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COMPARING PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS ON SOCIETY AND POLITICS: CONTEXT AND RELIGION IN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

Palestinian Christians, both in the Palestinian Territories (Palestine) and in Israel, number close to 180,000 altogether. Close to 50,000 of them live in the Palestinian Territories while roughly 130,000 live in Israel. In both cases, Christian Palestinians make up less than 2 percent of the overall population. In Israel, Christians make up 11% of the Arab population of over one million while in Palestine the Christians make up less than two percent (1.7%) of the entire population of three million. (1). In 1995 a survey of a national sample of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza on attitudes to society, politics and economics was conducted. It included surveying a group of 340 Christians from different localities in the West Bank and Gaza. (2). This survey provided a basis for comparing attitudes of Christians to those of their Muslim compatriots. In March 2000, a survey was conducted for the purpose of comparing the attitudes of Palestinian Christians in both Palestine and Israel. The same questionnaire was used, except for some modifications, in both the 1995 and 2000 surveys. (3). While the two surveys do not add up to a longitudinal study they, nevertheless, provide a basis to compare between two samples of Palestinian Christians in Palestine in 1995 and 2000 and between Palestinian Christians in Palestine and Israel for the year 2000. The responses of Muslim Palestinians in the 1995 survey also provide an opportunity to compare their responses with those of Christians in Israel and Palestine.

In the 1995 survey, Palestinian Christians' attitudes on the desirable form of government and social order and the importance of good relations with the rest of the Arab world, among other issues, were found to be similar to those of their Muslim compatriots. Despite this broad agreement, on certain issues Palestinian Christian attitudes diverge from those of the general population. Agreement and divergence between the attitudes of Christian and Muslim Palestinians is neither accidental nor, as often superficially assumed, determined solely by religion. There are concrete socio-economic factors and characteristics that explain the prevalence of certain attitudes among

Palestinian Christians. But lest misunderstandings occur, these attitudes are best understood within the Palestinian context, not outside of it, and certainly not in opposition to it. In the 2000 survey comparisons were restricted to Palestinian Christians in both Palestine and Israel with no basis for comparing with Muslims. It was thought useful, nevertheless, to provide the responses of Palestinian Muslims and Christians from the 1995 survey in order to have an overall picture of the agreement and divergence in attitudes of the three groups included in the two surveys. The 1995 survey came as Palestinians were readying themselves for the elections in January 1996 for President and Legislative Council and amidst rising expectations of the Oslo Accords and their political, economic and social impact. The 2000 survey came amidst rising frustration and disappointment with the Oslo Accords and heightened religious sensitivity in both Nazareth and Bethlehem.

Who are the Palestinian Christians?

Palestinian Christians are an indigenous Arabic-speaking group that has inhabited the Holy Land for centuries. Some Palestinian Christians claim descent from the times of the early Church, the Mother Church, as Syriacs do. Others are more modest and trace their descent either to the Middle Ages or to neighbouring countries, such as Jordan, where Christianity spread early on in its history. But in all cases, the affinities that tie these Palestinian Christians to the land and society are real and they reflect a long history of coexistence in the country.

Palestinian Christians in the West Bank and Gaza belong to fifteen different denominations, the largest of which are the Greek Orthodox (51 percent) and the Roman Catholics (32 percent). Some smaller denominations, such as the Copts, who originally came from Egypt, number no more than a score of families. Yet each denomination or community has its own rich tradition of rites and rituals and its own educational and other institutions, which attests to its long presence and attachment to the land called Holy. A history of foreign, mostly European, missionary sponsorship of schools, started around the middle of the 19th century to serve the local Christian population, has left its mark on the community and its outlook. The advantages that the Palestinian Christians gained from earlier access to education enabled them to develop a middle-class socio-economic and occupational profile – and the preferences and limitations associated with it – well before other Palestinians. It is argued that the European educational institutions, by exposing Palestinian Christians to foreign languages and cultures, introduced them at

an early stage to the notion of relative deprivation. The first manifestation of this occurred around the turn of the century, when Christians from the Bethlehem and Ramallah areas, comparing the backwardness of the Ottoman Empire to the progress in Europe and America, started to emigrate to North, Central and South America.

Palestinian Christians in Israel belong to a more limited number of denominations with the Greek Melkite Catholics comprising the largest community with roughly 40 percent followed by the Greek Orthodox with 35 percent, the Roman Catholics (Latins) with 12 percent, the Maronites with 6 percent and smaller communities of Protestants, Armenians, Copts and others making up the remaining 7 percent. The overwhelming majority of the Christian population of Israel and Palestine is of indigenous Arab stock and speaks Arabic as its mother tongue. (4).

The impact of the 1948 and 1967 wars

Palestinian Christians, as an integral part of their society, suffered the consequences of the Arab-Jewish confrontation in the first half of the 20th century. When the communal conflict came to a head in the war of 1948, 50,000–60,000 Palestinian Christians became refugees, approx. 35 % of all Palestinian Christians resident in the British Mandate of Palestine in 1948. All in all, the first Arab-Israeli war created 726,000 Palestinian refugees. (5). The changes in Arab Palestinian society as a result of the 1948 war provoked a fresh wave of emigration among Palestinian Christians. Many established themselves as traders, professionals and businessmen in newly burgeoning Jordanian capital, Amman. Others opted for North America and the Persian Gulf. Those who chose the Gulf States eventually retired to their hometowns, such as Beit Sahour, best known for 'The Shepherds' Field. Those who moved further afield put down roots in their new countries and became diaspora communities with the usual sentimental attachments to their homeland and its fading memories.

In Israel among the 156,000 Arabs who remained over 20 percent were indigenous Christians. While conditions in Israel in the early years of the state were characterized by strict limitations and military government imposed on the Arab population, this had inadvertently led to less mobility and contributed to lower emigration rates among both Christian and Muslim Arab Palestinians in Israel. One consequence of the 1948 war was the strengthening of centripetal tendencies in the Arab community as clannish and family organization was reinforced side by side with the emergence of

leftist and secular forces, particularly the Israeli communist party, that vied for the loyalty of the Arab citizens of the state.

The 1967 War heralded drastic changes for Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza. Henceforth, economic, social and political change took place against a background of mounting tension between the Palestinians, on the one hand, and the Israeli military authorities and Jewish settlers on the other. These changes and the precarious population balance between Arabs and Jews led some Israelis and Palestinians to recognise the need for a political solution that would end the occupation and secure the basic rights of Palestinians. Christians, too, played a role, primarily in mainstream and secular political organisations. At the same time, their middle-class background and occupational preferences made them increasingly sensitive to the instability and uncertainty that accompanied Israeli military rule. As an indication of their inability to accept the arbitrariness of life under the occupation, the rate of emigration among Palestinian Christians was double the national rate between 1967 and 1993. The more intense the confrontation between Palestinians and Israelis became, the higher the emigration rate among Christians. (6).

In Israel, meanwhile, the 1967 war enabled the 1948-Palestinians to come in contact once again with their kin and compatriots in the West Bank and Gaza. While the political and economic contexts were different, this renewed contact enabled forms of identification between the two groups, particularly as Israeli occupation became harsher as time went on. The 1967 war and its aftermath heralded changes that would eventually affect the political identifications of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel. With the rise of political Islam in Iran and elsewhere and with the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union, the Arab population of Israel came to be shaped by external forces. These forces equally affected Christians but both they and their Muslim compatriots had also to deal with internal forces that distanced the Arab population in Israel from majority identification with the left. These forces also gave rise or ascertained different identifications as the rise in political Islam affected a large number of Israeli Arabs side by side with emerging consumerist and secularist trends. The family continued to be a strong basis of identification all throughout these developments.

The First Intifada and the Oslo Accords

In December 1987, political tension between Israelis and Palestinians erupted in the Intifada. Christians on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip were active

participants; some gave their lives, others were imprisoned and still others had to hide from Israeli pursuit. Christian communities reacted collectively, pressing, like other Palestinians, for an end to occupation and for a new relationship with the Israelis based on mutual respect and recognition of rights. In the eyes of the Palestinians and their leaders, the Intifada was a call for peace with Israel, based on the acceptance of two peoples in the land. As proof that they were able to confront Israelis as equals, it was also a source of pride for Palestinians.

The first Intifada and its success were key factors in the run-up to the Oslo accords. These accords set the stage for the hoped for political and economic transformations. As negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis dragged on and as the hoped for political transformation was bogged down in lack of clear division of power among the three branches of the Palestinian National Authority, set up as the result of the Oslo Accords, Palestinians increasingly felt disappointed and frustrated. The coming to power in Israel of Ehud Baraq first evoked high expectations on all sides, including Palestinians in the Palestinian Territories and in Israel. However, the failure of the Baraq government to successfully conclude negotiations with the Palestinians led to increasingly pessimistic attitudes by the Palestinians. On the internal front, the failure of the National Authority to institute clear legal procedures and to enforce them has strengthened the feeling that traditional forces and particular and clannish groups could act as substitutes with the apparent confusion and mounting frustration that this caused to increasing numbers of the population. In Israel, the crystallization of the Islamic Front and the elections for the Nazareth municipality that pitted religious and secular forces against each other in almost equal numbers got reflected in the Nazareth Shehab Eddin Mosque affair that left the community divided. (7).

It was with this background that the 2000 survey was conducted to compare the attitudes of Palestinian Christians in their two respective contexts. The plan for the survey called for a larger survey to be conducted on a representative sample of all Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and possibly in Israel. The plan, however, could not be implemented because of the occurrence of the second Intifada in September 2000.

Socio-economic profile of Palestinian Christians

The average age of the Christian community is 32 years, compared with 16 years for the Palestinian population as a whole. The older age structure among Christians is the result of emigration among younger members, later

marriage and lower fertility. The ratio of males to females is significantly lower in communities with high levels of emigration, such as Jerusalem, where there are 83 males for every 100 females.

Christians in the past tended to be better educated. But since access to education has become almost universal, the gap between Christians and the general population in educational achievement has been narrowed if not overcome.

	1995 Survey		2000 Survey	
	Christians	Muslims	IC*	PC*
None/Elementary	7	14	7	13
Secondary 3rd Grade	1526		32	17
Tawjihi (all types)	41	32	25	25
Diploma (teaching or equivalent)	10	14	12	16
University	27	14	14	22

* Throughout the text IC refers to Palestinian Christians in Israel and PC refers to Palestinian Christians in the Palestinian Territories (Palestine).

Palestinian Christians in Palestine tend to be over represented in the higher educational levels of Diploma and University and under represented in the None/Elementary and Secondary levels. In Israel, Christians tend to be over represented in the Secondary level while they are under represented in the Diploma and University levels when compared to their parallel numbers in Palestine. These figures, to be cautiously interpreted, may point to similar educational trends in the Palestinian Christian community in Israel to that found among the general Palestinian population in Palestine. One possible cause to explain the educational differences between Christians in Palestine and Israel is the preponderance of private church schools in the West Bank, particularly in Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Ramallah, that prepare youngsters to pursue higher education, often abroad. Also, the development of a Palestinian system of higher education in Palestine since 1967 was a definite factor as well.

By occupation, few Christians are manual workers, as the following comparison shows:

Christians	Muslims	IC	PC
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Farming	1	6	–	1
Construction	2	7	3	7
Skilled mechanics	5	6	11	11
Other skilled/unskilled worker	3	6	3	3
Commerce	7	7	3	7
White-collar workers/secretaries	14	9	6	11
Own business	15	7	3	6
Professionals	4	2	4	4
Civil Servants/teachers	20	13	15	16
Students	13	10	25	25
Housewives/retired persons	14	22	22	17
Unemployed	3	6	4	7

Apparently, the 2000 survey over represented the students since 25 percent of the respondents in both Israel and Palestine specified their occupation as students. But these figures provide the overall trends of the occupational profile of Christians in both Israel and Palestine. Christians tend more to gravitate towards the civil service, white collar and professional occupations. One noticeable trend is the percentage of Christians who identify themselves as skilled mechanics. In Palestine this could be a reflection of changing occupational preferences since 1995. In any case, the figures presented here need to be considered cautiously as they could reflect general trends but should not be considered as accurately representative of the overall population.

When it comes to ranking oneself according to class, two-thirds of Palestinian Christians in both Israel and Palestine place themselves in Middle Class similarly to other Palestinians. More Christians from Palestine rank themselves as Lower middle than was the case in 1995, possibly reflecting worsening economic conditions. As for Palestinian Christians in Israel, 6 percent rank themselves as Upper Class, double that of Christians in Palestine while 8 percent place themselves in Lower Class, which is four times that of Christians in Palestine. These self-rankings could reflect realistic and concrete situations but they could also incorporate perceptions such as relative deprivation. One conclusion could be that Christians, particularly in Palestine, no longer perceive themselves as having an economic and social advantage when compared to the rest of the population. This, in itself, would emphasize that what affects Palestinians in general affects as well Palestinian

Christians and helps mold their perception of themselves and their environment.

Class	Christians	Muslims	IC	PC
Upper	2	3	6	3
Upper-middle	23	12	15	15
Middle	65	64	66	64
Lower-middle	9	17	5	15
Lower	2	5	8	2

Christians are a largely urban community: 97 percent of them live in the urban localities of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Only three percent of respondents live in villages or refugee camps. Historically, Christians have always resided in urban areas. However, this has become extremely pronounced in recent decades, because agriculture and related activities can no longer support the population of Christian villages, especially in the Ramallah and Jenin areas of the West Bank. Moreover, Israeli economic policies since 1967 have turned many Palestinian villages into dormitory communities of people commuting daily to Israel. As a result, many Palestinian Christians from villages have elected to migrate to Jerusalem and other West Bank cities and join communities already established there.

In Israel, the major concentration of Palestinian Christians remains in the 114 Arab villages that comprise 50 percent of the Arab population of Israel. But an equally important concentration is found in the Arab and mixed Jewish-Arab cities such as Nazareth, Shefa 'Amr, Jaffa/Tel Aviv, Haifa and Acre. Many of the larger villages in which Christians are found are virtual towns and usually include Muslim and, in some villages, Druze communities as well. The clannish and family organizing principle continues to play a prominent role in social relations and dynamics in these villages side by side with religious parameters and boundaries.

Psycho-Social Attitudes

Christians show more social conservatism and caution when dealing with the unknown:

One should be sure that something really works before taking a chance on it:

Christians 84% – Muslims 77% - IC 88% - PC 84%

If you try to change things you usually make them worse:

Christians 17 % – Muslims 17 % - IC 20% - PC 21%

This is expected, considering the Christians’ small numbers and the higher stakes involved if things do not work out for them. But, as the second statement shows, they, like other Palestinians, are not opposed to change, even though there is a slight increase in the percentage of those Christians who, in 2000, tend to oppose change. Christians, in the 1995 survey showed that they have less fear with respect to the future than their Muslim compatriots. However, in 2000, Christians in both Israel and Palestine showed similar feelings of uncertainty and fear about the future as Muslim Palestinians showed in the 1995 survey:

When I think of the future, I feel uncertain and fearful:

Christians 45 % – Muslims 56 % - IC 58% - PC 55%

Christians, however, remain conservative as is emphasized in their response to the question of trust:

People trust and feel close to some people and not to others. For each of the following groups, tell us whether or not you feel close to and trust them.

IC	PC	Christians		Muslims	
	Family	94	94	96	90
	Friends	82	82	86	73
	People of my own religion	57	65	66	54
	Colleagues	63	63	72	64
	People with the same political views (as my own political faction)	47	58	53	40
	Neighbours	55	55	64	44
	People with the same living conditions	54	54	54	46
	People from my village, town, home district	39	48	47	37
	Religious persons such as sheikhs and priests	48	38	23	52
	All Palestinians	29	35	15	22
	Employers	28	28	15	25
	Israelis	NA	NA	8	6

Nobody	12	12	NA	NA
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Clearly the family in Palestinian society remains the primary institution for reference to all groups in the two surveys. Surprisingly, Palestinian Christians in Israel take the lead in the percentage of those who place trust in the family. Friends come in second place but lower numbers of Palestinians Christians in Palestine in 2000 are willing to put their trust in their friends than in 1995. Likewise, Palestinian Christians in Palestine exhibit less trust in people with same political views than Muslim compatriots or Palestinian Christians in Israel. This later group exhibits the highest trust in neighbours while Palestinian Christians in Palestine exhibit the lowest percentage of trust in 2000. This could point to trends in the Israeli Arab society that reflect the continuous importance and significance of family, friends and neighbours to social cohesion and affiliation. In contrast, Palestinian Christians in Palestine could be operating in conditions that confirm the saying “familiarity breeds contempt” or like feelings!

Palestinian Christians in Palestine are consistent in their trust, or lack of it, of people from their own villages and towns. Even though Muslims are conservative when it comes to blanket trust of all Palestinians, Christians are even more so. In the 2000 survey Palestinian Christians in Israel exhibit the least trust in All Palestinians thus providing another indicator of narrower identifications. But still Palestinian Christians in Palestine are less willing in 2000 to trust all Palestinians than they were in 1995. A redeeming feature of Palestinian Christians in Palestine, however, is their greater trust in religious representatives that has increased from slightly less than 50 percent in 1995 to slightly more than 50 percent in 2000. Of interest, however, is the low percentage of trust by Palestinian Christians in Israel shown to religious persons. This could reflect the secular tendencies operating on the Arab population of Israel side by side with the clannish and family orientations.

Trust in Israelis is quite low and it stands at similarly close percentages of 8 and 6 percent for the Christian populations of Israel and Palestine, respectively. While one would have expected a significantly higher percentage of trust in Israelis by the Christians in Israel, the fact that this did not materialize reflect the crisis that Christian Palestinians, as other Arabs, in Israel have with their Israeli environment in general.

Christians, like Muslims, have clear social boundaries. Within these, though, Christians are more willing to make exceptions in respect of good friends,

irrespective of religious background or, among a small minority, with regard to daughters marrying someone from another religion:

A good friend is a good friend, whether he is called Mohammed or Hanna.

Christians 93 % – Muslims 81 % - IC 91% - PC 94%

Are you willing to have your daughter marry someone from a different religion?

Christians 10 % – Muslims 4 % IC 9% - PC 10%

The overwhelming majority of both Christians and Muslims reject mixed marriages. Sticking to social boundaries, however, does not exclude mutual respect for other religions, or good neighbourliness where Christians and Muslims live together or send their children to the same school, often a Christian private school. Responses to another question indicate that bonds of kinship may be stronger among Christians, confirming the importance not only of social boundaries, but also of inclusive forms of identification:

My brother and I are against my cousin, and my cousin and I are against the stranger.

Christians 50 % – Muslims 40 % - IC 65% - PC 50%

The response of Christians to this old saying indicates that for a substantial group among them traditional group identity is still a valid basis for social intercourse. This is clearly so for the Palestinian Christians in Israel thus confirming the clannish and family bases of social organization. The rational, legal approach so favoured by modern secularist groups takes a back seat here. Perhaps every minority develops a view of the world that focuses excessively on itself, with the attendant consequences, including a heightened sensitivity to contact and interaction that may be a source of tension and conflict.

The differences between rich and poor are perceived as the third biggest difference by Christian Palestinians in Israel. The two biggest differences are those between Jews and Others in Israel with 59% and between Muslims and Christians with 17%. Clearly the major divide relates to perceived differentiation of Jews from non-Jews. The religious divide seems also to apply to Muslims but to a much lower extent as 17 percent of Christians in both Israel and Palestine perceive differences with Muslims as the biggest difference. For Christians in Palestine the difference between people in Gaza and those in the West Bank appears to persist between 1995 and 2000. This is not surprising considering the absence of physical contiguity between Gaza and the West Bank and the difficulty in maintaining normal relations between the two geographic entities of Palestine. Besides, Gaza is known to be an

especially depressed economic area with a majority of Palestinian refugees living in camps and the overall population suffering from high rates of unemployment and poverty.

Which one of the following differences you think is the biggest difference in the West Bank/Gaza?

	Christians	Muslims	IC	PC
Differences between rich and poor	41	41	16	34
Differences between people in Gaza and people on the West Bank	19	16	NA	19
Differences between Muslim And Christians	14	7	17	17
Differences between town And country in Palestine	5	10	NA	6
Differences between refugees And non-refugees	2	11	NA	3
Differences between Palestinians Inside and outside the territories	10	12	NA	7
Differences between people in my locality and people in Other localities	9	5	2	8
Differences between Jews and Others	NA	NA	59	NA
Difference between secular and Religious Jews	NA	NA	4	NA

Of interest in the 1995 survey is the fact that a double percentage of Christians to that of Muslims think that differences between Muslims and Christians is the biggest difference. The slight increase in the percentage of Christians in Palestine who think in 2000 that this is the biggest difference reflects the strength of forces that continue to posit religious difference as an important one in society.

On personal choices, and particularly on the role of Palestinian women in society, politics and economy, the Christians are progressive with a noticeable

trend, shown in the 2000 survey, towards more conservatism. An overwhelming majority of Christians believe that women should be encouraged to look for a suitable job, irrespective of the economic sector. This is also the position of a smaller majority of Muslim respondents in 1995 thus reflecting a competitively oriented society, irrespective of gender considerations. The drop, however, in the percentage of Palestinian Christians in Palestine who approve of such a proposition in 2000 could be related to changes in the perception of the overall economic situation and available opportunities of employment for males and females. Thus when the males, the traditional providers, have limited employment opportunities, the tendency is to give them preferential treatment in the labor market. But this male-oriented predisposition could also point to heightened conservatism in the Palestinian Christian community with respect to women's accessibility to the public realm. Thus, more Palestinian Christians in Palestine in 2000 would want women to stay out of politics than was the case in 1995. Similarly, more would like to see women stay home and look after their children and families. This perhaps could be attributed to the market mechanisms and the nature of politics in Palestinian society. There is, however, a clear trend towards relegating women's employment to spheres where contact with "unwanted" strangers is minimized.

Two-thirds of Palestinian Christians in Israel and slightly over fifty percent of Palestinian Christians in Palestine subscribe to the statement that women should preferably work in areas such as education and social services. Of significant importance is the fact that Palestinian Christians in Palestine have become more agreeable to this statement than was the case in 1995. The gap between Christians and Muslims over this statement that existed in 1995 has been narrowed. This transformation could be attributed to the projection of narrower identifications because of the absence of a clear inclusive social, economic and political vision in Palestine. As to the Palestinian Christians in Israel, their response is in agreement with the overall tendency in Israel where clannish and family orientations take precedence to society-wide identifications.

	Christians	Muslims
IC	PC	
<p>Women should be encouraged to look for a suitable job,</p>		

irrespective of the economic sector.	91	59	86	78
Women should stay out of politics.	10	34	14	18
Women should stay home and look after their children and families.	16	55	14	22
Women should preferably work in areas such as education and social services	36	68	66	51

One can argue that there are similar cultural factors operating in both Palestinian and Arab Israeli societies that influence similarly the direction of attitudes of both Christians and Muslims towards the role of women. The Christians, however, tend to be more willing to see women compete more freely, take an active role in politics and to see them operate outside the home. But Christians, like Muslims, would prefer to see women's access to the public sphere streamlined to the "safe" areas of education and social services thus reflecting an overall conservative orientation across the society.

Economy and Society

The fact that the Christians are a prosperous community does not reduce their feeling of relative deprivation:

Of course people like to earn more, but I consider my income to be reasonable:

Christians 52 % – Muslims 64 % IC 55% PC 58%

If I could, I would change to another kind of work:

Christians 64 % – Muslims 64 % IC 73% PC 56%

They are also as likely as their Muslim compatriots to want to change their place of work. Dissatisfaction with job and income is an important reason why not only Christians, but also all Palestinians seek to work outside the West Bank and Gaza.

If I could, I would like to work in:

	Christians	Muslims	IC	PC
Israel	28	19	58	21
Gulf	19	41	3	12

USA	28	20	16	23
Europe	25	20	16	16

Christians in Palestine tend to be more attracted to Israel and the USA than Muslims, who favour the Arab societies of the Gulf States. Limited job opportunities in the highly dependent Palestinian economy works as a push factor. In Israel, clearly the preference is for a job in the country itself while the USA and Europe come in as second best followed by a minute percentage of those who would want to work in the Gulf.

Apart from a more open and liberal education, Christians' attitudes are conditioned by their perception of relations with Israeli employers.

Relations with Israeli bosses and co-workers are pragmatic and work-oriented:
Christians 77 % – Muslims 86 % IC 45 % PC 55%*

Relations with Israeli bosses and co-workers are personal and friendly:
Christians 41 % – Muslims 31 % IC 43% PC 57%*

(* Of those who work in Israel and not of total number of respondents)

But, in spite of their relative openness on economics and work relationships, Christians are still a conservative group when it comes to risk-taking:

Imagine that you receive a lot of money, unexpectedly. On which one of the following would you spend more?

IC	Christians		Muslims	
	IC	PC	IC	PC
Start a business	34	38	18	28
Expand an already established business	20	15	8	23
Buy a house or property	23	16	23	19
Buy a car/new furniture	2	4	10	3
Build an additional storey on to my house	2	3	1	4
Give myself and my family a good time	11	19	24	9
Invest in a bank with good returns	9	5	15	12

Christians in Palestine are slightly less likely to start a business with a windfall, but more willing to expand an already established business or buy a house or property, steps that normally do not involve taking chances. But their rejection of increased consumption reveals a more frugal streak than Muslims. Moreover, the preference for bank investments underlines their lack of entrepreneurial spirit, their conservative bias against taking risks. In Israel,

the consumerist tendency shows as almost one-fourth want to have a good time and one-tenth would like to buy a car or new furniture. More than their compatriots in Palestine, they would not like to take risks as shown by the percentage of Christians in Israel who would like to invest in a bank.

Christians in both Israel and Palestine see individual efforts as the most important factor for success. This could reflect an achievement-oriented community that sees individual efforts as most determining of one's chances in life.

Which one of the following is, in your opinion, most important for achieving success in life?

IC	Christians		Muslims	
		PC		
Own efforts	23	13	29	28
Organisational and group solidarity	21	30	21	30
Education and training	28	21	14	16
Experience	10	11	4	5
Connections (others)	18	11	5	11
Religious beliefs	1	15	.3	1

Another trend is the stress on group solidarity particularly among Christians in Palestine. But whereas 15 percent of Muslims in 1995 considered religious beliefs as most important, only less than 1 percent of Christians in both Israel and Palestine subscribe to this position.

With their preference for individualism, frugality, hard work and own efforts, Christians are more inclined to work for themselves than for the government or private employer.

What kind of a job would you prefer?

A job in a government office or private institution with a regular income so that I don't have to think about the future:

Christians 27 % – Muslims 43 % IC 35% PC 25%

or

Working hard to build my own business and take risks to get ahead and make a lot of money:

Christians 73 % – Muslims 57 % IC 57% PC 72%

Perhaps because of their faith in individual efforts, Christians in Palestine are more optimistic about their children's future and less envious of the rich. In Israel, however, Christians tend to be more envious apparently because in a consumerist environment, comparisons are apt to become relevant in self assessment particularly when the rich become quite conspicuous in their spending.

Young men and women of a family like mine have a reasonable chance of realising their goals in life:

Christians 72 % – Muslims 59 % IC 60% PC 69%

When I see what the rich have I feel I should have the same:

Christians 35 % – Muslims 43 % IC 63% PC 35%

But one indicator, that is cause for concern, is the fact that in both Palestine and Israel over one-fourth of the respondents would seriously consider emigration given the present conditions in society. Thus, in spite of optimism for the future of young men and women, a significant minority is not at all happy with what it sees and experiences at present in both Israeli and Palestinian societies.

As things stand today in our society, I think I should seriously consider emigration IC 26%
PC 27%

Religion and Group Identity

Given their attitudes to religion and religiosity, Christians are fairly secular. Two-thirds of them can be happy and enjoy life without being religious, in contrast to only slightly more than a quarter of their Muslim compatriots. In Israel, Christians are overwhelmingly secular as they can enjoy life without being religious. Slightly more than half of all Christians in 1995 believed that their religion is the only true religion, in contrast to over nine-tenths of Muslims. In 2000, however, almost three-fourths of Christians in Palestine subscribe to the proposition reflecting, perhaps, the increasing role of religion in public life. But in spite of their modernising secularist tendencies, Christians in Palestine try hard to live their daily lives according to the teachings of their religion, and believe in life after death where the appropriate judgement is meted out to good and bad. The Christians in Israel also believe in these propositions but to a lesser extent possibly reflecting the impact of consumerist preference:

I can be happy and enjoy life without being religious:

Christians 61 % – Muslims 27 % IC 83% PC 68%

I am convinced that my own religion is the only true religion:

Christians 53 % – Muslims 91 % IC 63% PC 72%

I try hard to live my daily life according to the teachings of my religion:

Christians 77 % – Muslims 87 % IC 63% PC 81%

I believe in life after death, where good people will be rewarded and bad people will be punished:

Christians 76 % – Muslims 95 % IC 64% PC 76%

Although Christians exhibit less religiosity than their Muslim compatriots, they are far more religious than upper and middle-class people in any Western society. In general, Palestinian Christians tend to see religiosity as an individual and parochial concern, not as a regulator of social and political life.

Faith and religious values must determine all aspects of social and political life:

Christians 35 % – Muslims 75 % IC 31% PC 40%

A person must return to his spiritual and cultural roots and seek the meaning of his religious destiny:

Christians 58 % – Muslims 80 % IC 73% PC 71%

But the increase in the role of religion in politics and society has apparently left its impact on Palestinian Christians as more of them believe in 2000 in the regulatory importance of faith and religious values but especially on the need for return to spiritual and cultural roots.

But the strength of religion aside, almost all Christians, and 85 percent of Muslims, believe that, irrespective of religious beliefs, the most important thing is for people to lead a responsible life.

No matter what people's religious beliefs are, the most important thing is that everybody leads a responsible life and is a good human being:

Christians 96 % – Muslims 85 % IC 97% PC 95%

There is, however, some difference between Christians and Muslims in attributing similar ethical and social principles to the three monotheistic religions.

The monotheistic religions (Islam, Christianity and Judaism) believe in the same God and teach similar ethical and social principles:

Christians 85 % – Muslims 60 % IC 75% PC 77%

But a majority of Christians and Muslims attend religious services either once a week or sometimes. The higher percentage of Muslims attends weekly, since the Friday noon prayers attract a good number of the faithful. Christians attend church less frequently, but attend they do. A similar proportion of both groups rarely or never attend religious services. The unexpectedly high percentage among Muslims who never attend is explained by the fact that women visit mosques less regularly than men, or not at all. In Israel, the secularist tendency shows once again as a relatively small group of Christians attend services regularly.

Do you attend religious services?

	Christians	Muslims	IC	PC
Yes, once a week or more	35	49	14	32
Yes, sometimes	35	24	36	37
Seldom	23	10	24	19
Never	6	17	15	7

As for prayers, Muslims pray more frequently and regularly. The disparity between the two groups can be explained by two factors. First, the Islamic prescription of daily prayers does not have a counterpart in Christianity and, second, socio-economic and educational standards affect the overall frequency of prayers:

Frequency	Christians	Muslims	IC	PC
Daily and regularly	32	76	19	28
Often	20	6	5	17
Sometimes	27	8	42	30
Seldom, never	23	10	29	22

In a society characterised by high religiosity, Christians, who by Western standards can be considered highly religious, are significantly less religious than Palestinians in general. This is particularly so with Christians in Israel whose majority of seven-tenths pray only sometimes, seldom or never.

Changes and Improvements

Christians and Muslims generally agree on the changes and improvements they would like to see.

Think of your life, all parts of it. What changes, reforms or improvements (personal, social, economic or political) do people like you see as being most necessary?

	Christians	Muslims	IC	PC
Economic issues	53	48	42	42
Political issues	22	31	23	29
Social issues	8	7	23	13
Personal issues	6	4	9	15
Others	11	9	3	-

The changes specified reflect the socio-economic and political environment in which Palestinians find themselves. The economy is the main preoccupation of all Palestinians, irrespective of locality. This reflects to some degree the current situation of a weak economy with high unemployment dependent on the political climate of a volatile Israeli-Palestinian relationship. Nonetheless, the fact that a sizeable percentage specifies economic changes reveals the preoccupation with mundane, concrete matters. It is surprising, given the political context in which Palestinians live, that less than one-third of them chose political issues. This tempts one to conclude that politics, as such, is not pivotal in the day-to-day lives of people but becomes important when it affects the economy and consequently impacts the lives and prospects of individuals and their families.

Political Orientations – Palestinian Politics

Even though an above-average number of Palestinian Christians identify themselves first as Arabs and then as Palestinians and only then by religion – indicative of a strong Arab nationalist feeling – their responses to items on Palestinian politics show the dilemma in which they, and other Palestinians, find themselves:

Think of political leaders in the West Bank/Gaza. Which leader do you admire and support the most?

	Christians	Muslims	PC
Arafat	28	39	22
Yassin	0	20	0
Nobody	19	15	5
Haidar Abdul Shafi	4	3	3
Habash and Hawatmeh	7	3	7
Others	15	12	22

Don't know	27	7	--
NA	--	--	41

Four-tenths of Christians chose not to answer this question while 22 percent gave Mr. Arafat their support, a decline of some 8 percent since 1995. Twice as many Christians as Muslims chose Habash and Hawatmeh, representatives of the secular opposition, while Abdul Shafi of Gaza, an independent with no party backing who led the Palestinian delegation at the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, received an four and three percent, respectively.

Political Orientations – Israeli Politics

Think of political leaders in Israel, which leader do you admire and support the most?

	IC
Azmi Bishara	27
Issam Makhoul and Mohammed Barakah	11
Ehud Baraq	11
Nobody	14
Others	6
NA	37

Among Christians in Israel, Azmi Bishara, the secularist nationalist member of the Israeli Knesset is clearly the most prominent leader with over a quarter of all respondents. The influence of the old Jewish-Arab communist coalition still persists as both Makhoul and Barakah receive the support of slightly over one-tenth of Christians. The Israeli Labor Party also has its influence with a comparable over one-tenth support. But if we add those 14 percent who designated Nobody with the 37 percent who chose not to vote then we have a majority of Christians in Israel who are distant from the political life. This, as in Palestine, could point to disaffection and disillusionment with what is going on thus contributing to lack of political orientation and interest.

In Israel Arafat gets only 3 votes equal to the three votes received by Yossi Beilin, one of the architects of the Oslo Accords. Ramzi Geraisy, the mayor of Nazareth who is leftist leaning Greek Orthodox, receives also lone 3 votes. Thus, clearly the political environment of Palestinian Christians in Israel is completely different from that of the Palestinian Christians in Palestine.

But what do Christians think of the chances of Palestinian politicians they admire?

Christians in Palestine are certain that leaders will have a difficult time managing Palestinian affairs, but are likely to withdraw their support if leader/s they admire do not act properly. Thus their support is conditional on performance to a greater extent than that of the overall population, about half of which would give unconditional support. In the same vein, Christians are more realistic about the support their leaders enjoy than their Muslim compatriots.

	Christians	Muslims	IC	PC
Given the conditions of our society, these leaders will have a very difficult time in managing our affairs.	93	77	71	74
Most people like me support these leaders.	46	58	19	37
Even if my leader acted in a way I did not understand, I would still support him.	33	47	19	32

Especially in Israel, Christians are realistic that the overall population would not support these leaders and that the support given to them is conditional on acceptable performance. This could reflect the stress, among Christians in Israel, on democratic practices as opposed to personality cult or other particularistic factors.

If there were elections for the Palestinian Administrative Council (Legislative Council) in West Bank/Gaza, which group would you most likely to vote for?

	Christians	Muslims	PC
Fatah 23		32	36
Hamas and Jihad 0		0	23
Nobody/won't vote	20	18	19
Popular and Democratic Fronts	14	6	20
Fida, People's Party, independent	9	3	14

Others	13	4	5
Don't Know	13	11	14
NA	-	-	5

Clearly Fatah has declined as vote getter among Christians in Palestine as those who are willing to vote for Fatah in 2000 are almost equal to those willing to vote for the Popular and Democratic Fronts. The Islamist groups receive no support whatsoever while Nobody, Don't Know and NA receive together the highest vote of 38 percent. It is worthy to note, nevertheless, that the left and the secularist groups with independents receive a high of 34 percent support.

In Israel, Christians would give their votes to the Balad list, a nationalist list headed by secularist Azmi Bishara. But the Hadash list, ex-communists, headed by Makhoul, a Christian, and Barakah, a Muslim, receive the second best votes. Number three on the preference of voters is nobody and number four is Labor Party with Ehud Baraq as its leader.

If there were elections for the Knesset (Israel's Parliament) in Israel, which group would you most likely vote for?

	IC
Balad (Azmi Bishara)	36
Hadash (Barakah and Makhoul)	27
Nobody	14
One Israel (Ehud Baraq – Labor Party)	12
NA	5
Don't Know	2
Others	4

Clearly, Palestinian Christians in Israel are nationalist-secularists when it comes to electing their representatives. They are, nevertheless, affected by their Israeli environment and the traditional “partnership” that has existed between some segments of the Arab Israeli population and the Labor Party in Israel.

Political Orientations – International Relations

Christians are twice as likely as Muslims to choose a European country as their ideal.

In your mind, which country comes closest to being an ideal country, the country that other countries should try to be like?

	Christians	Muslims	IC	PC
Modern Asian countries	9	14	1	4
Small European countries	18	11	30	19
USA	15	8	20	17
Iraq	3	8	--	--
Islamic countries	0	7	2	2
Other European countries	16	7	21	20
Jordan	4	5	--	1
Israel	6	5	2	4
Palestine	6	3	1	3
Other	13	12	19	25
There is no such country	8	13	4	5

Christians also take a more favourable view of the USA. Not surprisingly, few Christians chose an "Islamic" country while countries in the immediate vicinity receive low ratings. Israel is a particular case where its perception as ideal country could be colored by current political circumstances. This could apply as well to Palestine.

There are a number of foreign governments and organizations which have tried to influence the Palestinians. For each one we mention, please tell us whether you consider its influence as more helpful or as more harmful.

<u>Government/Organization</u>		<u>More Helpful</u>
Vatican	IC	66
	PC	62
	1995 Survey	17
EU	IC	58
	PC	70
World Bank	IC	30
	PC	62
	1995	44
Japan	IC	42
	PC	61

	1995	44
Egypt	IC	27
	PC	47
	1995	42
Saudi Arabia	IC	12
	PC	22
	1995	42
<u>Government/Organization</u>		<u>More Harmful</u>
Israel	IC	63
	PC	81
	1995 Survey	85
USA	IC	25
	PC	54
	1995	71
EU	IC	4
	PC	10
	1995	34
UN	IC	5
	PC	18
	1995	50
World Bank	IC	5
	PC	9
	1995	21

Clearly, the Vatican is seen as More Helpful by two-thirds of Christians. Perhaps, this expectation from the State of the Holy See had to do more with the visit of Pope John Paul II to the Holy Land than with practical, concrete or realistic expectations. The EU and World Bank are also viewed positively particularly by Christians in Palestine. Of the two More Helpful Arab

countries, almost half and one quarter of Christians in Palestine, respectively, perceive the role of Egypt and Saudi Arabia as more helpful. This reflects the regional leadership that Egypt traditionally played and the increasingly important role assumed by Saudi Arabia in regional matters but especially the Palestinian issue. Thus Christians in Palestine get affected and impressed by whatever policies neighboring Arab and Islamic countries adopt.

Israel is seen as More Harmful by almost two-thirds of Christians in Israel and by eight-tenths in Palestine. The USA, meanwhile, is perceived as harmful by one-quarter of Christians in Israel and by over half of the Christians in Palestine. Christians in Israel thus take a more positive attitude towards the US than their fellow Christians in Palestine. Practically, a small minority of Christians in Palestine perceives the role of the EU, UN and World Bank as being harmful.

But what should Palestine's place be in the region? Christians strongly support regionalism.

An overwhelming majority believe in regional economic cooperation. An equally strong majority among Muslims shares this. When coordination with Jordan is specifically mentioned in the 1995 survey, a strong majority of both Muslims and Christians supported it. The level of support for confederation with Jordan has remained steady since 1995 and it again included Christians and Muslims alike.

	Christians	Muslims	IC
PC			
Without regional economic cooperation, states in our Region cannot survive.	88	78	87
85			
Coordination and cooperation in all areas will characterise relations between Jordan and the Palestinians in the long run.	80	73	NA
NA			
Relations with Jordan should evolve towards a Confederation covering all social, economic and Political areas	NA	62	74 61

Political Orientation - The Oslo Process

One person says that the process that started with Oslo has
 Turned out to be detrimental to Palestinian interests
 25 40

Another person says that we need to be patient.

There are good chances for a final agreement that respects

The fundamental Palestinian interests 59 57

The Christians in Palestine seem to be consistent in their positive outlook on the good chances of a final agreement that respects Palestinian interests to the position they have taken in 1995 on the peace accords. Still, more of them than in 1995 appear skeptical that Oslo would turn out to be good for Palestinian interests. This is not surprising given the turn of events in Palestine and in the negotiating process since the Oslo Accords were signed.

What do you feel about the Palestinian-Israeli accords?

	Christians	Muslims
I fully support it	11	10
I support it because it was the best we could get	63	49
I do not support it	26	41

Political Orientation - Jerusalem

An overwhelming majority of Christians believe that Jerusalem is holy for the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Accordingly, they are willing to place the holy places in the city under the sovereignty of respective religions. Two-thirds of Muslims find the proposition acceptable which reflects on the potential for a Palestinian-Israeli agreement on this sensitive issue.

Jerusalem is the holy city of Muslims, Jews and Christians.
 There must be the same rights for the three religions in the city.
 Christians 94% - Muslims 63% IC 92% PC 90%

The holy places in Jerusalem should be placed under the sovereignty of the respective religions.

Christians 85% - Muslims 66% IC 86% PC 84%

Surprisingly, however, over half of Christians are for the re-division of Jerusalem as it was in 1967. Why this is so?:

Jerusalem should be redivided as it was on 5th June 1967, that is into an Arab city and an Israeli city.

Christians 58% - Muslims 38% IC 53% PC 61%

Jerusalem can remain an undivided city, provided that its eastern part is the capital of the state of Palestine.

Christians 67% - Muslims 44% IC 83% PC 77%

Jerusalem can remain an undivided city provided that Palestinians and Israelis have their municipal councils and that both cooperate together in matters of mutual interests.

Christians 66% - Muslims 31% IC 80% PC 69%

The final status of Jerusalem is non-negotiable because it is an Islamic Trust (Waqf). Christians 9% - Muslims 64% IC 6% PC 6%

All of Jerusalem, including the Jewish part, should be under the control of Palestinians. Christians 33% - Muslims 81% IC 9% PC 32%

The Christian position on redivision should be read carefully: Redivision here would mean going back to the *status quo ante*, which accurately correspond to the national and religious boundaries of Jerusalem as they were in 1967. Christians, accordingly, are reaffirming what was there before and what Israel is trying to obliterate through the creation of demographic and other facts in the eastern Arab part of the city. That this is the proper reading of the Christian position is confirmed by their response to the statement on the eastern part becoming the capital of Palestine. Over two-thirds of Christians are for this proposition and an equal number for the proposition that Palestinians and Israelis could cooperate in mutual municipal matters, on an equal basis. Christians, however, do not accept exclusivity of the city as less than one-tenth of them agree that Jerusalem is an Islamic Trust. One-third of them, however, are willing to consider that all of Jerusalem, including the Jewish part, is Palestinian. Judging, however, from the gap in response with

their Muslim compatriots, Christians base their responses more on reality than ideology.

The message of Jerusalem to Christians is not overly heavenly or ideological but more earthly. The search, apparently, is for survival and this cannot be done without acknowledging the sanctity of the city to others. Nor can it be done by injustice; obliterating facts or creating new ones in order to forge history. This will not guarantee the oneness of the city. Nor can Jerusalem be safeguarded as one city holy to all and dear to both national groups if ideology of the one side or the other triumphs. Jerusalem, therefore, must be shared on the national level and on the administrative municipal level. This is how the Christian Palestinian position on the city should be read.

This is what Christians in Israel adhere to most clearly as they are for an undivided city with its Eastern part the capital of Palestine and they are strongly for cooperation between the Palestinian and Israeli municipal councils in an undivided city. They are less likely than Christians in Palestine to support the proposition that all of Jerusalem should come under the control of Palestinians. This reflects a realistic assessment rather than taking of an ideological position.

Desired Social Order

After a century of civil strife, wars, diaspora, refugee status and military occupation, what type of government would Palestinians like?

Think of a country in which you would like to live. What do you think is best for such a country?

	Christians	Muslims	IC
PC			
A government that tries to make all people as equal as possible in wages, housing and education, even if incomes are heavily taxed.	66	58	81
69			
or			
A government that allows people who are clever and work hard to become wealthier than others?	34	42	18
27			

Shops and factories owned by private businessmen who work hard to make their businesses grow.	74	62	79
72			
or			
Shops and offices owned by the government elected by the people.	26	38	15
25			
A government which is honest and without corruption.	90	94	94
88			
or			
A government that is a little dishonest, but with some strong and inspiring leaders.	10	6	4
11			

An overwhelming majority of both groups want honest, clean government. Christians are more willing to accept egalitarian government. However, in keeping with their predilection for success on own efforts, a good majority is against government intervention in business.

Christians in Palestine are also less accepting of one-party rule, even though one-third of them are willing to contemplate the proposition. In Israel, the overwhelming majority is for a multiparty system

Think of a country in which you would like to live. What do you think is best for such a country?

	Christians	Muslims	IC
PC			
One political party with a single plan for the country's future.	33	50	12
31			
or			
More than one party, each with its own plan for the country's future.	67	50	84
64			

A government which is responsible to the elected Administrative Council (Legislative Council) and respects majority decisions. 92 87 93
90

Or

A government that strikes deals and decides what is best for the population, irrespective of the position of the elected council. 8 13 5
6

A government that controls what newspapers may write to prevent disunity. 8 13 8
6

or

A government which allows newspapers to criticise government and exercise full freedom of expression.92 87 90
89

An overwhelming majority of Palestinians, and more so Christians in Palestine and Israel, want both a government accountable to the Legislative Council and uncensored media.

Not surprisingly, Christians expect government to reach political solutions by negotiation.

A government can use different methods to protect its ability to govern a country. Think of the West Bank/Gaza today. Which of the following methods do you approve of and which do you disapprove of?

	Christians	Muslims	IC
PC			
Seeking political solutions by negotiation 90	90	79	94
Banning arms, and collecting them from groups and individuals 95	86	73	92
The prosecution of political activists who use violence 84	76	60	88

Christians show stronger support for banning and collecting arms from groups and individuals. Three-quarters of them in 1995 and over eight-tenths in 2000 favour prosecuting violent political activists, compared to only three-fifths of Muslims. Law and order is a major political priority for Christians.

Christians overwhelmingly favour democratic government, with or without power sharing.

Which one of the following do you think is the best solution for West Bank and Gaza? And for Israel? (2000 Survey).

	Christians	Muslims	IC
PC			
The largest political group rules, and the other groups accepts what it decides. 35	5	6	42
One political group rules over the others, and people that refuse to accept this have to keep quiet or leave the country. 11	3	3	3
A single party open to everyone rules without any opposition. 20	4	13	6
All people vote for any group they like, but groups form a government that ensures a share of power for all major groups. 86	41	36	24
All people vote for any group they like, and the winning group or groups rules/rule, while the other parties remain in the opposition. 74	48	43	49

The last two solutions, supported by a significant percentage of Palestinians, represent the democratic model. Clearly, Christians in Palestine are democrats. Christians in Israel also tend to be democrats but surprisingly to a significantly lower extent than their fellow Christians in Palestine. One could argue that the Israeli political environment with Arabs in the minority has definitely left disappointing and dampening effects on the practice of democracy as experienced by the Palestinian Arabs in Israel.

One illuminating finding points to the fact that three-quarters of Muslims in 1995 and close to nine-tenths of Christians in both Israel and Palestine in 2000 feel that group differences should not play any role in politics:

	Christians	Muslims	IC	PC
Obviously there are group differences between Muslims and Christians in this country, but they should be kept out of politics.	91	75	88	88

On the other hand, Christians, particularly in Israel, are more optimistic about future relations between Israel and Palestine even though there is a decline in this optimism among Christians in Palestine between 1995 and 2000:

	Christians	Muslims	IC	PC
Israel and Palestine will be good neighbours in the future.	62	37	76	55

But how do Christians and other Palestinians feel about future prospects in general? They tend to be more optimistic than the general population.

Think about life in West Bank/Gaza and in Israel. How do you think you will feel in three years' time?

	Christians	Muslims	IC	PC
Very happy with life	15	12	15	15
Just happy, but not very happy	33	26	44	42
Neither happy nor unhappy	31	32	12	17
Unhappy with life	13	19	9	16
Angry and impatient with life	8	11	13	7

Over half of all Christians in 2000 feel that they will be just happy or very happy in three years' time. Less numbers of Christians than Muslims would

expect to be in the middle, i.e., neither happy nor unhappy. Thus, the Palestinians, in spite of what they say and do, are cautiously optimistic about the future. A little over one-tenth of Christians expect to be unhappy and less than one-tenth angry and impatient with life. A significant minority of 13 percent in Israel expect to be angry and impatient with life in three years' time which could be a reflection of the feeling of being caught up in a system from which there is no escape or opportunities for mobility.

Choosing Identity Paper

If you could freely choose between different Identity papers, which one would you prefer?

	Palestinian Territories	East Jerusalem	Israel
IC	9	3	83
PC	41	36	21

Preference for which identity paper to have indicates that Palestinian Christians in Israel in the great majority stick to the ID paper given by Israel. Nevertheless, a minority of just below 10 percent would like to have the ID of the Palestinian Territories while 3 percent would be satisfied with that of East Jerusalem that is also issued by Israel but entitles the bearer only to permanent residency and not to citizenship rights.

On the other end, 41 percent of Palestinian Christians would prefer the ID papers of their authority, while the other six-tenths are not that certain as they opt for the ID papers of either East Jerusalem or of Israel. This lack of certainty could be attributed to lack of clarity in the general situation and the inability of the Palestinian Authority to clearly delineate obligations and benefits of its citizens.

Situation of Christians in Palestine and Israel

There are different opinions on the situation of Christians in West Bank and Gaza and in Israel:

Our life is difficult regardless if we are Christians or Muslims

IC	38
----	----

PC	59
----	----

Palestinian Christians encounter difficulties in life more than Muslims

IC	58
----	----

PC	40
----	----

Palestinian Christians in the Palestinian Territories are more of the opinion than their Israeli counterparts that life is equally difficult regardless of religious background. Palestinian Christians in Israel are of the exact opposite opinion expressing their belief that Palestinian Christians, in Palestine and Israel, encounter more difficulties than their Muslim compatriots.

Tensions in Bethlehem and Nazareth

Do you think that there is tension between Christians and Muslims in Bethlehem?

	YES	NO
IC	52	40
PC	45	53

Over half of Christians in Israel and over four-tenths in Palestine believe that there is tension in Bethlehem.

Do you think tension in Bethlehem is because of:

	Islamic Fundamentalists	Christian Fundamentalists	Palestinian Authority	Israeli Govt.
IC	23	1	3	29
PC	28	2	8	15

Palestinian Christians in Israel feel that both Islamic fundamentalists and the Israeli government share responsibility for tensions in Bethlehem. While four-tenths of respondents did not offer an opinion. The Palestinian Christians in Palestine feel that the blame is more on Islamic fundamentalists followed by blame on the Israeli government while almost half of the respondents did not volunteer an opinion. A small minority in both groups believe that the Palestinian National Authority is to blame.

When we turn to tensions in Nazareth, there is a total agreement, in both Palestinian Christian groups, on whose responsibility it is.

Do you think tensions in Nazareth are the fault of:

	Islamic	Christian	Mayor	
Israeli				
	Fundamentalists	Fundamentalists	of Nazareth	
Government	32	1	3	62
PC	33	1	2	62

This total agreement of putting the blame primarily on the Israeli government and secondly on Muslim fundamentalists has to do with an identical perception of the way the Israeli government mishandled the Shehab Eddin Mosque affair in Nazareth. The responsibility of the Israeli government, according to Palestinian Christians in both Israel and Palestine, was even greater than that of the Islamic fundamentalists who fermented their position into a political and religious issue.

Perceived Threats to Christians in Israel and Palestine

Palestinian Christians in Israel

	1 st threat	2 nd threat	3 rd threat
1) Islamization	35	13	5
2) Economic Deterioration	33	29	11
3) emigration	12	1	5
4) Lack of Identity	6	7	8
5) Judaisation	5	23	15
6) Unemployment	5	13	36

Palestinian Christians in Palestine

	1 st threat	2 nd threat	3 rd threat
1) Emigration	41	10	9
2) Economic deterioration	24	30	13
3) Islamization	17	12	8
4) Lack of Identity	4	3	9
5) Inter-marriage	3	4	12

Over one-third of Christians in Israel perceive Islamization as the number one threat. This is undisputably due to the Shehab Eddin Mosque affair but also to the fact that political Islam has made important gains among

Muslims in Israel. This development accentuates the political and social distance between the Christian and Muslim communities and increases the feeling of separateness by the Arab Christians in Israel. One-third of respondents in Israel also perceive the economic situation as an almost equal threat to the Christians in Israel. This indicates that mundane preoccupations are as important as ideological ones. Both are perceived as equally threatening. Slightly over one-tenth feel that emigration is a threat to the Palestinian Christian community in Israel. This is surprisingly a much lower percentage than in Palestine and it could reflect the reality that no large scale emigration has taken place in Israel.

In Palestine, the first three threats are similar to those perceived in Israel except in a reversed order. Thus emigration is seen as the number one threat by over four-tenths of respondents followed by economic deterioration with almost one-quarter of respondents indicating it as the second threat. Islamization is perceived by less than one-fifth of respondents as the third threat to the community. These responses reflect the reality that in terms of Christian-Muslim relations in Palestine, there was nothing comparable to the Shehab Eddin Mosque affair that could have heightened religious sensitivities. Besides, relationships between Christians and Muslims in Palestine have been known historically to be excellent relationships characterized by openness and mutual respect.

Christians in Israel are not only sensitive to their Muslim neighbors, but they appear to be much more so to their Jewish neighbors:

Do you think that Christian-Jewish relations have:

	Improved	deteriorated	remained the same
IC	3	85	10
PC	17	36	46

Thus an overwhelming majority of Christians in Israel believe that relations with their Jewish neighbors have deteriorated. No doubt this belief is also tied to the way the Shehab Eddin Mosque affair has been handled by the Israeli government. This reflects the feeling of Christians in Israel that not only the Israeli government but also the Jewish population, in general, are not sensitive to their religious feelings. Surprisingly in Palestine, Christians do not share these same feelings as close to one-fifth believe that relations with the Jews have improved and only slightly over

one-third think that they have deteriorated. Again, the context in which one finds oneself has a definite effect on perceptions and attitudes.

Do you think that Christian-Muslim relations have:

	Improved	deteriorated	remained the same
IC	4	56	28
PC	10	23	52

Christians in Israel seem to have been caught at a moment of crisis not simply with the Jews but also with Muslims as well over half of them think that Christian Muslim relations in Israel have deteriorated. In contrast, only slightly more than one-fifth of their counterparts in Palestine believe so. But the sensitivity of Christian-Muslim relations shows itself in only small minorities of both Christian groups in Israel and Palestine expressing their belief that Christian-Muslim relations have improved.

Outlook

Palestinian Christians in Israel and Palestine, like other Palestinians, are in the midst of a crisis situation. On the one hand, there is the second Intifadah with all its promises and stresses; on the other, the Sharon-led Israeli government accentuates the polarization towards the right in Israel. Where would Palestinian Christians go and how should they proceed in light of political, social and economic challenges facing them and their societies? Emigration is a choice that indicates giving up; its exercise further weakens the community and society in spite of the relative retrieve and comfort that it may provide those who exercise it. The realistic option is for Palestinian Christians to become immersed in the affairs of their societies and to insist on constructing social, political and economic agendas that are all inclusive. As citizens of both Palestine and Israel, Palestinian Christians should exercise their right to shape the future together with the forces in their societies that aspire for similar goals and objectives, irrespective of religious, cultural and other backgrounds. The primary issues in Palestine and Israel are not religious in nature; they are political, social and economic. Reducing the problems and issues to difference of religion or projecting on them religious sensitivities will certainly not help; on the contrary, it would complicate things and render solutions impossible.

Footnotes

(1). See: Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, Current Status Report, Series No. 1, Demography of the Palestinian Population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, December 1994 and also Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1998.

(2). The findings of the 1995 survey were published in Theodor Hanf and Bernard Sabella's A Date with Democracy: Palestinians on Society and Politics. An Empirical Survey, Arnold Bergstraesser Institut, Freiburg i. Br. 1996.

(3) The 1995 survey was conducted in collaboration with Prof. Theodor Hanf of the Arnold Bergstraesse Institut of Freiburg, Germany. The 2000 survey was also conducted in collaboration with him and with Ms. Kirsten Schulze of the London School of Economics. Both surveys were supported by the German Catholic Bishops' Conference. In the 2000 survey, two samples were selected in both Israel and Palestine: in Israel the sample was composed of 374 adults distributed into 218 males or 58% and 156 females or 42%. The geographic spread of the sample included the following cities: Acre, Haifa, Jaffa, Nazareth, Shafa 'amr and Tel Aviv. The sample also covered the following villages: Al Maghar, Al Maker, Deir Hanna, Eilaboun and Kufr Kanna and Tur'an. In Palestine, the sample was made up of 564 adults; 346 males or 76% and 109 females or 24%. The sample was derived from the following cities and towns: Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour, Birzeit, Jerusalem, Rafidia (Nablus) and Ramallah. The villages represented in the sample were Aboud, Jifna, Taybeh and Zababdeh.

(4) For estimates of Christians in Palestine and Israel, as well as in other countries in the Middle East, see Jean-Pierre Valognes' Vie et mort des Chretiens d'Orient: des origines a nos jours, Fayard, Paris, 1994. Other publications of relevance: Daphne Tsimhoni's Christian Communities in Jerusalem and the West Bank since 1948: An Historical, Social and Political Study, Praeger, Westport, Conn. 1993; Andrea Pacini's edited work Christian Communities in the Arab Middle East: The Challenge of the Future, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998.

(5) Kossaibi, George "Demographic Characteristics of the Arab Palestine People," in Khalil Nakhleh and Elia Zureik, The Sociology of the Palestinians, Croom Helm, London, 1980. p. 18.

(6) Sabella, Bernard, "The Emigration of Christian Arabs: The Dimensions and Causes of the Phenomenon," in in Andrea Pacini (ed.) Christian Communities in the Arab Middle East: The Challenge of the Future, Clarendon Press Oxford, 1998. For Christian population figures in the countries of the Middle East and changes in them over time, see Fargues, Philippe "The Arab Christians of the Middle East: A Demographic Perspective," in Andrea Pacini (ed.) Christian Communities in the Arab Middle East: The Challenge of the Future, Clarendon Press Oxford, 1998 .

(7) On interpretations for what occurred in Nazareth see Ashkar, Ahmed Self Destruction – The Nazareth Example: Conflict In Shehab Eddin Theater, Al Mashriq/Al ‘Amel, Ramallah, 2000. Ashkar reflects on the underlying political and economic causes for the conflict and blames both Muslim and Christian groups for ‘religionizing’ the issue. Other interpretations are those offered by Father Drew Christiansen "What Lurks Behind The Nazareth Mosque?" Woodstock Theological Center, Georgetown University, September 2000. Father Christiansen is a senior fellow of Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown University. He also serves as counselor on international affairs for the U.S. Catholic Conference focusing especially on the Middle East. On the implications of the Shehab Eddin issue on the papal visit to the Holy Land, see Christianity Today, "Nazareth Mosque Dispute Darkens Papal Visit to Israel," Week of November 29, 1999. The author also gives his interpretation of the Nazareth dispute in "Palestinian Christians: Population, Interreligious Relations and the Second Intifada", a chapter contribution to an upcoming book on Palestinian Christians co-authored by Kirsten Schulze of London School of Economics and Theodor Hanf of the Arnold Bergstraesser Institut of Freiburg, Germany.