



**Youth Strategy Document**  
**“Youth Participation and Rights in Palestine under**  
**UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security”**  
**The YWCA of Palestine**  
**2020**

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## Introduction

This Youth Strategic Document was developed by the YWCA of Palestine in cooperation with the youth group “Al-Ofoq.” Its purpose is to build a national reference for youth participation and youth rights in Palestine, as outlined in UNSC Resolution 2250, with a relevance to the Palestinian context. “Al-Ofoq” (Horizon) Group was formed by youth from various areas of the West Bank, with the participation of a group of civil-society institutions and other youth groups. All assisted in developing the final version of this strategy document. Young people constitute a large segment of Palestinian society: the percentage of young people aged 18-29 years reached 23% of the total population (PSBC 2019). That makes Palestinian society a youthful one. Hence, this document focuses on young people, setting basic pillars for the advancement of Palestinian youth in line with UNSC Resolution 2250.

## Document Characteristics

- This document is based on data/inputs provided by young men and women from different areas of the West Bank. It is based on their vision of community, youth and human rights' work in Palestine.
- This document is structured according to UNSC Resolution 2250 and its pillars, as issued by the UN Security Council in 2015.
- This document was developed with youth inputs and content contributions, to ensure that their rights and opinions are represented. To this end, several participatory meetings and workshops were held with the assistance of consultants.
- This document was further developed with the participation of institutions and relevant groups of official, non-governmental organizations and local bodies.
- This document does not necessarily aim to be formally adopted, but calls for greater efforts at the national level. Local and national institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, are invited to voluntarily adopt it, or work to mainstream it into their (community, legal or human rights) programs.



## Document Methodology

1. A youth group was formed, naming itself “Al-Ofoq” Group, consisting of 25 young men and women activists from different areas of the West Bank.
2. Training was held in order to empower “Al-Ofoq” Group in the field of UNSC Resolution 2250 for Youth, Peace and Security.
3. “Al-Ofoq” Group were given more than a year to devise an outline for the document and its pillars, and the interventions that need to be implemented to achieve these pillars.
4. Outputs have been shared with community/youth institutions in the West Bank, with the aim of prioritizing the content of the document and reformulating and developing these priorities, through three geographical workshops in the south, north and middle of the West Bank.
5. The first amended version of the document was then produced. It was shared with stakeholders and experienced people for further consultation, to reach the final version of the document.



## About “Al-Ofoq” Group

“Al-Ofoq” Group is a youth group consisting of young men and women from several districts in the West Bank. The Group has worked to increase their knowledge of human rights and international legal systems for human rights’ protection. These youth also developed their skills in influencing community mobilization and in methodologies for youth participation in local/national decision-making processes. They advocated for building a national reference document, in accordance with relevant international resolutions and covenants.

### **Some of their activities are listed below:**

1. Several meetings were held with grassroots’ youth institutions, to explore potential partnerships.
2. A call for participation was launched to join “Al-Ofoq” Group, A total of 15 young men and women were selected to join the group.
3. Two interactive and preparatory workshops were organized (that included a discussion of youth rights in accordance with UNSC Resolutions 2250 and 1325) in order to develop an initial draft of the youth strategy document.
4. A research and learning meeting was organized. It focused on fundamental human rights, legal and societal concepts, and included group-work for research and discussion.
5. An interactive workshop was organized with a larger youth group (approximately 40 male and female participants from many governorates of the West Bank). The workshop aimed to present the first draft of the document to them, so they could express their views and provide a wider youth perspective, to further develop the document based on their contributions.
6. Three interactive regional workshops (center, north and south West Bank) were organized, in which social activists and youth institutions participated. The workshops aimed to share the drafted document with institutions and stakeholders, to obtain their comments and contributions so that it could be further developed according to their experiences.



## The YWCA of Palestine

The YWCA of Palestine was first initiated in 1893 by informal meetings of groups of Christian women in Jaffa and Jerusalem. It was officially established in Jerusalem in 1918. Currently, the YWCA of Palestine is a national umbrella organization with four local associations operating in East Jerusalem, Ramallah, Jericho and Bethlehem.

The YWCA of Palestine sees “women, and especially young women, as decision-makers, agents of change and leaders in a society where equality, freedom, tolerance, justice, peace and dignity are promoted”. Its mission is “to empower women and youth to demand, exercise and protect their economic, social and political rights”.

YWCA of Palestine has moved significantly in the direction of rights-based approach programming, **covering three thematic areas:**

1. Economic Justice
2. Leadership Development and Civic Engagement for Youth
3. Just Peace (Women, Security and Peace)

## UNSC Resolution 2250 and Youth

At its 7573rd meeting, held on December 9, 2015, the Security Council (at the initiative of Jordan) adopted Resolution 2250 unanimously on Youth, Peace and Security. It affirms the important positive role that young people can play in the process of peace building, conflict prevention and resolution, as well as combating extremism and violence on regional, national and international levels.

The Resolution addresses the democratic and demographic imperative of involving youth on issues of peace and security, especially in conflict-affected countries, where they comprise a large segment of the population. During conflict, youth are often the most-affected segment, at risk of displacement, physical and sexual violence, and extremism (among other things). The rise of such political, ethnic and religious radicalism and violent extremism challenges global peace and security.

Hence, including young people; and building their capacities in preventing and resolving conflict; is a key aspect in the sustainability of peace efforts. It recognizes the positive contribution of youth, while enhancing their full participation, engagement and contribution. This requires a strategy and action plan to reinforce youth participation, their leadership roles and empowerment.





## This document focuses on the following four pillars of the Resolution:

- **Participation:** The Security Council urges Member States to consider ways to increase the inclusive representation of youth in decision making at all levels; in local, national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict. The Security Council urges Member States to take into account, as appropriate, the participation and views of youth, recognizing that their marginalization is detrimental to building sustainable peace in all societies, including, inter alia, negotiating and implementing peace agreements.
- **Protection:** The Security Council calls upon member states to comply with international laws relevant to the protection of civilians and the status of refugees, including those who are youth, as well as eliminating all forms of discrimination against women.
- **Prevention:** The Security Council urges Member States to facilitate an inclusive and enabling environment in which youth actors are recognized, through creating youth policies that positively contribute to peacebuilding efforts, including social and economic development. The Security Council urges Member States to institute mechanisms to promote a culture of peace, tolerance, intercultural and interreligious dialogue that involves youth, by supporting quality education.
- **Partnerships:** The Security Council urges Member States to increase, as appropriate, their political, financial, technical and logistical support, taking into account the needs and participation of youth in peace efforts. Furthermore, there is a need to engage relevant local communities and non-governmental actors in developing strategies to counter extremism.

## Challenges facing Palestinian Youth

Studying the challenges faced by young people illustrates the importance of community-based organizations, and their role in creating an appropriate environment to reduce the effects of these challenges. We are fully aware that youth are sensitive to environmental conditions, they face difficulties in controlling their emotions and they lack experience in facing the complexities of life. Thus, there are general challenges/difficulties facing Palestinian youth that were identified in previous work by governmental and non-governmental institutions.

**Some of these challenges are highly important to youth, as detailed below:**

1. **The Israeli Occupation:** It is the main problem facing the Palestinian youth sector. Since the occupation is fully aware of the importance of youth in Palestinian society, it has been using direct methods, since the first intifada, to limit freedoms and impose a dire economic situation. On the other hand, it has also used indirect methods that are more dangerous, such as encouraging crime, addiction, etc.
2. **Unemployment:** Young people suffer from a high rate of unemployment, which affects them on all levels: psychologically, socially, politically and in terms of their security. This is linked to meagre incomes and an inability to meet basic human needs. Consequently, resorting to crime and violence is one method that youth turn to, in order to increase income through illicit means.
3. **Inadequate education and a lack of interest in vocational education/training:** The quality of education in Palestine has become inadequate compared to global trends, societal needs and changing youth realities. The establishment of vocational education/training centers should help to enhance youth's economic and social levels, through professional and social skills.
4. **Lack of appropriate entertainment facilities and youth centers for leisure, and their inadequate geographic distribution:** Leisure time is a serious matter that should be utilized properly by youth. The existence of entertainment facilities - such as public places and centers for sports, art or music serving young people – is one of the best means of filling leisure time and positively directing energy.
5. **Political alienation:** The political participation of Palestinian youth has declined in the last ten years for several reasons, the most important being the poor political discourse of the current leadership. Additional reasons are one-party control, internal political divisions and the lack of programs targeting youth that enhance dialogue and increase the acceptance of other opinions. Therefore, in order to enhance the political participation of Palestinian youth, and for the sake of directing this sector's future, the energies of the young generation must be activated.

## Pillars of the Document

Building on the work of “Al-Ofoq” Group on UNSC Resolution 2250, three main pillars are highlighted:

**The First Pillar: Empowering Youth and Developing their Life Skills**

**The Second Pillar: Civic Engagement and Community Participation**

**The Third Pillar: Building Local and International Partnerships**

Three workshops - in different geographic locations - were held to draft this document. These focused on identifying the most important problems and challenges facing these three pillars; and the most important interventions that need to be undertaken.

Palestinian youth face additional challenges to those mentioned above, that limit their empowerment and life skills' development. **Such challenges are:**

- The absence of a safe environment and protection for youth-work, as a result of oppressive occupation procedures.
- Geographic isolation.
- High percentage of young people subjected to prosecution, arrest, injury and alienation.
- Weak Palestinian policies/laws that do not protect youth-work.
- Absence of a space for freedom of opinion, caused by political divisions and partisan racism.

Palestinian youth also suffer from the deteriorating economic situation, the high cost of living, low wages and unemployment, which reached 41.1% in 2018 (according to PCBS). Additionally, the non-institutionalization of youth-work is a critical challenge, as it ignores the reality of young people and does not view caring for them as a high priority for decision-makers. Moreover, the decline in volunteering among youth in particular is due to the changing concept (and a lack of understanding) of volunteering. Some customs, traditions and cultures reject new tools such as gender mixing, marginalizing the role of women and people with disabilities. There is a lack of awareness on the importance of youth participation and their role in the volunteering process has diminished. Youth's confidence in community institutions has weakened. This is a result of the weakness of their youth programs, which do not meet the aspirations, dreams and needs of youth. Most are politically-conditioned according to external financing requirements.

Among the other challenges that limit the development of the youth sector are the weaknesses of educational curricula, staff and outcomes; and the gap between these and the requirements of the labor market. There is a weakness in vocational education and enrollment, in addition to administrative and financial corruption. There are poor selection mechanisms for youth representatives at local and international forums, and weak financial support and unfair distribution. This has created a sort of monopoly with unfair competition, weak global and local participation and little networking between institutions.



# The First Pillar: Empowering Youth and Developing their Life Skills

In order to develop the capabilities and skills of youth; provide them with fair opportunities to achieve progress and advancement in all aspects of life; and allow them to access the resources that they need, the following priority interventions have been identified:

## **1. Develop and enhance vocational education and skills, through:**

- Activating and developing vocational education policies and increasing the minimum wage.
- Developing and increasing vocational education centers and outputs, especially in remote, urban areas.
- Encouraging a positive attitude in governmental hiring towards those holding a vocational degree.
- Educating the community and school students about vocational and academic opportunities.
- Planning and implementing appropriate youth economic projects, while ensuring their sustainability.

## **2. Economic empowerment of youth, through:**

- Promoting national products and reducing imports.
- Enacting policies and laws that encourage the creation of youth economic projects.
- Creating job opportunities for youth.
- Adapting vocational and academic education to meet the needs of the labor market.
- Emphasizing cultural heritage as a pillar of the Palestinian economy.
- Fighting corruption and enhancing accountability, transparency, integrity and the right to access information.

## **3. Develop and support youth-led organizations and groups, by:**

- Recognizing informal youth groups.
- Activating policies on youth participation in local government.
- Enabling and developing the skills of youth working at youth institutions/groups.
- Supporting the sustainability of youth institutions, while maintaining their distance from politically-conditioned external financing.
- Activating social responsibility laws for the private sector.

## **4. Promote the value of Palestinian identity, through:**

- Increasing youth awareness on the importance of volunteering.
- Modifying governmental and private educational curricula to emphasize national values, belonging and the importance of volunteering.
- Amending the university volunteering system, to ensure that students benefit from volunteering opportunities.
- Increasing youth awareness on Palestinian issues: political, historical, cultural and social.

## The Second Pillar: Civic Engagement and Community Participation

Although Palestinian society is a youthful one (PCBS 2019), youth participation rates in decision-making do not exceed 1%. The percentage of youth who have undertaken volunteer work is 19.6%. Those who participated in charitable activities are 11.3%, whereas the percentage of youth belonging to sports' clubs and centers is 6.3%. The rate of belonging to national parties is 1.4%, and according to the Palestinian Youth Survey of 2015, the percentage of young people belonging to NGOs is 4%. These statistics show the low extent of youth participation in Palestine. Thus, to increase their participation rates, the following interventions are proposed:

### **1. Develop a safe environment to combat violence against youth, through:**

- Increasing youth's awareness of their rights.
- Monitoring violations of youth rights and following-up legally.
- Activating the Law for the Freedom of Opinion and Expression.
- Ensuring that young people are not held accountable based on their political, religious or social affiliations.
- Eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against youth and women, and people with disabilities.
- Working to end the political divide between parties and eliminating political racism.

### **2. Develop policies and enact laws that guarantee the right of youth participation, through:**

- Increasing the participation of youth in decision-making processes.
- Reducing the age of running for local elections.
- Increasing the percentage of youth working in private institutions.
- Restructuring the parties and political framework, to ensure wider participation of youth.

### **3. Activate laws and policies that protect rights and safeguard freedoms, through:**

- Monitoring violations of youth rights.
- Ensuring freedom of expression and amending the cyber-crime law.
- Empowering youth to defend their rights.

## The Third Pillar: Building Local and International Partnerships

This document has been developed in accordance with UNSC Resolution 2250, therefore, building international partnerships is considered to be one of the foundations of success for this strategy. The sharing of international experiences on youth development helps enrich the learning process, as the world today is a global village that allows open communication with others. Therefore, building international partnerships is an important aspect in helping youth to improve their reality.

The importance of building local partnerships stems from the fact that by working separately, results cannot be realized at a national level. Such results will be limited to a few institutions and individuals. Building partnerships with community-based institutions, at the local and national level, will lead to greater impact at the national level.

Due to the importance of this pillar, it was necessary to discuss pertinent challenges and problems, and formulate interventions that help to build local/international partnerships while harvesting their benefits. Several interventions are put forward; the most prominent ones are the following:

### **1. Boost the interest of youth in local and international partnerships, through:**

- Increasing youth's knowledge of international, local and regional participation programs and opportunities.
- Promoting youth skills that enhance group dynamics, such as language skills, working with different cultures, and completing application forms for participation.
- Strengthening the law on the right to organize and form youth groups.

### **2. Activate the role of youth networks and unions operating in Palestine, through:**

- Encouraging complementary action between institutions and reducing negative competition.
- Developing youth programs/activities that serve their needs and desires.
- Creating a youth media platform at the international, regional and local levels, and networking between them.
- Developing a database that includes institutions, networks and unions, including their programs and activities.

### **3. Equal opportunities in local and international partnerships, through:**

- Promoting transparency, integrity and accountability across all relevant sectors.
- Ensuring the inclusion of women, people with disabilities and marginalized groups.

## Conclusion

Young people who participated in preparing this strategy document hope that it will be used as a basic reference for formulating strategic plans that activate the role of youth on several levels. It aspires to ensure that youth are not treated as a separate societal entity, and to provide a realistic approach to working with youth as active partners in economic, social and cultural development. This will be achieved by enhancing the skills of youth; their scope of participation and their influence on decision-making and implementation processes; as well as contributing solutions to challenges facing society. If you would like to see the list of participants, [click here](#).







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