GlobalResearch
Center for Research on Globalization

Palestinians Are Joining the Exodus of Refugees to the EU…

By IMEMC
Global Research, March 09, 2016
International Middle East Media Center 9 March 2016

Region: Europe, Middle East & North Africa
Theme: Crimes against Humanity, Poverty & Social Inequality
In-depth Report: CRIMINALIZE WAR, PALESTINE

Palestinians are joining the Middle East exodus to Europe in greater numbers because of the Syrian war and ongoing Israeli occupation, a senior Palestinian official has said.

Saeb Erekat, the secretary general of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), told EU Observer, from Ramallah, that "thousands" had already left for Europe.

"What other options have they? We have people dying of starvation in al-Yarmouk refugee camp [in Syria], and thousands of Palestinians leaving Syria and Lebanon trying to reach Europe," he said, according to the PNN.

Palestinians collect their belongings from under the rubble of a residential tower, which witnesses said was destroyed in an Israeli air strike in Gaza City August 24, 2014.

"The UN has said that Gaza will be unfit for human habitation by 2020, but Israel's siege of Gaza continues."

The Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza are home to some 4.5 million Palestinians.

Two million more live in refugee camps in Jordan in a legacy of wars in 1948 and 1967. Another 500,000 live in camps in Lebanon and a further 500,000 in Syria.

Frontex, the EU border control agency in Warsaw, said that just six Palestinians were intercepted trying to enter the EU via irregular crossings to Greece in January of last year, but that figure rose to 488 in August. It peaked at 1,747 in October, and stayed high (1,142) in January of this year, despite inclement weather.

The real number is likely to be much bigger because most Palestinians travel without ID papers, making them difficult to count.

Easo, the EU asylum agency in Malta, said that up to 19,000 Palestinians applied for asylum in the EU last year, compared with 15,680 in 2014 and 9,590 in 2013.

It said that most of them were "Palestinian 'refugees' or persons of Palestinian origin who were previously long term residents of countries now affected by the Syrian conflict.

It additionally stated that these people have a 53 percent to 87 percent chance of success, depending on which EU state handles their claim.

Israel 'killing hope'

The number of Palestinians on the move is likely to go up if the spate of knife and car-ramming attacks on Israelis that has been going on since last year escalates into a full-scale uprising.

Erekat blames the instability on the Israeli occupation.

"[Israeli] prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his extremist government have done everything possible to kill hope in the minds and hearts of Palestinians. What they see on a daily basis are more settlements, land grabbing, checkpoints, siege, military raids, settler attacks and systematic denial of their rights," he said.

He said the Arab-Israeli conflict also contributes to instability in Syria, the main source of the EU refugee crisis.

"You can't defeat Daesh (ISIL) without ending the Israeli occupation," he said, using an Arabic name for Islamic State, a jihadist group which controls parts of Syria and Iraq.

> "Lack of hope could lead people to commit desperate acts like joining Daesh. Though the numbers of Palestinians joining them are minimal, this is not a situation that can be taken for granted."

Sanctions call

The 60-year old Palestinian diplomat has served as the PLO's chief negotiator in Arab-Israeli peace talks for most of the past 20 years.

He welcomed a French project to set a deadline for new peace talks after which France would recognise Palestine in its 1967 borders.

"Recognising Palestine is not going to end the occupation, but it's a strong message to the Palestinian people in terms of support for their rights. European countries will be investing in peace," he said.

He also welcomed an EU retail label code on settler food, wine, and cosmetics exports that was published last year. But he advocated tougher action.

"Effective actions against Israeli settlements are banning of settlement products, divestment and sanctions on companies profiting from the occupation," he said.

Apartheid jibe

The UN and the EU advocate a two-state solution to the conflict.

Erekat said: "I sincerely don't see any other solution but a two-state solution for the welfare of both Israelis and Palestinians."

But, he added: “I personally think that Israel doesn’t want a two-state solution. The Israeli government believes in … one state with two systems, which means apartheid.”

He said Israel’s impunity in the EU and US is part of the problem.

“Radicals that could not even get close to the Knesset [the Israeli parliament] 20 years ago are now part of the government coalition. But I also believe that this [Israeli policy] has a lot to do with pragmatism: Israel has the feeling that no matter what, they’ll never be held accountable,” he said.

He said the only “morally acceptable” alternative to two states is “one single, democratic state in all of historic Palestine”.

‘Stop making excuses’

“If they don’t like the idea of two sovereign states living side by side, I call upon them to talk to us and let’s set the terms for a one-state solution. But they should not even dream that our people will accept anything short of … the right to self-determination, freedom,” Erekat said.

The one-state model would imperil Israel’s objective to be a “homeland of the Jews” in demographic terms.

Based on Erekat’s comments, EUobserver asked the Israeli mission to the EU if any models other than the two-state solution would be acceptable to Israel.

The mission asked for its statement to be published in full.

“Israel’s declared and unequivocal position is two states for two people,” the statement said.

> “In order to achieve this, Mr. Erekat and his colleagues should engage in direct negotiations and stop making excuses as to why they can’t come to the table. Prime minster Netanyahu has repeatedly stated his willingness to restart direct talks – be it in Jerusalem or Ramallah. All other personal beliefs should be challenged in the negotiation room.”

The original source of this article is International Middle East Media Center
Copyright © IMEMC, International Middle East Media Center, 2016

Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page

Become a Member of Global Research

Articles by: IMEMC

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants

permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca