

Aqraba Town Profile (including Yanun Locality)



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Background

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

The "Village Profiles and Needs Assessment" was designed to study, investigate, analyze and document the socio-economic conditions and the programs and activities needed to mitigate the impact of the current insecure political, economic and social conditions in the Nablus Governorate.

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 Nablus Governorate. In addition, the project aims to prepare strategic developmental programs and activities to mitigate the impact of the current political, social, and economic instability with the focus on the agricultural sector.

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

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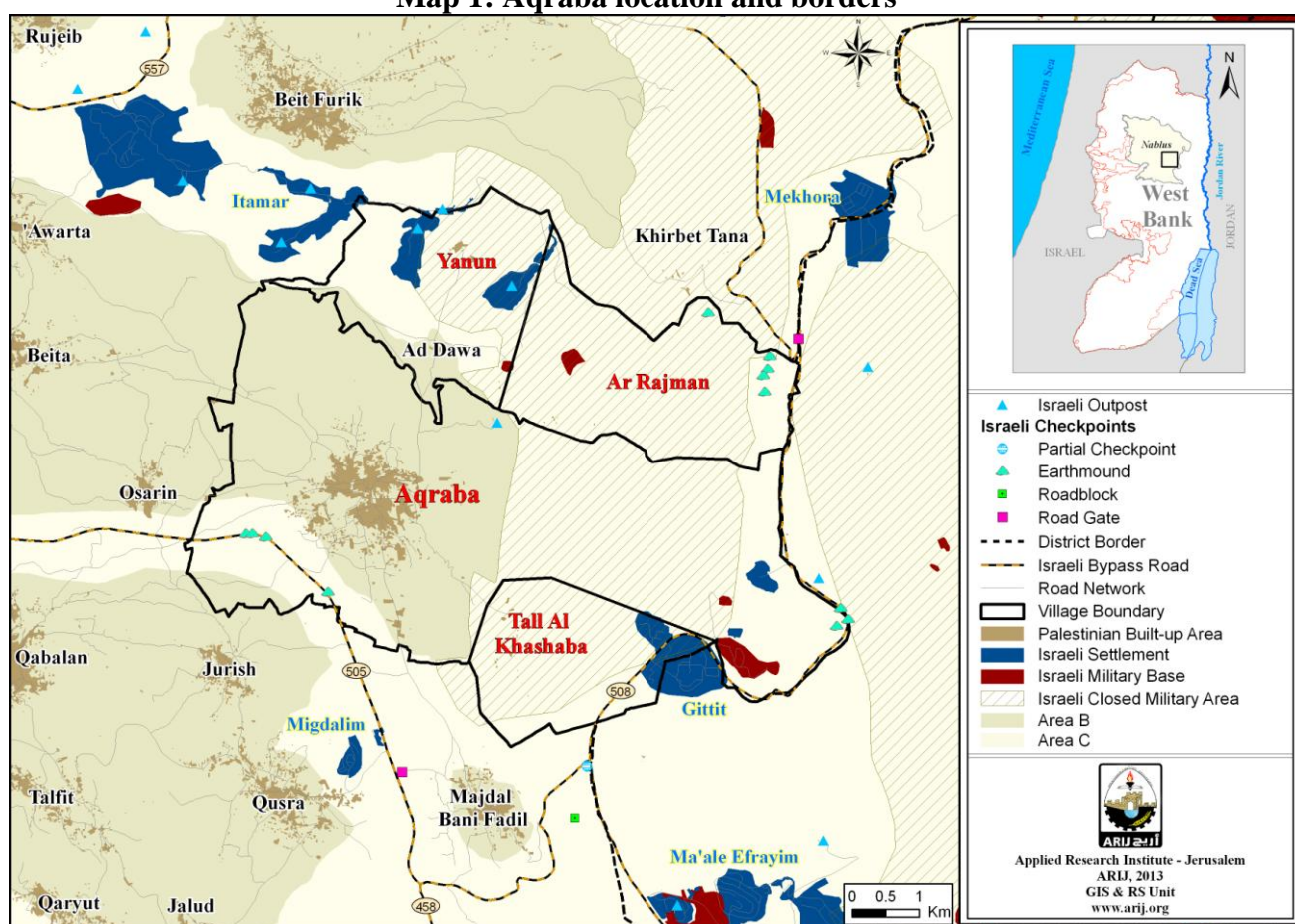
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Aqraba Town Profile (including Yanun Locality)¹

Location and Physical Characteristics

Aqraba (including Yanun Locality) is a Palestinian town in the Nablus Governorate, located 11-16km southeast of Nablus City. It is bordered by Al Jiftlik to the east, Beit Furik to the north, 'Awarta, Beita, Osarin and Qabalan to the west, Jurish, and Majdal Bani Fadil and Al Jiftlik to the south (ARIJ-GIS, 2014) (See Map 1).

Map 1: Aqraba location and borders



Source: ARIJ - GIS Unit, 2014.

Aqraba is located at an altitude of 340-731m above sea level with a mean annual rainfall of 348-418 mm. The average annual temperature is 19-20°C whilst the average annual humidity is approximately 55-57% (ARIJ-GIS, 2014).

Until 2012, a project committee was responsible of Yanun Locality. However, this locality was incorporated within the boundaries of the larger population center Aqraba. This was done via a resolution adopted by the Palestinian Cabinet and the Ministry of Local Government in 2012, and

¹ The information in this profile include Aqraba town and Yanun locality data, based on the local government's decision to merge Aqraba town and Yanun locality in 2012.

according to this resolution, Yanun Locality and Aqraba came under the administrative authority of one municipal council which is called Aqraba Municipal Council.

The total area of Aqraba town consists of approximately 51,442 dunums. The borders of this locality are set according to the new local councils' borders which were defined by the Palestinian Ministry of Local Government. The new borders of the Palestinian localities were set by the Palestinian National Authority, represented by the Ministry of Local Government, the Central Elections Commission, the Ministry of Planning and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, in the year 2011. These governmental institutions reset the borders of the localities for the purpose of the Palestinian elections that took place in 2011. Accordingly, ARIJ adopted these new borders in this report since it found that the newly adopted borders, to a certain extent, better suit the demographic, environmental and agricultural variables and facts on the ground. Also, ARIJ uses these defined borders only for the sake of this research and study. It is worth noting that these borders do not represent the areas and borders of the private properties at the locality level and are not included in the PNA files of the private land holdings.

Since 1997, Aqraba has been governed by a Municipal Council which is currently administrated by 11 members appointed by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). There are also 25 employees working in the council, which has a permanent headquarters and is included within the Joint Services Council Southeast of Nablus (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013).

The Municipal Council owns a vehicle for the collection of solid waste in addition to pick up truck and Bagger bulldozer (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013).

It is responsible for providing a number of services to the residents of Aqraba, including:

- The establishment and maintenance of the drinking water network and electricity networks
 - Collect solid waste, street cleaning and public services
 - Road rehabilitation, construction and paving
 - Organization and processing and issuance of construction licenses
 - Provision of headquarters for government services
 - Protection of governmental properties
 - Protection of historical and archeological sites
 - Implementation of projects and studies for the town
 - Provision of transportation
 - Provision of educational kindergartens
- (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013)

History

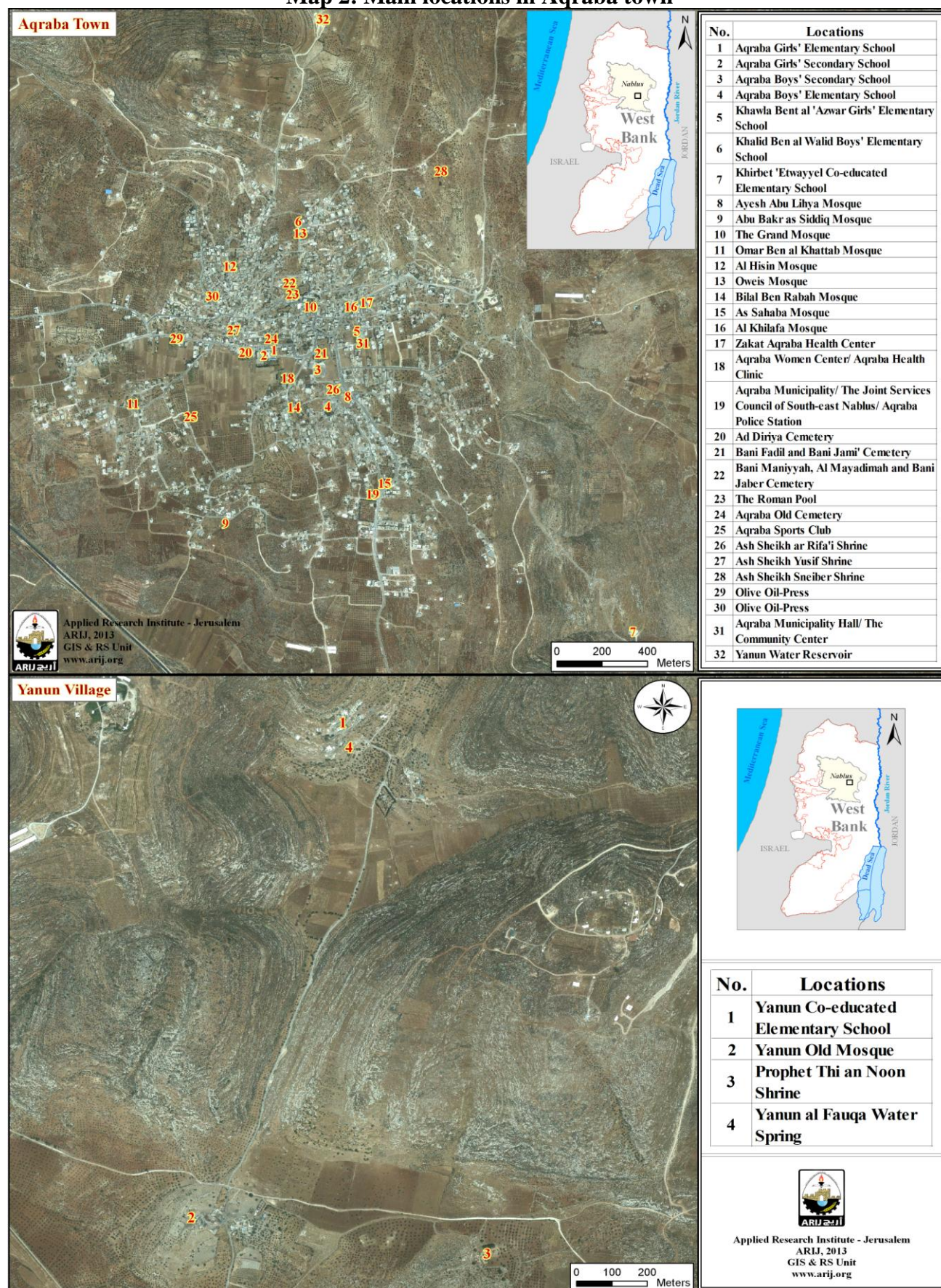
The town of Aqraba was named after the word “scorpion” by the Canaanites. It was also linked to the idea of intensity and movement. It may also be derived from the word “Aqrabeen” which refers to the Roman queen in the Byzantine era, or the word “Ocrabian” which means an area of difficulty. The establishment of the assembly dates back to more than 2,000 years ago and the families originally come from Jordan. (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013) (See photo 1).

Photo of Aqraba

Religious and Archaeological Sites

There are 11 mosques in Aqraba: The Grand Mosque, As Sahaba Mosque, Abu Lehye Mosque, Al Khelafa Mosque, Bilal Mosque, Umar Ibn al-Khattab Mosque, Al Hosen Mosque, Owais al-Qarani Mosque, Abu Bakr Al Sadeq Mosque, Al Tawil Mosque, and the Ali ibn Abi Talib Mosque. There are also a number of historical and archeological sites in the town, including: Sartaba Castle, Al Hosen Castle, Khirbet Al ‘Arma, Khirbet Abu Ghraib, Khirbet Al Dowara, Khirbet Maras Al Din, Khirbet Abu Rashid, Khirbet Abu Resah, Khirbet Al Koroom, old Roman ruins, and the Roman pool. It is worth mentioning that none of these areas are currently eligible for designation as an official tourism site (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013) (See Map 2).

Map 2: Main locations in Aqraba town



Source: ARIJ - GIS Unit, 2014.

Population

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the total population of Aqraba in 2007 was 8,197, of whom 4,208 were male and 3,989 female. There were 1,417 households registered as living in 1,815 housing units.

Age Groups and Gender

The General Census of Population and Housing carried out by PCBS in 2007 showed the distribution of age groups in Aqraba as follows: 45.8% were less than 15 years of age, 50.9% were between 15 and 64 years of age, and 3.2% were 65 years of age or older. Data also showed that the sex ratio of males to females in the town was 105.5:100, meaning that males and females constitute 51.3% and 48.7% of the population, respectively.

Families

The population of the town consists of several families, including:

- Bani Fadil Tribe: Consisting of Shataya family, Marasheda family, Abo Lehya family, Abo Helal family
- Al Dereya Tribe: Consisting of Al Hawawesha family, Al Hamzat family, Marawaheya family
- Bani Jaber Tribe: Consisting of Al 'Adeyat family
- Bani Maneya Tribe: Consisting of Jarban family and Zayat family
- Bani Jame' Tribe: Consisting of Abo Shahab family, Bani Hamed family, and Al Sabra family
- Meyadema Tribe: Consisting of Khater family, Al Khajeel family, and Abo Hamad family (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013)

Education

According to the results of the PCBS Population, Housing and Establishment Census, 2007, the illiteracy rate amongst Aqraba population is approximately 6.9%, of whom 74.5% are females. Of the literate population, 16.2% could only read and write, with no formal education, 32.1% had elementary education, 27.8% had preparatory education, 12.2% had secondary education, and 4.6% completed higher education. Table 1 shows the educational level in the town of Aqraba by sex and educational attainment in 2007.

Table 1: Aqraba population (10 years and above) by sex and educational attainment

| S E x | Illite- rate | Can read & write | Element- ary | Preparat- ory | Second- ary | Associate Diploma | Bachelor | Higher Diploma | Master | PhD | Un- known | Total |
|-------------|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------|-------------------|--------|-----|--------------|-------|
| M | 100 | 791 | 934 | 814 | 382 | 68 | 97 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 10 | 2,902 |
| F | 293 | 439 | 904 | 777 | 315 | 36 | 54 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 2,824 |
| T | 393 | 930 | 1,838 | 1,591 | 697 | 104 | 151 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 15 | 5,726 |

Source: PCBS, 2009.

There are eight public schools in the town run by the Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education (See Table 2).

Table 2: Schools in Aqraba by name, stage, sex, and supervising authority (2011/2012)

| School Name | Supervising Authority | Sex |
|--|-----------------------|---------|
| Yanun Co-educated Elementary School | Government | Mixed |
| Aqraba Boys Secondary School | Government | Males |
| Aqraba Girls Secondary School | Government | Females |
| Aqraba Boys Elementary School | Government | Males |
| Aqraba Girls Elementary School | Government | Females |
| Khalid ibn al-Walid Boys Elementary School | Government | Males |
| Khawla Bent Al 'Azwar Girls Elementary School | Government | Females |
| Al Tawil Khirbet co-educated Elementary School | Government | Mixed |

Source: Directorate of Education in Nablus, 2012

In the town there are 2,823 students, 158 teachers, and 101 classes. The average number of students per teacher in the school is nearly 18, whilst the average number of students per class is approximately 28 (Directorate of Education in Nablus, 2012).

There is one kindergarten in Aqraba town, which is run by a private organization (See Table 3 below).

Table 3: Kindergartens in Aqraba town by name and supervising authority

| Name of Kindergarten | No. of Classes | No. of Teachers | Supervising Authority |
|----------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Al Aqsa Kindergarten | 5 | 6 | Private |

Source: Directorate of Education in Nablus, 2012

The educational sector in Aqraba town faces a number of obstacles, including:

- The lack of classrooms
 - The lack sufficient number of schools
- (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013)

Health Status

Aqraba has several health facilities available, including a governmental health clinic (Aqraba), a governmental mother and children center, a private general physician clinic, 2 private dental clinics, a private Physiotherapist center, and 3 private pharmacies, in addition to Aqraba Zakat charity clinic (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013).

In the case of the absence of necessary health services in the town, some patients head to Rafidiya or the National Hospital, or Ar Rahmah (Mercy) health clinic, or to private health clinics in Nablus City, which is about 18km away (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013).

The health sector in the town faces a number of obstacles and problems, principally:

- The lack of an ambulance
- The lack of medicine in the governmental health clinic

- The lack of time doctors' present in the governmental health clinic, which is limited to two days a week
 - The lack of a medical tests laboratory in the governmental health clinic
 - The lack of clinics for NCDs diseases such as hypertension and diabetes
- (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013)

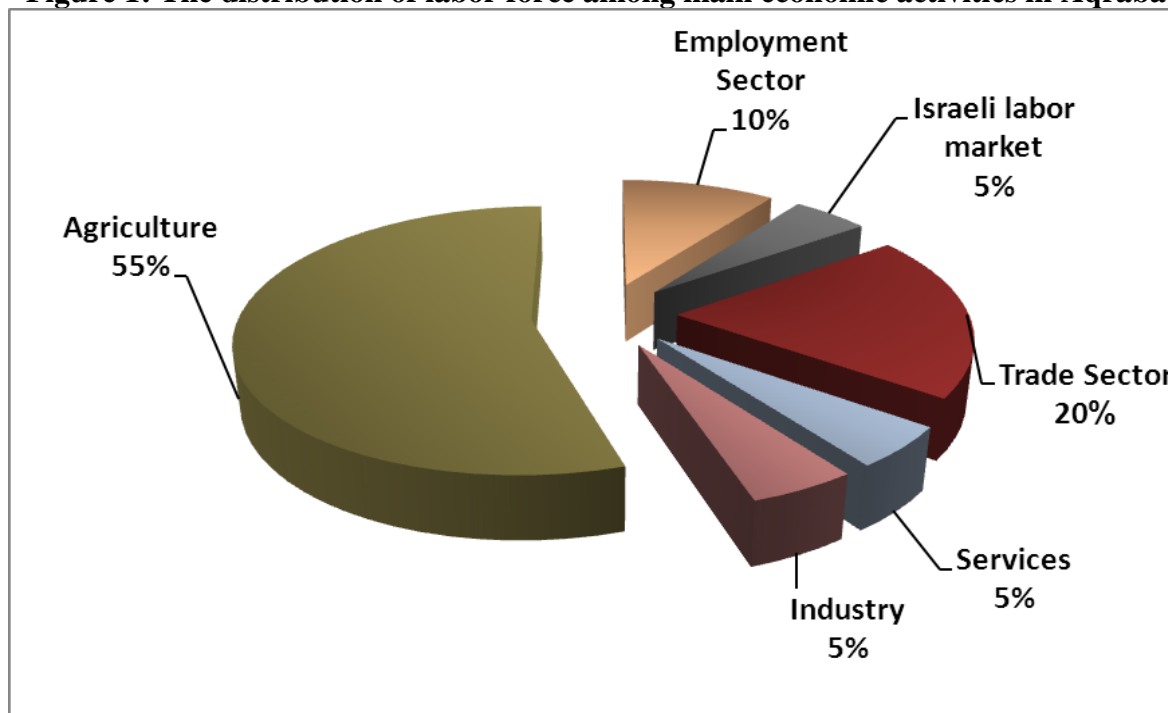
Economic Activities

The economy in Aqraba is dependent mainly on the agricultural sector, which absorbs 55% of the town's workforce (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013) (See Figure 1).

The results of a field survey conducted by the ARIJ team in 2013 for the distribution of labor by economic activity in Aqraba are as follows:

- Agriculture sector (55%)
- Trade sector (20%)
- Government or other public employees sector (10%)
- Israeli labor market (5%)
- Industry (5%)
- Services sector (5%)

Figure 1: The distribution of labor force among main economic activities in Aqraba



Source: Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013

Aqraba has 11 markets, 3 bakeries, 10 butcheries, 1 fruit and vegetable store, 19 services providers, 20 different professional workshops, 3 oil presses, 7 stores for agricultural tools, in addition to 150 other stores (Cement and iron, stores for the sale of electrical equipment, computers, cellular, animal feed, foodstuffs, clothing and auto parts) (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013).

In 2013, the unemployment rate in Aqraba reached 25% and the groups most affected economically by the Israeli restrictions were:

- Workers in the agriculture sector
 - Workers in the industry sector
- (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013)

Labor Force

According to the PCBS Population, Housing and Establishment Census-2007, 30.4% of Aqraba's labor force was economically active, of whom 86.4% were employed. 69.2% were not economically active, of whom 54.2% were students and 36.3% were housekeepers (See Table 4).

Table 4: Aqraba population (10 years of age and above) by sex and employment status

| Sex | Economically active | | | | Non-economically active | | | | | | Not stated | Total |
|-----|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-------|-------------------------|---------------|----------------|------------------------------------|--------|-------|------------|-------|
| | Employed | Currently Unemployed | Un-employed (never worked) | Total | Student | House-keeping | Unable to work | Not working & not looking for work | Others | Total | | |
| M | 1,432 | 102 | 120 | 1,654 | 1,032 | 4 | 143 | 15 | 38 | 1,232 | 16 | 2,902 |
| F | 75 | 6 | 8 | 89 | 1,116 | 1,435 | 152 | 2 | 23 | 2,728 | 7 | 2,824 |
| T | 1,507 | 108 | 128 | 1,743 | 2,148 | 1,439 | 295 | 17 | 61 | 3,960 | 23 | 5,726 |

M: Male; F: Female; T: Total.

Source: PCBS, 2009.

Agricultural Sector

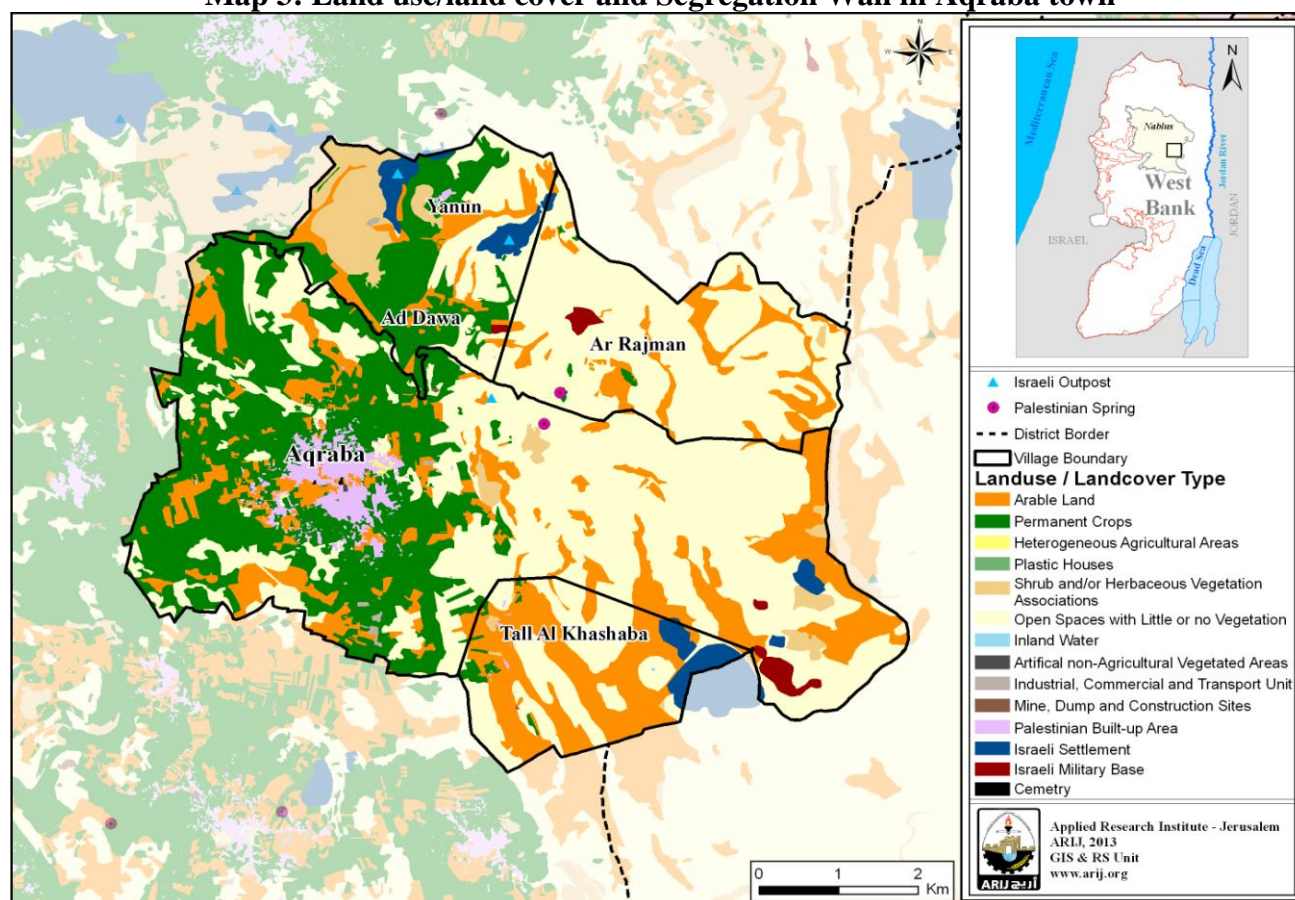
Aqraba has a total area of approximately 51,442 dunums of which 24,937 dunums are arable land and 1,144 dunums are registered as residential (See Table 5 and Map 3).

Table 5: Land use and land cover in Aqraba town (area in dunum)

| Total Area | Built up Area | Agricultural area (24,937) | | | | Inland water | Forests | Open Spaces | Area of Industrial, Commercial & Transport Unit | Area of Settlements, Military Bases & Wall Zone | Tomb |
|------------|---------------|----------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|---------|-------------|---|---|------|
| | | Permanent Crops | Green-houses | Range-lands | Arable lands | | | | | | |
| 51,442 | 1,144 | 12,418 | 1 | 1,989 | 10,529 | 3 | 0 | 23,831 | 96 | 1,425 | 6 |

Source: ARIJ – GIS Unit, 2014.

Map 3: Land use/land cover and Segregation Wall in Aqraba town



Source: ARIJ - GIS Unit, 2014.

There are several different types of rain-fed and irrigated open-cultivated vegetables in Aqraba. The most commonly cultivated crop in this area are green beans. Also 2 dunums of greenhouses are cultivated with different vegetables (Ministry of agriculture-Nablus, 2010).

Table 6 shows the different types of fruit trees planted in the area. Aqraba is famous for olive cultivation and there are approximately 12,778 dunums of land planted with olive trees in the town.

Table 6: Total area of horticulture and olive trees in Aqraba (area in dunums)

| Olives | | Citrus | | Stone-fruits | | Pome fruits | | Nuts | | Other fruits | | Total Area | |
|--------|------|--------|------|--------------|------|-------------|------|------|------|--------------|------|------------|------|
| Rf. | Irr. | Rf. | Irr. | Rf. | Irr. | Rf. | Irr. | Rf. | Irr. | Rf. | Irr. | Rf. | Irr. |
| 12,778 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 34 | 0 | 40 | 0 | 287 | 0 | 158 | 0 | 13,297 | 0 |

Rf.: Rain-fed; Irr.: Irrigated.

Source: Ministry of Agriculture-Nablus, 2010

In terms of field crops and forage in Aqraba, cereals (particularly wheat) are the most cultivated, covering an area of approximately 1,960 dunums (See Table 7).

Table 7: Total area of forage and field crops in Aqraba (area in dunums)

| Cereals | | Bulbs | | Dry legumes | | Oil crops | | Forage crops | | Stimulating crops | | Other crops | | Total Area | |
|---------|------|-------|------|-------------|------|-----------|------|--------------|------|-------------------|------|-------------|------|------------|------|
| Rf. | Irr. | Rf. | Irr. | Rf. | Irr. | Rf. | Irr. | Rf. | Irr. | Rf. | Irr. | Rf. | Irr. | Rf. | Irr. |
| 1,960 | 0 | 30 | 0 | 183 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 455 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 2,655 | 0 |

Rf.: Rain-fed; Irr.: Irrigated.

Source: Ministry of Agriculture-Nablus, 2010

The difference in size of agricultural areas between the two sets of results obtained from the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and ARIJ's GIS Unit is explained by the difference in each organization's definition of land coverage and ownership. The MoA and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2011) conducted a survey which used a definition of agricultural areas based on land ownership. Therefore, the areas included in the survey were those of actual holdings of agricultural areas and fragmented and small seasonal cultivated areas in residential and agricultural areas were not considered. ARIJ's survey, however, indicated the existence of a high proportion of small and fragmented holdings (home gardens) throughout the occupied Palestinian territories. This therefore, accounts for the larger area of agricultural holdings calculated by ARIJ.

The field survey conducted by the ARIJ team shows that 1% of the residents in Aqraba rear and keep domestic animals such as cows and sheep (See Table 9).

Table 8: Livestock in Aqraba

| Cows* | Sheep | Goats | Camels | Horses | Donkeys | Mules | Broiler Chickens | Layer Chickens | Bee Hives |
|-------|--------|-------|--------|--------|---------|-------|------------------|----------------|-----------|
| 303 | 11,010 | 2,340 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 185,000 | 0 | 15 |

*Including cows, bull calves, heifer calves and bulls

Source: Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture - Nablus, 2010

There are approximately 66 kilometers of agricultural roads in the village, categorized as follows:

Table 9: Agricultural Roads in Aqraba Village and their Lengths

| Suitability of Agricultural Roads | Length (km) |
|--|-------------|
| For vehicles | 6 |
| For tractors and agricultural machinery only | 20 |
| For animals only | 20 |
| Unsuitable | 20 |

Source: Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013

The agricultural sector in the town has a number of problems, including:

- Confiscation of land
 - The lack of access to agricultural land
 - The lack of water sources
 - The lack of capital for agricultural projects
- (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013)

Institutions and Services

Aqraba town has several national governmental branches, including a post office and police station. There are also a number of local institutions and associations that provide services to various sectors of society. These include:

- **Aqraba Municipal Council:** Founded in 1997, and later registered by the Ministry of local Government, it aims to bring attention to issues of the town and provide all services to the population, in addition to providing infrastructure services.
- **Aqraba Sports Club:** Established in 1995, and later registered by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, its aim is to interest young people, train them, provide services to them to improve their athletic skills, and provide different social and cultural activities.
- **Aqraba Women's Center:** Established in 2006 by the Aqraba Municipal Council, it's meant to provide training courses for women and small-scale projects.
- **Al Falah Association:** Founded in 2005 by the Ministry of Interior, it is meant to provide services to farmers. (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013)

Infrastructure and Natural Resources

Electricity and Telecommunication Services

Aqraba has been connected to a public electricity network since 1992. It is served by the Israeli Qatariya Electricity Company, through the North Electricity Company, which is the main source of electricity in the town. 100% of the housing units in Aqraba are connected to the network (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013).

Aqraba is connected to a telecommunication network and approximately 50% of the housing units within the Aqraba boundaries are connected to phone lines (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013).

Transportation Services

There are 10 taxis and 4 buses in Aqraba. In the absence of transportation in the town, the citizens use their private cars. The town is impacted by the Israeli-imposed earth mound roadblocks and military checkpoints (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013). There are 3km of main roads and 15km of secondary roads in Aqraba (See Table 10).

Table 10: Roads in Aqraba town

| Status of Internal Roads | Road Length (km) | |
|------------------------------|------------------|-----------|
| | Main | Secondary |
| 1. Paved & in good condition | 3 | 10 |
| 2. Paved & in poor condition | - | 3 |
| 3. Unpaved | - | 2 |

Source: Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013

Water Resources

Aqraba is not provided with a water network, so the citizens buy water via water tanks with high prices ranging between 10 and 14 NIS/cubic meter (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013). In addition, Aqraba town has 3 water springs, 2 of them under Israeli control. There are also 2000 domestic wells to collect rain water and a water tank with a 2000 cubic meter capacity (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013).

Sanitation

Aqraba lacks a public sewerage network. Most of the population uses cesspits and septic tanks as a main means for wastewater disposal (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013). The wastewater collected by cesspits and septic tanks is discharged by wastewater tankers directly into open areas or nearby valleys with little regard for the environment. Here it is noted that there is no wastewater treatment either at the source or at the disposal sites and this poses a serious threat to the environment in addition to public health (ARIJ - WERU, 2013).

Solid Waste Management

Aqraba Municipal Council is responsible for the collection and disposal of solid waste generated by citizens and establishments in the town. As the process of solid waste management is costly, a monthly fee amounting to 15 NIS/month per household is charged to the population and facilities served by domestic solid waste collection and transportation services. 100% of the fees are collected (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013).

Most of the population in Aqraba benefits from the solid waste services, whereby waste is collected from households, institutions, shops, and public squares in plastic bags, and placed in 120 containers (of 1m³ capacity), located at various points in the town. The Municipal Council collects the solid waste once a week and transports it using a waste collection vehicle to the waste landfill Zahrat Al Fanjan in the Jenin Governorate 3km away from the town. Here the waste is subsequently buried in an environmentally sound way (Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013).

The daily per capita rate of solid waste production in Aqraba is 1.05kg. Thus the estimated amount of solid waste produced per day from Aqraba residents is nearly 9.7 tons, or 3,523 tons per year (ARIJ-WERU, 2013).

Environmental Conditions

Like other towns and villages in the Nablus Governorate, Aqraba experiences several environmental problems which must be addressed and solved. These problems can be identified as follows:

Water Crisis

The lack of water-providing services in the town due to the absence of a public water network forces citizens to buy water at high prices.

Wastewater Management

The absence of a public sewerage network in the town means that Aqraba residents are forced to use unhygienic cesspits for the disposal of wastewater, and/or to discharge wastewater into the streets, as citizens cannot afford the high cost of sewage tankers. This is particularly common in winter. These methods lead to environmental damage, health problems, and the spread of epidemics and diseases in the town. This wastewater also contaminates the groundwater because most cesspits are built without lining, to avoid the need to use sewage tankers and allow wastewater to enter into the ground. Moreover, the untreated wastewater collected from cesspits by sewage tankers is disposed of in open areas without concern for the damage it causes to the environment and to residents' health.

Solid Waste Management

Aqraba town suffer from some problems regarding the management of solid waste, such as: the absent of a health landfill to serve the town, as the other villages and towns in Nablus City, that get rid of their solid waste to Zahret al Finjan landfill in Jenin Governorate. This landfill is the main environment-friendly landfill serving the town in addition to most of the localities in the Nablus Governorate.

Impact of the Israeli Occupation

Geopolitical status in ‘Aqraba town

According to the Oslo II Interim Agreement signed on 28th September 1995 by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel, ‘Aqraba (which includes the following localities: Yanun, Khirbet Al Tawil-Tell Al Khashaba, Al Rajman, and Dura) was divided into Area B and Area C. Approximately 16,189 dunums (31% of the town’s total area) were classified as Area B, where the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has complete control over civil matters but Israel continues to retain overriding responsibility for security. The rest of the village’s area, constituting 35,253 dunums (69% of the total area), was classified as Area C, where Israel retains full control over security and administration related to the territory. In Area C, Palestinian building and land management is prohibited unless through consent or authorization by the Israeli Civil Administration. The majority of ‘Aqraba’s population resides in Area B. (See Table 1). while most of the land lying within Area C is open space and agricultural land or has been taken for Israeli settlements and Israeli military bases. It is worth mentioning, that the localities (Yanun, Khirbet Al Tawil-Tell Al Khashaba, Al Rajman and Dura which belongs to ‘Aqrabalie within Area C in the northern and eastern part of ‘Aqraba. The majority of Israeli violations occur in these localities. (See Table11).

Table 11: The Geopolitical Divisions of ‘Aqraba town according to Oslo Agreement 1995

| Area | Area in dunums | Percentage of Total village area % |
|----------------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| Area A | 0 | 0 |
| Area B | 16,189 | 31 |
| Area C | 35,253 | 69 |
| Nature Reserve | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 51,442 | 100 |

Source: Source: ARIJ-GIS, 2014

Israeli occupation practices in ‘Aqraba town

Hundreds of dunums of land belonging to ‘Aqraba town have been confiscated by Israel, primarily for the purpose of establishing settlements, military bases and the construction of Israeli settlement roads. The following is a breakdown of the Israeli confiscations of land of the village of ‘Aqraba:

Israel has confiscated 1,085 dunums from ‘Aqraba town for the establishment of "Itamar" and “Gitit” settlements. Founded in 1973, “Gitit” is located to the south-eastern side of ‘Aqraba and occupies an

area of approximately 1,181 dunums. It is partially built on the territory of 'Aqraba and Al Jiftlik. "Gitit" settlement contains approximately 315 Israeli settlers.

"It is also partially built on the territory of the neighboring towns of 'Aqraba and Al Jiftlik. Itamar" is located to the northern part of 'Aqraba. Founded in 1984, it has a total area of 3,564 dunums and contains around 1,181 Israeli settlers. "Itamar" settlement is mainly built on the territory of the neighboring town of 'Awarta.

Israel has also confiscated an area of 338 dunums from the town lands to establish two military bases, located on the eastern side of the town near "Gitit" settlement. These military bases are a source of abuse and human rights violations on Palestinian citizens and their land.

Israeli authorities have also isolated approximately 3,000 dunums of lands in 'Aqraba town, Awarta village, Beit Furik, Yanun, and Rujeib for the benefits of "Itamar" settlement and its related outposts, which s following to this settlement, in order to construct a security fence separating the settlement area from the aforementioned Palestinian villages from Itamar settlement and their adjacent outposts. Most of this isolated land is agricultural land, which is a critical source of income for village residents.

Israeli military checkpoints in 'Aqraba town

After the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000, the Israeli authorities established a number of military checkpoints at the northern entrance of 'Aqraba town. Israeli forces placed cement blocks and earth mounds at the main entrance of the town on the west side, which is connected with Israeli bypass road No. 505. This entrance remained closed for almost 11 years, but was re-opened in 2012. During the closure period, residents had to use alternative roads. One of these roads passes through the neighboring village of Beita, from the western side, while the other is through Majdal Bani Fadil from the south side. Moreover, the Israeli forces set up a barrier and cement blocks on the road which connects Majdal Bani Fadil to 'Aqraba village, but this barrier was removed later on.

Israeli forces have also established 10 earth mound barriers to close off agricultural lands and cut the link between minor roads and bypass roads No. 505 and No. 508 located on the east, west and southern sides of the town. These barriers are still in place and prevent the movement of farmers to and from their agricultural lands.

'Aqraba town in particular and Nablus city in general, has been affected by "Huwwara" and "Za'atara" main checkpoints. These checkpoints , which are still considered as the most important checkpoints, have worked to separate the northern governorate from the central and southern governorates. "Huwwara" checkpoint was partially removed in 2009, when Israeli forces reduced their presence in this vicinity and reduced their control over the movement of Palestinian civilians as a result of calmer conditions. However "Za'atara" checkpoint still cuts through the West Bank and stop and search procedures are still imposed upon Palestinian residents, but to a lesser extent than in previous years.

Over the last decade, military checkpoints in the area have continued to have a negative impact on the daily lives of residents. Checkpoints continue to hinder freedom of movement and sever the links between Nablus city and the surrounding villages, as well as the connection between the villages and their agricultural lands. This has resulted in heavy economic losses for residents of 'Aqraba as they are forced to travel further distances which takes more time, in order to reach their agricultural land, especially when checkpoints are closed.

Israeli bypass roads in 'Aqraba town

Israeli authorities have established multiple bypass roads across the West Bank, confiscating thousands of dunums of agricultural and non-agricultural lands in order to link Israeli settlements to each other and to separate the Palestinian community. These roads also serve to enhance Israeli security control on these roads.

Israel has confiscated land from the east and south of 'Aqraba in order to construct Israeli bypass roads No.505 and No. 508. These roads extend a 7km onto the territory of 'Aqraba town.

It should be noted that the real danger of the bypass roads lies in the confiscated land that was taken for the benefit of what is known as the buffer zone. The buffer zone is imposed by the Israeli army and usually occupies 75 meters on both sides of the road.

Violations in Khirbet Al Tawil within 'Aqraba by Israeli authorities

Khirbet Al Tawil is located 2km to the east of 'Aqraba. It has been subjected to a huge number of violations and attacks by the occupation forces, and one of the most targeted localities in Nablus Governorate. Israeli forces have delivered many demolition and eviction orders. They have demolished a number of houses, including tents and basic tin structures.

According to the land Research Center, the Populations of Khirbet Al Tawil) is Approximately 500 Palestinian residents live in Khirbet Al Tawil. These residents depend on agriculture and rearing animals for their living.

This Palestinian locality has been targeted by Israeli forces to displace the hundreds of citizens living in Khirbet Al Tawil, under the pretext that the village is located within Area C and is situated within an Israeli military zones used for the training of the Israeli army as well as under the pretext that the community is located within Area C. The occupation authorities classified 125,788 dunums of land in the Jordan Valley area as a closed military zone, using it for training and citing security measures, whilst preventing Palestinians from accessing their land. and use it for the purposes of training and security isolation ..

Israeli outposts in 'Aqraba town

Land belonging to 'Aqraba, Awarta, and Yanun territory has been taken by force by Israeli settlers to establish five outposts on the eastern hills of "Itamar" settlement. These outposts are named (Hill 851 - Har Gideon , Hill 782, Givat Olam outpost, Hill 836, and Hill 777- Hkonat Arnon). These outposts overlook the above villages, with the aim of extending the territory controlled along the eastern side of the settlement, and as a result, control more Palestinian land. These outposts are between (3 km and 6 km) away from main Itamar settlement and form a barrier which surrounds the Palestinian areas and its population.

During the past two decades, Israel has built 232 outposts in the West Bank. The outposts are foundations for new settlements, and tend to be extended branches of a mother settlement a few miles away. The process usually begins with the establishment of mobile caravans on the land that has been taken by the settlers. Establishing settlement outposts was encouraged by Ariel Sharon; the aim was for Jewish settlers to occupy Palestinians hill tops and create facts on the ground, so that Palestinians could not claim the land if there was ever to be a future solution between the two sides. Consecutive Israeli governments have provided security and logistical support for these outposts.

The Israeli army has also supported illegal Israeli settlers in their relocation to the settlements, in addition to providing security and infrastructure support. Since 2001 when Ariel Sharon became Prime Minister, there has been a significant increase in the number of outposts across the West Bank.

Settler attacks on ‘Aqraba town

Attacks and violence perpetrated by settlers living in the settlements near ‘Aqraba town has had a profoundly negative impact on village residents and their property. Palestinian land owners are unable to access their lands, as they have been fenced off with barbed wire. Settlers have planted trees in these areas to reinforce their control over the area. The settlers have damaged and burned a number of Palestinian owned trees and plants. Settlers have also attacked the land owners in an attempt to intimidate and deter them from returning to their land.

Israel has confiscated lands from ‘Aqraba town and the neighboring villages, in order to establish illegal settlements in the area. But also these settlements pose a real threat for the Palestinians on their own land. “Where, “Itamar” settlement and the settlers living in it pose a constant threat for the residents of ‘Awarta, ‘Aqraba and Beit Furik. Since the establishment of this settlement in 1984, Palestinian residents have been subjected to several violent attacks, for example farmers have been attacked in order to prevent them from reaching their agricultural land. Settlers have also stolen crops, damaged trees and attacked homes, places of worship, cars and other private property.

Israeli military orders in ‘Aqraba town

Israeli forces have issued military orders to confiscate land, stop construction work and order house demolitions in the ‘Aqraba area. Most of the orders have been issued in Khiribet Al Tawil in the eastern part of the town, and in Yanun, Al Rajman and Dura in the northern part of the town. These areas are targeted by the Israeli forces under the pretext of building without a permit in Area C, as per the Oslo Agreement. They are also targeted because they are located near to military zones and settlement sites. Between 2009 and 2013, there was a significant increase in the amount of orders imposed upon Palestinian residents of ‘Aqraba. The Israeli authorities reject the majority of building license applications submitted by Palestinians in Area C. Details of these orders are detailed below:

The following are examples on these military order in ‘Aqraba, and the following are the available commands :

In October 2013, Israeli forces issued Military Order No. (6/60 / T), confiscating 5.3 dunums of ‘Aqraba town territory to build a security fence along Israeli bypass road No. 505 so as to build a security fence to this road.

2 . The Occupation forces issued several military orders and notifications, especially in the years (2009-2013) to stop construction and evacuation or demolition procedures , for homes and facilities in the town under the pretext of lack of building permits because they are situated within area C.

3. On 9th January 2008, Israeli forces a series of military orders and notices to stop construction of the houses in the town under the pretext of building without a pre-approved building permit. These notifications are numbered as follows: 142041; 142042; 142043; 142044; 142046; 142047; 142048; 142050; 142051; 142052; 142053; 142054; 142055; 142056; and 142057.

4 . On 11th March 2011, two military notifications were served to halt the construction of houses in the town under the pretext of building without a pre-approved building permit. These notifications are numbered as follows: 147657 and 147658.

5. On 6th May 2012, two military notifications were served to halt the construction of houses in Khiribet Al Tawil under the pretext of building without a pre-approved building permit. These notifications are numbered as follows: 149653 and 149654.

6. On 19th June 2013, four military notifications were served to halt the construction of houses in Khiribet Al Tawil under the pretext of building without a pre-approved building permit. These notifications are numbered as follows: 152883; 152884; 152885; and 152886.

7. On 18th July 2013, four military notifications were served to halt the construction of houses in the town under the pretext of building without a pre-approved building permit. These notifications are numbered as follows; 152887; 152888; 152889; and 152890.

8. On 19th January 2010, Military Order (904/2) was issued to evict residents from a house in 'Aqraba under the pretext of building without a pre-approved building permit.

Development Plans and Projects

Implemented Projects

Aqraba Municipal Council has implemented several development projects in Aqraba during the last five years (See Table 12).

Table 12: Implemented Development Plans and Projects in Aqraba during the Last Five Years

| Name of the Project | Type | Year | Donor |
|---|----------------|-----------|---|
| Build a health center | Service | 2009 | CHF |
| Constructing another floor in the municipality building | Service | 2009 | Aqraba Municipal Council |
| Paving internal roads | Infrastructure | 2009-2010 | Aqraba Municipal Council, Municipalities Funds, and Ministry of Finance |
| Maintenance of schools in the town | Education | 2009-2012 | Aqraba Municipal Council |
| Constructing internal roads | Infrastructure | 2009-2012 | Aqraba Municipal Council |
| Constructing agricultural roads | Agricultural | 2009-2012 | Aqraba Municipal Council |
| Constructing retaining walls | Infrastructure | 2009-2012 | Aqraba Municipal Council |
| Purchasing containers for solid waste | Service | 2009-2012 | Aqraba Municipal Council |
| Establishing and maintaining the power grid | Infrastructure | 2009-2012 | Aqraba Municipal Council |
| Building classrooms in the Aqraba girls elementary school | Education | 2010 | Aqraba Municipal Council |
| Building classroom in the Al Tawil Khirbet co- educated Elementary School | Education | 2011 | Aqraba Municipal Council |
| Buying a bagger bulldozer and agricultural roller | Service | 2011 | Municipalities Fund |
| Building classrooms in the Khalid ibn al-Walid Boys Elementary School | Education | 2012 | Aqraba Municipal Council |
| Paving internal roads for schools | Education | 2012 | Municipalities Fund |

Source: Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013

Proposed Projects

Aqraba Municipal Council, in cooperation with the town's civil society organizations and the town residents, hopes to implement several projects in the coming years. The project ideas were developed during the Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) workshop conducted by ARIJ staff in the town. The projects are as follows, in order of priority from the viewpoints of the participants in the workshop:

- 1 - The need to establish a sewage network of approximately 24 km
- 2 - The need to equip Aqraba secondary school playgrounds, and to expand the activities of the sports club
- 3 - The need to establish a civil defense center
- 4 - The need to establish a diabetes clinic for the treatment of diabetic patients
- 5 - The need to establish a veterinarian clinic
- 6 - The need for paving internal streets with sidewalks of 14km
- 7 - The need to construct agricultural roads for a length of 30km, and retaining walls along approximately 4km
- 8 - The need to expand the public electricity network 4km, and the public water network for a length of 4km
- 9 - Projects to support farmers and livestock breeders in the village
- 10 - The need to build a second floor in the Women's Center, with the establishment of a nursery for children
- 11 - The need to establish a vocational training center
- 12 - The need for productive projects and industrial services for unemployed young people.=
- 13 - The need for feminist development projects to support the women in the community, such as sewing and other concerns
- 14 - The need for marketing of agricultural products, particularly olive oil
- 15 - The need to establish a center to care for the disabled and those with special needs
- 16 - The need for a health clinic to reach Khirbet Al Tawil and Yanun
- 17 - The need for projects to combat wild pigs and stray dogs
- 18 - The need to rehabilitate archaeological sites and shrines
- 19 - The need to create a public park to serve the children in the village

Locality Development Priorities and Needs

Aqraba suffers from a significant shortage of infrastructure and services. Table 13 shows the development priorities and needs in the town, according to the Town Council's perspective:

Table 13: Development Priorities and Needs in Aqraba

| No. | Sector | Strongly Needed | Needed | Not a Priority | Notes |
|------------------------------|---|-----------------|--------|----------------|--|
| Infrastructural Needs | | | | | |
| 1 | Opening and paving of roads | * | | | 31 km [^] |
| 2 | Rehabilitation of old water networks | | | * | |
| 3 | Extending the water network to cover new built up areas | | | * | |
| 4 | Construction of new water networks | * | | | 20 km |
| 5 | Rehabilitation/ construction of new wells or springs | | | * | |
| 6 | Construction of water reservoirs | | | * | |
| 7 | Construction of a sewage disposal network | * | | | 20 km |
| 8 | Construction of a new electricity network | | * | | |
| 9 | Providing containers for solid waste collection | * | | | 50 containers |
| 10 | Providing vehicles for collecting solid waste | * | | | 1 vehicle |
| 11 | Providing a sanitary landfill | | | * | |
| Health Needs | | | | | |
| 1 | Building new clinics or health care centres | * | | | Diabetes clinic |
| 2 | Rehabilitation of old clinics or health care centres | * | | | Health center |
| 3 | Purchasing medical equipment and tools | * | | | |
| Educational Needs | | | | | |
| 1 | Building new schools | * | | | Establish two elementary schools (Male and Female) |
| 2 | Rehabilitation of old schools | * | | | Aqraba Elementary Schools |
| 3 | Purchasing new school equipment | * | | | All Schools |
| Agriculture Needs | | | | | |
| 1 | Rehabilitation of agricultural lands | * | | | 20,000 dunums |
| 2 | Building rainwater harvesting cisterns | * | | | 200 cisterns |
| 3 | Construction of livestock barracks | * | | | 50 barracks |
| 4 | Provision of veterinary services | * | | | |
| 5 | Provision of seeds and hay for animals | * | | | 1000 ton yearly |
| 6 | Construction of new greenhouses | * | | | 50 greenhouses |
| 7 | Rehabilitation of greenhouses | | | * | |
| 8 | Provision of field crops seeds | * | | | |
| 9 | Provision of plants and agricultural supplies | * | | | |

[^] 5 km secondary roads and 26 km agricultural roads.

Source: Aqraba Municipal Council, 2013

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