

Deir Istiya Village Profile

Name of Village: DEIR ISTIYA

Name of person doing the survey: Laura and Sherrill, corrections made by Marie Jo, Updates made by Maxime

Date of Survey: 28 February, 2003 and 2-3 November, 2004, Added Feb. 2006
Update in July 08

Who gave the information:

Mayor: Dr. Nafiz Mansour

Riziq Abu Nasser, General Director of Palestinian People's Party

Gassan Amad/Abu Ferras (Olive Harvest Coordinator, 2002 and 2003

2008 Update: Mayor Jammal Diyab

1. Location of village

15 Km. from Green Line;

7 Km from Salfet before road was closed; now 17 km.

2. Current population, previous population. How many villagers are living outside Palestine?

3250 by 1996 statistics; of these 100 have left the country and 50 have emigrated internally.

4000 estimated for 2004

About 10,000 have left since 1967

3. Origins of the name. Any ancient sites or legends associated with the village?

The origin of the name is not clearly documented. There are different stories about these origins. The word Deir means monastery, and in Aramaic, Istiya meant wall, but in Greek meant military camp. Another version says that Istiya is an Indo-European term meaning castle. Actually, the village is on the top of a hill with 5 arched gateways into the old city. Istiya could also come from a prophet, but this version is not accepted by all. Whatever the origin, people were living in the village in the pre-Islamic and pre-Christian era, and there are still 20 cemeteries belonging to that period around the old town.

Part of the old city remains and is being restored, little by little. Some of it dates back to pre-Canaanite times, while another old section is from the Ottoman days. Under these ruins are other homes, but they have not be

excavated or dated.

In 1917 the British occupied Palestine, but their first contact with Deir Istiya was in 1921. They came to look for a man named Abdurrahman Al Ahmad, because they believed he had weapons. He denied it, so they took him to the central square, laid him on the ground and crushed his body. Some of the villagers opposed the British rulers, but others worked for them, for example as police. Some of them are still alive and collecting pensions from the British government.

During the British occupation Deir Istiya had a more prominent role than now. There were many wells in the area, and agriculture was well developed. People raised sheep, goats and cows. Others worked in Haifa, Yaffa and other cities.

In 1948 nothing exceptional happened in Deir Istiya. People saw the refugees and heard about the massacre of Deir Yassin, but nothing more. The West Bank passed to Jordanian rule, and in 1950 the West Bank and East Bank were unified under the Hashemite Jordanian Kingdom.. During this time the Palestinian Communist Party was formed mainly of young people who resisted the joining of the West and East Banks. Jordan persecuted the Communists and imprisoned many of them for up to 10 years.

In the 1960's the Gulf States opened their borders and some from Deir Istiya immigrated, especially to Kuwait. But many of them came back to the village.

The 1967 war changed Deir Istiya completely. The first contact between Deir Istiya and the Israeli occupation revealed to the villages the harshness of the invading army. The Israeli soldiers rounded up everyone in the village, interrogated them and demanded their cooperation. Mr. Abdullatif Ali Omar Abdu Nasser was arrested and never returned to the village again. The Mukhtar was ordered to execute their orders in the village.

Most of the people who went to work to Kuwait left the village at that time. The People began to resist the occupation, and, in 1974, 50 men were arrested and imprisoned for from 6 months to 3 years.

4. Main forms of employment, currently and before intifada

About 20% of the people work in government related jobs, with the PA (police, soldiers, teachers) and as professionals or white collar (lawyers, doctors, nurses and office workers). This village has a high percentage of professionals compared to other villages in the district. There are also laborers and many unemployed. Many work abroad and send money home. Between 1967 and Oslo employment was mainly farming and work in Israel. There was a high dependence on Israel at that time but when Israel closed the border, in 2000, most of these workers returned to their fields. Before the first Intifada 40 families raised goats and milk cows and were quite rich. This is down to 3-5 families because they cannot graze the animals outside the village due to danger from settlers and confiscation of 20 000 dunams for security reasons.

In 2008, over 70% of the village is unemployed. Most who do hold jobs work as previously noted in government positions or as teachers. About 20-30

villagers work in settlements or in Israel proper.

5. Any traditional industries apart from farming

There are 3 oil presses and 2 marble processing plants (one inside and one outside the village) The marble comes from Hebron, Jenin and Italy.) About 15 women are employed in a sewing factory where pieces are received and assembled

6. Agriculture. What crops do they grow? Any animals? How has this changed over the years?

Deir Istiya has the largest land area in Salfet, and the second largest in the West Bank (the first is Tubas). The village is famous for its olive orchards, but has lost 3,000 trees to security issues and settler violence –uprooting and burning trees .

Before the occupation, there were 16 goat farms and 9 dairy farms. Now there are 5 goat farms and 1 dairy farm, which means a very big impact on the economy of the village.

There is great difficulty marketing olive oil. PARC helps market some; some goes to the Arab Emirates and other Arab states, but most stays in the homes and some goes to Palestinian merchants. On the other hand, there is a new and growing effort to produce organic olive oil, by regulating the amount of acidity in the oil (it has gone down from 2.3% to 0.2 %), by changing from chemical to composted fertilizer, and by demanding good pruning of the trees. Farmers have formed cooperatives to get their olives pressed within 1-2 days instead of waiting 2-3 weeks, which makes the oil more acid.

They used to grow a lot of citrus and vegetables in the Wadi Kana, but this once fertile valley has become drastically polluted by sewage from settlements, and is as well unsafe due to the surrounding settlements. In addition, there is almost no market now for these

7. Form of government, e.g. village council, municipality.

Appointed or elected. If elected, when were the last elections? If appointed, does each family have a representative?

Village council elected in 2005; Fatah: 5, People's Party: 3, Hamas: 3
Mayor: Jamal Faris, PPP (speaks very good English as he lived in the US for a long time, ready to work with us) 0599-254 857

In 2008, the council is now elected by the general population. There are 2 Fatah groups (5 members), 1 Islamic group (3 members) and 1 leftist group (3 members, of which one is the mayor). The mayor is still Jamal.

There is a municipality made up of 11 members, nominated by families and approved by the Palestinian Authority. Among themselves, they chose a mayor. Nine families chose not to participate in this process because they

want elections. It is possible that everyone wants elections, but accept the current process until the situation improves and elections can be held. There were local elections in 1976, but an Israeli terrorist group targeted the winners in Nablus, Ramallah and Hebron, putting two of them in wheelchairs and a third was murdered. The Israeli military then took over running the municipalities from 1980-1987.

8. Political, religious and civic organizations e.g. mosques, women's organizations

Political parties are almost all represented: Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Palestinian Peoples Party. The Peasants Union, the Sports Club (250 members age 16 up) and the Deir Istiya Ladies Association (3-4 months old, to help women with employment and social activities; plans to open a center for them) are related to the Fatah movement.

The Farmers Union, the Youth Union (130 youth 12-25 years old) and the Women's Committee for Savings and Loans are related to the PPP.

There are also the Palestinian Youth Development Committee and a charity committee that collects money and goods from individuals and receives it from abroad to give to poor families.

One of the women's groups has obtained funding for a new kindergarten and for renovation of old buildings to create a children's computer center.

Palestinian Red Crescent

Two mosques

9. Names of the families living in the village in order of size

There are 18 families in the village. The four largest are the Abu Hijle, Mansour, Salman, and Thiab families and comprise 3/5's of the population. The Abu Hijle family owns a great deal of the village land, as well as land in the villages of Sanniry and Bidya, and in the cities of Nablus and Qalqilia.

2008: There are now 25 families in the village. The mayor mentioned that families were now marrying out of the village.

10. Services: Any schools or clinics? How many shops? Nearest hospital, nearest university

There are 4 schools, 2 kindergartens and one nursery school. Two of the schools are for boys, grades 1-6 and 7-12, and two are for girls, grades 1-4 and 5-12. Kindergarten is for 4-6 and nursery for 2 months to 3 years. Deir Istiya has the highest level of education in the Salfeet District, with 200 students attending university at An Najah in Nablus, Al Quds in Abu Dis, American University in Jenin and Al Quds Open University in either Nablus or Salfeet. About 70 villagers hold doctorate degrees.

There are three medical clinics in the village, but this does not really cover their needs:

A public clinic – open till 2 p.m.
Red Crescent clinic -one doctor daily til 2 p.m.
The Palestinian Youth Union Center has a clinic – open 4 – 9 p.m.
The village uses hospitals in Salfet and Rafidia in Nablus.
2008: There is now a Red Cross clinic, as well as 2 private doctors..

Small shops meet daily needs and are scattered throughout the village.

11. Utilities: Does the village have electricity, running water? When did they receive these? Other water sources. Any restrictions on their use?

Since 1994 there are electric lines supplying the village with electricity which they must buy from Israel. Before that, they used generators and refrigerated with kerosene powered refrigerators, but there was electricity only from 5-11 p.m.

There is a Palestinian Electric Company in Jerusalem that tried to expand its services to Deir Istiya, but there is no water company. Israel said that if Palestinian villages wanted "their" water, they had to accept their electricity. Since 1997, there is a system of piped water, also purchased from Israel in adequate supply. Before '97 everyone collected rain water into their own wells and pumped it to a tank on the roof.

Of course, the water is under Palestinian land, and Palestinians must pay Israel to receive it.

2008: The village still buys water, and sells it to villagers for 3.6NIS. The mayor stated that they lose 100,000\$ a year on water costs, as to make a profit they would need to charge 5NIS a unit, which most can't afford.

12. Transportation: what transportation services exist, transportation and road closure problems

Getting around by taxis or private cars is somewhat easier today than early in the Intifada. As in all of Palestine, transportation is interrupted unpredictably by flying checkpoints and roadblocks.

13. Housing: Village plan, problems with building permits, and history of house demolitions

They have no problems with building North and East of the village which are in Area B. The village requires a building fee of about 1% of the value of the house to be built. To the West, the land is in Area C where building is not allowed. In any case, this is where there are many settlements and roads leaving to them, and no one can build near a settlement or its road.

The army has demolished farmer's shacks that they used for overnights and to store equipment in their fields. This is especially true in the Wadi Qana, which is some distance from the village. There is no development plan, because conditions do not invite development of any kind.

As for house demolitions, there have not been any, but the Mayor said "It is like an earthquake here; nothing is secure, nothing is stable."

2008: The village has lost 15,000 dunums of land. They stand to lose 10,000 more if settlements keep expanding and Israel keeps declaring land government property.

14. Land: total original area, previous confiscations with areas and dates and purpose, current confiscations and how they heard about confiscations? current built up area, agricultural area remaining

Deir Istiya has the largest land area of any village in the Salfeet district, originally counting 34,000 to 36,000 dunams. 14,000 dunams, or 40% of the total, have been lost to settlements, settlement roads and military bases. Most of the lost land was not in olives, but was for grazing or vegetable crops. About 14,000 dunams are in olives, and about 1,000 dunams are built up.

Sometimes there is a warning that land will be taken, sometimes not. Israel dresses its actions in justifications such as needing the land for security or the military. They tell people that they can go to court to get compensation, but no one does this, because they refuse to acknowledge the legality of the seizures.

Nor will they sell their land because this too would give legitimacy to Israel's theft of village lands.

Many Israeli policies or practices are aimed at driving people from the land. Students who were going to study at universities abroad, would lose their right to come back if they were gone more than three years. In other cases, representatives of the government asked people to sign papers to get a permit to go to Jordan but they were actually signing a contract to sell their land.

Israel uses Ottoman-period records to determine how much land someone owns, but during the time of Ottoman domination, people declared less than they owned to avoid taxes. Ottoman law also said that if land was in disuse for three years, it could be legally taken. Israel has used this to expropriate much land from farmers who stopped farming to work in Israel because of the higher income there.

15. Settlements: when built, population? Settler roads? Any problems with settlers?

The first settlement, Karnei Shomron, was built in 1977, after Camp David., on the land formerly occupied by a Jordanian army base. After that came Ginot Shomrom, Immanu'el, Yaqir, Novim, Revava and Neveh Menachem. At the beginning of the Intifada, settlers attacked villagers at the entrance to the village, but have not done so since. In 1995 settlers attacked the Mayor's car and injured him, causing the loss of his right eye.

Further damage is caused by the raw sewage that runs from the settlements to the North into Wadi Qana, poisoning the water table which feeds the

irrigated fields and livestock.

2008: Settlers still destroy olive trees, as well as bulldoze land. This causes farmers to not be able to use their land. A case is currently being filed by the village against the settlers for this reason in court.

16. Past human rights violations: killings, serious injuries, house demolitions, admin detention by army and/or settlers.

During the 1st Intifada :

1 person has been killed.

In 1990 :

70 year old man was crippled by gunshots while sitting on his horse and plowing his fields.

During this Intifada :

In 2001, a man was made paraplegic by gunshot that entered his stomach and lodged in his spine.

In 2003, a 24 years old man was hit by a car and then shot. (Thamer, 19??)

A teenager, 15, was taken from his home when the army couldn't find his brother, driven around and beaten. He subsequently became depressed, and agitated, and insane, and died.

(Some source speaks of 3 killed and 10 injured, in this Intifada, another one says that, in August 2002, one person was killed and 17 injured.)

17. History of resistance

Prior to first intifada: There were political movements against the occupation and many youth went to prison. People raised Palestinian flags, wrote graffiti, joined Palestinian organizations, and threw stones at passing cars.

First intifada: This was a popular Intifada and people participated in large numbers. There were many demonstrations, people threw stones at jeeps and settlers cars, and they put up roadblocks to prevent settlers from entering the village. They also planted trees next to the settlements to declare ownership of the land. One youth was killed when he threw a Molotov cocktail. Many people were arrested.

Second intifada:

The second Intifada is led by a small number of militants, while the majority of the population is excluded. Non-violent actions have been few. The violence allowed Israel to declare that this is a war against terrorists and that violent retaliation is necessary. It has made ordinary life impossible, although a smaller number of people have been arrested.

According to the Mayor, the problem of Deir Istiya is the Israeli occupation, nothing else.

We were told about three youth from the village from different fractions that were killed together by the army on a suicide mission close to Nablus.

Some youth are throwing stones and molotows when the army enters DI. Houses have been searched and many youth, also under 16 have been arrested.

18. Recent developments: Wall: building started around Immanuel end of 2005

2008: No more wall construction started, but there are plans. Prospective locations could mean the village would lose 70% of its land.

Will any land be confiscated? If the wall follows the planned path, the village will lose 70% of its land.

See Incident and House Reports from IWPS

Incident Report n° 68 Dec. 03 Shooting

Incident Report n°109 April 04 Farmer beaten by 12 settlers

Incident Report n°116 April 04 Army incursion, curfew, 1 man beaten and arrested, uprooting of trees by the army

House Report n° 49 Young man hit by settler car then shot by soldiers while on settler road.

HR-Report 236 – Jan 2006 – incursion, arrest

HR-Report 232 – Nov 2005 – student from DI arrested in Huwara, severely beaten, Ambulance denied access

HR-Report 231 – Nov 2005 – incursion, arrest

HR-Report 230 – Nov 2005 – incursion, arrest, beating

HR-Report 225 – Sep 2005 – settlers damage property

HR-Report 215 – Aug 2005 – incursion, arrest

HR-Report 211 – Aug 2005 – incursion, arrest

HR-Report 215 – Aug 2005 – arrest/detention

HR-Report 230 – Nov 2005 – incursion, arrest/detention

HR-Report 231 – Nov 2005 – arrest/detention

HR-Report 236 – Jan 2006 – incursion, arrest/detention

HR-Report 253 – July 2006 – incursion, arrest

HR-Report 255 – June 2006 – freedom of movement

HR-Report 265 – Aug 2006 – freedom of movement

HR-Report 277 – Nov 2006 – incursion

HR-Report 287 – Jan 2007 – freedom of movement

HR-Report 292– Feb 2007 – freedom of movement

HR-Report 303– Feb 2007 – incursion, beating

HR-Report 325– June 2007 – freedom of movement

HR-Report 328– June 2007 – freedom of movement

HR-Report 330- July 2007 - collective punishment
HR-Report 336- Octob 2007 - incursion, arrest
HR-Report 338- Octob 2007 - incursion
HR-Report 344- April 2008 - settler violence
HR-Report 349- May 2008 - settler violence
HR-Report 351- May 2008 - settler violence
HR-Report 353- May 2008 - settlement expansion
HR-Report 356- June 2008 - settler violence
HR Report 362 - 05 Jul 2008 - incursion, arrest
HR Report 365 - 12 Jul 2008 - cerfew, detention