

However, reading the papers in this book show also the difficulties and hardships encountered by the first immigrants.

***Christian Palestinians in Palestine and  
the Palestinian Christians Diaspora in Latin America***

The study “Palestinian Christians: Facts, Figures and Trends - 2008” estimates the number of Palestinian Christians in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem at 51,710, which makes 1.37 percent of the Palestinian population.<sup>18</sup> The majority of Palestinian Christians live today outside of Palestine. This ongoing immigration of Palestinian Christians has very much influenced both the Churches and the society. In the book “Christian Presence in the Holy Land,” Fu’ad Farah states that the effect of this immigration varied from one Church to another. According to his data, the Armenian Orthodox Church was the one to suffer most from immigration, having lost almost 61 percent of its members, followed by the Assyrian Orthodox Church with almost 50 percent, the Arab Greek Orthodox Church with 32 percent, the Roman Catholic Church with 28 percent, the Greek Catholic with 15 percent, and the Protestant Churches with 8 percent.<sup>19</sup>

Family networks in the Diaspora have functioned as a generator for new migration among family members, a phenomena that can also be traced through researching the family names of Palestinian immigrants to Latin America, as Roberto Marín-Guzmán has shown.<sup>20</sup> Today many of these family names are no longer present in Palestine and can only be found in the Diaspora, as stated in the work of Dr. Musallam.

The future of the Christian Palestinian community is very much related to the issue of connecting to our faithful living in the Diaspora. Developing a sense of community and solidarity with our sisters and brothers who at a certain stage had to leave our homeland is essential for strengthening our understanding of who we are and who we want to be. Efforts are needed from the local churches and their CROs to link between all Palestinian Christians, those who still live in Palestine and those who are in the Diaspora.

It is our hope that this book is a first step for the dwindling Christian Palestinian community in Palestine to rediscover and reconnect with their sisters and brothers in the Diaspora.

**The Formative Stages of Palestinian Arab Immigration  
to Latin America and Immigrants’ Quest  
for Return and for Palestinian Citizenship  
in the Early 1920’s**

***Adnan A. Musallam***

***Early Immigration from the Ottoman State to the Americas***

The Mediterranean region witnessed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century waves of emigration from the Ottoman State. Nevertheless, emigration to the Americas was an inseparable part of international migration of human waves, which started between 1880 and 1920 from South and Central Europe and from the Ottoman Empire to the United States. Their number was estimated at 25,000,000: Italians, Greeks, Slavs, Jews, Ottomans, and others. The number of Arab Ottomans from Greater Syria (now Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Jordan) in this immigration was estimated to be 250,000 persons, not to mention the thousands of emigrants who ventured to Latin America.<sup>21</sup>

According to a report by the Ottoman Consul in the City of Buenos Aires in Argentina, 46,000 Ottoman immigrants arrived between 1911 and 1913. The Consul urged his government to put an end to this phenomenon.<sup>22</sup> The number of Ottoman immigrants to the Americas between 1860 and 1914 was estimated at 1,200,000 including 33,000 who came from Syria.<sup>23</sup>

The major factors that attracted immigrants to the Americas were economic. The tremendous industrialization which was taking place in the United States required manpower; this was guaranteed by the large number of immigrants. High wages and rumors that the American government was distributing agricultural land free of charge to anyone who migrated to the western parts of the United States (Homestead Act 1862) gave immigrants additional incentives.<sup>24</sup>

The Ottoman Foreign Ministry, furthermore, received many applications submitted by Brazilian landowner Paolo Duval from Sao Paulo asking for large numbers of Ottoman agricultural workers.<sup>25</sup> News about fortunes made by pioneers of emigration and checks sent to the mother country motivated others to follow suit. In 1914, emigrants from geographical Syria sent home remittances estimated at 8,000,000 dollars.<sup>26</sup>

It is worth mentioning that areas where early immigrants had settled became an attractive factor for other family members and relatives who subsequently immigrated, not for economic reasons but to join relatives. Between 1908 and 1909 family relations were the main reason for 95% of Syrian immigration to the United States.<sup>27</sup> This factor played a considerable role in the firm establishment and continuity of emigration that exists today.

### *Early Emigration from Ottoman Palestine*

Historically, Palestine was connected in all aspects of life with Ottoman Greater Syria since 1516. Artificial boundaries which now separate the Palestinian from the Syrian, the Syrian from the Lebanese, and the Jordanian from the Palestinian took shape in the wake of the French and British agreements as embodied in the Sykes-Picot Agreement (May 1916), the military occupation system, the Anglo-French Agreement (September 1918), the decisions of San Remo (April 1920), and the Cairo Conference (March 1921).<sup>28</sup>

Emigration from Palestine, thus, was an integral part of this movement from Ottoman Greater Syria. The fundamental motivating factor for emigration was the deteriorating economic and political condition in the Holy Land, which left its mark on all population sectors. Outside influences escalated with the opening up of Palestine and Syria to new Western influences and technological innovations. As a result of the Industrial Revolution in Europe and the accompanying colonial movements in the Arab World, the region entered the Western economic network. Thus, “it was useless for local hand-made products to compete with European mass produced goods, severely affecting the local economy and deepening the political and economic servitude to the European system.”<sup>29</sup>

Instability in the region, furthermore, played a significant role in escalating emigration. The years between 1792 and 1853 were characterized by feudal disorders, wars, economic paralysis, and demographic deterioration in the Ottoman Empire. Bribery, favoritism, and administrative corruption were widespread. Peasants who constituted the great majority of the population felt the pinch of taxes and levies. Thefts spread everywhere. The word “Khawa”, a levy imposed on the weak by the strong, became an integral part of people’s daily dictionary. In addition, the continual wars of the Ottoman State in the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century drained the number of youths as emigration became an exit and a means for youths to dodge the draft and escape armed conflicts including that of the First World War (1914 – 1918).<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the above-mentioned factors, we should mention that the existence of the Holy Places in Palestine, the importance of Jerusalem and Palestine in the international arena, the spread

of foreign religious institutions in the Holy Land, and the crowds of visitors and pilgrims that came to Palestine from all over the world (mixing with Christian Arab interpreters and sellers of memorial curios who knew many foreign languages) eventually led to an increase in the awareness in Europe and the New World of Palestinian Arabs. This increased their desire to see those countries and immigrate to them in order to exploit the available economic opportunities, as is the case with people all over the world.

Information available to us indicates that the emigration of the Palestinians started in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. However, the first death among the emigrants to Latin America, recorded in the registers of the Latin Parish priest’s office in Bethlehem, goes back to 7 September 1796. The deceased emigrant’s name was Andrea Francis Hanna Dawid from the Tarajmah Quarter in Bethlehem.<sup>31</sup> The question that arises: Was Dawid’s presence in Latin America simply an isolated phenomenon, or was it part of a wider Palestinian presence in those lands? What was the nature of Dawid’s journey? Are there any similar cases in the Parish’s office or other registers? This data must be scrutinized comprehensively. However, at least it confirms that the Palestinians were “years ahead of Arab immigrants to explore the wilds of America,” and that Palestinians preceded their Lebanese brethren in emigrating to the New World, although on a smaller scale, and did not settle down in the countries they went to as the Lebanese did. This was confirmed by the elder of the Arab Lebanese community in Brazil in the 1950s, Rizq Allah Haddad, as mentioned in the book, “Arab Speakers in South America.” According to him, two brothers from the family Zakhariya from the Tarajmah Quarter in Bethlehem were among the first Arabs who arrived in Brazil in 1874. They sold mother-of-pearl curios such as rosaries, crosses, and icons in the main jewelers’ street in Rio.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, international exhibitions held in the United States played a pioneering role in attracting Palestinian merchants from Bethlehem. Many of them came to visit the Philadelphia Exhibition of 1876, the Chicago Exhibition of 1893, and the St. Louis Exhibition of 1904, carrying with them Holy Land products such as mother-of-pearl, olive wood, and Nabi (Prophet) Moses stone, so as to exhibit and sell them to the faithful.

According to oral traditions, Bethlehemites like Geries Ibrahim Suleiman Mansoor Handal, Geries Anton Abul-‘Arraj, Hanna Khalil Morcos, and Mishel and Gabriel Dabdoub, and others attended these international exhibitions. The Handal brothers eventually settled down in New York while the Dabdoub brothers, who received a medal during the Chicago Exhibition, returned to their native town. It so happened that a Mexican merchant was impressed with the Bethlehem products in the Chicago International Exhibition that he and Hanna Khalil Morcos agreed that the latter would travel to Mexico with a number of Holy Land products. That is what Morcos did. He returned to Bethlehem, gathered various Bethlehem products, traveled to Mexico in 1895, and settled in that country. Others followed, such as Geries Anton Abul-‘Arraj, who went with his wife Sarah Dawid to the Republic of Guatemala after the termination of the 1893 International Exhibition. Having

made his fortune selling Holy Land products, he decided to stay in that country and eventually took up trade.<sup>33</sup>

As one Western observer wrote:  
*“Hundreds of them have emigrated, consigning themselves from Jaffa to a Marseilles steerages agent with no notion of their ultimate destination. They can be found peddling lace anywhere from Haiti to the Argentine. Out of an arm basket and a five-peso credit they create bank accounts and fine stores. They emigrate as peasants in a fez and skirt; ten years later they show up in Bethlehem in a hat and trousers, and their former neighbors... in fezzes and skirts... address them as effendi.”*<sup>34</sup>

The news of these pioneers, their newly found wealth, and the cheques they sent to their relatives to erect spacious homes like those of Jacir, Handal, and Hermas, to mention only a few, spread far and wide. This created jealousy in the hearts of others. Some Syrians and Lebanese followed the example of their Palestinian brethren in selling Holy Land curios until the number of professionals increased and rumors spread that these products were manufactured in Europe. Thereafter, Westerners abstained from buying curios. Inevitably Palestinian merchants had to turn elsewhere; settlement and free trade consequently began. Initially, roaming peddlers followed the example of their Lebanese and Syrian brethren and penetrated Central and South America. They chose Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, and Honduras. In time, Chile became a main center for immigrants from the sister towns of Bethlehem and Beit Jala. The first Palestinian immigrant to enter Chile was the late Jubra’il D’eiq from the Tarajmah Quarter in Bethlehem. That was in 1880. He was followed by the late Yusuf Jacir from Bethlehem and the late Yusuf Geries Salah from Jerusalem. The three of them worked together in commerce.<sup>35</sup> However, according to the Palestinian Ambassador to Chile, Dr. May Kaileh, “The first Palestinian registered in the official registries of Chile was in 1840 in the fifth region, i.e., in Vina del Mar.”<sup>36</sup> It appears that the history of Bethlehem and Palestinian emigration to Latin America needs to be reexamined in light of this new piece of information from Chile and from Bethlehem concerning Andrea Francis Hanna Dawid.

In the beginning, emigration was slow and temporary as the fundamental aim was making a fortune and returning home. However, between 1908 and 1918, coups, wars, and compulsory military service resulted in a notable rise in the number of emigrants. With the outbreak of the First World War, the prices of basic goods went up sharply resulting in many shortages. In 1915 and 1916, hundreds of thousands of people were on the verge of death and starvation due to the spread of the typhus epidemic. Collective fleeing from the draft became a familiar phenomenon. Thus, the slow and temporary emigration was transformed gradually into a dangerous social phenomenon in whose bitter reality Bethlehem and Palestine continue to experience.

*Emigration from Bethlehem and Palestine in the British Era, 1917-1948:  
Its Impact Locally and on the Diaspora*

Emigration continued throughout the British Mandate in light of the deterioration of the country’s political situation. Most emigrants made their way to Latin America. Large groups of emigrants followed each other, encouraged by relatives already living in Chile, Colombia, Peru, Honduras, and El Salvador. Very few emigrants arrived at the North American shores at this stage because American laws, enacted between 1917 and 1924, limited the immigration of non-Anglo-Saxons such as Italians, Slavs, Arabs, Asians, and Africans. They aimed at the preservation of the cultural and ethnic hegemony of the Anglo-Saxon whites. These same years witnessed the appearance of racist movements antagonistic to anyone who was Catholic, immigrant, foreigner, black, or Jew. One such movement was the Ku Klux Klan, which reached its climax in 1923 when its followers were estimated to be in the millions.<sup>37</sup>

Lack of official statistics makes it difficult to estimate the total number of Palestinian emigrants in this period, but the estimate of emigrants in 1936 was 40,000.<sup>38</sup> With the arrival of vast numbers of emigrants to main immigration centers in Latin America, certain streets in principal Latin American cities began to acquire Palestinian characteristics. At the same time the names of certain large families in Palestinian cities began to disappear gradually from local registers, resulting from collective emigration and family reunification in the Diaspora. Such was the case in Bethlehem with the following families (mentioned as samples only).<sup>39</sup>

Farahiyah Quarter	Anatra Quarter	Tarajmah Quarter	‘Najaj rah Quarter	Hreizat Quarter	Qawawsah Quarter
Jada’	Shahin	Kamandari	a1-‘Alul	Abu Jarur	Abu Nifhar
D’eis	Dhawabah	Abu Fheilah	Qarqur	Hreiziz	Sirriyeh
Barakah	Abu Gheith	Talamas	Hilwah	Abu Hermas	Abu Shunnar
Jidi	Silhi	Sam’an	al-Qabas	‘Afanah	Bsiseh
Bkhit	Wardah	Tarud	‘Duzman	Sahuriyah	Nquli
Dakkarat	Shamali	Dahburah	Za’nun	Dguban	
Miladeh		‘Abis	Abu Arab	Adawi	
Zaitun			al-Chat’ah	al-Tqu’i	
Dardahiyyah				al-Bahri	
Silsik				Hasluf	
Shhadeh				Sabbagh	
Abu Shaqrah					
Mua’allim					
Jacir					



Palestinian folk literature looked with much anger and disgust at the mass emigration of young people to the Americas:

*No America! May the father of your friends be cursed... You have taught young people to knock at your doors  
No America! May the father of your people be cursed... Your great wealth has incited young people (to leave their homes)*<sup>40</sup>

### ***The Question of the Return of the Immigrants from Latin America***

It is worth mentioning that a considerable number of immigrants in Latin America desired to return to their country, because they did not emigrate for the love of emigration but for the improvement of their economic conditions or in an attempt to flee the horrors of continual wars. After the end of the First World War, many decided to practice their natural right of return to their birthplace. The British authorities, however, closed the doors in their faces at a time when the doors of Palestine were wide open to Jewish immigrants. The Palestinian Citizenship Law was ratified in 1925 with the main aim of facilitating the granting of Palestinian citizenship to Jews coming to Palestine, according to Item 7 of the Mandate Charter.<sup>41</sup>

Lauren E. Banko points out the following:

*The process of ‘inventing’ Palestinian citizenship was unlike anything else Great-Britain had done in their colonial empire, especially because they had to take into account international treaties and regulations, Ottoman laws and the Balfour Declaration as it was included in the Mandate’s charter. While Palestinian nationality and citizenship laws were a product of the British Government’s legislative process, citizenship’s legal validity came from international law - the Treaty of Lausanne’s law of state succession and the Mandate itself as international document. The entire five-year process of inventing citizenship in the crucial early 1920’s created an enormous amount of questions the British dealt with over the status, sovereignty and civic rights of subjects as apposed to nationals or citizens in a mandated territory. British notions of citizenship were imported into Palestine after approval by His Majesty’s Government (HMG) in London.*<sup>42</sup>

The Covenant of the League of Nation’s Article 22, which clarified the mandate system, was vague about the citizenship of former Ottoman subjects.<sup>43</sup> Lauren E. Banko adds that article 7, which focuses on acquisition of nationality by Jewish immigrants, does not mention Arab inhabitants of Palestine.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, the British saw Arab inhabitants as Ottoman citizens during the

military and civil administrations during the period the Allies were at war with Turkey.<sup>45</sup> The international recognition of Palestinian nationality became operative in light of the peace treaty (Treaty of Lausanne) between Turkey and the Allies on 24 July 1923.<sup>46</sup> Concerning Palestinians residing abroad, Article 34 of the Treaty clearly mentions that these persons had two years to apply for the Palestinian nationality.<sup>47</sup>

Excerpts of immigrants’ quest for Palestinian citizenship and the many problems encountered in their host countries as a result of not having citizenship were reported, discussed, and documented in leading Palestinian newspapers, mainly Jaffa’s Filastin (Palestine) and Jerusalem’s al-Jami’ah al-‘Arabiyyah (The Arab Union) between 1926 and 1933.<sup>48</sup>

### ***The Committee for the Defense of Immigrants Rights to Palestinian Citizenship***

The notables of the Bethlehem region took up the case, under the leadership of Khalil ‘Issa Morcos from Bethlehem, ‘Atallah Hanna al-Najjar from Beit Jala, and ‘Issa al-Khury Basil Bandak from Bethlehem (owner of the newspaper “Sawt al-Sha‘b” and later Mayor of Bethlehem and founder of “The Committee for the Defense of Emigrants Rights to the Palestinian Citizenship” in 1927). The Committee led the campaign against the oppressive British policy that allowed the incoming alien Jewish immigrants to obtain citizenship under the easiest conditions, while placing numerous obstacles in the face of native-born Palestinians who wanted to return to their country. The Committee launched an appeal to the British people in the form of a booklet on the question of the emigrants and the obstacles created by the British authorities to prevent Palestinians abroad from obtaining Palestinian citizenship. ‘Issa al-Bandak, Mayor of Bethlehem (1934-1938), raised the question before “Lord Peel’s Royal Commission” that came to Palestine in 1936 to investigate disturbances and rebellion in the country, and to recommend for the partitioning of Palestine in 1937. The Royal Commission recommended in its report the facilitation of measures of return for those emigrants with genuine intentions who kept a continual personal contact with Palestine.<sup>49</sup>

The Defense Committee demanded in its campaign that all Palestinian immigrants residing abroad should be considered, at their request, Palestinian citizens, and that all Palestinian emigrants who have returned to Palestine or have temporarily stayed away should obtain their right to Palestinian citizenship as soon as they submit official applications to the relevant departments. The Defense Committee demanded that orders must be circulated to all British government representatives throughout the Palestinian Diaspora to defend and protect the interests of all Palestinian Arabs until the government acknowledged their right to Palestinian citizenship. “The government should consider these applications indicative of the feelings of Palestinian Arab public opinion in the country and aboard...”<sup>50</sup>

## *Problems Faced by Palestinian Immigrants*

Concerning Palestinian emigrants who left the country before 1920, Britain considered them Turks because they traveled with Ottoman passports during Ottoman Turkish rule. This British stance totally contradicted Item 34 of the Treaty of Lausanne which stipulated that citizenship must be given to those who were born in countries which were once parts of the Ottoman Empire within two years of the effective date of the Treaty - 6 August 1924 - but no later than 6 August 1926.<sup>51</sup> However, the Government of Palestine did not enact the Palestinian Citizenship Law and did not promulgate it in the official gazette until 16 September 1925. Thus, the government wasted more than half of the period as specified in the Treaty. In addition to this tragedy, the British Government failed to circulate the Law in the local papers, neither did the British representatives in the Americas circulate it in the press so that emigrants could be informed.<sup>52</sup>

The British Ambassador in the Mexican capital stated that the British Government “had not authorized him to spend three pounds to publish the mentioned Law. In October 1927, the British Mandatory Government issued a statement saying, “The Palestinian citizenship is given to the emigrants who left the country after 1920 or before this date, and returned to the country and resided six months in it.” As for the emigrants who had left the country before 1920 and did not return and constituted ninety per cent of all emigrants abroad, they were considered by the British to be Turks, completely ignoring the fact that they were not “Turks: by race, nationalism, language, or emotion.”<sup>53</sup> As a consequence of this British policy, only one hundred applications were approved of a total of 9,000 submitted by emigrants wanting to return to their mother country.<sup>54</sup>

The British Government, on its part, expressed its readiness to defend the interests of those who had acquired citizenship, but it refused to protect those who did not acquire it, that is, the overwhelming majority. It did not want to bear the responsibility of a great number whose sole aim was to benefit from British protection, though item 12 of the Mandate Charter stipulates that “the Mandated Power had the right, too, to extend the protection of its ambassadors and consuls to Palestinian subjects living abroad.”<sup>55</sup> When a delegation from the Palestinian community living in El Salvador met the British Consul and asked him to carry out this item, the Consul’s reply was: “The British State accepted the mandate over the land of Palestine only, and this mandate does not include the affairs of the Palestinians.”<sup>56</sup>

Palestinian emigrants deprived of their citizenship faced extremely difficult circumstances. For example, in July 1927 in El Salvador, the Government enacted a law forcing every merchant whose capital exceeded thirty pounds to register his name and produce his citizenship papers. If the merchant failed to observe this order, he would have his stores closed. When the Palestinians asked the British Consul to give them a citizenship certificate, he refused. When some Palestinians tried to

obtain the Salvadorian citizenship to protect their interests, the government refused on the basis that their need to acquire citizenship did not stem from their love and commitment, but from personal benefit only.<sup>57</sup>

The immigrants who did not carry Latin American citizenship faced other difficulties:

- They could not travel from one country to another to tend commercial interests.
- The American republics, in particular El Salvador and Guatemala, enacted laws to deport anyone who did not possess citizenship.
- Coups and rebellions frequently happened in the American republics. Normally foreigners took shelter with their consuls; but Palestinians came under the mercy of the strong and thus became victims of blackmail.
- When immigrants were unable to obtain their citizenship, they were inevitably compelled to acquire the citizenship of the country in which they were residing, thereby gradually becoming out of touch with their country and relatives and losing the incentive of returning to found industrial and commercial projects.<sup>58</sup>

## *Settling Down in Latin America: Stories of Success and Failures*

The Palestinian immigrants who did not acquire citizenship eventually settled in the Diaspora for good and played a pioneering role in the development of their new homes. Stories of the brilliant success of emigrants from Bethlehem and Beit Jala are numerous and documented. The following are examples: The Brothers Hunain and Nicola Jarur from the Hreizat Quarter in Bethlehem were extremely successful in the Chilean industries. This is evident in the economic projects they established, such as the Jarur Brothers’ Factories of cotton goods employing about 3,000 laborers in an area of 80,000 square meters. Other examples are the Sahuri Brothers from Bethlehem who have erected a modern industrial city for cotton goods with an area of 150,000 square meters; the factories of Sulaiman Zummar from Beit Jala; the factories of Hermas Brothers from Bethlehem, and the factories of Abu Sabal Brothers from Beit Jala and hundreds others, all in Chile.<sup>59</sup>

Few are the stories we hear about emigrants who followed the example of the late ‘Abdul Majid Shuman who traveled to the United States in 1911 carrying with him eight gold pounds. He returned home in 1929 to lay the foundation of the Arab Bank, which, since then, has become one of the greatest banking institutions in the Arab World.<sup>60</sup>

Little do we hear about such men as Badr and Ibrahim ‘Abdullah al-A’ma (or Lama) who returned from Chile in 1927, armed with a knowledge of the art of photography and cinema. Their aim was to establish a cinema company in Palestine. However, a stop in Alexandria, Egypt, convinced

them that opportunities in Egypt were better than in Palestine. They settled down and founded the Condor Cinema Film Company, which presented in May 1927, “A Kiss in the Desert”, the first silent Arabic film in the history of Egyptian cinema. In the thirties and forties, Lama Studios became one of the major cinema companies in Egypt.<sup>61</sup>

Though success stories of immigrants are documented and available, thousands of stories of failures are not, such as the stories of those who could not return home despite their deep love, as they did not possess even the fare to return to their homeland. They preferred the hardships of life and a slow death in the Diaspora, as dignity would not allow them to return as failures and to become a joke to their fellow Palestinians back home.

**Political Participation and Economic Success  
of the Palestinians of Christian Origin  
in Central America**

*Roberto Marín-Guzmán*

*Introduction*

At the end of the nineteenth and early in the twentieth century, many Arabs emigrated to different countries in the world. The motives for these movements were diverse, ranging from economic, political, religious, to social reasons. To emigrate was undoubtedly a brave decision full of challenges. However, many hoped to find in another land the ways to improve their economic situation, practice their religion freely, or flee from political persecution in their own countries. Many others probably had great expectations for commercial activities that would glean great profits. These were the major reasons for many Arabs - mainly Palestinians, Lebanese, and Syrians - to leave their homelands and move to faraway countries in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth. The purpose of this essay is to study the process of Palestinian immigration in the Central American republics. It will also analyze the different activities that the Palestinian immigrants of Christian origin and their descendants have engaged in these host countries, mainly their businesses, their industrial participation, and, finally, their financial strategies. The essay will also study their cultural contribution to the countries of Central America, as well as their political involvement as leaders in various administrative positions.

I will discuss the different periods of Palestinian immigration in Central America that presented diverse kinds of people to the region – people of different religions, social status, and cultural backgrounds – and this diversity certainly influenced their ultimate occupations in the five host countries, the traditional Central American republics. Undoubtedly, the majority of the first Palestinian immigrants at the turn of the century and during the first decades of the twentieth century were predominantly Christians of rural origin. They settled mainly in Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala, with very few in Costa Rica. It is also important to point out that more recently, after the establishment of the State of Israel, and especially after the Six Days War of 1967, more Palestinians have arrived in Central America. In this more recent period of immigration, most of them are Muslims as opposed to those of Christian origin who characterized the previous emigration periods.