

Wadi Qana Case Study: Two Thousand Olive Trees under Threat

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Background: Wadi Qana and Olive Trees

Wadi Qana is a fertile valley that is part of the village of Deir Istiya in the West Bank, Occupied Palestinian Territories. The Wadi Qana stream runs through it as well as 15 natural springs. Orange and lemon trees line the river, and olive trees have grown on the land for thousands of years.

For farmers in this area, olives are the main source of income and the trees are an integral part of this ancient landscape. A representative of al Zaytouna, an organisation focused on preserving Palestinian culture, explained the importance of olives: “There is an olive tree on my land that is between 2,000 and 3,000 years old.” Generations of Palestinian farmers transfer their knowledge about tending their trees from parents to children: “I learned from my father, my father learned from his father... Each learning from his father about how to keep these trees. My son is eight years old now and after school and during school holidays I take him to our land and teach him about these trees.”

Wadi Qana is surrounded by nine Israeli settlements, all illegal under international law, and, despite the land being privately owned by Palestinians, it has been designated a “Natural Reserve” by the Israeli Civil Administration. Paradoxically, the Administration has been issuing orders to farmers to uproot olive trees on this land since 1986 with the explanation that this must happen because it’s a Natural Reserve.

These orders aren’t the only threat to the trees. Around the year 1999, the trees started dying and water tests proved that more than 70% of the water supply was severely polluted from sewage waste pumped down from the settlements. A few hundred trees died. Sewage pipes were eventually put in to pump the sewage out. The farmers returned and continued to replant their trees but the sewage system has not been upgraded to keep up with continued settlement expansion, resulting in a vastly inadequate sewage containment network for the number of settlements that it supports.

Overflow and pollution, therefore, continues.

IWPS Petition to the Israeli government: [STOP UPROOTING PALESTINIAN TREES!](#)

This is what happened afterwards:

Some of you will remember the [IWPS petition](#) and the worldwide letter writing campaign earlier this year, which helped bring about a suspension ‘until further notice’ of the order by the Israeli Occupation Army (IOA) to destroy up to 2,000 trees in the beautiful Wadi Qana valley, belonging to 10 farmers of the West Bank village of Deir Istiya.

Sadly, this did not end threats to the livelihood of the Deir Istiya farmers. On 24 August new warrants were left by the IOA in the fields of three farmers, ordering destruction of further 180



trees. The original 10 farmers appealed to the Israeli High Court to overturn the decision by the Israeli Minister of Defence, Ehud Barak, as head of the Civil Administration of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, which resulted in a “stay of execution” until 19 September, when the case will again come to Court. The three farmers affected by the second, more recent wave of warrants have not filed a case in the courts.

In anticipation of the new Court decision, a big gathering of local Palestinians and their international and Israeli supporters is planned on 19 September in Wadi Qana. If the decision goes against the farmers, the demonstrators plan to stay day and night and peacefully face Israeli bulldozers and resist destruction, which could come at any time thereafter.

19 September, which is the coming Wednesday, therefore is the critical date. All international appeals on behalf of the farmers should be made before that date. The matter is very urgent. Please follow Wadi Qana updates and do what you can to contact as many people as possible, including people of influence in your countries, to send urgent appeals to Ehud Barak.

Sign this [petition](#) and share it with all your friends, family and contacts.