

Zaytoun village profile



Deir Istya village

4000 people

28 cooperative members

Zaytoun works with over fifty farmer cooperatives throughout the West Bank, sourcing fairly traded olive oil, almonds, dates, couscous, herbs and soap.

We've been following the story of the farmers in Deir Istya over the last few years – this hilltop village of around 4000 people has an ancient history, with an ancient fort. The cooperative, established in 2004 with 28 members, is vital to the village's economy – there are three oil presses and two processing plants – and it was one of the first cooperatives to gain Fairtrade and organic certification for its olive oil production.

However, the village has lost most of its land and olive groves to a ring of illegal Israeli settlements and the separation wall. Included in the lands is the fertile valley of Wadi Qana. Blessed with many water springs and the Wadi Qana river, it has been a source of pride to the villagers who have long grazed their animals and cultivated many crops here, as well as gathering wild herbs. All of the springs have local names, including Ein al Maghassel, “the source of the washing place,” where women came during Ottoman times to wash clothes and carpets. Until recently some families lived next to their farms here, yet a few years ago access to their lands was prevented by the Israeli military and life became intolerable – the families moved up the hill into Deir Istya village. The clear water has also been polluted by raw sewage that is pumped out from the nearby illegal settlements – Immanuel and Revava. This is despite the Israeli nomination of the valley as a Nature Reserve!

Contact Zaytoun

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