

**Merging the Residents of Refugee Camps in the West Bank Economically,  
Socially and Culturally with the Neighbouring Urban Environment  
A Case Study of Balata Camp, Nablus**

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**Abstract**

The Palestinian refugees are being in great need for help and rehabilitation. They suffer from various difficulties, which are considered as impossible to be solved due to the significant decrease in their living conditions, prevailing unemployment and poverty, over crowding and residential crisis, and the very low level of provided services.

This thesis concentrates on the refugees in the West Bank, especially the refugees in Balata Camp and their ability to accept the idea of all types of merging. Mainly, it aims at investigating certain economic, social and cultural tools to achieve merging between the residents of Balata Camp and the neighbouring urban environment in order to improve the living condition and level of services in the camp, and sustain the generous and safe life of those residents.

To achieve this aim, a number of research methods were used, including: the literature concerning the issue of refugees, available documents at the Center of Refugees in Nablus Municipality, detailed interviews with a group of residents and officers in the camp, in addition to the questionnaire that was distributed in the camp to identify the major problems facing the residents as well as determining their ability to accept the idea of merging; either economic, social or cultural.

The study has faced a lot of obstacles in terms of the shortage in related data sources, invasion of Israeli military forces to the camp during the research period, which interrupted the undertaking of interviews, in addition to lack of cooperation from some residents due to the speciality of the subject of the study regarding merging and their feeling that merging would have a political aim, particularly resettlement and ignorance of the right of return to their initial homeland.

The results of the study indicated that there is a clear acceptance by the residents of Balata Camp towards the process of economic, social and cultural merging, and also that this process is an urgent necessity to improve the living conditions and develop the environment of the camp. In addition, the study emphasized that the improvement and development of the camp does not contradict with the right of return of Palestinian refugees.

The study recommended the necessity of improving the economic conditions and level of services as a base and introduction for the merging process, which could be attained through the provision of required finance, and formation of a technical committee within a context of partnership and integration among the UNRWA, Nablus Municipality, and other related institutions and authorities in Balata Camp and in Nablus City as well as being based on public awareness and participation.

Finally, the study has emphasized the significance of work towards supporting the development and improvement of the camp's environment using different tools and the proposed methods in order to sustain and enhance the culture of the right of return through the future generation.