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Arab/Palestinian Citizenship and Residency: ISRAEL, EAST JERUSALEM, WEST BANK AND GAZA

This resource describes basic distinctions between the different legal statuses of the Arabic-speaking populations who live in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. Please note: this table only covers legal status and selected practical and bureaucratic distinctions—it does not attempt to describe the identity, political perspectives, or sense of belonging of any of these categories or the individuals within them. This table is a distilled and simplified description of a very complex reality; we hope you utilize this only as a starting point for further learning.

CATEGORY	ARAB CITIZENS OF ISRAEL <i>(approx. 1.5 mil people)</i>	RESIDENTS OF EAST JERUSALEM ¹ <i>(approx. 350,000 people hold this status)</i> <i>Also, a majority of the 24,000 Druze in the Golan Heights (which was also annexed into Israel following the 1967 War) hold a similar status</i>	PALESTINIAN CITIZENS <i>(approx. 3.1 mil people in the West Bank and 2.1 mil people in Gaza)</i>
STATUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Citizenship status equal to that of Jewish Israelis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The vast majority have a special East Jerusalem residency status, not Israeli citizenship. Residency status is conditional and can be revoked for living outside Jerusalem for several years or being found guilty of a number crimes. > A growing minority seek to and successfully acquire Israeli citizenship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Citizens of the Palestinian Authority (PA), no Israeli status.
DOCUMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The same blue Israeli identity card as Jewish Israelis.² > Israeli passport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > A blue Israeli identity card² similar to the ID card issued to citizens, but it does not list a nationality. > A laissez passer (an international travel document intended for stateless persons, in lieu of a passport) issued by Jordan and the U.N. > East Jerusalem residents are not entitled to an Israeli passport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > A green Palestinian identity card issued by the PA in coordination with Israel. > Palestinian passport (it is not recognized in all countries, and some hold a laissez passer in addition).
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND CIVIL GOVERNANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Eligible to vote in local and national elections in Israel. > Can run for any political office in Israel. > Governed by Israeli laws. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Eligible to vote and run in Jerusalem municipal elections (mayor and city council). > Ineligible to vote or run for office in Israeli national elections (Knesset). > Not permitted to vote in Palestinian elections. > Governed by Israeli laws. > Most East Jerusalem residents choose not to vote in Jerusalem elections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Eligible to vote in Palestinian national (Palestinian Authority) and local elections. > Different areas of the West Bank are governed by different laws, delineated in the Oslo Agreements. The West Bank is also under the authority of the Israeli Civil Administration. > Since 2007, the Gaza Strip has been administered and ruled by Hamas.

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TAXES AND SERVICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Pay taxes to the Government of Israel. > Government of Israel is responsible for public services (social security, healthcare, education, police, security, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Pay taxes to the Government of Israel. > Government of Israel is responsible for public services (social security, healthcare, education, police, security, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The Government of Israel collects taxes and is responsible for disbursing the funds to PA based on a mechanism in the Oslo Accords. > PA is responsible for most public services (i.e healthcare and education).* <p><i>* Services in refugee camps in Gaza and the West Bank are administered by the United Nations, and the Oslo Accords prohibit PA security services from operating in Areas B and C.</i></p>
MOVEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Can move throughout Israel and the West Bank. > Can fly out of Ben Gurion Airport and have no restrictions on air travel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Can move throughout Israel and the West Bank. > Some East Jerusalem residents can fly out of Ben Gurion Airport. Those who cannot, or chose not to out of fear of losing their Jerusalem residency status, can travel to the airport in Amman, Jordan via land crossing. They can also fly from Ramon Airport in southern Israel. 	<p>West Bank:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Need a permit to enter Israel, including Jerusalem. > Use of Ben Gurion Airport is prohibited. Travelers can either reach Jordan by land crossing to fly out of the airport in Amman or, since 2021, obtain a permit from Israel to fly out of Ramon Airport in southern Israel. <p>Gaza:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Need a permit to enter Israel or the West Bank, issued only in exceptional circumstances. > Use of Ben Gurion Airport is prohibited. Travelers can either reach Jordanian or Egyptian airports by land crossing or, since 2021, obtain a permit from Israel to fly out of Ramon Airport in southern Israel.

¹ Almost all of the Arabic-speaking population of Jerusalem lives in East Jerusalem, around 350,000 people. Prior to 1967, East Jerusalem was under Jordanian control. After the war, Jerusalem was annexed by Israel, but most East Jerusalem residents did not choose to become citizens, during the limited period of time with this was offered. Since then, there have periods Israel has not allowed residents to apply for citizenship in most cases, and periods in which they could apply. Today, East Jerusalem residents can apply for Israeli citizenship through a process that is less time-consuming and challenging than it had been in prior years. Non-Israeli citizen East Jerusalem residents (the vast majority) receive permanent residency status—a different category than citizen that entitles them to some rights but not others, as described in the table.

² This ID card functions like a driver’s license or state-issued ID in the U.S.