

The Responsiveness of the Palestinian Development Plans to the Public's Needs in Marginalized Areas

Abstract

The study addresses the Palestinian Development Plans' lack of responsiveness to the needs of marginalized areas in Palestine and its implications on attaining stability and civil peace. These areas include Area 'C' and Jerusalem, which fall under full Israeli control, as well as Palestinian refugee camps. The study uses a descriptive approach and the qualitative content analysis methodology, in coherence with interviews, in order to analyze the Palestinian Development Plans and tackle the key issues.

The importance of the study stems from the fact that these areas make up the largest part of the Palestinian territories. Therefore, not prioritizing them within the development plans set by the PNA will not only negatively affect the role of these areas in combating the occupation's policies and achieving the Palestinian national project, but also will further the fragmentation amongst the different societal components and damage the socio-economic situation and the civil peace within the Palestinian society.

The full study tackles the issues through demonstrating the theoretical framework for planning processes and the criteria for improving development plans, ensuring that the most marginalized areas in Palestine are identified and the current status of their existence in the development plans are accurately analyzed. The study also analyzes the current challenges and obstacles the Palestinian development plans face in responding to the needs of the marginalized areas.

The study concludes a number of findings, most notably:

- The lack of intervention mechanisms by the Palestinian National Authority to ensure the basic needs of the marginalized areas are met, especially in refugee camps.
- These marginalized areas are not prioritized as the main areas of focus in the development plans, harming the social cohesion and civil peace and creating violence and instability within Palestinian society.
- There is a common misconception that links the improvement of life conditions in refugee camps to the right of return being compromised.
- There is another misconception that believes UNRWA has sole responsibility in providing services to refugees, which prevents these camps from receiving quality services and basic needs, increasing the already high rates of poverty and unemployment and remaining amongst the most marginalized areas.
- Moreover, the occupation sets policies that obstruct any Palestinian effort in contributing to the development processes in these areas, depriving Area 'C' and Jerusalem from improving their living conditions and preventing the establishment of infrastructural institutions that provide services to the population, displacing their inhabitants and keeping these areas as a refuge for those who are outlaws.

The study provides a number of recommendations, the most important of which are:

- 1) The Palestinian National Authority and its competent institutions should benefit from prominent and successful international experiences in addressing the situations of

marginalized regions and groups, seeing that they are the most vulnerable to social instability due to their harsh economic and social conditions.

- 2) The need to focus on renovating and rebuilding dilapidated infrastructure in refugee camps to allow their inhabitants to live decent lives and to strengthen their presence as a symbol of the right to return. It is necessary to increase budgets allocated to projects in the Department of Refugee Affairs, provide political and moral support for UNRWA and encourage international donations for these camps.
- 3) To promote the stability of citizens in Area 'C', Jerusalem and its surrounding areas near the Apartheid Wall through developing their infrastructure and providing them with various services in coordination with international institutions, UN institutions and other donors.