

Deir al Qilt Locality Profile



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Background

This report is part of a series of booklets, which contain compiled information about each city, village, and town in the Jericho Governorate. These booklets came as a result of a comprehensive study of all localities in Jericho Governorate, which aims at depicting the overall living conditions in the governorate and presenting developmental plans to assist in developing the livelihood of the population in the area. It was accomplished through the "Village Profiles and Needs Assessment;" the project funded by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AECID).

The project's objectives are to survey, analyze, and document the available natural, human, socioeconomic and environmental resources, and the existing limitations and needs assessment for the development of the rural and marginalized areas in the Jericho Governorate. In addition, the project aims at preparing strategic developmental programs and activities to mitigate the impact of the current political, social, and economic instability with special emphasize on agriculture, environment and water.

All locality profiles in Arabic and English are available online at <http://vprofile.arij.org>.

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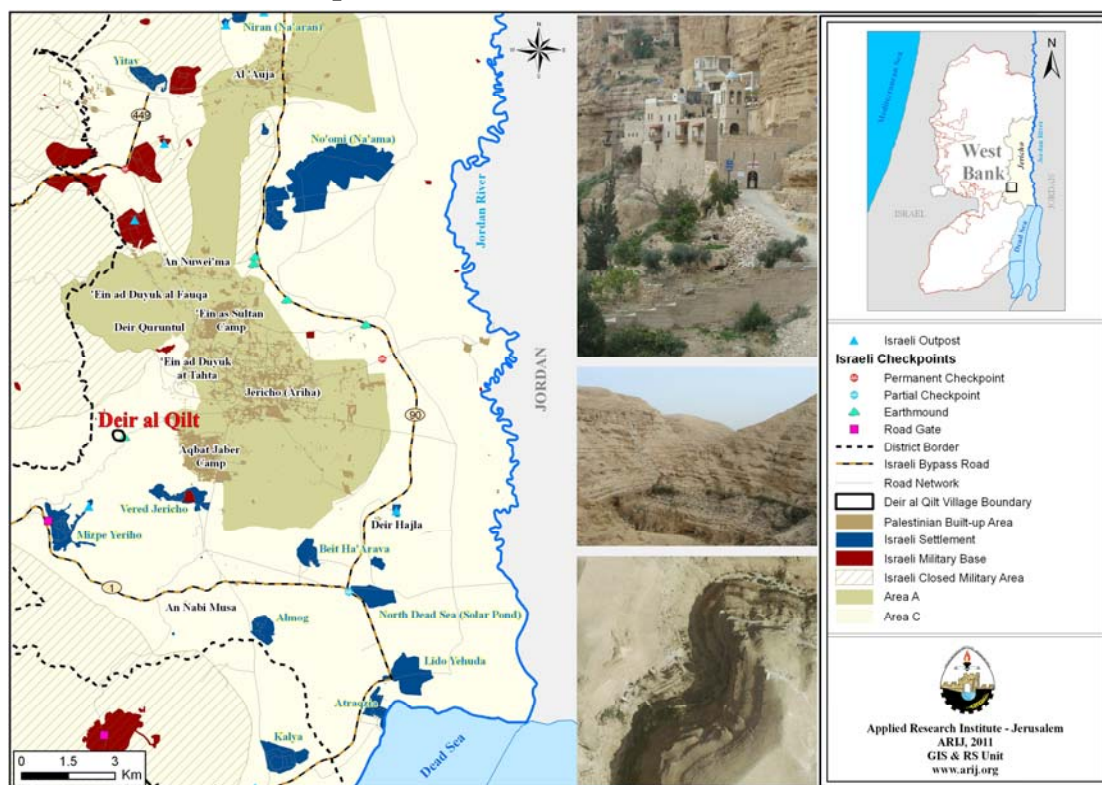
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Deir al Qilt (St. George Monastery)

Location and Physical Characteristics

Deir al Qilt is a Palestinian locality in Jericho Governorate located (horizontally) 4.83km southwest of Jericho City. Deir al Qilt is bordered by An Nabi Musa locality lands to the east and south, and 'Ein ad Duyuk al Foqa village lands to both the north and west (ARIJ-GIS Unit, 2010) (See map 1).

Map 1: Deir al Qilt location and borders



Source: ARIJ – GIS Unit, 2011

Deir al Qilt is located at an altitude of 120m below sea level with a mean annual rainfall of 159mm. The average annual temperature is 23 °C, whilst the average annual humidity is approximately 50.9% (ARIJ-GIS Unit, 2010).

Deir al Qilt locality has no local authority; however, it has a monastery called Deir al Qilt.

History

Wadi Qilt is a deep valley located between neighboring hills, consisting of high rocks stretching 45km is distance between Jericho and Jerusalem Governorates. In the past, the valley, streams and old irrigation systems were considered the largest and most important in the country (Jericho Municipality, 2011). Additionally, in past

times the narrow and rugged road which extends along the valley was considered the main road in Jericho city. Currently this route serves as a path and course for tourists visiting the Monastery of St. George located in the region (Jericho Municipality, 2011). The monastery is carved on the rocky walls of the valley and is managed by the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The monastery, as one of the oldest in Palestine accommodates persons adopting an ascetical lifestyle. It is believed that Prophet Elijah spent some time in this region during his way to Sinai, whilst also being held that St. Joachim (father of Virgin Mary) was there when an angel announced his daughter Mary's conception.

Hermits and monks resided in this valley since the third century AD. At first, they dwelt in caves and in small niches in the rocks. In the late fifth century (circa 480 AD), the monastery was built by John of Thebes (from the city of Thebes; one of the capitals of ancient Egypt, which is currently called Luxor), who abandoned Egypt in order to bring the practice of mortification to the region. However, in the sixth century, the monastery was known as the 'Monastery of St. George'; so named after St. George of Koziba from Cyprus, who had also sought to bring an ascetical lifestyle to the area. In 614 AD, the monastery was destroyed by the Persians and monks and hermits who lived in the region were killed. Currently, the bones and skulls of the monks, who were martyred and which were found during excavations and restoration of the monastery later, exist in the monastery. In addition, here rests the tomb of St. George of Koziba. In 1179, the Crusaders restored the monastery, which later became abandoned and neglected after they were expelled from the country. Finally, in 1878, the Greek monk Callinicos resided in the area and began rebuilding and restoring the monastery. This work was completed in 1901 (Wikipedia, 2011) (See photo 1 below for Deir al Qilt locality).

The valley is additionally identified as a wonderful place for different sports such as climbing and walking, especially in winter months. As such, distinctive marks were added along a 15km route specified for hikes, starting from Al Qilt springs until "Tulul abu 'Alayiq" site or "Herod winter Palace" in Jericho. Visiting times, at the time of publication, are from 9 am - 12 pm and again from 2 pm - 4 pm (Wafa, 2011). The importance of the wadi commences with Herod who built an aqueduct to supply his winter palace and garden in Tulul abu 'Alayiq with water during the Roman Period. The structure of the Roman aqueduct is still visible in the valley (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities & Jericho Municipality, 2010).

Photo 1: Deiral Qilt (St. George Monastery)



Population

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the total population of Deir al Qilt in 2007 was only 4 people; all are males and are living in the monastery.

Agricultural Sector

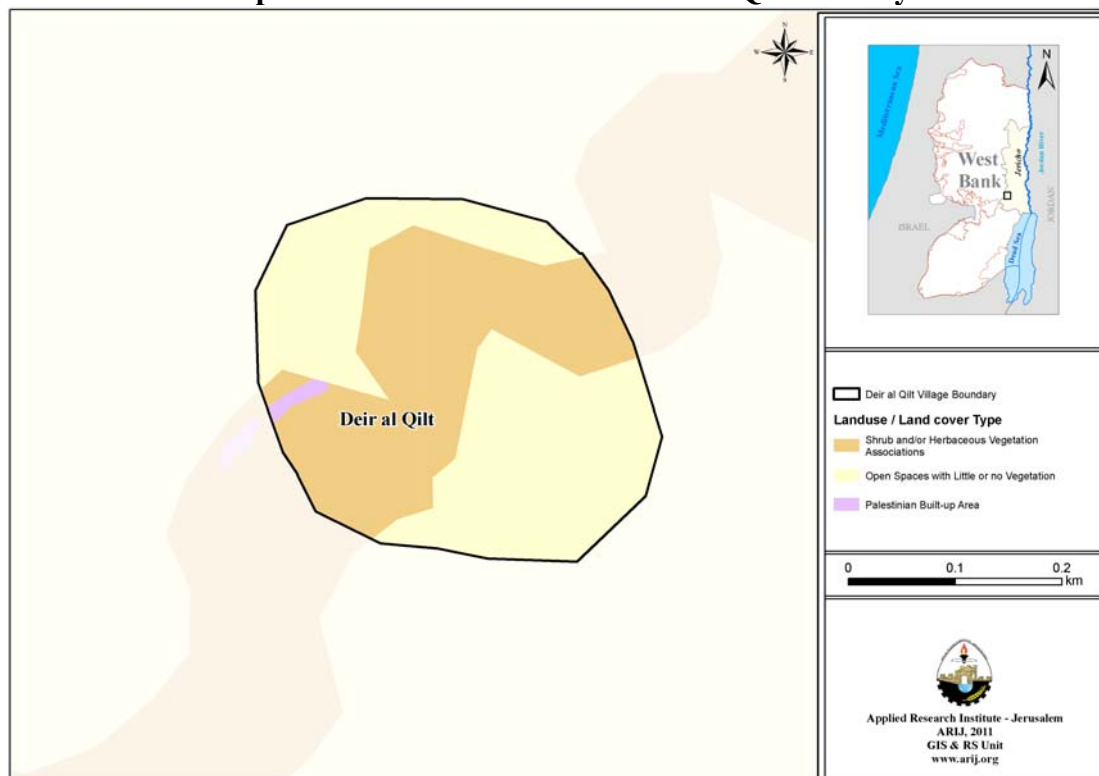
Deir al Qilt lies on a total area of about 103 dunums of which 45 dunums are considered ‘arable’ lands, and only 1 dunum is registered as ‘residential’ (See table 1 and map 2).

Table 1: Land use and land cover in Deir al Qilt locality in 2010 (area in dunum)

Total Area	Built-up Area	Agricultural area (45 dunums)				Inland water	Forests	Open Space	Area of Industrial, Commercial & Transport Unit	Area of Settlements & Military Bases
		Permanent Crops	Green-houses	Range-lands	Arable lands					
103	1	0	0	45	0	0	57	0	0	

Source: ARIJ – GIS unit, 2011

Map 2: Land use/land cover in Deir al Qilt Locality



Source: ARIJ – GIS unit, 2011

Geopolitical Status in Deir al Qilt Village

According to the Oslo II Interim Agreement signed on 28th September 1995 between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel, All of Deir Al Qilt was classified as area C, and covers an area of 103 dunums. In area C Israel retains full control over security and administration related to the territory. Palestinian building and land management is prohibited in this area unless through a permit given by the Israeli Civil Administration.

At the end of 2007, the Israel occupation authorities imposed a blockade on Deir al Qilt area where it established two Israeli checkpoints on the roads leading to a Monastery there. The first Israeli checkpoint was to the Jericho City side, whereas the other is near the Jericho-Jerusalem road. Hundreds of tourists used to daily visit the Monastery, but with the checkpoint establishment tourist visit have drastically reduced as they have to take alternative longer roads, travelling through desert areas to get into the Monastery.

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