

Al Burj Village Profile



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Background

This booklet is part of a series of booklets, which contain compiled information about each city, town, and village in Hebron Governorate. These booklets come as a result of a comprehensive study of all localities in Hebron 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 Azahar Needs Assessment'; a project funded by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AECID) and the Azahar Program.

The 'Village Profiles and Azahar Needs Assessment' was designed to study, investigate, analyze and document the socio-economic conditions and the needed programs and activities to mitigate the impact of the current unsecure political, economic and social conditions in Hebron Governorate with particular focus on the Azahar program objectives and activities concerning water, environment, and agriculture.

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 Hebron 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 the focus on the agricultural sector.

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

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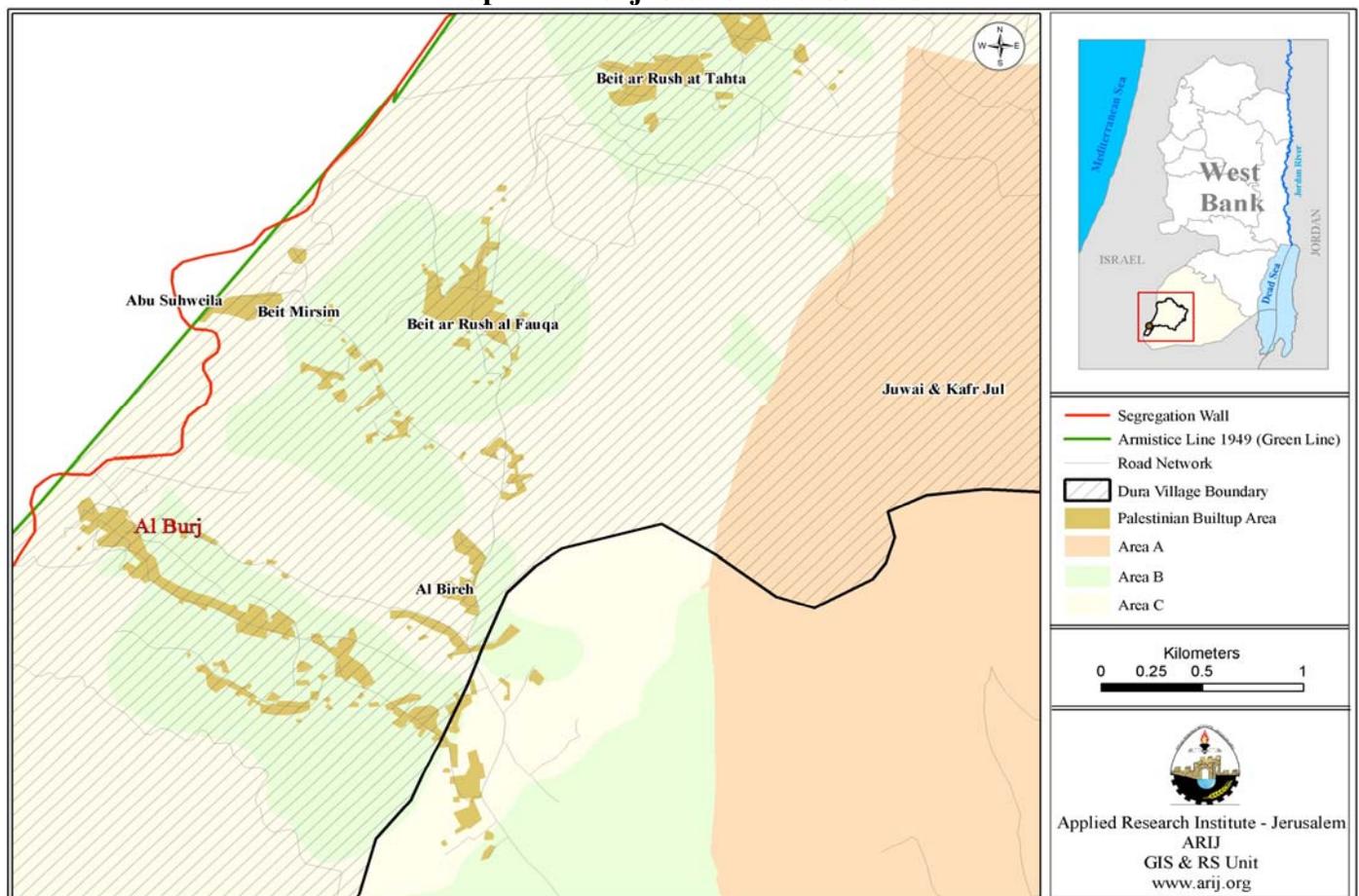
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Al Burj Village Profile

Location and Physical Characteristics

Al Burj is a village in the Dura area which is located 35 kilometers southwest of the City of Hebron, in the southern part of the West Bank. It is bordered by Al Bireh village to the east, Beit Mirsim to the north, Ar Ramadin to the south, and by the 1949 Armistice Line (the Green Line) to the west.

Map 1: Al Burj location and borders



The total area of Al Burj village is approximately 9,910 dunums, of which 160 dunums are Palestinian built-up areas, 6,850 dunums are agricultural lands, 1,906 dunums can be categorized as forest, uncultivated, or public land, and 2,000 dunums which have been confiscated by the Israeli forces to build settlements and construct the segregation wall. The village council has a master plan for 348 dunums of village lands verified by the Ministry of the Local Government (MOLG).

Al Burj lies on a hill, with an elevation of 464 m above sea level. The mean annual rainfall in Al Burj is 435.9 mm; the average annual temperature is 15.7 °C, and the average annual humidity is 60.6% (ARIJ GIS).

Al Burj village is considered a rural area as it meets the criteria relevant to rural areas. The village is governed by a village council, which was established in 1996 with seven members and two full-time employees. The council provides services to the households in the village, such as:

- Infrastructure services: water, electricity and paved roads.
- Establishing schools.
- Overseeing governmental services such as building licenses and social aid.
- Providing social services and assistance.

History

According to one narrative, the history of Al Burj dates back to between 800- and 1000 years ago. According to this narrative the name of the village is derived from a castle established in 1254, called “Salah Al Deen Castle”. The castle was used as a monitoring tower for the western villages (today located inside the Green Line). The name of the village comes from the word “Burj” which means (in Arabic البرج) “tower”. The origin of Al Burj residents is the Arabian Peninsula and eastern Jordan.

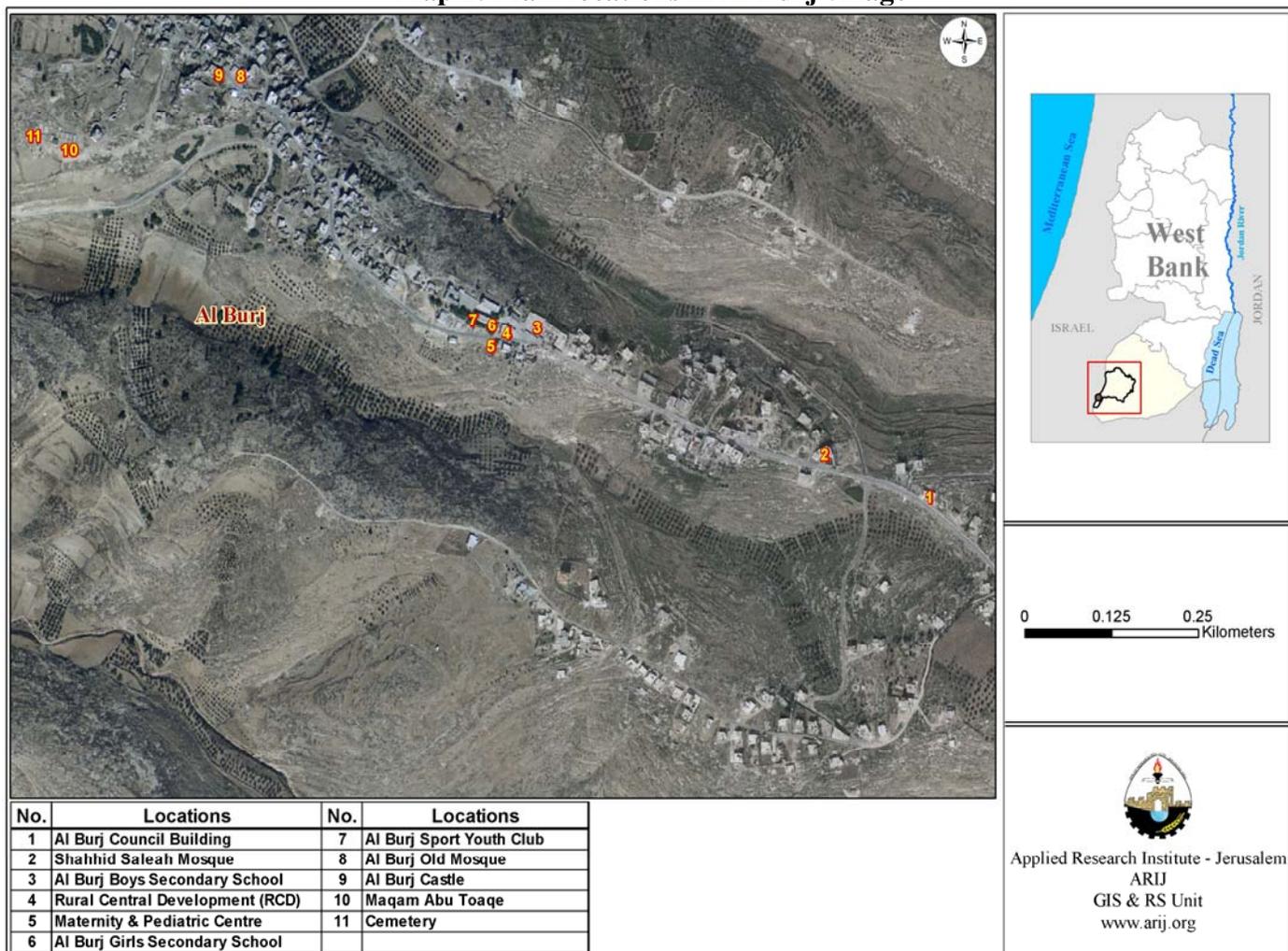
Photos of Al Burj



Religious and Archaeological Sites

In terms of religious establishments, there are three mosques serving the community; Al Burj Mosque, Al Shaheed Saleh Al Talahma Mosque, and Al Bireh Al Jaded Mosque. In terms of historical sites, there are Al Burj Castle, and the Place of Abu Al Touq.

Map 2: Main locations in Al Burj village



Population

The total population of Al Burj, in 2007, is estimated to be 2,289. this is an estimate number based on the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) Census of 1997, of which 1,141 were males and 1,148 were females.

Age Group and Gender

The 2007 Census data shows the distribution of the Al Burj population by age group and sex. The largest age group was between 0-14 years, which constituted 42.6% of the total population, followed by the 15-64 years (age group) which constituted 53.5%, and the age group 65 and above, which constituted 3.2% of the total population. The sex ratio in the village was 102.8 males for every 100 females. In the village of Al Burj, males constituted 50.7% of the total population, and females constituted 49.3%. ((This data includes population figures from the villages of Al Burj and Al Bireh)).

Families

The residents of Al Burj descend from the following families: Talahma , Al Feqyat , Al Amayra , Al Masharqa , Al Awawda , Etbasha , Al Qemary , Shahateet , Dudeen , and Al Henaweiah .

Migration

The village officials indicated that about 50 inhabitants have migrated from the village due to the political and economic situation.

Education

According to the PCBS Population, Housing and Establishment Census-2007, Final Results, of the entire village population aged ten years and older, about 9.7% of them were illiterate, 14% of the population could read and write but had no formal education, 48.5% of the population had elementary and preparatory education, and 17.1% had a secondary education. 48 and 137 persons had an associate diploma or a bachelor's degree. Table 1 shows the education attainment by sex in Al Burj village:

Sex	Illiterate	Can read & write	Elementary	Preparatory	Secondary	Associate Diploma	Bachelor	Higher Diploma	Master	PhD	Total
M	49	118	201	250	167	30	85	1	5	-	906
F	126	133	180	243	142	18	52	-	3	-	897
T	175	251	381	493	309	48	137	1	8	-	1,803

Source: PCBS, May 1999. Population, Housing and Establishment Census-1997, Final Results

This data includes population figures from the villages of Al Burij and Al Bireh

Al Burj is served by two secondary governmental schools, one for boys and one for girls (see table 2). The data of Ministry of Education and Higher Education reveals that at the end of the 2006/2007 scholastic year there were 689 students, 25 classes and 32 teachers in Al Burj village.

No.	School Name	Stage	Sex	Supervising Authority	No. of Students	No. of Classes	No. of Teachers
1.	Al Burj Secondary for Boys School	Secondary	Male	Government	353	12	15
2.	Al Burj Secondary for Girls School	Secondary	Female	Government	336	13	17
	Total				689	25	32

As of 2007, there were three kindergartens in Al Burj, one supervised by the Al Burj Youth Society, and two supervised by the private sector in the village. The main obstacles facing the education sector in the village are:

- The distance between the village and the city of Dura, with students forced to travel about 10 km to reach Dura city.
- A lack in the number of classrooms.
- A lack of play grounds

Health Status

The health sector in Al Burj is made up of one primary health care center and one maternity and child center, both supervised by the Ministry of Health. Otherwise, there are no hospitals, ambulances, or pharmacies in the village. This is in combination with the distance of medical facilities from the village, with the nearest hospitals to the village in Dura (25 km) and in Hebron (35 km). Often the residents are forced to travel 8 km to reach health centers in Adh Dhahiriya.

The village council officials cite that the main obstacles facing the health sector in the village are the lack of clinics and full-time doctors, the lack of ambulances, and the lack of proper dental care professionals.

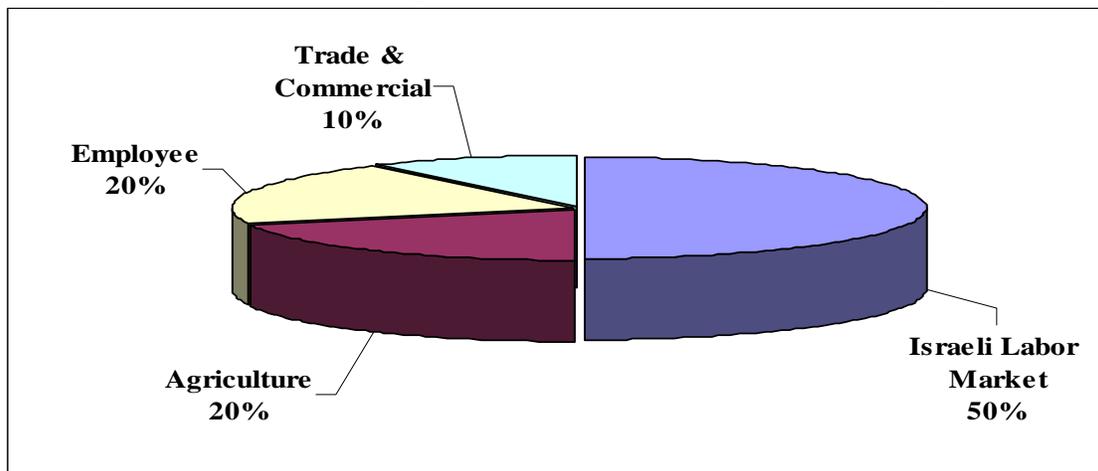
Economy

Most of the residents in the village depend on the Israeli labor market, with about half of the workers in the village finding employment in the Israeli labor market. The agricultural sector and the employees in the public and private sector have a significant proportion of Al Burj’s economic base, with about 20% of the workers engaged in each sector. In terms of trade institutions, there are 12 groceries, one cloth shop, one shop for selling chickens, one hair salon, and one library.

According to village officials, the village economic base can be classified as follows:

- The Israeli Labor Market (50%).
- The Agricultural Sector (20%).
- Employees (government or private sector) (20%).
- The Trade and Commercial Sector (10%).

Figure 1: Percentage of economic activity in Al Burj village



Based on the survey conducted in January 2007 in Hebron Governorate localities by ARIJ, the social groups in the village most affected by the Israeli restrictions and activities since the beginning of the Second Intifada were:

- 1) Workers previously employed in the Israeli labor market.
- 2) Small-holder farmers.
- 3) Families maintaining 6 individuals or more.
- 4) Small-holder traders.
- 5) Housekeeping and children.

Labor Force

According to the PCBS Population, Housing and Establishment Census in 2007, there were 496 economically active persons in Al Burj, of whom 84.7% were employed. According to these figures, 22 individuals were unemployed, a group which constituted 4.4% of the total population (10 years of age and older). Of the 1,307 non-economically active persons in the village, 57.8% were students, 31.5% were housekeeping, and 8% were unable to work (See table 3).

Sex	Economically Active				Not Economically Active						Total
	Employed	Currently Unemployed	Unemployed (Never work)	Total	Students	House keeping	Unable to work	Not working & Not looking for Work	Others	Total	
M	369	21	43	433	379	-	59	2	33	473	906
F	51	1	11	63	377	412	45	-	-	834	897
T	420	22	54	496	756	412	104	2	33	1,307	1,803

Source: PCBS, March 2009. Population, Housing and Establishment Census-2007, Final Results
This data includes population figures from the villages of Al Burij and Al Bireh

Agricultural Sector

According to the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture, the total area of Al Burj village is 9,910 dunums. 6,850 dunums are considered arable land; however, only 2,637 dunums are cultivated (see table 4).

About 2,000 dunums of cultivable land are uncultivated, with farmers using it as pastures for livestock. Village officials cite the disuse of arable lands as a result of: water shortage, lack of manpower, and economic unfeasibility as a direct result of the occupation.

Total Area	Arable Land		Built up Area	Forests Area	Open Spaces and Rangelands
	Uncultivated Area	Cultivated Area			
9,910	5,610.5	1,239.5	160	16	1,890

Map 3: Land use/land cover and segregation wall map of Al Burj village

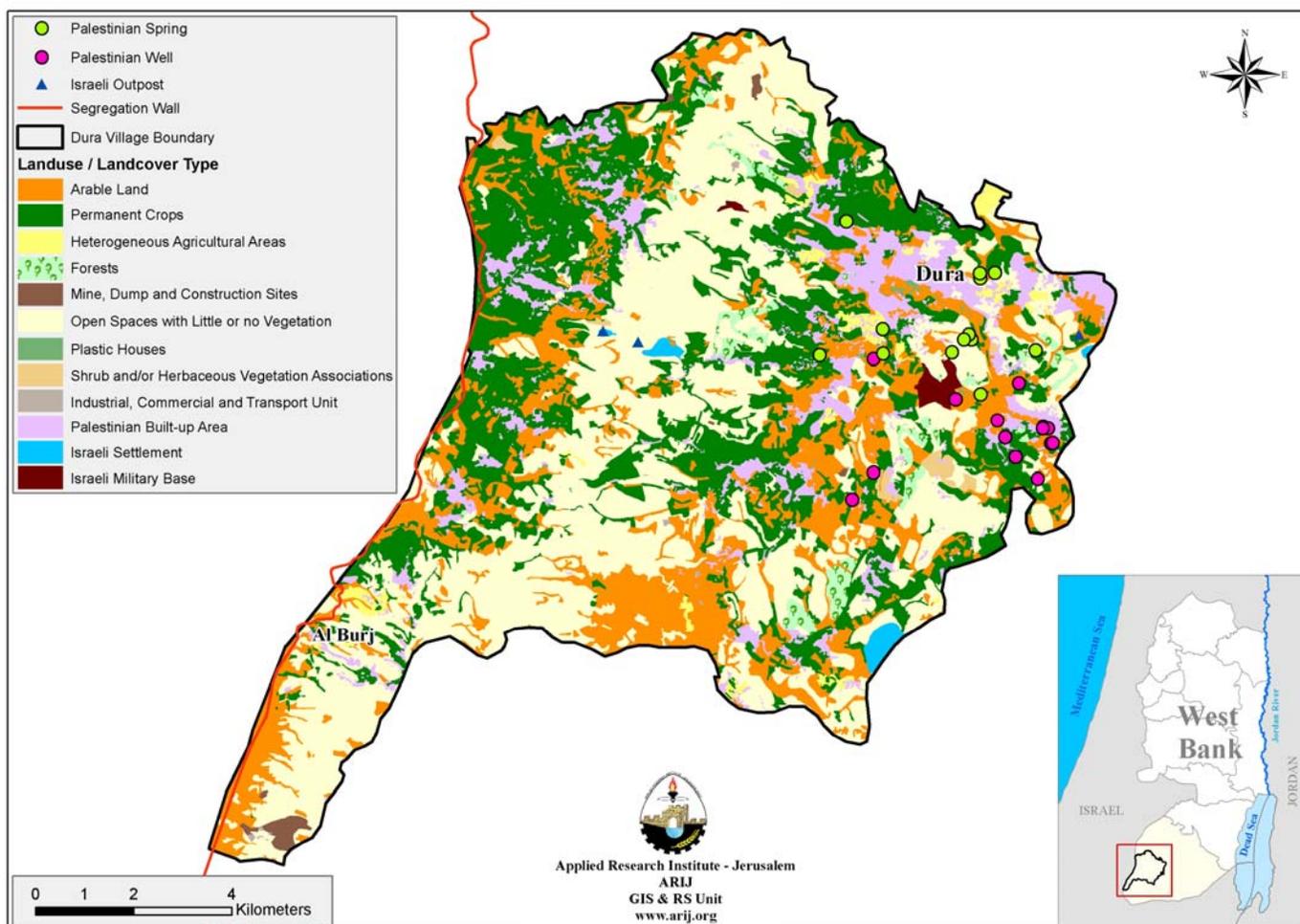


Table 5 shows the different types of rain-fed and irrigated open cultivated vegetables in the village of Al Burj. The rain-fed fruity vegetables are the most cultivated, with an area of about 10.5 dunums. The most common vegetables cultivated within this area are squash, snake cucumber and gourd.

Table 5: Total area of rain fed and irrigated open cultivated vegetables in Al Burj Village (dunum)

Fruity vegetables		Green legumes		Other vegetables		Total area	
Rf	Irr	Rf	Irr	Rf	Irr	Rf	Irr
10.5	0	7	0	2	0	19.5	0

Rf: Rain-fed, Irr: Irrigated

There are 2 types of aromatic medical plants in the village of Al Burj spread over a total area of about 2 dunums. These plants are thyme and sage.

Table 6 below shows that about 239 dunums of Al Burj’s land is planted with olive trees. Other trees planted in the area are mostly almond trees, fig trees and grape vines.

Olives		Citrus		Nuts		Other fruit		Total area	
Rf	Irr.	Rf	Irr.	Rf	Irr.	Rf	Irr.	Rf	Irr.
239	0	0	1	63	0	44	0	346	1

Rf: Rain-fed, Irr: Irrigated

Table 7 shows the total field crops cultivated in the village of Al Burj. Cereals, in particular wheat, white corn and barley, are the most cultivated crops, with an area of about 693 dunums. In addition, the cultivation of dry legumes crops, mostly lent, and forage crops such as Sern and Vetch, is common in the village of Al Burj.

Cereals		Bulbs		Dry legumes		Seeds		Forage crops		Other crops		Total area	
Rf	Irr.	Rf	Irr.	Rf	Irr.	Rf	Irr.	Rf	Irr.	Rf	Irr.	Rf	Irr.
693	0	4	0	32	0	1	0	138	0	3	0	871	0

Rf: Rain-fed, Irr: Irrigated

According to an ARIJ survey, the residents of Al Burj village are also dependent upon rearing and keeping livestock, where about 10% of households breed domestic animals, such as sheep, goats and chicken, in addition to about 47 bee hives. (See table 8).

Cows*	Sheep	Goats	Horses	Donkeys	Broilers	Bee Hives
2	2,435	667	1	40	41,800	47

*Including cows, bull calves, heifer calves and bulls

There are about 10 km of agricultural roads in Al Burj, largely considered insufficient, but suitable for agricultural vehicles and hardware.

Israeli Forces destroyed 60 olive trees belonging to Al Burj residents, and they confiscated about 200 dunums of agricultural lands to construct the Segregation Wall. Village officials cite that the agricultural sector suffers from lack of rain (where the rain is less than 300 mm most years), desertification (because the village is near the Negev Desert – 20 km) and, as mentioned before, from the economic unfeasibility as a result of lack of water.

Institutions and Services

Al Burj is headed by a village council, which was founded in 1996. In addition, other institutions serving the village residents are:

- Al Burj Sport Youth Club.
- Al Burj Women's Society.
- The Rural Central Development (RCD).

Infrastructure and Natural Resources

Telecommunication Services: Al Burj is connected to a telecommunications network and 70% of the village housing units are connected.

Water Services: Since 1987, Al Burj has been connected to a water network supplied by the Israeli company (MECOROT). The village authorities estimate that 60% of the housing units are connected to this network. In terms of alternative sources, the residents depend on cisterns, buying portable tanks, and a natural water spring that exists on the Al Burj side of the Segregation Wall. The per capita water supply is 100 liters per day, and the per capita water use is 61 liters per day. Village officials cite several obstacles to a functional water network, such as the disruption of continuous water supply, especially since 2000, and the age of the existing water network. In addition, the price of purchased water is high, adding to the difficulty for the 40% of the housing units that are not connected to the water network.

Electricity Networks: Since 1995, Al Burj has been provided with an electrical network powered by the Israeli National Electricity Company (Qutria). Currently, 90% of the housing units are connected to this network. The village suffers from the weak currents, especially the region that is distant from the lone generator, and the electrical network needs maintenance as well.

Sewage Disposal Facilities: The village does not have a sewage disposal network, and wastewater is disposed of by means of cesspits. The volume of wastewater produced annually by the village is 0.0389 MCM/yr, all of which is put into cesspits.

Solid Waste Collection Services: There is no solid waste management system in the village. Each resident or household must dispose of solid waste individually by burning. It is estimated that 491.8 tons of solid waste are generated annually.

Transportation Facilities: The residents of the village are served by two buses belonging to the Front Line Transportation Company, which serves many of the villages in the areas. The bus line runs from the north of Al Burj to a village called Sikka. In addition, there is a taxi office, "Taxi Al Janoub". The taxi office belongs to the city of Dura. The number of taxis provided to service Al Burj and neighboring villages is 20, in addition to three informal taxis which run inside the village. Village officials cite the primary obstacle to transportation in the village as a lack of vehicles and automotive services. In terms of road quality, 7,500 meters of main road are paved and in good condition, and 4,000 meters of main road are unpaved.

Impact of the Israeli Occupation

Though the village of Al Burj is reasonably free from the encroachment of settlements, there is an Israeli stone cutting factory to the south of the village on about 2000 dunums. Israeli forces manning flying checkpoints, which are unpredictable, make access to the nearest hospitals and health centers restricted, as well as hampering the transportation of the sick. Also, there is a bypass road near the village that connects settlements in the Hebron Governorate to Israel.

Regarding the segregation wall, Israel started construction of the wall around the village in 2003. The wall surrounded the village from the west side with 6 km of the wall on the land of the village. Approximately 500 dunums of Al Burj land will be isolated behind the wall on completion of its proposed path. As a direct result of the wall, Israeli Forces have cut about 60 olive trees, and destroyed two houses and one kilometer of agricultural road. In addition, the farmers will lose the natural water spring “Bayara Al Burj,” which will be isolated behind the wall.



Section of segregation wall in Al Burj village

Development Plans and Projects

As a result of the fact that Al Burj is suffering from a shortage of decent infrastructural and developmental services, the village council has established a development plan which includes development projects. Starting in 2004 the village council implemented four projects funded by outside donors, including:

Table 9: Development plans and projects in Al Burj village			
No.	Project name	Type	Funded by
1	Paved internal roads (3 km)	Infrastructure	UNDP
2	Established building for the village council	Infrastructure	The Norwegian and Dutch donor
3	Sheep, beehives and domestic wells	Human Services	Union of Agricultural Work Committees
4	Al Burj Garden for Children	Services	UNICEF

The village council is currently overseeing a number of developing projects and plans:

- The repaving of old internal roads.
- Establishment of a new water network.
- Providing the village with new sources of electricity.
- Providing solid water collection services in the village.
-

Locality Development Priorities and Needs

According to Al Burj village council studies, the village has suffered from a shortage of many infrastructural and service needs. Table 10 shows the development priorities and needs in the village.

No.	Sector	Strongly Needed	Needed	Moderately Needed	Not Needed	Notes
Infrastructural Needs						
1	Opening and Pavement of Roads	*				6,000 m ^
2	Construction of New Water Networks	*				12 km
3	Rehabilitation of Old Water Networks				*	
4	Construction of Water Reservoirs		*			5,000 m ³
5	Extending the Water Network to cover New Built up Areas		*			6 km
6	Construction of a Sewage Disposal Network				*	
Health Needs						
1	Building of New Clinics or Health Care Centres					
2	Rehabilitation of Old Clinics or Health Care Centres				*	
3	Purchasing of Medical Equipment and Tools			*		
Educational Needs						
1	Building of New Schools	*				Secondary Education
2	Rehabilitation of Old Schools		*			Secondary Education
3	Purchasing of New Equipment for Schools		*			
Agricultural Needs						
1	Rehabilitation of Agricultural lands		*			1,000 dunums
2	Building Cisterns		*			50 cisterns
3	Construction of Barracks for Livestock		*			20 barns
4	Veterinary Services		*			
5	Seeds and Hay for Animals		*			
6	Rehabilitation of Greenhouses				*	
7	Field Crops Seeds		*			Almond, olive, and grapes ^^
8	Plants and Agricultural Supplies		*			

^ 4,000 m internal roads and 2,000 m agricultural roads

^^ The village needs these kinds of crops because they are suitable for the weather conditions and they are rainfed.

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