

Facts about Jordan Valley Solidarity

To Exist is to
RESIST

Save The Jordan Valley



1. Who is Jordan Valley Solidarity (JVS)?

Jordan Valley Solidarity is a network of Palestinian grassroots community groups from all over the Jordan Valley and international supporters. Our aims are to protect Palestinian existence and the unique environment of the Jordan Valley by building international support and supporting communities on the ground.

This includes monitoring, recording and aiming to prevent the abuse of Palestinian human rights by the Israeli occupation and settlers.

The situation in the Jordan Valley is very serious. The Israeli military occupation since 1967 has been attempting to gradually annex the area (which is 28% of the occupied West Bank). Comments made by Netanyahu in March 2010, and previously by Olemert, have left us in no doubt about their intentions. On the ground they are seeking to control more and more



of the Jordan Valley by expanding their illegal Israeli colonies and trying to drive Palestinians from their land through house demolitions, movement restrictions, curfews, arbitrary arrest and detention, land confiscations, and denial of access to water, electricity, health and education.

In 2003, several community members in the Jordan Valley came together to try to build a community-based campaign to defend the indigenous community's presence. Today, the campaign continues to grow, and has spread to all of the Palestinian communities in the Valley. As a grassroots campaign we rely entirely on community members volunteering their time and energy, and support from individuals and organizations that support our aims and activities.

We have no budget to speak of, or any sources of funding, except in the rare cases that a person or an institution comes forward willing to fund a project that the campaign has undertaken. Since its inception, the campaign has been open to working with any individual or organization that shares its political analysis of the problem facing the Palestinians of the Jordan Valley and shares the commitment to maintain and strengthen Palestinian presence in the Valley.

The Campaign's activities center around non-violent actions, which strengthen the steadfastness of Palestinians in the Valley. Our work varies, depending on the needs and priorities of the local communities, but in recent years we have:

- supported villages such as Fasayil and Ka'abne to build community schools
- helped several different communities to run water pipes to their local area
- mobilized local communities around rebuilding structures destroyed by the Israeli occupation
- built roads so people can more easily access their homes
- mobilized and educated Jordan Valley communities about the traditional methods of building using homemade hay-and-clay bricks

The second major task of the campaign is raising awareness about

the plight of Palestinians in the Jordan Valley and the urgency of supporting them both at the national and international level. This is particularly important given that it is a topic most often ignored in discussions about Palestine and the occupation. This advocacy work is carried out through:

- preparing written, audio, and visual materials that advocates of Palestinian rights can use
- trying to attract media attention to the situation in the Jordan Valley
- offering eyewitness tours for visitors to Palestine so they can see for themselves what is described above
- persuading international agencies to operate in the Jordan Valley, to provide the services most needed by the local community, and to monitor the effects of the Israeli policies and practices on the people and the land.

The Campaign continues to face several challenges. One of the first obstacles is the large distance between the communities of the 150 km long Jordan Valley. There is no cost-effective public transport available to Palestinians in the Valley, including the campaign organizers. While dealing directly and in-person with community members is the ideal means of communication, the use of phones and other communication technology is also very expensive, since there is no Palestinian communication infrastructure outside of the Area A and B towns and villages, and the Israeli alternative is costly. The Internet is completely useless as a means of communication within the Valley given that only an extremely tiny minority has Internet access. The dearth of sources of funding that would allow for the Campaign to sustain itself as an independent grassroots initiative is a further major challenge.

Despite these challenges the Campaign continues based on the determination of the people of the Jordan Valley to remain steadfast on their land, and in the ongoing struggle to regain the land and resources taken from them, the Palestinians of the Jordan Valley.

2. Why the Jordan Valley

The Jordan Valley is situated over the Eastern Water Basin. However, Palestinians in the area suffer from a lack of access to water due to Israeli restrictions and copious usage. They are only permitted to use 40% of the water in this basin or approximately 58 million cubic meters (mcm) of water per year. Since its occupation in 1967, Israel has monopolized, destroyed and exhausted the area's water resources. Over the last four decades, Israel has isolated 162 agricultural wells in the Jordan Valley, prohibiting Palestinians from using them.

With discriminatory allocations, Israel controls where wells can be placed, how deep they can run and how much water can be pumped from them. Consequently, Palestinians are left to use dirty water from unconditioned, neglected water sources, because, oftentimes, untreated settlement water seeps into Palestinian artesian wells and springs. Israel also forbids Palestinians from using the Jordan River, which would provide 250 million cubic liters of water per year.

Furthermore, due to various Israeli restrictions, settlers in the Jordan Valley, who cultivate around 27,000 dunums (6,672 acres) of land, consume



about 41 mcm of water per year. They mainly extract Palestinian water sources, in addition to restricting its access to the Palestinians, to cultivate their lands. In contrast, Palestinians cultivate about 53,000 dunums of the valley's land, consuming 37 mcm of water per year. According to a 2009 Save the Children factsheet, 9,400 Israeli settlers consume 6.6 times more water than the 56,000 Palestinian residents. As in the rest of Area C settlers receive 75% discounts on their water bills.

Israel also fully controls the Dead Sea and denies Palestinian rights to access its water, minerals and shores. Palestinians should have control of 30% of the Dead Sea as its border, but since 1967 they are prohibited from using or investing in the area. Israel has also exhausted Dead Sea water, threatening its existence over the next 20 years. As a result of the lack of water draining into the Dead Sea from the Jordan River and wadis, as well as Israel's excessive pumping of sea water, aerial photos show the Dead Sea splitting into two separate, smaller lakes. Additionally, Israel is excessively pumping water out of the sea and reserving water coming from the western valleys of the Jordan River, which further exhausts available water and decreases the annual amount of water drained into the Dead Sea.

A 2009 Amnesty International report documented Israeli restrictions on Palestinian access to water in the valley (P53):

"In recent years, during the summer months, the Israeli army has also stepped up pressure on Palestinian herder communities to force them out of the Jordan Valley by confiscating their water tankers and depriving the villagers and their flocks of water at the height of the hot season."

The report refers to the Israeli denial of access to nearby wells to villagers in Ras al Ahmar, Humsa and Hadidiya, securing exclusive access for the agricultural settlements of Ro'i, Beka'ot and Hamdat.

Measures of Israel's Control over Jordan Valley Water

Isolating and destroying 162 irrigation projects east of Road 90, claiming they were closed for security purposes. Israel also destroyed wide areas of irrigated fields, denying thousands of Palestinians their only source of income—agriculture—and prohibiting any further development or reconditioning of the wells;

Preventing Palestinians from using their share of 250 million cubic meters of the Jordan River; destroying Palestinian agricultural projects along the banks. Moreover, Israel closed up to five meters of the western Jordan River and is draining excessive amounts of river and wadi water to feed the huge reservoir lakes it built;

Controlling underground water and digging wells at critical depths, which hit the salt beds and cause the water to be salty.;

Situating new Jewish-only wells near Palestinian springs, drying out or using much of the Palestinian water. In the past, these wells served the Palestinians with 6 million cubic meters per year, but now Palestinians must buy water from the Mekorot;

Closing most areas that have a good capacity to hold water for military zones, natural reserves or other security reasons;

Prohibiting Palestinians from digging new or reallocating wells, causing the Palestinian wells to have small depths. Additionally, Israel measures the amount of water used by the Palestinians and imposes fines on those who exceed the allocated amount;

Polluting the springs and underground water by not controlling the leakage of sewage water from the settlements.

Israel's justification for occupying the Jordan Valley has always been security purposes. Thus, consecutive Israeli governments have implemented plans that will grant complete control of the area. Through such policies and acts, Israel continues efforts to eliminate the Palestinian presence in the Jordan Valley and isolate it from the West Bank in order to create facts on the ground before executing a unilateral plan that will exclude the region from the West Bank.



The Israeli Cabinet adopted a project to encourage young Israeli couples to settle in the Jordan Valley, including promises and plans to develop the agricultural and tourism levels in the area and to confiscate more Palestinian land for settlement expansion. Israel has also tried to bypass the 2004 advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice, which declared the construction of the Wall in the West Bank illegal, by implementing a series of procedures that guarantee eventual completion of its previous development and settlement plans. In other words, by surrounding the Jordan Valley with checkpoints, closures and roadblocks and confiscating more land for settlements and military bases, Israel is securing segregation to be a fact on the ground. These occupation policies place Palestinians under siege in cantons.

Although Palestinians can still cultivate any land remaining after Israeli confiscation and colonization, Israel prohibits Palestinians from constructing any infrastructure or other development projects, such as reclaiming of agricultural land, opening agricultural roads or extending irrigation networks. Moreover, Israel continues to confiscate land, demolish homes and prevent rehabilitation of existing houses and roads of the Palestinians, but maintains plans for settlement expansion and infrastructure development for Israeli settlers in the Jordan Valley.

The Palestinian communities in the Jordan Valley suffer from severe shortage in basic services. Most communities, especially those located in Area C, are not connected to electricity, water, telephone or sewage networks in addition to lacking public transportation.

The development of the Jordan Valley, in terms of the Palestinians, has never been on the agenda, and Israeli has refused all demands raised by residents to provide these basic services. Consequently, many Palestinian communities still live in harsh, primitive conditions with no access to any kind of service. The following gives an overview of basic services in the Jordan Valley:

Health

There are only 24 health clinics in the Jordan Valley, operated by the Palestinian Ministry of Health and civil organizations, such as the Palestinian Medical Relief Committees, Palestinian Red Crescent, Union of Health Work Committees and UNRWA. The clinic buildings, however, are very old and/or poorly constructed from concrete, metal sheets and tents. Israeli policy prohibits the construction of health clinics as it does with housing or other kinds of infrastructure. They also threaten to demolish any illegal building or reconditioning of clinics. Consequently, health services in the Jordan Valley are almost non-existent and, if available, never meet the needs of the population, particularly in emergency situations. And due to occupation policies, civil organizations are limited in capacities and cannot provide dependable primary healthcare. For example, health clinics are only open 2-3 days/week for about 2 hours/day. Any critical cases or emergencies must be transferred to hospitals in the major cities. And oftentimes, Israeli soldiers place obstacles at checkpoints for medical staff, often forcing them into long, detailed searches. As a result, patients are delayed in receiving medical attention. The hospital in Jericho is the only one in the Valley.

Education

There are 38 basic and secondary schools located in the Palestinian communities of the Jordan Valley, serving more than 13,000 students. There is a lack of infrastructure and supplies, such as drinking fountains and sanitation facilities, in about 12 schools. Israel also refuses to give permits to build new schools in most Palestinian communities. According to the sources in the Palestinian Ministry of Education, most Jordan Valley schools lack sufficient classrooms; thus, many students continue their education in classrooms that fail health and safety regulations or travel to schools farther away. Students have to commute large distances through difficult checkpoints to access schools and universities in Jericho, Nablus and Tubas, leading to students moving in with the extended family or families splitting up.

The Jordan Valley area heavily utilizes its agricultural prospects, providing 35% of the total produce distributed to the Palestinians. It produces 60% of

the vegetables, 40% of the citrus and 100% of the bananas. This agricultural success is associated with the area's unique location below sea level, which is likened to a giant greenhouse where crops ripen early in the winter. Life for Palestinians in what should be the breadbasket for the West Bank has been made increasingly difficult by the Israelis. In a 2009 survey by Save the Children just 4% of farmers said they didn't face obstacles getting their produce to market.

Agricultural Barriers Israel imposes on Palestinians in the Jordan Valley

- Complete dependence on Israeli production components, such as fertilizers, seeds and irrigation networks;
- It is difficult to find Palestinian alternatives to Israeli goods, meaning that Israeli companies control price and quality;
- Continued confiscation of agricultural land to complete the eastern segregation zone and expand settlements and closed military zones;
- Dumping the Palestinian market with Israeli goods produced in settlements, especially during peak production, in order to eliminate Palestinian products that may supply the local markets;
- Demolition and destruction of infrastructure, such as curfews of agricultural lands, demolition of agricultural barracks and retention of walls, stone terraces and irrigation networks;
- Prevention of building new wells, reconditioning existing wells and digging deep wells near springs and other Palestinian wells, which prevents water from running to Palestinian fields. The Israeli water company, Mekorot, monopolizes this work;
- Destruction of livestock sector by imposing high fines on shepherds who let their sheep cross an Israeli zone from which Palestinians are forbidden;
- Prevention of land owners, who do not have a Jordan Valley residential address on their ID, from reaching or cultivating their lands;
- Closure of Arab, Israeli and regional markets to Palestinian farmers.

Poverty and Unemployment

As a result of all of these restrictions and oppressive policies, Palestinians

in the Jordan Valley suffer high rates of poverty and unemployment. The majority of Palestinians in the Jordan Valley live under the poverty line. In 2006, unemployment rates reached 21% in the Jericho and Tubas districts, and 20.5% were Palestinian Authority employees who did not receive salaries. Furthermore, despite its agricultural advantages, approximately 53% of Jordan Valley residents in Jericho and Tubas districts were food insecure in 2006, up 10% from 2005.

Occupation Procedures that Inhibit Tourism

- Strict procedures on checkpoints leading in/out of the valley;
- Isolation and complete Israeli control of Jericho;
- Military closure and/or destruction of some tourist sites;
- Ongoing Israeli military training and explosions, leaving some sites, such as the Greek Monastery of Hijla, damaged;
- Prevention of Israeli drivers and tourist guides from entering Palestinian areas, leaving tourists with no choice but to walk on foot or avoid the area;
- Prevention of Palestinians from holding religious or cultural festivals;
- Closure of Wadi el-Qilt Road, which leads to the Monastery of St. George;
- Prevention of Palestinian Authority employees from entering Jericho to watch and document Israeli destruction of archeological sites and theft of archeological pieces;
- Cancellation of visits to Jericho and its archeological sites from Israeli and international tourist programs;
- Construction of the Separation Wall, which prevents geographical continuity between the three main tourist centers (Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Jericho);
- Halt in investment after the second Intifada;
- Halt in all projects between the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and donor countries and organizations after the Palestinian legislative elections. Projects include annual diggings, reconditioning and rehabilitation of infrastructure.

4. Our Projects

It's not easy to resist the occupation in the Jordan Valley due to the difficult conditions of living in Area C. People need to survive, which does not leave much space for resistance. We are determined to continue our fight for our rights in the Jordan Valley with our international supporters. Our believe and strategy is that providing sustainable solutions is extremely important. For example, when we build schools or houses from mud bricks, we teach the local community how to build them so that if they get destroyed by the Israeli army they no longer rely on Jordan Valley Solidarity, but can rebuild them independently.

Schools and homes

We have built 3 schools from mud bricks in Area C. In 2007 we built a school in Fasayil room by room. It received a demolition order from the Israeli authorities but our campaign succeeded in keeping it standing and upholding the right of 130 children to education.

We renovated and rebuilt around 200 houses, which had been demolished by the Israeli army. We have established 3 tent schools and are planning to build mud brick schools in these communities once there is funding.



Olive trees

We have planted hundreds of olive trees in 10 communities

Workshops

In conjunction with lawyers and journalists that volunteered with us, we provided trainings to youth to teach them how to write reports when threatened or attacked by the Israeli army, settlers or the police. We have also provided training to teach youth about the laws in the Jordan Valley.

Health Centers

We built 3 Health Centers in the Jordan valley

We also document human rights violations by the Israeli occupation, organize actions to show our disagreement and provide material support to families when possible.

5. Future Projects

We will continue the work we have done so far such building schools and homes from mud bricks. Our main future projects are as follows:

Mud brick machine

We are building a mud brick making machine, which will make our work much more efficient and will allow us to build more buildings much faster. (photo 8- currently the mud bricks are made by hand)

Samra school

Finish the Samra school and apply for the Palestinian authorities to send teachers.

Cheese factory

We are also working on plans to build a cheese factory which would employ Palestinian women and men from the Jordan Valley in the factory to make traditional Palestinian cheese. This will not only support 100 farmers by buying the milk, men and women to work in the factory but also show resistance against the occupation by providing Palestinian product on the market, supporting the boycott of Israeli products.



6. What you can do

The Friends Meeting House in Fasayil is now the hub of our campaign, where we co-ordinate all our activities, and where international visitors can stay. We welcome all volunteers who can commit to our principles of non violence and come with the aim to support the Palestinian resistance and to end the Israeli Occupation. If you are interested in working with us, please email us at: info@jordanvalleysolidarity.org

Over the last year internationals have been involved in supporting threatened communities, documenting of human rights abuses, and practical solidarity work.

A. Practical solidarity work

As a campaign we have been developing sustainable building methods in the valley by building homes, schools and the Friends Meeting House with mud bricks and local materials. We do this work with local communities and the support of internationals is always valuable: helping with the work and providing an international presence at the same time.

Our supporters have also helped us to run water pipes to communities in Area C, such as Al Farisiya, and plant crops and trees.

We always welcome anyone who wants to organize activities with the children from our community schools, which are run entirely by volunteer teachers.

B. Supporting threatened communities

When families face the demolition of their homes, are having their

water resources or land stolen by the illegal settlers, or are facing harassment, abuse and violence, they often request the support of our international friends. We work with internationals to provide a non-violent presence that is focused around the needs of the families and communities concerned.

C. Documenting human rights abuses

Written accounts of what is happening in the Jordan Valley, along with good quality photographs and film are really important. We can use these on our own website, but are also really pleased when volunteers spread this information to a wider audience by having their own blogs, speaking to supporters, contacting the international media, and lobbying those in power to take action.

Conditions

The campaign has a house in the central Jordan Valley where volunteers live together. Living communally, eating and working together means that you are never alone and always supported by other volunteers and people from the local area. Working and living in the Jordan Valley means that you will have to live in basic conditions and respect the Palestinian culture and traditions. This include dressing appropriately (long sleeves, long trousers and high neck).

Volunteers in the past have stayed with the campaign from anywhere between 1 day and 2 years. No experience is necessary, the only thing that we ask is that people commit to our principle of non violence and that you come with the aim to support the Palestinian resistance and to end the Israeli Occupation.

We expect no money for accommodation however all costs during your stay are covered by yourself. We do ask that once your time with us in the Valley ends that you use your experience and knowledge to spread information globally about the situation here.

Planning your visit

If you are based in the UK we suggest you contact Brighton Jordan Valley Solidarity at brightontubas@gmail.com and arrange to attend one of their training weekends - doing some training before you come means you will be far better prepared, will be able to support our work more effectively and will get more out of your visit. They only do training occasionally, so contact them as far in advance as possible.

It is also really worth having a look at the ISM website, which has lots of useful advice for activists planning to travel to Palestine.

Public transport for Palestinians in the Jordan Valley is very limited. There are some services (shared taxis) that run from Jericho, but this depends on the day and the time. We therefore ask that you contact us by email before

you come, so we can advise you on how best to get here.

Get involved wherever you are!

Even if you can't join us in Palestine at the moment, please think of other ways you can support our grassroots campaigning, by doing solidarity actions where you are, organizing fundraising events, or making a donation.

7. Contact details

For more details or if you want to volunteer with us contact us here:
Website: www.Jordanvalleysolidarity.org
Email: info@jordanvalleysolidarity.org
Phone: 059 239 1208



حملة أنقذوا الأغوار

Save the Jordan Valley Campaign



Mouvement pour une Alternative Non-violente



