

SUMMARY

Refuge has become a widespread phenomenon in the twentieth century. Large numbers of people flee their countries for a variety of reasons - socio-economic, political, and environmental. The phenomenon of refugees has become so enormous which necessitated the establishment of International Organizations. The case of Palestinian refugees is one of the severest and long lasting which necessitated the establishment of UNRWA in the early 50s whose mandate is temporary until a just solution for the Palestinian problem is reached.

Several attempts were carried out by academics, thinkers, politicians, and specialists to devise possible solutions for the Palestinian refugees' problems. None of these attempts, however, has taken into consideration the opinions and attitudes of the refugees themselves toward the proposed solutions of the problem. This is why this study, carried out by the researcher, gains a special importance since it approaches the refugee directly exploring his opinion and attitude regarding the proposed solutions for this problem.

It is natural that rapid political changes take place worldwide. The Middle East is no exception. However, the attitude towards the Refugees' problem whether that of the Israeli officials or the Palestinians has not been affected seriously by these changes.

This study aims at providing decision makers, Palestinians and others, with an information source which contributes to the design of a strategy which takes the opinion of the refugees into account when discussing and drawing their future. It, thus, bridges an informational gap which is warranted in the present period - the period which is said to have underestimated the refugees' issues in

the accords which have been signed by the various parties until now.

The methodology the researcher follows, is two folded: The first constitutes a survey of political and historical literature relating to the issue of Palestinian refugees. This is based on sources and official documents, regarding their numbers, geographic distribution, legal status, and the various proposals suggested by official and semi-official bodies. Additionally documents issued by research and study centers pertaining to finding a solution for the refugees problem as part of the Palestine problem were also examined. The second is comprised of a limited field survey to define and report the refugees trends and attitudes in the West Bank refugee camps. A representative sample of the refugees' body concerning the proposed solutions was examined to ascertain the level of consistency or conflict of the proposed solutions with that proposed by the refugees themselves. The researcher has designed a questionnaire of some 54 items. The questionnaire was distributed among a stratified random sample from 11 refugee camps in the West Bank. In this questionnaire, the variables of education, sex, age groups, social status were taken into consideration as independent variables.

For analytical purposes, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Cross tabulation was used to measure the reliability of responses in the light of the sample responses to other items connected with dependent and independent variables.

The study is comprised of six chapters. It first begins with the theoretical framework, moving secondly to the attitudes of various parties concerned with the permanent solution. Thirdly comes the latest studies and proposals submitted by semi-official bodies and research Centres concerning the permanent solution. Fourthly comes the design of the questionnaire. The description and analysis of the results comes fifthly, and finally comes proposals and recommendations.

The study presents a number of conclusions which explicitly show the attachment of the refugee to his right of return in

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accordance with UN resolution 194. The refugee is inclined to abandon the camp and accepts the cessation of UNRWA if this is associated with the guarantee of his right of unconditional return to his land. Regarding the right to compensation, the study shows that the compensation should be made individually to each refugee and not only to the government. The research on the other hand, shows that opposition of the refugee increases to any solution that entails their continuation in their present localities, or any that deals only with segments of the refugees ignoring other parts, or makes their return conditional. There is, however, an important point that should not be underestimated. That point relates to the success of the Palestinians to keep their problem alive, and transmit it from the older generation to the younger ones. This entails that wagering on the possibility of "live and forget" is a losing wager. Thus, finding a just and permanent solution for the Palestinian refugees and the Palestinian problem at large substantially contributes to the stability and progress of the Middle East and the World.