

Deir Hajla 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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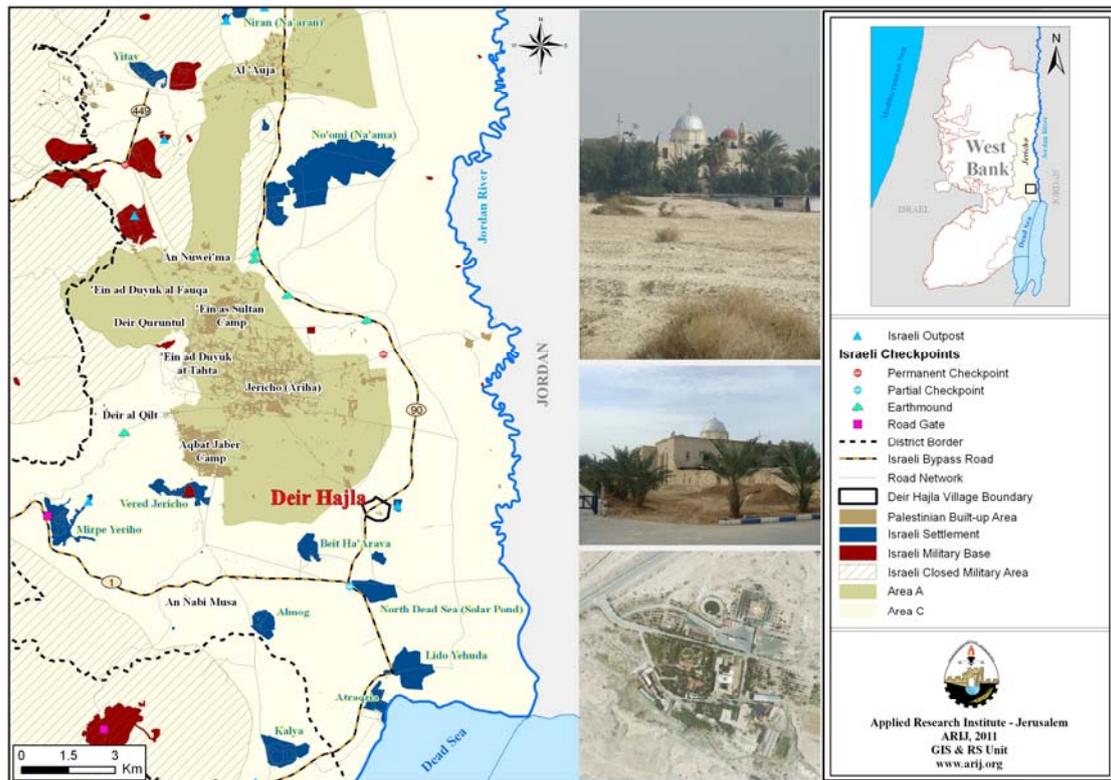
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Deir Hajla (St. Gerasimos Monastery)

Location and Physical Characteristics

Deir Hajla is a Palestinian locality in Jericho Governorate located (horizontally) 5.7km south of Jericho City. Deir Hajla is bordered by An Nabi Musa locality lands to the east, south and west, and by Jericho city lands to the north (ARIJ-GIS Unit, 2010) (See map 1).

Map 1: Deir Hajla location and borders



Deir Hajla is located at an altitude of 344m below sea level with a mean annual rainfall of 98.19mm. The average annual temperature is 24 °C, whilst the average annual humidity is approximately 49.9% (ARIJ-GIS Unit, 2010).

Deir Hajla locality has no local authority; however, it has a monastery called Deir Hajla Monastery.

History

Deir Hajla locality was named after the monastery of 'Mar John Hajla'. The monastery is a large one named by Orthodox monks as 'Saint Gerasimos Monastery'; after St. Gerasimos who founded the monastery in 455AD. Deir Hajla Monastery was founded near the monastery of Malawn, a small church inside a cave, where it is believed that the Holy Family found refuge during their flight from Herod. Since 617AD, both Malawn and Gerasimos Monasteries merged to become known as Deir Hajla (Gerasimos Monastery) (Makhoul, 2010).

Deir Hajla is one of the oldest monasteries in both Palestine and the world. It contains mosaic floors dating back to the Medieval Ages, which were later renovated. In the north-east side of the monastery there is located 'Ein Hajla (Hajla Spring) which, according to popular legend, the Canaanite village of Beit Hajla (meaning the house of hopscotch) was built upon. However, in the Roman era, it was called Hajla (the translation of which refers to the partridge bird) (Al Dabbagh, 1991) which is presently frequent in the region (See Photo below for Deir Hajla locality).

Photo1: Deir Hajla (St. Gerasimos Monastery)



Population

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the total population of Deir Hajla in 2007 was only 8 people; of whom 6 are males and 2 are females; all living in the monastery’s grounds.

Agricultural Sector

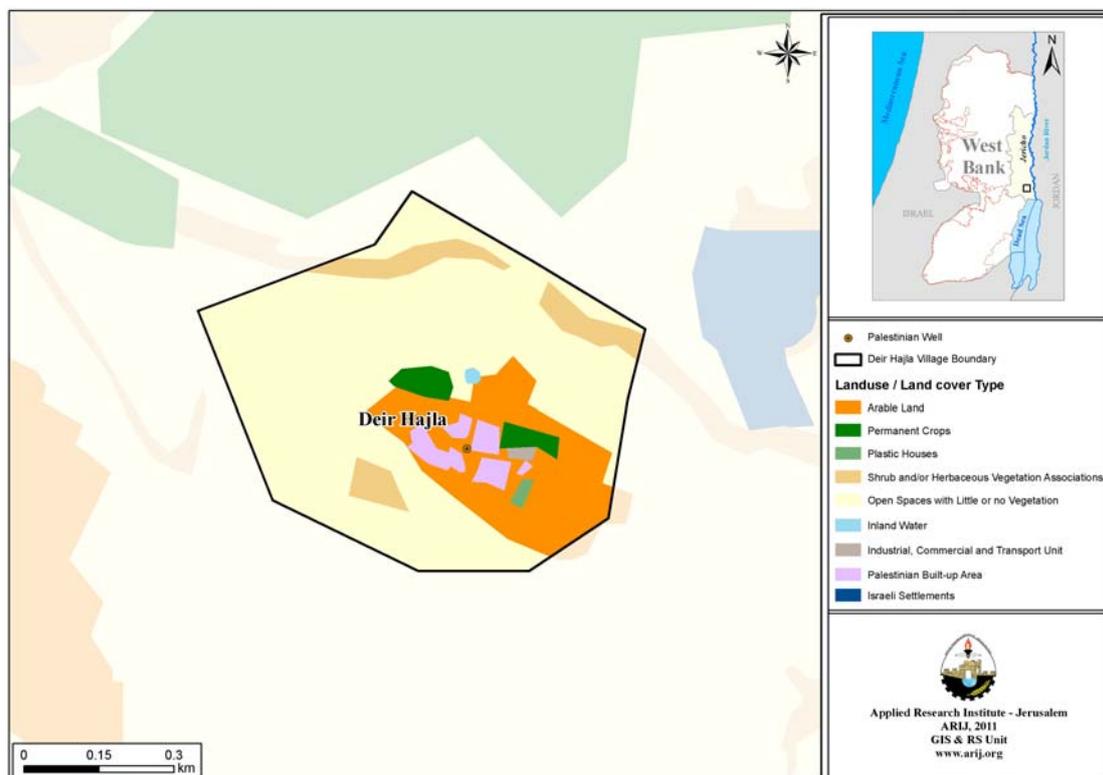
Deir Hajla lies on a total area of around 452 dunums, of which 125 dunums are considered ‘arable’ lands, and 14 dunums are registered as ‘residential’ (See table 1 and map 2).

Table 2: Land use and land cover in Deir Hajla locality in 2010 (area in dunum)

Total Area	Built-up Area	Agricultural area (125 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					
452	14	11	1	32	81	1	0	311	1	0

Source: ARIJ – GIS unit, 2011

Map 2: Land use/land cover in Deir Hajla Locality



Source: ARIJ – GIS unit, 2011

Geopolitical Status in Deir Hajla Locality

According to the Oslo II Interim Agreement signed on 28th September 1995 between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel, all of Deir Hajla locality was assigned as area “C”, which covers an area of 452 dunums and is under full Israeli control regarding security and administration related to the territory. In area “C” Palestinian building and land management is prohibited unless through a permit given by the Israeli Civil Administration.

Lands have been confiscated from Deir Hajla by the Israeli government to construct bypass road no. 90. It is worth mentioning that the real threat of bypass roads lies in the buffer zone formed by the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) along these roads, extending to approximately 75 m on both sides of the road.

Israeli Violations against Properties of Deir Hajla

On 3rd January 2012, Israeli authorities presented a number of Palestinian farmers and residents in Deir Hajla and Az Zoor demolition orders to pull down and remove Barracks and rooms that were considered as a shelter for farmers and warehouses for agricultural equipments. The order was issued under the pretext of unlicensed construction.

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