



פרק 1

רישום התושבים תש"ט (מפקד 1948)

Population Registration (1948 Census)



הלשכה המרכזית לסטטיסטיקה
Central Bureau of Statistics
دائرة الإحصاء المركزية

Disembarkation of immigrants from the immigration ship "United Nations" on the coast of Nahariyya, January 1st 1948. Palmach Photo Gallery.

הורדת מעפילים מאוניית המעפילים "האומות המאוחדות" בחוף נהרייה, 1 בינואר 1948. אוצר תמונות הפלמ"ח.

Chapter 1: Population Registration (1948 Census)

Introduction

The population registration conducted in November 1948 was not a population census in the conventional sense of the word. Three goals motivated Israel's Provisional Government to organize this operation, although the State was still in a process of formation and war:

- A. Organization of the elections for the Constituent Assembly (First Knesset). There was no possibility of holding democratic elections without the orderly registration of all residents of the country or at least of all eligible voters.
- B. Laying the foundation for a permanent register of Israeli residents (Registration of Population) and the creation of a card index containing data on each resident of Israel (punch cards intended for mechanical sorting and tabulating).
- C. Obtaining statistical figures on the size, composition and geographical distribution of the population.

In light of the above, the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Government of Israel decided – only a few months after its establishment – to undertake the Registration of the Population, although it was clear from a scientific point of view that the time was not right for carrying out a detailed and accurate census. Furthermore, mass immigration began during the second half of 1948, and it was advisable to carry out the registration of the population before it underwent a radical change. The registration was mainly designed to depict the position of the population during the transition from the Mandate period to that of Independence.

Difficulties in Conducting the Registration

Carrying out the Registration of the Population in a time of war involved many difficulties, such as the need to collect two sets of material (one for the civilian population and another for the military which was constantly on the move); the fact that many residents lived far away from their permanent place of residence and did not work in their profession; unusual difficulties in recruiting the manpower needed to carry out such an extensive operation, due to mobilization for military service and local work; disruption of transportation precisely at the time it was urgent to quickly transfer and distribute the registration forms. The work was made particularly difficult by the demands to terminate all the stages of the operation within a very short time.

On the day of registration, November 8, 1948, a curfew was imposed. Upon completion of the registration procedure, each resident was given a registration slip with the identification number determined for the registrant. The curfew was strictly observed, and there was no need to take coercive measures – a very important thing for a population that experienced unpleasant curfews during the Mandate government.

On January 25, 1949, 78 days after the Registration of the Population, the elections for the first Knesset were held in exemplary order and without any serious complaints as to their integrity. Approximately 440,000 men and woman voters participated in the elections, out of 507,000 eligible voters – 87.8% – the highest turnout in the history of the State.

Registration of the Non-Jewish Population

The detailed compilation of the registration material included only the Jewish population; detailed information on the entire population was unobtainable for the following reasons:

- A. On the day of the census, non-Jews were not registered in entire regions (such as the Western Galilee, the Negev) owing to the war. In other regions, this population was enumerated only partly.
- B. At the end of 1948 and the beginning of 1949, the registration of non-Jews was further supplemented. However, owing to war conditions, and fluctuations in the non-Jewish population (territorial changes resulting from the ceasefire agreements, return of residents, etc.) it was not possible to consolidate the material on the entire non-Jewish population.
- C. The nomadic Bedouin population in the Negev was also registered in part only, due to the mobility of the tribes, and their registration was completed only at a later date.

Types of Maps

Historical maps: The chapter presents original historical maps from the first Statistical Abstract for Israel. These maps present data on the Jewish population and the first waves of immigration after the establishment of the State. The maps are presented without any editing.

Thematic maps – 1948 census: In 1953, the CBS published the Population Register. This publication summarized the results of the 1948 census. Part A of the publication contained a uniform demographic summary for each of the Jewish localities that were surveyed and summaries by census areas. A key map of the census areas was also presented in the work. For this atlas the key map was digitized and the census summaries were entered into a computer, according to these areas. Using geographic information systems, these operations made it possible to produce a series of thematic maps based on CBS data, which broadly describes, for the first time, the demographic and economic characteristics of the Jewish settlement at the time of the establishment of the State. The borders of the state appear approximately as they appeared in the original key map, and in fact describe the border situation as it was after the end of the War of Independence, since at the time of the census the war was not over, and it was not clear what the state borders would be.