant underestimation. For example, this figure does not include Palestinians living in Germany which by many accounts, hosts the largest diaspora community in Europe. Because Palestine is not recognised as a state in many receiving countries, Palestinians are not accounted as such in migration data sources. Instead, they often registered under various nationalities depending on their status and/or travel documentation provided upon entry. See Koch & Ragab, “Mapping and Study of the Palestinian Diaspora in Germany”, 2018, Maastricht Graduate School of Governance.

3 The PNA is not equipped with a formal nationality law, leaving the question open from a legal perspective. In practice, multiple citizenship is permissible for West Bank and Gaza residents. See Qafisheh, ‘Who has the Right to Become a Palestinian Citizen? An International Law Analysis’.

4 2017-22 National Policy Agenda: Putting Citizens First, State of Palestine, December 2016.

2021



2023

- **National Development Plan:** ⁵The National Development Plan (NDP) for Palestine explicitly addresses the Palestinian diaspora in several instances, highlighting the importance of unity, engagement, and collaboration with Palestinians both inside and outside Palestine. It emphasises the need to build a Palestinian society with indivisible unity, encompassing both homeland residents and those in the diaspora. The document recognises the resilience and cohesion of the Palestinian people, expressing a vision of unity across geographical boundaries. Policies within the NDP underscore strengthening ties between Palestinians inside and outside Palestine, expanding their contributions to state-building and independence. Additionally, the plan emphasises collaboration with host countries and international organisations to enhance services for Palestinian refugees until the realisation of their right of return. Overall, the NDP recognises and values the role of the diaspora in contributing to state-building, independence, and international participation.



Trends

The Palestinian diaspora was mainly generated by the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli conflicts. The fate of displaced populations, and the “right to return” issue, constitute a cornerstone of Palestinian foreign affairs as well as a pillar of its national identity.⁶ However, the ongoing occupation and limited progress in state-building has impeded the state’s capacity to articulate meaningful engagement strategies and frameworks, despite the existence of active community-based networks.⁷ In the meantime, the diaspora’s gradual insertion into global economic circuits - in North America, Europe and Gulf countries - has generated substantial remittance inflows (Palestine is the largest recipient of remittance as a percentage of GDP in the region), highlighting the potential and attractiveness of diaspora engagement as a subject for policy-makers.⁸ In this sense, the government is becoming acquainted with diaspora issues in line with objectives outlined in the National Policy Agenda. For instance an inter-institutional committee has been set up to foster in-depth discussions with various actors involved (Ministries, CSOs, private sector). The committee seeks to identify current shortcomings in diaspora policy and examine ways to both increase engagement and better respond to expatriates’ needs; priorities include streamlining investment towards crucial domestic development projects, but also promoting positive public opinion on Palestinian statehood in receiving countries.



Achievements

Return and “Brain circulation”: In the past few years, a certain number of initiatives have targeted skilled diaspora members to return to Palestine for short-term ‘expert’ assignments. In collaboration with international agencies, Palestinian ministries have established channels of mobility devoted to supporting specific sectors of the economy, most often by harnessing the diaspora’s qualifications and ‘know how’. In particular, the academic, medical and ‘high-tech’ sectors have benefited from this type of expatriate involvement.⁹

Diaspora investment: Collaboration with the private sector has resulted in the establishment of various channels aiming to stimulate expatriates’ appetite for investment in Palestine. In particular, the Palestinian Investment Promotion Agency’s (PIPA) is the lead agency working on bringing foreign investment and driving expatriate entrepreneurship in Palestine. For example, it has participated in the MedGeneration programme, a regional endeavour devoted to tapping into diaspora potential by connecting qualified professionals in Europe with Palestinian businesses.¹⁰ Other initiatives including diaspora bonds or seed funding have materialised via an active banking sector and the willingness of many expatriates to invest locally.

5 <https://www.palgov.ps/en/article/296/Public-Policies-2021-2023>

6 “The Ghosts of Palestine’s Diaspora” This Week in Palestine, 2016.

7 Labadi Taher, “The Palestinian diaspora and the state-building process”, Arab Reform Initiative, 2018.

8 Saad Ayhab “The Impact of Remittances on Key Macroeconomic Variables: The Case of Palestine”, Palestine Economic Research Institute, 2015.

9 “National investment into our Human Capital” This Week in Palestine, 2016.

10 National Investment in our Human Capital, This week in Palestine, October 2016.

Whole-of-government approach: The Migration Technical Team (MTT), an inter-ministerial committee placed under the leadership of the Ministry of Interior, leads a multi-agency, transversal effort towards engaging the diaspora. The MTT, with support from the international community¹¹, is currently holding consultations bringing together governmental and civil society organisations based in Palestine with a view to increasing synergies among initiatives and laying the groundwork for a national diaspora strategy. Importantly, the MTT is also collecting data on expatriate communities in order to best integrate their needs and motivations in future policy-making.¹²

Obstacles



- **Uncertain political environment:** The occupation of the West Bank and the associated political uncertainty is a major obstacle to the development of more robust ties with the diaspora. While many diaspora members are prevented outright from entering Palestine, the burden of economic restrictions (constrained mobility inside the West Bank, lack of access to major resources) has a negative impact on business climate thereby crippling investor's confidence¹³.
- **Focus on livelihoods assistance:** Vast portions of Palestinian expatriates are three-generation-old displaced populations, registered as refugees under the terms of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Scarce economic opportunities and instability in main destination countries (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan) have made these populations particularly vulnerable. For this reason, Palestine's relationship with its diaspora is traditionally geared towards providing essential services such as humanitarian or livelihood assistance.
- **Identifying the diaspora community:** The highly segmented nature and unique trajectory of the Palestinian diaspora - particularly in terms of geographic distribution, legal status and financial resources - challenges conventional understandings of 'diaspora' and/or strategies of engagement. For instance, many Palestinians abroad are not registered as Palestinian citizens, making it difficult for central institutions to locate them and interact meaningfully.¹⁴ This reality has a fundamentally impact on any potential engagement strategy(ies).
- **Lack of coordination:** The Palestinian diaspora is a profoundly heterogeneous and segmented body. The fragmentation of the diaspora and the lack of a network that could connect Palestinian associations in order to coordinate efforts impedes diaspora engagement on both sides.
- **Remittance channels:** Most incoming remittances are sent by 'commuting' Palestinian workers in Israel. In addition to being a source of instability for many remittance-dependent households, the political deadlock forbids the emergence of favourable transfer facilities and of therefore a potentially more significant income stream for Palestine.

11 <https://www.icmpd.org/our-work/migration-dialogues/euomed-migration-iv/>

12 The MTT is supported in this endeavour by the EU-funded EUROMED Migration IV (EMM4) programme. EMM4 supports countries of the EU's southern neighbourhood in the development of national migration capacities in line with domestic priorities by providing expertise, knowledge outputs, field visits and dedicated training. <https://www.icmpd.org/our-work/migration-dialogues/euomed-migration-iv/>

13 PalTrade, Investment in Palestine: The Reality, October 2010.

14 Mapping and Study of the Palestinian Diaspora in Germany, 2018, Maastricht Graduate School of Governance.

SPOTLIGHT: effective practices



Transfer of Capital through Expatriate Knowledge (TOKTEN UNDP) 1994 - present

HUMAN CAPITAL

The TOKTEN project, implemented by UNDP, deploys 'highly qualified' professionals from the diaspora to serve as short-term volunteers in various Palestinian institutions. Running since 1994 in the West Bank and Gaza, this initiative illustrates how a skilled expatriate workforce can contribute decisively through sectoral interventions – primarily in education, health and information technology – to institution-building processes in a challenging context while fostering a sense of national affinity.

Ramallah Diaspora Convention

NETWORKING

The Ramallah convention, supported by the Ramallah city hall and private businesses, is an annual meeting bringing together diaspora connected with the city. It uses an extensive list of locally-organised diaspora meetings which have grown in popularity since the 1990s in particular among the community in the United States. The success of such initiatives reveals how migrants can, in some instances, favour affiliation with specific towns or villages over national connections.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Palestinian Market Development Program (PMDP) 2014-2018

This initiative, funded by UK Aid and the EU, was designed to support job creation and sustainable economic development in Palestine. It provided Palestinian SMEs with technical and financial support in the form of grants to scale up local businesses and drive their integration into global value chains. As part of its activities, PMDP organised various diaspora working-groups to explore trade and investment linkages and facilitated connections between expatriate investors and local businesses.

Annex:

List of Actors

Diaspora related institutions



- **At regional level**

United Nation's Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East 1949

Established in 1949, the agency provides assistance and protection to Palestinian refugees throughout the Middle East (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan). It is committed to the development and welfare of displaced Palestinian people in the absence of a permanent solution to “the Palestinian refugee problem.”

United Nations Development Programme/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People 1978

The UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian people focuses on delivering multi-sectoral assistance to the West Bank and Gaza in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. It has implemented several initiatives revolving around diaspora engagement in the Palestinian context.

- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates (MOFAE)

The MOFAE ensures Palestinian visibility and liaison with the expatriate community through a network of diplomatic representations and missions. The representations ensure bilateral relationships while providing essential administrative services and cultural promotion for Palestinian communities.

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) expatriates department (PEAD) 2007

The PLO expatriates department is a branch of the PLO aiming to foster connections with the expatriate community. Established in 2008, it focuses on identifying and forging links with Palestinian communities outside the Arab world.

PLO's Refugee Affairs Department (DoRA) 1996¹⁵

The Department of Refugee Affairs is responsible for the refugee portfolio and refugee affairs within the PLO. It also works on the issue of the right of return of Palestinian refugees.¹⁶

15 <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/israelpalestine/bringing-back-palestinian-refugee-question>

16 <https://www.badil.org/en/publication/periodicals/al-majdal/item/741-the-plo-and-the-right-of-return-interview-with-the-plo-department-for-refugee-affairs.html>

Ministry of Interior and Migration Technical Team (MTT) 2017

The MTT is an inter-institutional body encompassing several agencies and ministries promoting concertation and coordination in the development of migration policy. Chaired by the Ministry of Interior, it builds upon effective exchange and evidence to address and advise on various emerging migration priorities.

Palestinian Investment Promotion Agency (PIPA) 1998

PIPA provides a 'one-stop-shop' for helping potential investors set up investment projects in Palestine. It plays a key role in attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) by informing potential investors on Palestinian market opportunities, the tax system and financial regulations. In this sense, it is an essential interlocutor for all investment decisions coming from abroad.

The Palestinian International Cooperation Agency (PICA) 2016

The Palestinian International Cooperation Agency (PICA), established by a presidential decree, is the main public diplomacy tool of the State of Palestine and works as a national coordinator for South-South and North-South Cooperation. PICA draws upon the potential of the Palestinian diaspora to mobilise financial and technical contributions to PICA-supported projects and to contribute to the local development process in the form of Public Private Partnerships.

Diaspora organisations in Europe



Deutsch-Palästinensische Gesellschaft e.V (DPG) [Palestinian Association in Germany] 1986 Germany

☑ Integration activities

The association is Germany's biggest Palestinian organisation and serves as an umbrella for various Palestine-related entities. Its stated mission is to advance human rights for all Palestinians, inform the German public on the situation in the Palestinian territories and support the building of a democratic state in Palestine.

Palästinensische Gemeinde Deutschland [Palestinian Community in Germany]

☑ Development activities

☑ Integration activities

Beyond promoting Palestinian integration in German society, the "Gemeinde" (community) actively supports development in the Palestinian territories by collecting funds or organising youth exchange.

Palästinensisch-Österreichischen Gesellschaft (PÖG) [Palestinian Association in Austria, PAA] 1988 Austria

☑ Integration activities

PÖG primarily intends to foster the integration of Palestinians in Austrian society by organising cultural events, integration counselling and support to newcomers

PalMed Europe 2007 Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden (plus other non-EU)

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

PalMed is a profession-based diaspora organisation dedicated to supporting and strengthening links between Palestinian doctors and pharmacists practising in Europe. Born out of PalMed Germany, it also helps professionals to participate in humanitarian work in Palestine.

PalTech Europe 2013, several EU countries

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

Similarly to PalMed, PalTech Europe is a professional institution bringing together Palestinian engineers based in Europe around common projects, such as boosting business development and ties with Palestine.

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