
**United Nations Group of Experts On
Geographical Names
2019 session**

New York, 29 April – 3 May 2019

Item 5 (a) of the agenda *

**Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the
standardization of geographical names**

**National Report on Progress made in the standardization of
geographical names**

Submitted by the State of Palestine**

*GEGN.2/2019/1

** Prepared by the Palestine National Committee for Geographic Names (PNCGN)

Palestine National Committee on Geographic Names

Report

1th New UNGEGN session

New York, 29/4-3/5 April 2019

“National Report on Progress made in the standardization of geographical names- Agenda item 5”

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1 Context

The Palestine National Committee on Geographic Names (PNCGN) was formed based on the decree of the Palestine Council of Minister's in August 2010, in order to take care of all issues related to geographic names in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This decision aligns with the recommendations and resolutions of the United Nations, particularly those that emerged from the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) which encourages member states to establish national committees to be in charge of geographic names. Moreover, this decision reinforces the desire of the State of Palestine to extend its presence and participation in all United Nations entities, especially after the recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer state in the United Nations, taken by the Nations General Assembly in 2012. In addition, the formation of PNCGN confirms the comprehensive awareness and the realization of benefits of the standardization of geographic names and toponyms, as they carry historical, social, cultural, political, and economical components for any country, as well as identifying the characteristics and relationships between people, language, and place.

In January 2015, the PNCGN provided the Councils of Ministers with a list of recommendations relating to geographical names in Palestine. As a first action, the Council of Ministers requested the Ministry of Local Government (MOLG) to review and verify the spelling, pronunciation, and spatial locations of around 15,000 points that represent the names of all sites and features in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, according to British maps printed in 1942. MOLG completed the task and made it reachable by a web mapping application, known as geomolg. In 2016, MOLG became the Chair of the PNCGN, and wanted to expand and activate its role in the Arab Division for Group of Experts in Geographic Names (ADGEGN), United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), and to promptly participate in United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN).

2 Members of PNCGN

Structurally, the PNCGN consists of members from governmental, private, academic, and NGO institutions. The multidisciplinary members of PNCGN facilitate and ease coming up with mature work and output that significantly serves the scope and vision of forming the PNCGN. More specifically, the PNCGN includes representatives from the following agencies:

1. Ministry of Local Government (Chair),
2. Ministry of Transportation,
3. Ministry of Religious Affairs,
4. Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities,
5. Palestine Land Authority (PLA),
6. Commission on Land and Water Settlement
7. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS),
8. Negotiation Affairs Department (NAD)
9. Office of the Presidency
10. Palestinian Academic Institutions (An-Najah National University, Birzeit University, and Al-Quds University), various NGO's and
11. Private Sector organisations.

3 Key Tasks of the PNCGN

The main duties of the PNCGN can be summarized as follows:

1. Unifying geographical names in the West Bank and Gaza Strip
2. Preserving Arabic names for all locations and features as a reflection of culture and heritage
3. Raising awareness of the importance of authoritative geographic names
4. Protecting local geographical names from external influences
5. Creating an electronic database to store geographic names in spatial format
6. Preparing an Atlas of the geographical names
7. Creating names for newly constructed geographical features and communities
8. Applying national and international standards for geographic names
9. Promoting the usage of authoritative geographic names in official documents, maps, Atlas and Gazetteers.

4 Summary for the activities of PNCGN since the 30th UNGEGN session (August 2017)

The activities of PNCGN since the 30th UNGEGN session (August 2017) can be summarized as the following:

1. Holding 5 meetings to discuss all issues related to geographic names
2. Releasing the first issue of the Atlas on Geographic Names for the State of Palestine in Arabic language to be the first official reference in field.
 - a. Around 2,000 Geographic Names are included
 - b. The Geographic Names are plotted on top of an orthophoto for 2016
 - c. The scale of maps available in Atlas is 1:15,000
3. There are ongoing efforts to issue an Atlas for geographic names for the State of Palestine in accordance with unified romanization system approved in 2017
4. Sharing and updating the geographic names via Geomolg Portal (Geomolg.ps) to facilitate approaching them with an online tool.
5. Two new organizations have been added to the PNCGN:
 - a. Commission on Land and Water Settlement
 - b. Office of the Presidency

6. The participation in the 30th UNGEGN session and 11th UNCSGN held in New York during 7-18 August 2017
7. Preparation for the participation in 1st new UNGEGN session (April 2019)