

PALESTINE CIVIL SOCIETY

Party Portrait

Comprised of NGOs and individuals without cohesive political leadership, Palestinian Civil Society is largely dissatisfied with current Palestinian leadership and the negotiations process. These organizations see themselves as developing Palestinian society internally as a means towards ending the occupation and achieving Palestinian civil rights. Some estimates place the number of NGOs in Palestine at over 5,000, mainly funded by international donors and UN organizations. Critics claim that the main interests of these groups are to maintain funding, rather than create change. While a few coalitions exist, there is no unified leadership or coordination structure.

Key Interests

- Achieve peaceful Palestinian society that effectively incorporates citizen voices into representative democratic government
- Maintain thriving Palestinian economy with educational and employment opportunities for all that allows freedom of movement and access to resources
- End the occupation
- Achieve recognition of Right of Return for Palestinian refugees, with some symbolic return and/or reparations
- Attain permanent status of East Jerusalem as Palestinian capital
- For each individual actor: Maintain institutional power and funding

Sources of Leverage

Soft Power - Palestinian Civil Society achieves moral and legal legitimacy for their cause from UN Security Council Resolutions and the Geneva Convention. International solidarity for victimhood, especially from Arab States and European countries, and moral leverage in relation to Israeli actions within the West Bank also increase the soft power of Palestinian civil society organizations. The presence of Palestinian refugee populations spread across the Middle East and the world creates pressure on host governments.

Economic - Growing international support for boycott, divest, and sanctions movement constitutes an economic threat over Israel. In addition, labor constitutes an economic source of leverage, with sixteen percent of Palestinians living in the West Bank working in Israel or in West Bank settlements.

Regional Strategy

Use grassroots activism to mobilize Palestinians around engagement in democratic processes, offer a “voice” to concerns of non-politicians, and affect change within the Palestinian political sphere. Many of these organizations mobilize international support through messaging about the Palestinian cause and raise international funds to sustain local work. According to a 2015 Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research poll, 85% of individuals support the Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions movement. Many organizations, though not all, separate from ‘normalization’ (cooperation with Israel and Israeli organizations) to show dissatisfaction with political and social trends in Israel.

Powerful Individuals

Omar Barghouti (Founding member of Palestinian Committee for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel), Mustafa Barghouti (co-founder of Palestine Monitor and Palestinian National Initiative), Amjad Shawa (Director of Palestinian NGO Network in Gaza), Sami Khader (Director of Maan Development Center, board member of Palestine NGO Network)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Solidarity Network - Build cross-border Palestinian Solidarity Network with Palestinian refugees around the world, heightening concerns for all host countries

Grassroots Networks - Build grassroots networks within Palestinian society to engage politically, mobilize cohesive opposition, and increase independent civil society systems through re-envisioning funding sources and development practices

Engage nonviolent opposition - To Israel and Palestinian leadership;

Mobilize possible mediation body - Comprised of European Union, Arab League, US, and Russia

Internal Conflicts

Organizations and individuals disagree as to best-case future solutions, levels of appropriate boycott or cooperation with Israel, and strategies of nonviolence vs. violence. Many perceive the negotiations process to serve Israel’s needs without true consideration of Palestinian interests, and disagree as to the extent to which Palestinian leadership should attempt to negotiate with Israel. Many individuals and organizations are frustrated with what they see as unrepresentative and elitist Palestinian leadership, with a majority believing that Abbas should step down. Palestinian support for a one-state and two-state solution stood at 36% and 44% respectively, according to a 2017 EU-funded poll.

Memberships

N/A

Allies

N/A

Partners

EUROPEAN UNION, PALESTINE Fatah, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, UNITED NATIONS

Rivals

EGYPT Government, JORDAN, LEBANON Government, PALESTINE Hamas, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED STATES

Adversaries

ISRAEL

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

EUROPEAN UNION, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, UNITED NATIONS, UNITED STATES