

## Market of Intellectual Enslavement (Employment in Israeli Labor Market)

Dr. Yahya Hijazi - Jerusalem

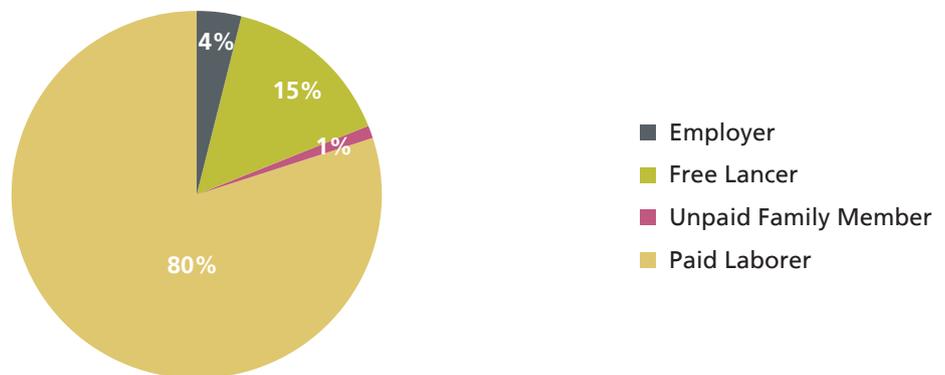
« I understand that working in settlements is frowned on by my community, but I cannot find an alternative that would provide basic life requirements for my family and enable my children to complete their education. It is a sad thing to work at a place that is considered a cancer in my homeland, but seeking livelihood forces me to work there due to lack of alternative in Palestinian institutions »<sup>1</sup>

### Statistics

According to Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics - 2014, the number of Palestinians working in Israel reached 105,000 workers, including 11,000 workers working in the construction sector, 6,000 in the agricultural sector, and 3,000 in the industrial sector and the rest work in the service sector<sup>2</sup>.

The situation in Jerusalem is very bleak. Statistical Book of Jerusalem issued by the Palestinian Bureau for Statistics - 2016<sup>3</sup> show that the majority are paid laborers rather than skilled professionals. Figure 1 shows the distribution of occupations by field:

### Types of occupations



Palestinians living in Jerusalem work in various occupations. According to the Statistical Book of Jerusalem, the majority comprising 26% of Palestinians living in Jerusalem work in services sector, 32% in construction, 24% in trade, restaurants and hotels. Furthermore, those who work in the settlements surrounding Jerusalem according to the same source are 33%.

Statistics show a steady decline in the proportion of workers in Israel and settlements between 2011 and 2015. This maybe contributed to the development and variance of the labor market in Israel and the shift from low-tech to hi-tech. In 2011, 43% of Jerusalemites were working in the Israeli market which is 10% higher than 2015. Perhaps we can predict that the current Israeli plan aimed at attracting Jerusalemites

1 Al-iqtisadi, 23.03.2015, Settlement Workers ... A Heartache, [http://www.aliqtisadi.ps/ar\\_page.php?id=3d101y250113Y3d101](http://www.aliqtisadi.ps/ar_page.php?id=3d101y250113Y3d101), accessed 09.03.2018.

2 Ibid.

3 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Book of Jerusalem – 2016.

on the one hand and religious Jews on the other to Israeli universities and colleges, and encouraging registration for various engineering programs, and attract them through providing full scholarships aimed at “reprogramming workers” through the acquisition of skills and knowledge at a higher level demanded by the current Israeli market, which needs skilled workers in different disciplines rather than unskilled workers, where the inter-ministerial committee recommended to provide a budget of 2.3 billion ILS for this purpose<sup>4</sup>.

According to Israeli statistics Jerusalem is considered the poorest between the Palestinian cities with high costs of living compared with its Palestinian counterparts. The high costs of living forces Jerusalemites to engage in the Israeli labor market in general and to work in the settlements in particular, because the average daily income in the settlements is twice the one in the Palestinian market<sup>5</sup>. The average daily income of Jerusalemites in the Israeli labor market is 173 ILS compared with 97 ILS in the Palestinian labor market.

« After receiving my BA degree in physics, I couldn't find work. I couldn't enroll in the Palestinian educational system to teach, and I refused to participate in the Israeli education system in addition to the fact that my certificate is not recognized by the Israeli Ministry of Education. Now, I sit behind a table in one of the settlements working for 8 hours a day wrapping berries »

« Muhammad's mother is a widow who spends the early hours of each morning praying, cooking breakfast, lunch for her children, and waiting until cleaning company's car comes to pick her up to go to Gush Etzion Settlement for work. She relies on her 13-year-old daughter to take care of her brothers and prepare them for school after she leaves »

## What are causes that force Palestinians in general and Jerusalemites in particular to work in Israeli settlements and join the Israeli labor market?

1. Limited Palestinian labor market in terms of quantity and fields due to Israeli occupation's restrictions that force it to depend on the Israeli market and prevent Palestinians from having free trade. Therefore, the Palestinian market is unable to absorb Palestinian labor force. In addition, the Jerusalem labor market, similar to the Palestinian labor market, is mostly composed of family businesses, where the workshops and private businesses mainly consider family members mainly before others.
2. Economic need; although many Jerusalemites see their work in the settlements, both in restaurants and Israeli institutions as a thorn in the throat, the restricted Palestinian labor market limits their options. Since more than 80% of Jerusalemites live under poverty line<sup>6</sup>, capable family members must search for job opportunities that provide their families with basic needs.
3. Working conditions and wages; despite harsh working conditions and unjust wages paid to Jerusalemite Palestinian compared with Israelis, Israeli wages, as noted previously, remain twice what is available in the Palestinian market. Hence, some Jerusalemites shy away from working in the Palestinian labor market despite its positive sides.
4. Facilitation factors to work in the Israeli market and settlements through intermediaries and transportation offices that organize travel to and from the workplace. In every economic and political crisis, there are people that take advantage of available opportunities for financial gains. Facilitation includes obtaining work permits for thousands of shekels paid by workers to brokers. It also includes deals that require manpower in exchange for a share in these deals. Others transfer Palestinian workers

---

4 Haaretz, 13.09.2017, Universities Program 2022, Integrating Arabs, Ultraorthodox Jews and Attracting Foreign Students, <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.3066862>, accessed 08.03.2018.

5 Ibid.

6 Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 2016

to and from their homes for a certain fee. According to a press report, about 53% of Palestinians are employed by brokers, 47% of these workers can sign contracts directly with Israeli employers<sup>7</sup>; therefore, more than half of them live at the mercy of brokers.

5. Some Jerusalemites living near Israeli industrial areas, especially females are seduced to work there. There is a group of cement blocks "industrial zones" built along the Palestinian neighborhoods in order to attract Palestinian labor easily. In the city of Jerusalem, there are several communities including Tel-Biot, Atarot, Shaul's Hills, and Al-Khan Al-Ahmar are filled with laborers from the West Bank in general and from Jerusalem in particular.
6. Limited ambition among school young men and women dropouts as their greatest ambition by the age of twenty is to have family, and buy an apartment behind the separation wall since it is much more expensive to own an apartment within it. After that, they are overwhelmed by the goal of saving money, seize to consider their professional future and whether work in settlements is really what they aspire to achieve. Many youth work for years as cleaning workers, in supermarkets or warehouses. During their career, their ambition is limited to promotion within the confines of their work. For example, becoming responsible for new youth in the cleaning department/ section.
7. If we examine correlation of level of education and type of occupation among workers in Israeli settlements, low educational achievement is evident; therefore, failure to complete academic studies increases the percentage of Jerusalemites working in the settlements, emphasizing the importance of reducing school dropout rate among youth.

### **Is there anything that can be done to reduce work in Israeli settlements?**

1. Raise public awareness among Palestinians in general, both in formal and informal frameworks about the dangers of indirectly supporting the settlement project on Palestinian land and identifying its negative impact on national economy, political solutions, environment and natural resources.
2. Jerusalemite or Palestinian settlement workers cannot be accused with lack of patriotism because the Israeli occupation created a dire situation of land expropriation including natural resources; a main source of livelihood for many Palestinians who are now working in the settlements and in Israeli labor market. These circumstances force Palestinians to wake up before sunrise, at three AM and stand in queues for hours before they can cross barriers of humiliation every day. Any proposal must therefore take into account basic economic needs of Palestinian workers in general and Jerusalemites in particular. Settlement expansion and the construction of the industrial zones on Palestinian land have environmental, political, social and economic repercussions<sup>8</sup>; therefore, any proposed solution must take into account humanitarian structure and status complex quo.
3. Invest in child education because is the safety net for children to discover new possibilities and opportunities.
4. Introduce Jerusalemites to the Palestinian labor market, encourage them to work in it and discover its advantages, or present facts on thousands of Jerusalemites working in the Palestinian market according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics<sup>9</sup>.

---

7 Sbeih Majd, Paid Palestinian Laborers in Israeli Settlements in the West Bank: Features & Working Conditions, Al-Haya News Paper, Work in Settlements ... Robbery of Graduates' Ambition and Killing Children's Dreams, [http://www.alhaya.ps/arch\\_page.php?nid=253102](http://www.alhaya.ps/arch_page.php?nid=253102), accessed 10.03.2018.

8 Policies and Projects, Israeli Settlements' Political, Social and Economic Impact on Palestinian Territories and Labor Market, Ramallah, 2014

9 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Book of Jerusalem – 2016.

5. Reinforce individual and collective initiatives starting from school as Hashwah<sup>10</sup> calls for schools to strengthen this aspect. Accordingly, students can acquire economic leadership through knowledge and skills in researching, proposing, planning projects and then presenting them to support their implementation. In later years, students can think and develop their own projects.
6. Support cooperatives and sustainable small enterprises through national actors to maintain a sustainable economy so as to protect women and men from joining the Israeli labor market by enabling them to manage their own business. However, without national institutions' coverage of start-up costs and constant support, then Palestinian workers will continue to serve Israelis.

---

<sup>10</sup> Hashwah, Maher, Towards Entrepreneurship in Palestine - Explorative Study, Palestinian Economic Research Center, March 2012

This article has been produced with the support of the European Union. This content of this article is the sole responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

"Hirak. The project is implemented by Palestinian Vision Organization (PalVision) in partnership with the Danish Church Aid (DCA), and funded by the European Union (EU) expanding over a period of 36 months; aims to support change for youth living in East Jerusalem by promoting community leadership and advocating for the political, social and economic rights of Jerusalemites under International Humanitarian Law (IHL).