

# **Palestine International Institute**

Aspiring to Bind Palestinians in the Diaspora  
and Expatriates to the Homeland

## **The Palestinian Community In Belgium**

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**Foreword**

The Palestine International Institute (PII) pioneers in producing studies provided by researchers in the Diaspora, in coordination with the Institute under the broad category, 'Palestinians in Diaspora'. This time we are pleased to present our readers with the 2008 reviewed and updated edition of our study entitled 'The Palestinian Community in Belgium'. This study falls under the 'Horizontal Studies' series which examines the emergence and evolution of communities and tackles issues related to the origins, structure, makeup size, problems and challenges of Palestinian communities in the Diaspora. The PII also issues the 'Parallel Studies' series which are supplementary studies with indirect bearing on communities, such as the study on Arab European Relationships. These studies are overseen and supervised by the executive chairman and research team. In addition, our scientific committee (comprising Dr. Mohammad Mikdashi, Dr. Hasan Al-Charif, Dr. Emile Nemat Khoury, and Dr. Nabil Dajani), looks over the upgrading and maintenance of the PII website, as well as the update of the 'Vertical Studies' series which are studies on the elite, focusing on the activists of the Palestinian communities in the Diaspora).

Before scrutinizing the data, statistics and information contained herein, we wish to indicate that this study presents academic insight based on scientific and objective research. This is indeed one of the goals for which PII has been established.

Our researchers have exerted considerable effort, with relentless pursuit and exploration, to overcome difficulties imposed by the scarcity of resources and documents, in an attempt to achieve integrated, rather than fractured, data, at a time when scientific research is considerably lacking and insignificant. The importance of this study, as well as other PII studies, springs from a number of factors, the most important of which are the following:

- It comes as an early harvest in virgin territory, where documents and sources of information on these subjects, in both Arab and foreign libraries, are virtually nonexistent, including centers that specialize in Palestinian issues and the Internet.
- No scholar or institution has come up with a partial, needless to say complete, series of studies about Palestinians in the Diaspora in countries where they exist, or about communities of countries that have hosted Palestinians. Despite all that has been said, we acknowledge the fact that the present study is in its early stages and is open to further development and expansion, on the basis of professionalism, authenticity, transparency and documentation, and with the intent of

being broadened and updated. Our mission and duty dictate that we make sure it is subject to the above processes in each of its new editions.

The PII welcomes any comments on the development of its studies and scientific and research references, with the aim of achieving its final goals and aspirations. If it appears that we are slightly lagging, it is because our human and financial resources are limited, and the conditions under which the research is being conducted are difficult.

The time to pick the fruit of our efforts is near. All this has been the result of the efforts exerted by a dedicated team, despite our humble resources. Our gratitude goes to all the scholars and researchers who have contributed to this and other studies which aim to reach those interested, address their patriotic, national, human and intellectual aspirations, and reveal facts and data that were previously unknown to those who have no access to such information.

We further reiterate our desire to receive feedback and urge our readers to send us any comments and suggestions that would serve to improve or advance our studies.

As'ad Abdul-Rahman,  
Executive Director

### **Acknowledgment**

The Palestine International Institute wishes to extend its appreciation and gratitude to all those who contributed to this study in various ways, including research, gleaning information, translation, editing and typing... etc. Special thanks go to Mrs. Maha Najjar for her major contribution to this study. Thanks are also due to all PII staff, including researchers and technical support, for their hard work and dedication, which is why this study has been produced with useful content and in proper form. Without their efforts this study would not have been possible.

## **Chapter One**

### **Belgium: the Host Country**

#### **Introduction**

This brief study aims to provide a synopsis of the Palestinian Community in Belgium. Lack of documented data about the number of Palestinians residing in the country and the scarcity of information available about their social and cultural positions made our work more difficult than originally anticipated.

As previously stated in other studies, precise and verifiable information about the number of Palestinians in Belgium range from a low of 800 to a high of 2,000. Security and legal precautions in Belgium make it virtually impossible to gather accurate figures from Belgium authorities regarding the number of individuals in the Palestinian community within the country.<sup>2</sup>

### **Historical Background**

Belgium gained independence from the Netherlands in 1830 and was occupied by Germany during World Wars I and II. It prospered in the past half century as a modern, technologically advanced European state and member of NATO and the EU. Tension between the Dutch-speaking Flemish (of the north) and the French-speaking Walloons (of the south) have led in recent years to constitutional amendments granting these regions formal recognition and autonomy.<sup>3</sup>

### **Population**

The population of Belgium is estimated at around 10,365,000 distributed among the following:

- Ethnic groups
  - Flemish (Dutch) at 58%,
  - Walloons (French) at 31%,
  - Mixed or other at 11%.
  - There are 1.23 immigrants for each 1,000 Belgians.<sup>4</sup>
- Religions
  - Roman Catholics at 75%
  - Muslims at 2%
  - 23% are distributed among Protestants and other religions.
- Languages
  - Dutch at 60%
  - French at 40%
  - German at less than 1%.

### **Major Political Parties**

#### **Flemish Parties**

Christian Flemish Democrats (CD&V)

Mr. Jo Vandeurzen is at the helm of this centrist party which is considered the largest in Flanders; in 1999, it campaigned against Prime Minister, Guy Verhofstadt. Despite a slight dip in its popularity it won the 2004 Flemish elections when it ran on the same ticket with the Moderate National Party.

Flemish Liberal Democrats (VLD)

The former prime minister, Bart Somers, is currently at the helm. This party was established in 1992 and joined the government in 1999. From the beginning, the party followed a right-of-center policy by its founder, Guy Verhofstadt. Internal reform within the party, however, forced a change in ideology and the party followed more moderate policies. Despite these reforms, the party lost its ideological sway between 2000-2004 in the second term of its coalition in the federal Belgian government. As a result, the party joined forces with the Social Liberal Vivant Party in the European and Flemish elections but lost to the other contending parties, the CD&V and Vlaams Blok.<sup>5</sup>

#### The Greens (Groen)

This party was founded in 1981 with Vera Dua at the helm and maintains close ties with the Francophone Green Party. The party was founded as a result of a popular environmental movement founded by progressive Catholics, friends of the environment and the Alternative Socialist Movement. The Green Party was part of a broader alliance of Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt, during 1999-2003. In the 2003 elections, the party lost all its seats in parliament to the Sp.A-Spirit coalition. Due to its weakened position the party refrained from participating in the new Flemish government.

#### New Flemish Alliance (NVA)

This party is presided over by Bort de Wever. It was founded in the autumn of 2001 and called for the independence of Flanders from Belgium. The party's membership is drawn from various political sectors and adopts a moderate right-of-center position. Some view it as an acceptable alternative to the more extreme Vlaams Blok Party. In the 2003 federal elections, the party captured 5% of the votes and one seat in parliament. In the 2004 parliamentary elections, as a result of its alliance with the Christian Flemish Democrats (CD&V), the party was able to win six seats.<sup>6</sup>

#### Socialist Party Alternative (SP.A)

This party was the big winner in the 2003 elections running on a joint ticket with the Social Liberal Spirit Party, when their share of the vote went up from 9% to almost 15%, securing them second place in the number of votes. In 2004, SP.A, along with its partner Spirit, lost in elections for the Flemish parliament. Although they won more seats in comparison to the Flemish elections of 1999, their percentage of the vote, compared to the successful 2003 federal elections, was considerably lower.

#### Spirit

This is a Belgium Flemish political party formed after the falling apart of the old moderate nationalistic Volksunie Party and currently forms an alliance with the SP.A. It is headed by Geert Lambert.

## Flemish Interest – Vlaams Belang (VB)

Frank Vanhecke currently leads this party. Originally, this was a Flemish nationalist party under the name of Vlaams Blok which called for an independent Flanders. In November 2005, the party was dissolved and a new party by the name of Vlaams Belang was formed. Because of its ultra-right leanings it was shunned by all parties of the Belgian political spectrum. In 2004, the Ghent court designated it as a racist party.

## French Parties (Francophone)

### Socialist Party (PS)

This party is headed by Elio Di Rupo. It is the dominant party in Wallonia and is supported by the urban working class. In the years since 1999, PS has simultaneously controlled five regional executive bodies which are: the Francophone Community Government, the Walloon Regional Government, the Brussels Regional Government, the COCOF— a local Brussels subsidiary of the Francophone community and the German-speaking Community Government. The ideology and image of the PS is a mix of old style state interventionism combined with modern electoral marketing. The party (or its members) has often been associated with criminal activities mostly concerning bribery and financial fraud.<sup>7</sup>

### Reformist Movement (MR)

This movement, headed by Didier Reynders, is a liberal movement that calls for the unity of Belgium. The ideology of MR is a mix of free-market liberalism that recently became a more left-leaning liberalism.

### Humanist Democratic Center (CDH)

This centrist Christian Democrat, Belgian French-speaking political party is headed by Joelle Milquet. It is allied with the CD&V and was formerly called the Christian Social Party. Its ideology is a mix of Christian-inspired humanism combined with a centrist policy toward the economy, supporting state intervention and calling for the unity of Belgium.

### National Front (FN)

The National Front is a small Belgian nationalist party supportive of Francophone issues. The party's leader is Daniel Feret. In the 2003 general elections, it won one seat in the chamber of representatives, 2% of the vote. It also has two seats in the senate.

### Francophone Greens (Ecolo)

This party, headed by Evelyne Huytebroeck, Jean-Michel Javaux and Claude Brouir, represents the Green movement in Wallonia and Brussels. It

resigned before the elections and was later overshadowed by the Socialist Party.

## Chapter 2

### The Muslim and Arab Communities in Belgium

#### Muslim Community Count and Composition

In 1968, the Belgian government acknowledged Islam as an official religion in the country, the first European country to do so. In sheer numbers, Muslims in Belgium outnumber both the Jewish and the Protestant denominations. In 1975, the Belgian government approved the inclusion of Islamic studies in the school syllabus for Muslim students under the supervision of the Islamic Cultural Center.<sup>8</sup> More than 700 Muslims teach Islam in some elementary and secondary schools. Moreover, Belgium is home to more than 290 mosques.<sup>9</sup>

In 1998, nearly a quarter of a century later, Muslims achieved another breakthrough when they held elections to choose a unified commission to represent them vis-à-vis the government,— to be their only official interlocutor with the Belgian authorities. The ensuing board, the Belgian Muslim Board was the first of its kind in Europe. Elections took place to choose members of the board after Belgian authorities gave the Muslim community, in June 1998 the right to choose their own representatives to act on their behalf in all matters related to their religion. A total of 280 Muslim candidates ran in the elections in which 70,000 voters took part. Elections were held in various mosques and Islamic centers in the country in which 68 members of various Muslim nationalities were elected.<sup>10</sup>

In March 2004, another round of elections took place to choose the 68 members for the board, which has been recognized by the government since 1998 as the official representative of Muslims, for a new term. A total of 69,000 Belgian Muslims registered to choose board members from among 178 candidates.<sup>11</sup>

Muslims in Belgium number around 450,000 and are considered to be the most active in Europe. Their composition and origins are as follows: 250,000 hail from Morocco; 130,000 from Turkey; and 30,000 from Albania. The rest are Palestinians, Algerians, Tunisians, Bosnians, Libyans and Senegalese.

According to EU records, Europe is home for more than 20 million Muslims. Their increasing number encouraged European governments to give them equal rights to education, religious freedom and political activity. Some naturalized Muslims hold ministerial positions in various European governments.

In the post-9/11 world and with the escalating violence that rocked parts of Europe, France in particular, fears of rising Islamic militancy forced Europeans to impose various restrictions on the activities and status of various communities.

### **Arab World View in Belgian Schools and Universities**

Information about Islamic civilization or the Arab world is almost nonexistent in the Belgian syllabus. Arab contributions to developments in the sciences during the 8th and 14th centuries, the rise of the Ottoman Empire during the 19th and 20th centuries and the Arab awakening are subjects that are hardly touched upon. While history books in Belgium mention the Crusades, they do not mention Napoleon's campaign against Egypt, the construction of the Suez Canal, the colonization of Algiers or the Palestinians' resistance to the Zionist occupation of Palestine in 1948. Vague reference is given to current Arab West relations.<sup>12</sup>

Belgian universities were generally more open towards Africa due to European colonial history on this continent. Arab language and literature were taught at the universities of Liege, Brussels, Goud, Mons and the Catholic University of Leuven. Teaching the Arabic language at Mons is relatively new and is connected with the teaching of spontaneous translation. Other universities taught archeology of the Arab world, especially Egyptology. Belgium has some of the world's renowned archeologists who have actively participated in various excavations in Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Palestine.

Belgian universities devote little time to contemporary Arab problems. The activities of the Arabs' only center for Arabic studies, CERMAC, which was established in 1975 at Leuven University, should be given due credit in this regard. This center has played an important role in acquainting the university's student body with the problems of the modern Arab world. To this end, the center has a specialized library and offers lectures and workshops. It also undertakes research and organizes seminars and study days. In addition, the center issues a bulletin titled, 'Cahiers du Monde Arabe', of which 148 issues have so far been published.

In addition to CERMAC, the university maintains another center for Oriental studies whose translations of old Arabic manuscripts and publications are considered a highly valued references in these fields.

The overall result of this activity falls short of expectations. Barring some lessons and lectures about Eastern archeology and Islamic architecture nothing substantive about the Arab world is taught outside a few academic centers like Leuven and Mons universities. If any, such education is confined to very small centers which are dismally under-funded to the extent that they cannot conduct long-term research and their impact is limited. As a result Belgium diplomacy, despite its experience and the sincerity of its diplomats in the Arab world, suffers from a shortage of seasoned experts in Arab politics and economy.



### **Arab View in the Belgian Press<sup>13</sup>**

Belgian media coverage of Arab problems fluctuates considerably. It is hard to classify any newspaper or T.V. channel in Belgium as absolutely anti-Arab however, some Belgian newspapers and channels can be classified by assessing their overall coverage vis-à-vis the Arab world or the Arab community in Belgium. Likewise, the Belgian press generally paints, and the Belgian public receives, a negative picture of the Arab world through the fact distorting lens of immigration. For example, La Dernière Heure, despite its discernible anti-Arab tinge as evidenced by its coverage of Arab news, has not been accused of racism. On the other hand, Le Soir follows a more balanced and impartial attitude when covering events in the Arab world. The Catholic daily La Libre Belgique also follows a balanced and unbiased approach and its editorials are more objective and accurate.

The major role in covering the news of the Arab world is undertaken by the Belgian Broadcasting and Television Corp. Its coverage of Arab events reflects Belgian journalists whose work reflects a sense of duty and competence. These journalists track events and portray them comprehensively to the effect that some reports are produced in a very unbiased manner. The show 'Sinbad' is singled out as being commendable and has helped to identify artists and researchers of Arab descent to the Belgians.

In a different vein, international news on the Belgian television network RTL is characterized as being shallow and inadequate, especially news related to the Arab world. On rare occasions, this channel airs worthy commentaries by well-informed journalists on issues of Arab and third world countries. Regrettably, these are few and are not supported by management. Events in the Arab world are unfolding at a rapid pace that leaves little breathing space for reflection and analysis.

### **The Arab World and the Belgian Economy<sup>14</sup>**

Since the Middle Ages, high-quality Belgian textiles were exported to the Middle East. In the 19th century, Belgian interests in Egypt became vast and important. Belgians are renowned for their dexterity in transportation especially in the field of railroads. Belgians could have easily capitalized on their good reputation in the Arab world but they chose not to.

The Belgian return to the Arab market was mainly driven by the first oil crisis during 1973-1974, when Belgian companies sought a share of a market which was capable of providing for their needs. More than 1,000 Belgian companies some with previous experience in the area, made a strong comeback. Of special importance in this regard are Tractebel, Petrofina, Distrigaz, ACEC and others. Other smaller companies managed their businesses on a day-to-day basis and were not seeking long-term relations.

At a time when most Arabs view Belgians positively, especially in the realm of business, Belgian companies, on the other hand, followed a policy in its dealings with Arabs, based on the belief that 'desert Arabs lack knowledge in the business world' and can be easily conned. This was an oversight of rich Arabs who are well experienced, informed and astute in their financial matters. As a result of this attitude, Belgians lost many lucrative business deals. Other companies showed a high level of efficiency and as a result merited appreciation. Another obstacle confronting Belgian companies is the low remuneration they receive for their exports. Belgians, due to their meager resources compared to their larger next-door neighbor France, are unable to compete in this respect. Moreover, internal strife between the Walloons and Flemish constrained their efforts. Regional allegiance has been given priority over national interests.

### **Arab Laborers in Belgium<sup>15</sup>**

Arabs of all nationalities do not exceed 150,000 in Belgium, or around 1.5% of the total population which is still far below the threshold politicians often say is 'permissible'. Bewildering to Belgians is the fact that most Arabs, especially Moroccans, are centered in Brussels (or some parts thereof), which makes their presence conspicuous. Another complication arises from the observation that Arab immigrants still cleave to their old social norms and traditions and outwardly refuse to assimilate into their host society.

Throughout history, immigrants, irrespective of their nationalities, including the Poles, Italians, Portuguese, Spanish and Turks, often wall themselves off from the rest of society and resist smooth assimilation. In the past, the Jews, Poles, Portuguese and Italians were barely accepted by society and were often singled out to feed racist behavior. Today, Arabs and Muslims are often targets for Belgians to vent their racist feelings. In the past, Italians were often dubbed as rude, devious and lethargic. In recent years, these attributes became identifiable with Moroccans. The Belgium public is ignorant of the factors that lead people to cohere to one place or the underlying reasons for resurgence of Islamic militancy amidst Arabs.

There are some preliminary facts about immigration that need to be highlighted:

- No state-sponsored consultative efforts are available to help smooth the assimilation of immigrants into society. This is nowhere more evident than in the fields of education, housing and vocational training. The conviction 'either they live our way or leave' made assimilation all the more difficult. Nevertheless the recent election of an Islamic board is of vital importance in this regard.
- The second generation of Arab immigrants is at a crossroad. Immigrants are bewildered as they are faced by two totally disparate cultures: conservative at home and liberal outside. This conflict is destined to end with the prevalence of the

second. The second and third generations of Arab immigrants will definitely melt into the dominant western culture as a similar fate for other minorities before them. This assimilation will unquestionably take its toll.

The bulk of Arab immigrants in Belgium are Sunni Muslims, who practice their religious rituals either in mosques or at their homes. The majority of them steer clear of fundamentalism and work hard to earn a decent living. Something ascertained by polls is that the second generation is less attached to religion and the third will be detached even further, compared to their forefathers.

On a different vein, Islamic militancy is rapidly gaining ground among a minority of Muslims in some major European cities. This is a world phenomenon and is not necessarily confined to Muslim communities in Europe; it is a manifestation of abandonment and disorientation rather than religious fervor. The surge of religious feeling constitutes a cause of concern for secular Europe. To combat Islamic resurgence by violence, such as the case of Muslim women's veils, is often counterproductive and will only aggravate relations among different segments of the population. A better approach would be to stress the values of forgiveness and diversity in a democratic multicultural system.

What distinguishes current Arab immigration from the Italian immigration in the past few decades is the fact that Arabs are Muslims. They are viewed by many not as being solely an economic category but also as culturally and religiously different. They are not viewed as unskilled and abused laborers but as 'different'. As Ellen Torren succinctly says: 'Judged by their economic status, immigrants are placed at the bottom of the social ladder so that now they are totally out of the picture.' This demeaning view entails great risks: such as the emergence of residential ghettos and open racism. The press helps in exacerbating this trend by accentuating the role of loud groups despite their insignificance, and its biased coverage of some problems only helps to accelerate the downward trend to make assimilation even more difficult.

We must accept the fact that 95% of all Moroccans born in Belgium (to Moroccan parents) do not go back to live in Morocco; they harbor only nostalgic feelings for their original country. Once in Morocco, however, they cherish to return to their 'homes' in Belgium.

## **The Palestinian Community in Belgium**

### **Historical Background**

The first wave of Palestinian migration took place in the early 1960s when approximately 30 Palestinians arrived in Belgium on their way to Germany. The majority of this group decided to settle in Belgium, some in the southern

part of the country, such as Luxembourg, while others moved to other cities such as Liège, Leuven and Brussels.

A second wave of migration consisted of Palestinian students who arrived to pursue academic studies in Belgium and particularly at the University of Liège. This wave of young male students arrived in the late 1960's and later in the period 1970-71 after the September confrontations which took place in Jordan. Many of these students were Jordanians who came from the city of Irbid, or other places, but they were treated as Palestinians. Others arrived from Algeria and other Arab countries. The majority, however, returned to Jordan or left for other western countries upon graduation. Those who remained married Belgian women and settled in Belgium. This group of students included some Palestinians who would later play a key role in Palestinian affairs in Europe and elsewhere, such as Naim Khader (and his brother Bishara who is still residing in Belgium), the brothers Afif and Hannan Safieh and others who no longer reside in Belgium.

From this group, the second and third generations are fully naturalized Belgians and many of them do not speak Arabic or have any direct involvement in Palestinian issues or activities.

The third wave of Palestinian migration to Belgium consisted of Palestinian refugees from Lebanon and Syria. Some arrived during the years of the civil war in Lebanon and many more arrived in 1982, after the Israeli invasion. The majority stayed in Belgium temporarily and later left for Sweden.

A fourth wave arrived after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the expulsion of the Palestinians. From this group, only few remained in Belgium while the majority left for the U.S. and Canada.

The fifth wave can be identified as occurring around the time of the Oslo process (1993 and after). Many arrived from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip after the emergence of the Palestinian Authority. Others arrived from Lebanon and Syria. This latest group consisted mainly of Palestinians who demanded political asylum upon arrival in Belgium and many were later recognized as political refugees; some were later naturalized as Belgian citizens.

Those who arrived from the occupied territories in the West Bank and Gaza which came under the rule of the Palestinian Authority (PA) after 1994 claiming they were 'persecuted by PA security', because during the years 1994-1999, Belgian authorities stopped recognizing the Israeli occupation and intimidation as valid legal arguments for asylum, due to the false belief then in Europe that the Israeli occupation had ended after 1994.

Among these political refugee candidates, some were granted Belgian residencies while others were denied them. Many who later became Belgian citizens did so after marrying local Belgian women (mostly Moroccan women with Belgian men).

The official UN title for this group is 'economic migrants' which I've used here instead of 'refugees'.

In fact, many Palestinians who arrived in Belgium in the past decade particularly from Gaza, are indeed 'economic migrants', who arrived in Europe in search of jobs and a better future and are not political refugees in the conventional sense.

Since the outbreak of the second *Intifada*, another wave of Palestinian refugees has arrived, mainly from the Gaza Strip. Estimates of 40 families (husband and wife plus an average of 3-4 children) now reside in and around the capital Brussels, or in other locations in Flanders, as candidate-refugees asylum seekers. In their request for political asylum, they either claim being 'wanted' by the Israeli army, or that their life has been threatened by PA security or by Palestinian Islamic groups.

Most Palestinians from Gaza currently residing in Belgium, awaiting decisions regarding their asylum applications, are in fact considered economic migrants

### **The Palestinian Community in Belgium**

Unlike the situation in other European countries where full-blown Palestinian communities, possessing lists of names and addresses, organized activities and even presidents or local leaders exist, it is hard to claim that such a community exists in Belgium. Several Palestinians flaunt the claim to be the 'president' or the 'coordinator' of such a community, but so far there are no real signs or solid proof that such a community exists.

After several attempts and meetings organized during the summer of 2003 and in 2004, some enthusiastic Palestinians from Brussels and elsewhere have gathered, expressing their will and readiness to revive the Palestinian community.

Based on the PII's initiative launched in Europe in 2003, the objective was to establish a database of all members of the Palestinian community in Belgium with their names, addresses, professional and academic data, etc. Unfortunately, this initiative faced several obstacles such as suspicions, internal conflict, political preferences and other reasons.

So far, we have managed to establish a list of 140 names, though it needs further updating. The only way to conduct further field research is the traditional way of calling people by phone or, for an effective outcome organizing further meetings at several locations in Belgium where major concentrations of Palestinians reside. This research, however, needs time, patience and financial resources.

After no less than 13 meetings in Brussels during the period between July 2003 and November 2004, the author of this report could only conclude that the probability of ever getting full and accurate data of the current circumstances is almost non-existent. Several Palestinians who do possess credible information and personal details about Palestinian individuals and families residing in Belgium are reluctant to cooperate, hiding behind the

'privacy' argument and the fact that they do not know whether these individuals wish to be identified for personal or political reasons.

### **Economic and Professional Status of the Palestinian Community**

So far, from the primary research conducted in 2004, we can conclude that the Palestinian community in Belgium does not consist of many prominent figures such as academics (lawyers, physicians, etc.) or independent professionals, businessmen or capitalists. Several businessmen are marginal figures, usually working with Lebanese criminals and mafia members in the business of stealing cars and drug trafficking.

One businessman owns, in partnership with a Lebanese businessman, a shipping company and an import-export business, but those who know his name and other details, refuse to provide such information. There are two full time Palestinian professors at Belgian universities: Bishara Khader at the Université Catholique de Louvain (Francophone), and John Nawas at the Catholic University of Leuven (Flemish university).

Some second and third generation Palestinians work as parliamentary assistants to ministers, local political parties, members of parliament or senators. A Palestinian woman works in the Belgian diplomatic corps (no details are available).

The second in rank in the representation office of the Arab League in Brussels is a Palestinian, Mr. Ghaleb Saad, who arrived in Belgium in 2003 to work for 4-5 years.

No Palestinian is known in a top medical or scientific position (unlike the hundreds of physicians and pharmacists in Germany for example). We know of one physician residing in Brussels, Dr. Amir Mu'alleem, from Nazareth.

Furthermore, there are about 30 master's and doctoral researchers, the majority of whom are conducting research in computer science, engineering health science, etc. Two Palestinians who have returned to work at Birzeit University, recently defended their doctoral theses in law: Samer Fares from Nablus and Feras Melhem from Halhoul. These students and graduates however, cannot be counted as part of the community because they all return to Palestine upon graduation.

Other professions known so far are:

#### **Lawyers**

There are two Palestinian female lawyers in Belgium; one is Maha Najjar, the author of this report, from 1948 Palestine. No details are available at the moment about the other.

#### **Artists**

These are film-director Michel Khleifi, from Nazareth, calligrapher and gallery owner Michel Najjar from Acre. One Palestinian female residing in Leuven is an architect who is currently writing a doctoral dissertation about Palestinian cultural heritage.

There are also some restaurant owners or kitchen workers, blue collar workers in the construction sector, garage owners or mechanics who are primarily from Gaza, taxi drivers and barbers. Many of the Palestinians of the latest wave of migration are unemployed and receive aid from the Belgian government.

Unlike many Moroccan or Turkish migrants of second or third generations involved in local and national politics as regional or local council members, no data is available concerning Palestinians in such political positions.

Language remains the main obstacle in the integration of new Palestinian migrants into Belgian society. The knowledge of French or Flemish depending on the region of residency, is a necessity for integration and employment.

### **Cultural Activity**

From time to time, some cultural events are organized, mainly by local Belgian NGOs in Wallonia and Flanders, as well as in Brussels. Existing Palestinian groups and unions often join in these activities and register their names as co-organizers. This helps mobilize people to attend such activities. Most activities in past years aimed to express solidarity with, and support for the Palestinian people under occupation. Solidarity during the past three years has concentrated on the issue of the Apartheid Wall and the campaign to boycott Israeli products. Several guest speakers have been invited in past years to lecture on subjects related to the Palestinian quest.

A worrying trend (in the eyes of Belgian state security) are the many activities organized by Moroccans and other Islamists in support of Palestine. In these activities, no Palestinians are ever present (neither as speakers nor as participants) and the discourse followed during such meetings is not tolerated by Belgian security authorities. The main problem in this context is that there is no organized Palestinian presence in Belgium to counter-balance such activities.

Mr. Fathi Al-Mohor, from the Palestine Liberation Organization office in Brussels, also spoke of the participation in activities on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and Land Day, and the establishment of a cultural committee for the Palestinian Committee in Brussels in the 1980's, with the aim of organizing cultural events, teaching Arabic to Arab youths and contacting the media to explain Palestinian issues however, this committee did not materialize. Although all these activities exist indeed, the organization and the mobilization are exclusively in the hands of local Belgian NGOs and volunteers.

Mr. Ahmad Al-Safi (Abu Khadr), who has resided in Belgium since the late 1960s, also established a cultural organization which means to bring Arab migrants together and offer social and cultural events. Most of these who attend these activities are Moroccans. A few years ago, he organized a night of poetry where the guest poet was the well known poet Samih Al-Qasem.

### **Palestinian Students in Belgium**

The number of Palestinian students, who arrived in 1997-1998 and are residing in Belgium as individuals or together with their families, is around 30-40. During the academic year 2004-2005, an estimated 40 Palestinians were registered in Belgian universities as master's or doctoral students and in the following year, 30 doctoral students and 10-14 master's students were registered.

In the mid-1990s, both the Belgian federal government and the regional governments in Wallonia and Flanders placed Palestine on their list of preferential partners in educational and scientific exchange. This step resulted in granting scholarships for master's and doctoral studies to many Palestinian students from the PA-administered territories. In the period 2001-2004, about 20 of these students graduated and returned to their alma maters in the West Bank and Gaza.

Since the outbreak of the second *Intifada*, however, Belgian authorities decided to halt granting scholarships to Palestinian researchers. Some Palestinian students managed to enroll in a master's degree programs at their own expense, or partially financed by their alma maters in Palestine, and a number of them have succeeded in gaining doctoral scholarships based on their outstanding research capabilities.

According to Safi, about 30-40 students, of the second and third Palestinian generations born in Belgium, are currently attending Belgian universities. No further information is available concerning their fields of study.

### **General Union for Palestinian Students (GUPS)**

The General Union of Palestinian Students in Belgium (GUPS) was established in the late 1960s, headed by Afif Safieh between 1969-71. It was re-activated in 1980. In the 1980s and 1990s, however, it was non-active but again was revived in 1999, due to the large presence of Palestinian students. The first elections were held in 1999 and were attended by about 40 participants.

Ever since, GUPS continued to conduct activities and events despite the lack of funding. In 2003, GUPS was officially recognized by the Catholic University of Leuven as one of the official foreign student groups, which meant that GUPS could use meeting facilities free of charge. This led to organizing several cultural and political activities and lectures in support of the



Palestinian people, like celebrating Palestine Day at the end of March 2004 which turned into an annual tradition.

The current president of GUPS, who was elected in January 2005, is Mu'att Sabha, a doctoral student of computer science at the Catholic University of Leuven (KULeuven). In February 2006, a new committee was formed and Dr Halima Sabbah, a specialist in nutrition, who comes from Maysloon (near Jenin) was elected as the new president of GUPS.

## **Belgian Solidarity with the Palestinian Cause**

### **The Official Belgian Political Scene**

Solidarity with Palestine and the Palestinian people has for long been a delicate matter in Belgian politics, handled with little media attention, or even none at all, due to the very strong influence of the Zionist lobby. Only after the beginning of the Oslo process and the decisions made by the European Union to support the peace initiative, did Belgium start to give more attention to this issue.

Unlike the government, however, several Belgian NGOs have been active in matters relating to solidarity with the Palestinian cause. Most of these NGOs receive their subsidies and budgets from the federal government, but since the de-federalization of foreign policy, regional governments started to establish their own policies and agendas, including policies vis-à-vis the Middle East and the Palestinian question.

### **Belgian Organizations Supporting the Palestinian Cause**

Some Belgian NGO's were founded for the sole purpose of extending aid to the Palestinians while others were founded to give support and assistance to Third World problems in general with some activities to promote support for Palestine.

The following is a brief description about the two groups of NGO's that support the strife of the Palestinian people:

#### **Belgian NGOs**

- The European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ECCP)<sup>16</sup>  
Chairman: Pierre Galand (elected to the Belgian Senate in June 2003)  
Secretary General: Dominique Weerts, dominique.weerts@cncd.be  
9 Quai du Commerce, 1000 Brussels,  
Tel: +32 (0)2 233 07 56 Fax: +32 (0)2 250 12 63  
E-mail: adp.eccp@euronet.be  
Website: [www.association-belgo-palastinienne.be](http://www.association-belgo-palastinienne.be)

Flanders (Dutch-speaking Belgium) The following organizations are active supporters of Palestine:

- The Actieplatform Palestina (APP)<sup>17</sup> (Action Platform Palestine)  
This is an umbrella organization that unites developmental NGOs, peace groups and solidarity committees. The members of APP are: Vlaams **PalestinaKomitee** (VPK) en Vrede, CODIP, Broederlijk Delen, FOS- Socialistische Solidariteit, Geneeskunde voor de Derde Wereld, 11.11.11 Koepel van de Vlaams Noord-Zuidbeweging Oxfam- Solidariteit, Oxfam-Wereldwinkels, Pax Christi Vlaanderen, Socialisme zonder Grenzen,.

The APP is mainly active in solidarity campaigns, info evenings and lectures in different locations in Flanders, solidarity missions to Palestine. APP also partially finances some Palestinian partner-NGOs. Several times per year, APP finances the travel expenses of Palestinian speakers.

President: Annuschka Vandewalle c/o FOS,

Grasmarkt 105 Bus 46, 1000 Brussels

Tel: +32 (0)2 552 03 15, Fax: +32 (02) 552 02 96

annushka.vandewalle@fos-socsol.be , www.11.be/palestina

The following organizations are members of APP:

1. Vlaams Palestina komitee<sup>18</sup> (VPK) - (Flemish Palestine Committee) Publishes a quarterly, called Sumud (in Dutch) together with the Dutch Palestine Committee. Interim President: Ludo De Brabander  
Belgian Solidarity with the Palestinian Cause  
Coordinator: Myriam Vanbelle, mobile: 0497 435713  
60, rue des Quatre Vents, 1080 Brussels  
Tel: +32 (0)2 501 67 00, Fax: +32 (0)2 514 28 13  
mirjam.vanbelle@oxfamsol.be ,  
www.vlaamspalestinakomitee.be
2. CODIP, Centrum voor Ontwikkeling, Documentatie en Informatie Palestijnen<sup>19</sup> (Centre for Development, Documentation and Information on Palestine). Responsible person is Myriam Vandecan and her Palestinian husband Numan Othman. The center mainly gathers information about breaches of human rights. It has limited resources.  
Ectorsstraat 19 , 3400 Landen  
Tel. and Fax: 011 88 15 52  
codip@skynet.be , www.codip.be
3. Broederlijk Delen<sup>20</sup> (Fraternal Sharing)  
Huidevetterstraat 165, 1000 Brussels  
Tel: +32 (0)2 502 57 00, Fax: +32 (0)2 502 81 01  
info@broederlijkdelen.be
4. FOS – Socialistische Solidariteit<sup>21</sup>

The SP.A., the Flemish Socialist Party has a special department and fund for 'cooperation development' (FOS). Coordinator for the Palestine file is Eric Willemaers,  
Tel: +32 (0)2 552 03 06  
or: Sabine Craenen  
Grasmarkt 105 B46,1000 Brussel  
Tel: +32 (0)2 552 03 00, Fax: +32 (0)2 552 02 96  
info@fos-socsol.be, [http://www.fos-socsol.be/eng/start\\_eng.htm](http://www.fos-socsol.be/eng/start_eng.htm)  
[http://www.fos-socsol.be/nl/start\\_nl.htm](http://www.fos-socsol.be/nl/start_nl.htm) (only in Dutch)

5. Geneeskunde voor de Derde Wereld
6. 11.11.11 – Koepel van de Vlaams Noord-Zuidbeweging<sup>22</sup>  
Umbrella organization of Flemish NGOs of the North-South movement, 11.11.11 is active on Palestinian issues only within the frame of APP (Action Platform Palestine)  
Secretary General: Jozef De Witte  
Vlasfabriekstraat 11,1060 Brussels  
Tel: +32 (0)2 536 11 11,Fax: +32 (0)2 536 19 10  
Info@11.be, [www.11.be](http://www.11.be)
7. Oxfam - Solidariteit (Oxfam / Oxfam Solidarity)  
The Belgian branch of Oxfam is active at the level of solidarity campaigns, such as the campaign to boycott Israeli products in Belgian supermarkets, support for Palestinian partner-NGOs (including the promotion of Palestinian products in Oxfam shops), organizes observation missions to Palestine. Most actions are now concentrated under the APP umbrella (supra).
8. Oxfam - Wereldwinkels (Oxfam World Shops)<sup>23</sup>  
Peter Cristiaensen (campaigns responsible) , Elke Vanlerberghe (partners in Palestine)  
Ververijstraat 17, 9000 Gent  
Tel: +32 (0)9 218 88 99, Fax: +32 (0)9 218 88 77  
[peter.cristiaensen@oww.be](mailto:peter.cristiaensen@oww.be), [elke.vanlerberghe@oww.be](mailto:elke.vanlerberghe@oww.be),  
[www.oww.be](http://www.oww.be)
9. Pax Christi Vlaanderen The Flemish chapter of PX<sup>24</sup>  
This is active on Palestinian issues and has a special coordinator for the Middle East and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.  
Middle East Desk Officer: Brigitte Herremans (who is also ME coordinator for Broederlijk Delen)  
Tel: +32 (0)2 213 04 06, [brigitte.herremans@broederlijkdelen.be](mailto:brigitte.herremans@broederlijkdelen.be)  
Italiëlei 98A, 2000 Antwerpen  
Tel: +32 (0)3 225 10 00, Fax: +32 (0)3 225 07 99  
e-mail: [paxchristi@paxchristi.be](mailto:paxchristi@paxchristi.be)
10. Socialisme zonder Grenzen

Antwerps Platform Voor Een Rechtvaardige vrede In Palestina: (Antwerp Platform for a Just Peace in Palestine)<sup>25</sup>  
Organizes info evenings and lectures, manifestations and other activities. [www.palestinaplatform.be](http://www.palestinaplatform.be)

- Sabra-Shatila Belgium<sup>26</sup>

This was founded 2001. Ectorsstraat 19, B-3400 Landen (see: CODIP) Contacts: Carlo Var Grootel, Guido Van Ham, and Myriam Vandecan info@sabra-shatila.be or sabra-shatila@skynet.be  
[www.sabra-shatila.be](http://www.sabra-shatila.be)

Note: The original Sabra-Shatila committee was 'taken-over' by a Lebanese-Belgian activist claiming to defend the rights of the Palestinians (See further: AEL, Arab European League).

- □ ● Vlaams Internationaal Centrum, VIC<sup>27</sup> (Flemish International Centre)

Tom Broeks  
Laanburgstraat 11, 1000 Brussels  
Tel: +32 (0)2 203 42 40, Fax: +32 (0)2 203 37 76  
tom.broeks@vicngo.be, [www.vicngo.be](http://www.vicngo.be)  
Vrede Vzw (Peace)<sup>28</sup>  
Ludo De Brabander  
Galgenberg 29, 9000 Gent  
Tel: +32 (0)9 233 46 88, Fax: +32 (0)9 233 56 78  
ludo@vrede.be, [www.vrede.be](http://www.vrede.be)

#### Wallonia and Brussels<sup>28</sup> (Francophone Belgium)

1. ABP Association Belgo-Palestinienne-Fondation Naim khader (Belgian Palestine Association – Naim Khader Foundation)<sup>29</sup>  
President: Pierre Galand.  
Coordinator: Nadia Farkh  
9 quai du Commerce, 1000 Brussels  
Tel: +32 (0)2 223 07 56, Fax: +32 (0)2 250 12 63  
abp.eccp@skynet.be, [ww.association-belgo-palestinienne.be](http://ww.association-belgo-palestinienne.be)
2. Magazins du Monde Oxfam (World Shops Oxfam) <sup>30</sup>  
Secretary General: Denis Lambert  
Rue E. Michiels 7a, 1180 Brussels  
Tel: +32 (0)2 332 01 10, Fax: +32 (0)2 332 18 88  
mdm.oxfam@mdmoxfam.be
3. Médecine pour le Tiers Monde, MTM<sup>31</sup> (Medicine for the Third World)  
Léa Matty  
Rue des Casernes 68, 1000 Brussels  
Tel: +32 (0)2 504 01 47, Fax: +32 (0)2 513 98 31

g3w@ngonet.be

4. Solidarité Socialiste (Socialist Solidarity)<sup>32</sup>  
Gladys Cifuentes  
Boulevard de l'Empereur, 15, 1000 Brussels  
Tel: +32 (0)2 505 40 78, Fax: +32 (0)2 512 88 15  
gladyscifuentes.fcd@euronet.be
5. Service Civil International, SCI<sup>33</sup> (International Civil Service)  
Rue Van Elewijck 35, 1050 Brussels  
Tel: +32 (0)2 649 07 38, Fax: +32 (0)2 646 87 92  
sci@scibelgium.be
6. Socialisme Sans Frontières, SSF<sup>34</sup> (Socialism without borders)  
Rue Plantin 29, 1070 Brussels  
Tel: +32 (0)2 523 40 23, Fax: +32 (0)2 522 61 27  
plantin@skynet.be
7. Solidarité Mondiale (World Solidarity)<sup>35</sup>  
Secretary general: Philippe Sterckx  
Chaussée de Haecht 579 Boîte 50, 1031 Brussels  
Tel: +32 (0)2 246 38 81, Fax: +32 (0)2 246 38 85  
solidarite.mondiale@solmond.be
8. Union des Femmes Palestiniennes en Belgique (Union of Palestinian Women in Belgium). <sup>36</sup>  
President: Renée Mousset-Basha (wife of one of the 2 Basha brothers who work at the PLO office in Brussels)  
Rue Taque 142, 4101 Jemeppe  
Fax: 04231 31 97  
contact: Soubhieh Isa, mobile: 0497 700934,  
sobeie\_isa@hotmail.com
9. Rencontrer pour la Palestine (Encounters for Palestine) Liège <sup>37</sup>  
President: Hamdan al-Damiri, mobile: 0496 230242
10. Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC)  
Samir El-Asi (now residing in Palestine)
11. Solidaires du Peuple Palestinien (Solidarity with the Palestinian People)
12. Justice et Paix pour le Peuple Palestinien asbl  
A non-profit organization. Objectives and activities not clear.
13. Al-Aqsa Foundation (Belgium branch office)<sup>38</sup>  
Al-Aqsa (ASBL) BD Leopold II 71, 1080
14. Union des Progressistes Juifs de Belgique<sup>39</sup>  
Rue de la Victoire 61, 1060 Bruxelles.

Tel: +32 (0)2 537 82 45

Union of Progressive Jews of Belgium: mostly anti-Zionist.  
Some of its active members participate frequently in Palestinian solidarity activities and demonstration, and have outspoken views against Israeli policies and practices.

15. Comité Belgo-Arabe d'Aide Au Peuple Palestinien (Belgian-Arab Committee for Aid to the Palestinian People). NON-ACTIVE!

President: Christian Lesenfants

Since the death of the above mentioned founder and president some years ago, this committee is no longer active.

## Summary

In 1968, the Belgian Government acknowledged Islam as an official religion in the country, the first European country to do so. In sheer numbers, Muslims in Belgium outnumber both Jewish and Protestant denominations. In 1975, the Belgian government approved the inclusion of Islamic studies in the school syllabus for Muslim students under the supervision of the Islamic Cultural Center. More than 700 Muslims teach Islam in a number of elementary and secondary schools. Moreover, Belgium is home to more than 290 mosques.

Muslims in Belgium number around 450,000 and are considered to be the most active in Europe. Their composition and origins are as follows: 250,000 hail from Morocco; 130,000 from Turkey; and 30,000 from Albania. The rest are of Palestinians, Algerians, Tunisians, Bosnians, Libyans and Senegalese.

Information about Islamic civilization or the Arab World is nearly nonexistent in the Belgian syllabus. Arab contributions to the development of sciences during the 8th and 14th centuries, the rise of the Ottoman Empire during the 19th and 20th centuries and the Arab awakening are subjects that are hardly touched upon. While history books in Belgium mention the Crusades, they do not mention Napoleon's campaign against Egypt, the construction of the Suez Canal, the colonization of Algiers or the Palestinians' resistance to the Zionist occupation of Palestine in 1948. Little reference is given to the current Arab West relations.

Belgian universities are normally more open towards Africa due to the European colonial history on this continent. Arab language and literature were taught at the universities of Liege, Brussels, Ghent, Mons and the Catholic University of Leuven. The teaching of the Arabic language at Mons is relatively new and is connected with the teaching of spontaneous translation. Other universities teach archeology of the Arab world especially Egyptology. Belgium has some of the world's renowned archeologists who have actively participated in various excavations in Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Palestine.

The first wave of Palestinian migration took place in the early 1960s when approximately 30 Palestinians arrived in Belgium on their way to Germany. The majority of this group decided to settle in Belgium, some in the southern

part of the country, such as Luxembourg, while others moved to live in other cities such as Liège, Leuven and Brussels.

A second wave of migration consisted of Palestinian students who arrived to pursue their academic studies in Belgium, particularly at the University of Liège. This wave of young male students arrived in the late 1960's and later in the period 1970-71 after the September confrontations that took place in Jordan. Many of these students were Jordanians who came from the city of Irbid, or other places, but they were treated as Palestinians. Others arrived from Algeria and other Arab countries. The majority, however, returned to Jordan or left for other western countries after graduation. Those who remained married Belgian women and settled in Belgium. This group of students included some Palestinians who would later play a key role in Palestinian affairs in Europe and elsewhere, such as Naim Khader (and his brother Bishara who still resides in Belgium), the brothers Afif and Hanna Safieh and others who no longer reside in Belgium. From this group, the second and third generations are fully naturalized Belgians and many of them do not speak Arabic or have any direct involvement in Palestinian issues or activities.

The third wave of Palestinian migration to Belgium consisted of Palestinian refugees from Lebanon and Syria. Some arrived during the years of the civil war in Lebanon and many more arrived in 1982 after the Israeli invasion. The majority stayed in Belgium temporarily and many later left for Sweden.

A fourth wave arrived after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the expulsion of the Palestinians. From this group, only few remained in Belgium while the majority left for the U.S. and Canada.

The fifth wave arrived around the period of the Oslo process (1993 and after). Many arrived from the West Bank and Gaza Strip after the proclamation of the Palestinian Authority. Others came from Lebanon and Syria. This latest group consisted mainly of Palestinians who demanded political asylum upon arrival in Belgium and many were later recognized as political refugees; some were later naturalized as Belgian citizens.

Those who arrived from the occupied territories in the West Bank and Gaza which came under the Palestinian Authority (PA) administration after 1994 claimed they were being persecuted by PA security, because during the years 1994-1999, the Belgian authorities stopped recognizing Israeli occupation and intimidation as valid legal arguments for asylum, due to the false belief then in Europe that the Israeli occupation had ended after 1994.

Among those political refugee candidates, some were granted Belgian residency while others were denied. Many of them who later became Belgian citizens did so after marrying local Belgian women (mostly Moroccan women with Belgian men).

In fact, many Palestinians who arrived in Belgium in the past decade particularly from Gaza, are indeed economic migrants, who arrived in Europe

in search of jobs and a better future and are not political refugees in the conventional sense.

Since the outbreak of the second *Intifada*, another wave of Palestinian refugees arrived, mainly from the Gaza Strip. Estimates of 40 families (husband and wife plus an average of 3-4 children) now reside in and around the capital Brussels, or in other locations in Flanders, as candidate refugees/asylum seekers. In their request for political asylum, they either claim being 'wanted' by the Israeli army, or that their lives are threatened by PA security or by Palestinian Islamic groups.

Most Palestinians from Gaza currently residing in Belgium, awaiting a decision regarding their asylum applications, are in fact considered economic migrants.

From time to time, some cultural events are organized, mainly by local Belgian NGOs in Wallonia and Flanders, as well as in Brussels. Existing Palestinian groups and unions often join in these activities and register their names as co-organizers. This helps mobilize people to attend such activities. Most activities in past years aimed at expressing solidarity with, and support for, the Palestinian people under occupation. Solidarity during the past three years has concentrated on the issue of the Apartheid Wall and the campaign to boycott Israeli products. Several guest speakers have been invited in past years to lecture on subjects related to the Palestinian quest.

## Conclusion

This preliminary study does not provide a holistic or complete image of the Palestinian community in Belgium. It is important, however, to direct attention to the existence of several individuals who try to organize or participate in political debates, cultural events and other activities. It is also desirable and more resourceful if the existing community leaders and members, even if not exceeding 1,000 members, would embrace all efforts under one efficient umbrella.

The existing local NGOs and volunteers organize many activities in solidarity with the Palestinian people and are always on the lookout for Palestinians willing to participate, speak or explain the Palestinian point of view to the Belgian public.

Unfortunately, communications between the PLO office and the rest of the community have been severed due not only to old conflicts and wounds, but also to the lack of personal competence and poor qualifications of the persons in question. It also seems that there is a lack of desire to revitalize intercommunication aiming at a new collective effort.

Finally, it is hoped that the PII is given the green light to further update and expand this preliminary survey. The objective of establishing an updated full scale database, as stipulated in PII basic documents, will have to be discussed.



## Endnotes

- 1 All PII rights are reserved. No quotation thereof is allowed without prior permission.
- 2 The only exception being the number of asylum seekers. In spite of this, these figures are not accurate because all applicants as asylum seekers are registered according to country of origin. Most Palestinians are registered as Syrians, Jordanians or Lebanese. Those hailing from the West Bank are ever registered as Israelis.
- 3 CIA-World Factbook.  
<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/be.html>
- 4 2005 figures from the same source.
- 5 Wikipedia – The Free Encyclopedia.  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vlaamse\\_Liberalen\\_en\\_Democraten](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vlaamse_Liberalen_en_Democraten)
- 6 Wikipedia – The Free Encyclopedia:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New-Flemish\\_Alliance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New-Flemish_Alliance)
- 7 Wikipedia – The Free Encyclopedia:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist\\_Party\\_%28francophone\\_Belgium%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_Party_%28francophone_Belgium%29)
- 8 [www.islamtoday.net](http://www.islamtoday.net)
- 9 [ww.muslim-lawyers.net/news/index.php3?aktion=show&number=267](http://ww.muslim-lawyers.net/news/index.php3?aktion=show&number=267)
- 10 [www.islamtoday.net](http://www.islamtoday.net)
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 <http://www.isesco.org.ma/pub/ARABIC/F>
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 The Committee's address: 9 Quai du Commerce, 1000 Brussels  
Tel: 02-2330756. Fax: 02-2501263  
email: [abp.eccp@euronet.be](mailto:abp.eccp@euronet.be) & [dominique.weerts@cncd.be](mailto:dominique.weerts@cncd.be)  
website: [www.association-belgo-palestinienne.be](http://www.association-belgo-palestinienne.be)
- 17 The address: c/o FOS, Grasmart 105 Bus 46, 1000 Brussels.  
Tel: 02-5520315. Fax: 02-5520296  
email: [annuschka.vandewalle@fos-socsol.be](mailto:annuschka.vandewalle@fos-socsol.be) website: [www.11.be/palestina](http://www.11.be/palestina)
- 18 The Committee's address: 60, rue des Quatre Vents, 1080 Brussels.  
Tel: 32 (0)2 501 67 00. Fax: 32 (0)2 514 28 13. email: [mirjam.vanbelle@oxfamsol.be](mailto:mirjam.vanbelle@oxfamsol.be) website: [www.vlaamspalestinakomitee.be](http://www.vlaamspalestinakomitee.be)  
mobile(Myriam): 0497 435713
- 19 The Center's address: Ectorsstraat 19, 3400 Landen.  
email: [codip@skynet.be](mailto:codip@skynet.be) website: [www.codip.be](http://www.codip.be).  
Tel & Fax: 011 88 15 52
- 20 Her address: Huidevetterstraat 165, 1000 Brussels.  
Tel: 02 5025700. Fax: 02 5028101. Email: [info@broederlijkdelen.be](mailto:info@broederlijkdelen.be)
- 21 The address: Grasmart 105 B46, 1000 Brussels.  
Tel: 02 5520306 & 02 5520300. Fax: 02 5520296 email: [info@fos-socsol.be](mailto:info@fos-socsol.be)
- 22 The address: Vlasfabriekstraat 11, 1060 Brussels. Tel: 02 5361111. Fax 02 5361910. email: [info@11.be](mailto:info@11.be) website: [www.11.be](http://www.11.be)
- 23 Her address: Ververijstraat 17, 9000 Gent.

Tel: 09 2188899. Fax: 09 2188877. emails: peter.cristiaensen@oww.be & elke.vanlerberghe@oww.be website: www.oww.be

24 The Organization's address: Tel: 02 2130406. email: brigitte.herremans@broederlijkdelen.be & paxchristi@paxchristi.be Address: Italiëlei 98A, 2000Antwerpen. Tel: 03 2551000. Fax: 03 2550799.

25 www.palestinaplatform.be

26 The contact the Committee: Email: info@sabra-shatila.be & sabra-shatila@skynet.be website:www.sabra-shatila.be

27 The Center's address: Tom Broeks, Laanburgstraat 11, 1000 Brussels. Tel: 02 2034240. Fax:022033776 email: tom.broeks@vicngo.be website: www.vicngo.be

28 The address: Ludo De Brabander, Galgenberg 29, 9000 Gent. Tel: +32 9 233 46 88. Fax:+3292335678. email: ludo@vrede.be website: www.vrede.be

29 The Institute's address: 9 Quai du Commerce, 1000 Brussels. Tel: +32 (0)2 2230756. Fax: +32 (0)2 2501263. email:abp.eccp@skynet.be website: www.association-belgo-palestinienne.be

30 The address: Rue E. Michiels 7a, 1180 Brussels.

Tel: 02 3320110. Fax: 02 3321888. email: mdm.oxfam@mdmoxfam.be

31 The Organization's address: Rue des Casernes 68, 1000 Brussels.

Tel: 02 5040147. Fax: 02 5139831. email:g3w@ngonet.be

32 The address: Boulevard de l'Empereur, 15, 1000 Brussels.

Tel: 32 (0)2 5054078. Fax: 32(0)25128815.

email: gladyscifuentes.fcd@euronet.be

33 The address: Rue Van Elewijck 35, 1050 Brussels.

Tel: 02 6490738. Fax: 02 6468792. email:sci@scibelgium.be

34 The address: Rue Plantin 29, 1070 Brussels.

Tel: 02 5234023. Fax: 02 5226127. email: plantin@skynet.be

35 The address: Chaussée de Haecht 579 Boîte 50, 1031 Brussels.

Tel: 02 246 38 81. Fax: 02 2463885. email:solidarite.mondiale@solmond.be

36 The address: Rue Taque 142, 4101 Jemeppe. Fax: 04 2313197.

contact Soubhieh Isa 0479700934, sobeie\_isa@hotmail.com

37 Its headquarters is in Liege and it can be reached on telephone number 0496230242

38 The Institute's address in Belgium:

Al-Aqsa (ASBL) BD Leopold II 71, 1080

39 The address: Rue de la Victoire 61, 1060 Bruxelles.