

Zaytoun village profile

Al Rameh cooperative

15 members

1200 people



This year we are proud to host **Abu Kamal**, an **olive farmer from Al Rameh** and part of the Palestine Fair Trade Association. The village of Al-Rameh, also known as *the Lebanon of Palestine*, is located 20km southwest of the city of Jenin. While the population of Al-Rameh does not exceed 1200 people, the 15 members of the PFTA cooperative produce an estimate of 10 tons of olive oil annually. Spread over 4,768 dunums (1 dunum=1000m²) of hills and valleys, Al-Rameh's agricultural outputs include a colorful array of crops from wheat, barley, white corn, okra, eggplants, olives and even bananas!

Another farmer in the Al Rameh cooperative, Abu Wail, declares that "we have the best olive oil". As in most villages, people in Al-Rameh take special pride in their olive oil. *"Our climate is perfect for the olive tree and this is why our olive oil is very good. We also produce cheese and it is also excellent but that is mostly because we are honest with what we make. I am proud of this and I am proud to say that I would vouch for anyone in my village that they always offer people the purest of what they harvest."*

Like every village in Palestine, Al Rameh's farmers struggle with the twin challenges of the occupation and climate change. According to Fida, *"we only get water four days a week and we have to spare as much of it as possible. This is a result of a political reality and when you combine it with a changing climate it becomes extra difficult for our community."* Most farmers describe this impact on their lands as *"the loss of the blessing in the soil"*.

These poetic expressions are based in a rooted spirituality that people in Palestine have had with their environment for hundreds of years, and in Al-Rameh people's expressions highlight this living history. Agricultural poetry and song have a special place in the hearts of many but especially the older folks who remember the days when women and men working in the fields sang for each other. 85 year old Um Atif still sings many of these oral treasures. *"My husband used to serenade me during olive harvest season. We would be climbing the trees and picking and singing songs to each other. There was so much love. Women who picked olives from the ground had to respond with specific versus to men who were picking from the branches."*

With her now fragile voice she sings, *"ya dayti ya dayti el laqata ya gharqa bilzeit o el riqqa"* which translates to *"my hands, my picking hands, drowned in olive oil and riqqa"*. This song refers to a popular dish women made during the olive season called Riqqa Adas. Riqqa is dough made from wheat, flattened, folded, and then cut into strips similar to homemade pasta. This pasta is added to sautéed onions and lentils and then left to simmer making a hearty meal that is perfect for keeping good energy during long days of work. And according to Um Atif, it is a good way to bring people together because *"everyone loves El Riqqa!"*

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