

Youth Palestinian Legislative Council



The Palestinian Youth Legislative Council met for the first time since the official announcement of the results on October 2nd 2013. This meeting saw the 132 elected youth from both the West Bank and Gaza strip representing the 16 winning electoral lists gather to begin their discussions; even members living in Gaza communicated with the rest of the Youth Council via Skype. Such internet-based interaction has been a defining feature of the programme. An amazing 47,007 young people registered to vote online, including 14,595 from the Gaza Strip. This electronic system was designed especially for the YPLC to ensure that voting was accurate, rapid and cost-effective, and to deal with the territorial division imposed by Israel.

Since the formation of the second Palestinian Legislative Council in 2006, its democratic practices and roles have not taken effect in the occupied Palestinian Territories due to the Hamas-Fateh conflict and the fact that Israel has imprisoned many of its members. As a result, a great gap between the understanding

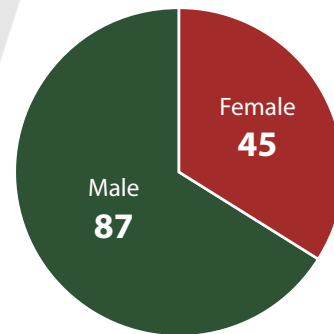
of democracy and its practices has been created, especially among the Palestinian youth. The YPLC thus aims to increase youth participation in politics by providing a platform for the practice of democratic processes. Each one of the 132 elected members must meet, plan, participate and ultimately agree on the policies at the forefront of their campaigns. Sharek simply acts as the facilitator and organising body for the Council. The youths' enthusiasm for the programme is evident in the amount of time members spend communicating with one another. As they live in different cities around the West Bank and Gaza strip, Facebook and Skype are the only way for the members to have informal meetings and share ideas. Furthermore, because 44 of the winning candidates are located in Gaza they are unable to travel to the West Bank. The internet enables the youth in Gaza to be actively involved in the Youth Parliament. 'We speak every day by mobile phone or through social media to discuss new ideas,' Yazan Al-Zubaidy, member of *The Country's Youth* list.

"Even though this is a model of the real PLC, we hope that it will set an example and tell everybody in Palestine that we are here and that we want change".

Juliana Zanayed, Member of Palestinian list.

"More than 47,000 youth participated in the election, more than 29000 voted, 14595 of them are from Gaza, 132 elected youth legislative members."





City	Members in YPLC
Gaza	44
Jenin	3
Tulkarm	5
Salfit	2
Nablus	12
Ramallah	3
Jericho	2
Jerusalem	5
Beit Lehem	15
Hebron	38
Qalqilia	3
Total	132

A number of winning electoral lists from the YPLC, about their values and aspirations for the future, and everyone expressed a need for change. It is clear that the situation in Palestine has continued to worsen for youth, with youth unemployment reaching levels above 30%.

A number of the electoral lists focus specifically on education, the economy and women's rights. More than 50% of the list *A Palestinian Future* are female and they work with youth around Palestine to raise awareness of women's issues. The programme directors insisted that, at least, a third of the seats are held by women.

Yazan Al-Zubaidy explained how the council brings people together, but that it is, 'not about elections, but the result of elections and what will happen'. He went on to add that 'the Palestinian youth are the major population, but they are not the major contributors to politics. This is something we need to change'.

Another electoral lists, *Palestinians*, places a specific focus on refugees and the Palestinian Diaspora living abroad. They are focusing on the rights of refugees and how to, 'develop society, starting with children and youth'. *The Palestinians' list* also has a largely political agenda and expressed a hope to mend the conflict between Fatah and Hamas.

Not only does the YPLC program provide youth with a platform to initiate change, it encourages them to form groups of forward thinking people who are eager to put ideas into practice on the ground. It encourages these groups to meet regularly and enables them to create further projects outside of the Legislative Council. One of these is a program run by *Liberty for Prisoners*. They operate a summer encounter program that brings Palestinians from abroad to Palestine for a summer to teach them about their heritage.

Many youth are calling for unity and are eager to voice their opinions about what is necessary for change. They are educated and motivated and the YPLC has given these 132 Palestinian youths the opportunity to create real change, and move Palestine forward towards a more proactive future.

The following lists were awarded seats in the Palestinian Legislative Youth Council:

- National Democratic Alliance: 16 seats
- Prisoners of Freedom: 15 seats
- Freedom and Future for Youth: 13 seats
- National Unity: 10 seats
- Palestinian National List: 9 seats
- We are Here, Where are You?: 8 seats
- Palestine: 8 seats
- Yes We Can: 8 seats
- Independent List of Palestine of Tomorrow: 8 seats
- Palestinian: 7 seats
- Jerusalem, the Capital City: 6 seats
- Palestine of Tomorrow: 6 seats
- The Hope of Tomorrow: 5 seats
- Homeland Youth: 5 seats
- Youth Caucus National Accord: 4 seats
- Youth Development: 4 seats

For more Information visit www.yplc.ps , or contact Sharek directly on 022967742.

