

# Palestine – West Bank

March 2025

Country – capital	West Bank (WB) part of Palestinian Territories– East Jerusalem (EJ). <sup>1</sup>
Population	Total population 3.2 million (est. 2024).+ approx 700,000 Israeli settlers in WB and EJ. Ethnic groups: Arabs, Jews, other. <sup>2</sup>
Geography	Middle East, landlocked, west of Jordan, east of Israel. <sup>3</sup>
Languages	Arabic, Hebrew (spoken by many Palestinians), English (widely understood). <sup>4</sup>
Writing system	Arabic. <sup>5</sup>
Education and literacy	Literacy rate total population: 97.5% (male: 98.8%, female: 96.2% - est. 2020). <sup>6</sup> In theory, there are 4 years of Primary school, 6 years middle education, 2 years secondary education at academic or vocational schools. After exam, tertiary education is possible. <sup>7</sup> For decades, access to education has been challenged due to violent targeting of teachers and students, Israeli military raids, destruction of schools etc. Particularly after the events of 7 October 2023, violence and restrictions to attend school, military operations and settler violence have intensified. Many dropouts from school, engaging in child labour. <sup>8</sup>
Religions	Muslim 80-85% (Sunni), Jewish 12-14%, Christian 1-2.5%, other <1.0% (2012 est.) <sup>9</sup>
Conflict history and overview	Since 1917, Palestine was home to a diverse population of Arabs, Jews, and Christians, under British mandate. <sup>10</sup> After WWII, the UN partitioned Palestine into two independent States, Arab and Jewish, with Jerusalem under UN guard. In 1948, Israel proclaimed its independence and in the ensuing war with Arab neighbours expanded its territory to 77% of mandate Palestine, including most of Jerusalem. Over half of the Palestinian Arab population fled or were expelled (the “ <i>Nakba</i> ”, catastrophe). <sup>11</sup> After the Six-Day War, 1967, Israel annexed Gaza Strip, West Bank, Golan Heights, and Sinai. The first <i>intifada</i> (Palestinian uprising) lasted from 1987-1993, killing 160 Israelis and, due to Israel’s military reaction, 1,087 Palestinians. <sup>12</sup> Under the Oslo Accords (1993-1999), the Palestinian Authority (PA) governed Gaza Strip and WB. <sup>13</sup> From 2000-2005, the second <i>intifada</i> (incl. suicide bombs and rocket attacks) reacted to perceived Israeli provocations; killing approx. 3,000 Palestinians and 1,000 Israeli, halting a final agreement on a two-state solution. <sup>14</sup> In 2002, Israel built a wall inside WB to keep Palestinians out of Israel and separate from EJ, and to protect its (illegal) settlements on Palestinian land. The wall was ruled illegal by the UN and International Court of Justice, <sup>15</sup> as is Israel’s occupation and settlement policy. <sup>16</sup> Hamas won PA elections in 2006, but failing to form a government with Fatah it took over Gaza by force. The Palestinian part of WB remains governed by Fatah, led by President Mahmoud Abbas. <sup>17</sup> After Hamas’ large-scale deadly attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, and Israel’s war with Hamas in Gaza, WB and EJ also experience intensified military and annexation/ demolition activities by Israel, including violent attacks by settlers (esp. refugee camps in the north), with serious human rights consequences. <sup>18</sup>
Humanitarian situation	Life expectancy at birth: 75 yrs (2024 est.). Population below poverty line: 29.2% (2016 est.). <sup>19</sup> Escalating military operations, violent settler attacks and severe movement restrictions result in mass displacement (40,000 in north WB) and diminished access to healthcare in the WB. Ambulances are blocked at checkpoints, hospitals are struggling to function and maternal care for 73,000 pregnant women is practically absent. <sup>20</sup>
Human rights situation	Apart from Israeli violations, Palestinian authorities also repress the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. Arbitrary arrests and torture in Palestinian detention centres. Security officers harass protest organizers and dissidents with threatening phone calls and visits. In 2023, protesters were dispersed with stun grenades and tear gas. <sup>21</sup>
Situation of women FGM – early marriages	Maternal mortality rate: 20 deaths per 100,000 live births (2020). <sup>22</sup> Child marriages: 1% of girls married by the age of 15 and 13% by 18. <sup>23</sup> Increasing cases of gender-related violence and risks of early marriage, due to increased displacement. <sup>24</sup> FGM prevalence: unknown. <sup>25</sup>
Situation of LGBTI	Consensual same-sex sexual acts legal in the WB. No legal protection against discrimination. No restrictions to freedom of expression, but in 2019 an LGBT group was banned. <sup>26</sup>
IDPs / asylum/ migration in Malta	IDPs within WB: >40,000 as of February 2025. <sup>27</sup> Malta sea arrivals 2024: 4. <sup>28</sup> Palestinian asylum seekers 2023: 15, 2024: 13; UNHCR refugees 2023: 72, 2024: 47. <sup>29</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/west-bank/>
- <sup>2</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/west-bank/>
- <sup>3</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/west-bank/>
- <sup>4</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/west-bank/>
- <sup>5</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/west-bank/>
- <sup>6</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/gaza-strip/>
- <sup>7</sup> <https://www.scholaro.com/db/countries/palestine>
- <sup>8</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/unprecedented-education-crisis-west-bank>
- <sup>9</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/gaza-strip/>
- <sup>10</sup> <https://www.pcrf.net/information-you-should-know/what-was-palestine-before-1948.html> ; <https://www.un.org/unispal/history/>
- <sup>11</sup> <https://www.pcrf.net/information-you-should-know/what-was-palestine-before-1948.html> ; <https://www.un.org/unispal/timeline/> ; <https://www.un.org/unispal/history/>
- <sup>12</sup> <https://www.un.org/unispal/history/> ; [https://www.btselem.org/statistics/first\\_intifada\\_tables](https://www.btselem.org/statistics/first_intifada_tables)
- <sup>13</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/gaza-strip/>
- <sup>14</sup> <https://www.un.org/unispal/history/> ; [https://archive.ph/20130414103627/http://old.btselem.org/statistics/english/Casualties.asp?sD=29&sM=09&sY=2000&eD=15&eM=1&eY=2005&filterby=event&oferet\\_stat=before](https://archive.ph/20130414103627/http://old.btselem.org/statistics/english/Casualties.asp?sD=29&sM=09&sY=2000&eD=15&eM=1&eY=2005&filterby=event&oferet_stat=before)
- <sup>15</sup> <https://imeu.org/article/israels-west-bank-wall>
- <sup>16</sup> <https://www.un.org/unispal/timeline/> ; <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-178173/>
- <sup>17</sup> <https://www.un.org/unispal/timeline/>
- <sup>18</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/03/israel-ramps-settlement-and-annexation-west-bank-dire-human-rights> ; <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/west-bank-monthly-snapshot-casualties-property-damage-and-displacement-january-2025>
- <sup>19</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/west-bank/>
- <sup>20</sup> <https://palestine.unfpa.org/en/publications/palestine-situation-report-15-february-2025> ; <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/west-bank-monthly-snapshot-casualties-property-damage-and-displacement-january-2025>
- <sup>21</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/palestine-state-of/report-palestine-state-of/>
- <sup>22</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/west-bank/>
- <sup>23</sup> <https://www.girlsnobrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/palestine/>
- <sup>24</sup> <https://palestine.unfpa.org/en/publications/palestine-situation-report-15-february-2025> ; <https://palestine.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/2025-03/Palestine%20Situation%20Report%20%23%2015%20February%202025%20%28Final%29.pdf>
- <sup>25</sup> <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/arabstates/Palestine.Summary.19.Eng.pdf>
- <sup>26</sup> <https://database.ilga.org/palestine-lgbti>
- <sup>27</sup> <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/humanitarian-situation-update-274-west-bank-enarhe> ; <https://palestine.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/2025-03/Palestine%20Situation%20Report%20%23%2015%20February%202025%20%28Final%29.pdf>
- <sup>27</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/mt/figures-at-a-glance>
- <sup>27</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/mt/figures-at-a-glance>
- <sup>27</sup> [https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download?data\\_finder%5BdataGroup%5D=displacement&data\\_finder%5Bdataset%5D=population&data\\_finder%5BdisplayType%5D=totals&data\\_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B0%5D=REF&data\\_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B1%5D=ASY&data\\_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B2%5D=IDP&data\\_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B3%5D=OIP&data\\_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B4%5D=STA&data\\_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B5%5D=HST&data\\_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B6%5D=OOC&data\\_finder%5Byear\\_filterType%5D=range&data\\_finder%5Byear\\_rangeFrom%5D=2018&data\\_finder%5Byear\\_rangeTo%5D=2024&data\\_finder%5Bcoo\\_displayType%5D=all&data\\_finder%5Bcoo\\_displayType%5D=custom&data\\_finder%5Bcoo\\_country%5D%5B0%5D=132&data\\_finder%5Byear\\_%5D=&data\\_finder%5Bcoo\\_%5D=&data\\_finder%5Bcoo\\_%5D=&data\\_finder%5Badvanced\\_%5D=&data\\_finder%5Bsubmit%5D=&data\\_finder=on&sort%5Bcoo\\_id%5D=asc&page=6](https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download?data_finder%5BdataGroup%5D=displacement&data_finder%5Bdataset%5D=population&data_finder%5BdisplayType%5D=totals&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B0%5D=REF&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B1%5D=ASY&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B2%5D=IDP&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B3%5D=OIP&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B4%5D=STA&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B5%5D=HST&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B6%5D=OOC&data_finder%5Byear_filterType%5D=range&data_finder%5Byear_rangeFrom%5D=2018&data_finder%5Byear_rangeTo%5D=2024&data_finder%5Bcoo_displayType%5D=all&data_finder%5Bcoo_displayType%5D=custom&data_finder%5Bcoo_country%5D%5B0%5D=132&data_finder%5Byear_%5D=&data_finder%5Bcoo_%5D=&data_finder%5Bcoo_%5D=&data_finder%5Badvanced_%5D=&data_finder%5Bsubmit%5D=&data_finder=on&sort%5Bcoo_id%5D=asc&page=6)

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This factsheet was compiled by Adri van den Berg for BDE. Adri worked for many years as a Country of Origin Information (COI) researcher, her final post before retiring being with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO, now EUAA) in Malta.

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