

Al Bireh City Profile



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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 Ramallah Governorate. These booklets came as a result of a comprehensive study of all localities in Ramallah 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 "Village Profiles and 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 Ramallah 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 Ramallah 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://vprofile.arij.org>.

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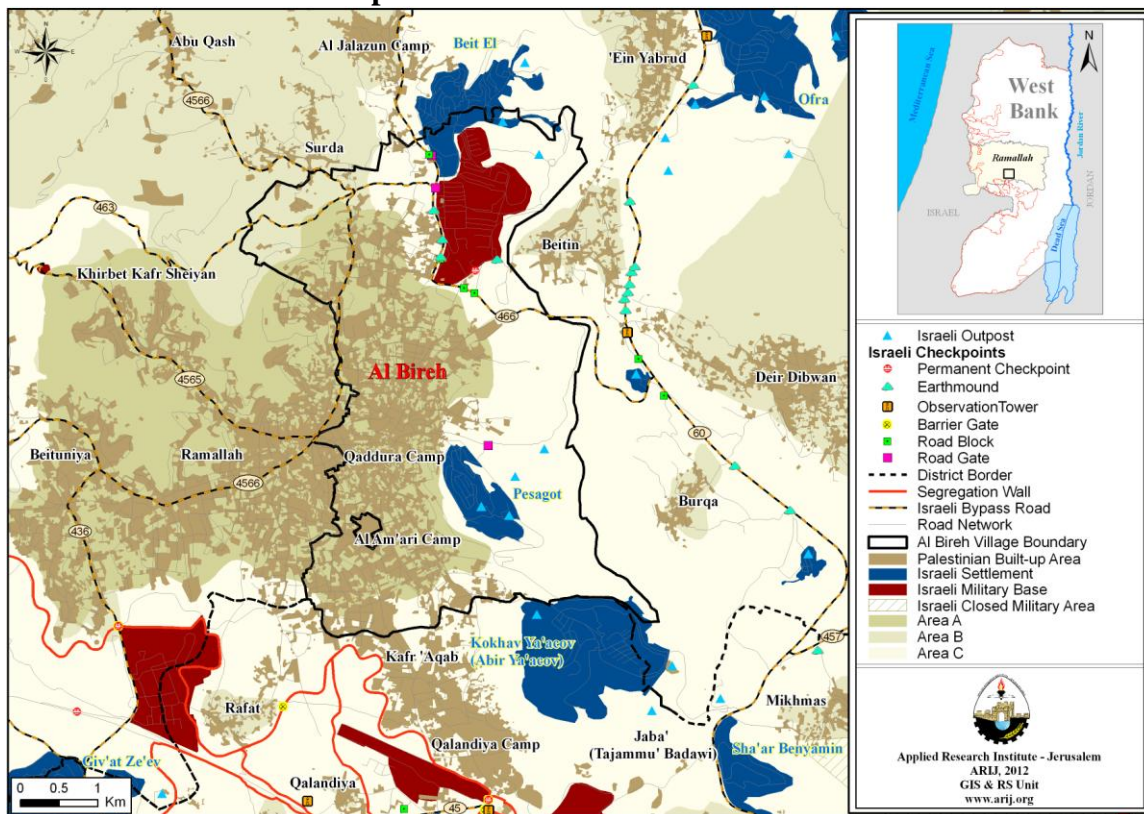
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Al Bireh City Profile

Location and Physical Characteristics

Al Bireh is a Palestinian city within Ramallah Governorate, located 1.55 km east of Ramallah City. Al Bireh is bordered by Beitin, Burqa and ‘Ein Yabrud lands to the east, Surda village, Dura al Qar’ and ‘Ein Yabrud lands to the north, Ramallah city and Qaddura Camp to the west, and Kafr ‘Aqab and Rafat villages (in Jerusalem Governorate) to the south (ARIJ-GIS, 2012) (See Map 1).

Map 1: Al Bireh location and borders



Source: ARIJ - GIS Unit, 2012.

Al Bireh is located at an altitude of 846 m above sea level with a mean annual rainfall of 600.7 mm. The average annual temperature is 16 C° whilst the average annual humidity is approximately 61% (ARIJ-GIS, 2012).

Since the year 1937, Al Bireh has been governed by a Municipal council which is currently administrated by 5 members appointed by the Palestinian National Authority. There are 240 employees working in the council, which owns a permanent headquarters and 5 vehicles for the collection of solid waste, in addition to 15 trucks, 5 pickup cars, 2 bulldozers, 2 tractors, a small hammer and a metal detecting device (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012).

It is the responsibility of the municipal council to provide a number of services to the residents of Al Bireh, including (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012):

- Solid waste collection, road construction and restoration, street cleaning and social development services.
- The organization of construction and licensing processes.
- Implementation of projects and studies for the city.
- Provision of offices for governmental services, such as post and security.
- Protection of historical and archeological city sites.
- Provision and management of a sewerage network.
- Provision of public markets.
- Provision and management of kindergartens.
- Provision of slaughterhouses and the organization of animal slaughtering.

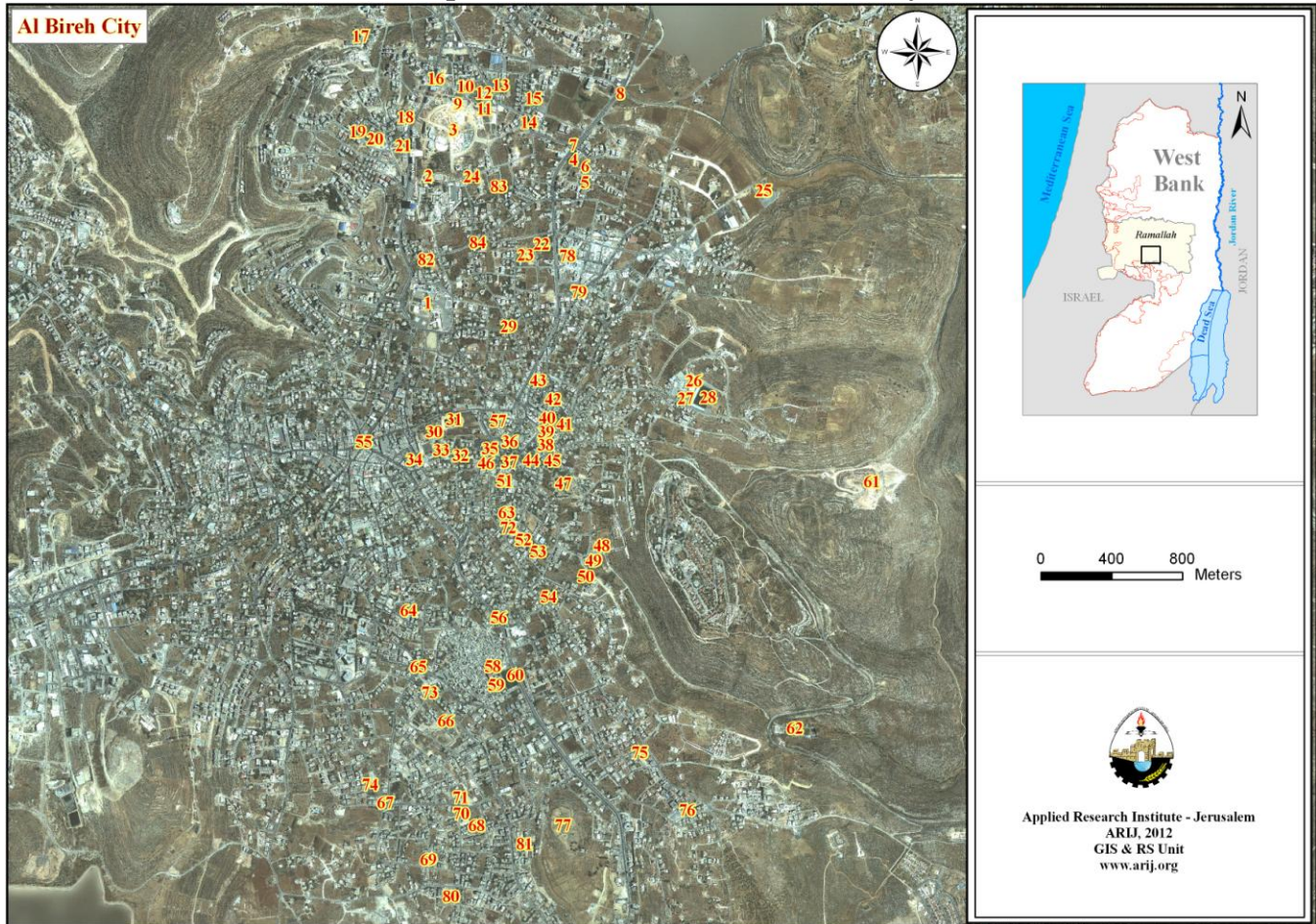
History

Al Bireh carries a Canaanite name meaning ‘the wells’, and is called thus as a result of the many water springs which are located on Al Bireh lands. The city was established in 1928 and its residents today are descendants of city’s native citizens (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012).

Religious and Archaeological Sites

There are numerous mosques in the city (namely: Al Bireh Grand Mosque, Al Omari, Al Khulafa’, Al ‘Ein in addition to other mosques). The city has several sites of archaeological interest including: Shiban, Najem and Abu Mujahid Shrines, the Church of the Holy Family, Al Khan (an inn) and At Tall Mountain (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012) (See Map 2).

Map 2: Main locations in Al Bireh City



No.	Locations	No.	Locations	No.	Locations
1	The District	29	Boor Sa'id Roundabout	57	The Crescent Hospital
2	The National Park	30	Friends Co-educated School	58	The Palestinian Red Crescent Headquarters
3	"Al Ersal" Center Area	31	Friends Stadium	59	Al Bireh New School
4	Jerusalem Pharmaceutical Co.	32	Al Bireh Girls Elementary School	60	Ramallah Municipal Stadium
5	Al Fajr al Jadida "New Dawn" School	33	Al Bireh Girls Secondary School	61	Al Bireh Landfill
6	Ramallah Health Department	34	Al Bireh Great Mosque "Abdel Nasser Mosque"	62	Wastewater Treatment Unit
7	Ahmed ash Shuqeiri Square	35	Al Bireh Municipality	63	Directorate of Education
8	Palestine Square	36	Al Bireh Municipality Park	64	Ramallah & Al Bireh Governorate
9	The Spanish School	37	Childhood Development Center	65	Habboob Roundabout
10	The American School	38	Al Mughtaribeen School	66	The Turkish School
11	An Najah School	39	Al Omari Mosque	67	Dalal al Mughrabi Roundabout "Dalal al Mughrabi Square"
12	The Courts Complex	40	The Holy Family Church (Archaeological Site)	68	Mahmoud Darwish Al Wihda School
13	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	41	The Medical Complex for Diabetes	69	Al Karama School
14	Ministry of Interior	42	Family Recovery Society	70	Al Wihda Club
15	Ramallah Directorate of Interior	43	Jordanian School	71	Lid Society
16	Chambers of Commerce of Ramallah and Al Bireh (under construction)	44	Khawla Bint al Azwar School	72	Lifta Society
17	Al 'Awa'el School	45	Ali ben Abi Talib Mosque	73	Al Am'ari "Ar Rahman" Mosque
18	Khalid Hospital	46	Al 'Ein Mosque	74	Al Yarmouk Mosque
19	Ministry of Finance	47	Al Bireh Old Cemetery	75	Al Khulafa' ar Rashadin Mosque
20	Daraghmeb Mosque	48	Amin al Hussein School	76	Samiha Khalil School
21	Jerusalem Electricity Company	49	Aal Rashid bin Maktoum School	77	Tal an Nahda Archaeological Area
22	Al Mustaqbal Hospital	50	The Islamic School	78	Abu 'Obeida Mosque
23	Al Mustaqbal as Salih "the Good Future" School	51	Khalil ar Rahman School	79	The Industrial Zone Roundabout
24	Al Kawthar Mosque	52	Ash Shar'iya School "the Blind Women Society"	80	Tamim ad Dari Mosque
25	Al Bireh Municipality Slaughterhouse	53	The Blind Women School	81	Al Hittu Mosque
26	Al Hashimiya School	54	Ar Razi Hospital	82	Ministry of Labor
27	Al Bireh Youth Foundation	55	Al Manara Roundabout	83	Ministry of Agriculture
28	Al Bireh International Stadium	56	Al Am'ari Roundabout	84	Ministry of Social Affairs

Population Source: ARIJ - GIS Unit, 2012.

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the total population of Al Bireh in 2007 was 35,910, of whom 17,986 were male and 17,924 female. There were additionally recorded to be 7,917 households living in 12,087 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 Al Bireh is as follows: 34.3% were less than 15 years of age, 54.8% were between 15 and 64 years of age, and 3.7% were 65 years of age or older. Data additionally showed that the sex ratio of males to females in the city is 100.3:100, meaning that males and females constitute 50.1% and 49.9% of the population, respectively.

Families

Al Bireh residents are from several families, including Hamayel, Qar'an, 'Abed, Karakra, At Taweel and Ar Rafidi families (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012).

Education

According to the results of the PCBS 'Population, Housing and Establishment Census'-2007, the illiteracy rate among Al Bireh population is approximately 3.6%, of whom 77.2% are females. Of the literate population, 9.5% could only read and write, with no formal education, 18.1% had elementary education, 22.3% had preparatory education, 18.8% had secondary education, and 27.5% completed higher education. Table 1 shows the educational level in the city of Al Bireh by sex and educational attainment in 2007.

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

Sex	Illite- rate	Can read & write	Element- ary	Preparat- ory	Second- ary	Associate Diploma	Bachelor	Higher Diploma	Master	PhD	Un- known	Total
M	205	1,167	2,324	2,809	2,264	811	1,921	65	539	181	35	12,321
F	696	1,176	2,165	2,711	2,393	1,184	1,790	40	248	34	32	12,469
T	901	2,343	4,489	5,520	4,657	1,995	3,711	105	787	215	67	24,790

Source: PCBS, 2009.

There are 7 public schools in the city (all run by the Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education), 11 private schools, and one UNRWA school (Directorate of Education in Ramallah, 2011) (see Table 2).

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

School Name	Supervising Authority	Sex
Al Bireh Girls Secondary School	Government	Females
Al Bireh Co-educated Elementary School	Government	Mixed
Al Bireh Expatriates Co-educated Elementary School	Government	Mixed
Al Hashimiya Boys Secondary School	Government	Males
The New Dawn Co-educated Elementary School	Government	Mixed
The Unity Boys Elementary School	Government	Males
The Good Future Boys Secondary School	Government	Males
The Islamic Garden Elementary School	Private	Mixed
Al Bireh Sharia Secondary School	Private	Males
The Islamic Girls Secondary School	Private	Mixed
Khalil ar Rahman Elementary School	Private	Mixed
Muhammad ben Rashid al Maktoum Private School	Private	Mixed
Al Anwar Elementary School	Private	Mixed
The Jordanian Secondary School (Palestine Academy)	Private	Mixed
The Boys Islamic Secondary School	Private	Males
Al Qabs Secondary School for Optical Disability	Private	Mixed
An Najah Girls Secondary School	Private	Mixed
Al Khatib Elementary School	Private	Mixed
Al Am'ari Boys Elementary School	UNRWA	Males

Source: Directorate of Education in Ramallah, 2011

In the city there are 8,552 students, 523 teachers, and 317 classes. The average number of students per teacher in the school is nearly 16, whilst the average number of students per class is approximately 27 (Directorate of Education in Ramallah, 2012).

There are 16 kindergartens in Al Bireh city run by different bodies. 1,575 children in total attend these kindergartens (Directorate of Education in Ramallah, 2012) (See table 3 below).

Table 3: Kindergartens in Al Bireh city by name and supervising authority

Name of Kindergarten	No. of Children	Supervising Authority
The Little Angel Kindergarten	22	Private
An Najah Kindergarten	295	Other private
Baby World Kindergarten	112	Other private
Lafta Charitable Society Kindergarten	27	Other private
Children of Hope Kindergarten	55	Christian Civil
The Elementary Model Kindergarten	32	Islamic Civil
Palestine Academy Kindergarten	20	Other private
Al Anwar Kindergarten	144	Other private
Al 'Awa'el Kindergarten	170	Christian Civil
Al Jameel Kindergarten	82	Other private
Al Khatib Kindergarten	136	Other private
Al Huda Kindergarten	79	Other private
Family Revival Society Kindergarten/ Al Bireh	75	Islamic Civil
Children Paradise Model Kindergarten	200	Islamic Civil

Birds of Paradise Kindergarten	49	Other private
Muhammad ben Rashid Kindergarten	77	Christian Civil
Source: Directorate of Education in Ramallah, 2012		

Health Status

Al Bireh has 6 hospitals: Musallam Eye Hospital, Ar Razi Eye Hospital, the Military Medical Services Hospital, Khalid Hospital, the Future Hospital and the Red Crescent Hospital. There is also a governmental health center, a governmental mother and child care center, 5 private medical laboratories, 32 private pharmacies, and a number of private dental clinics, private physician gynecologist and pediatrician clinics (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012).

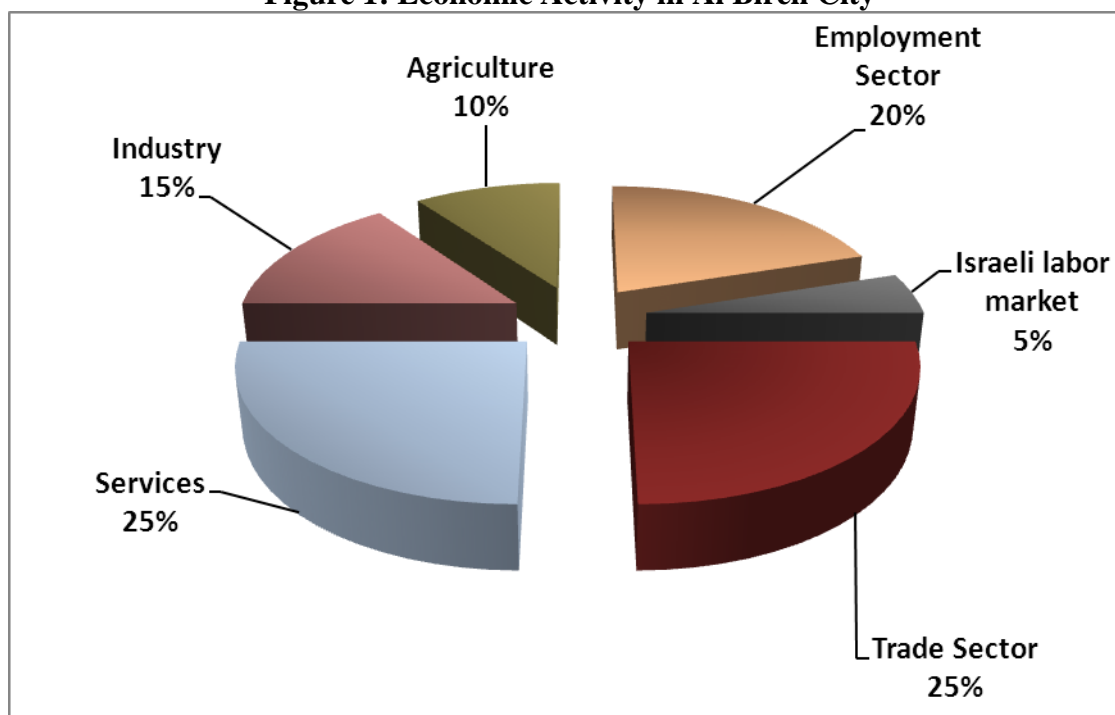
Economic Activities

The economy in Al Bireh is dependent on several economic sectors, primarily the trade and services sectors each of which absorbs 25% of the city workforce (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012) (See Figure1).

The results of a field survey conducted by the ARIJ team in 2012 for the distribution of labor by economic activity in Al Bireh are as follows (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012):

- Trade Sector (25%)
- Services Sector (25%)
- Government or Private Employees Sector (20%)
- Industry (15%)
- Agriculture Sector (10%)
- Israeli Labor Market (5%)

Figure 1: Economic Activity in Al Bireh City



Source: Al Bireh Municipality, 2012

Al Bireh has 143 groceries, 17 vegetable and fruit stores, 36 bakeries, 34 butcheries, 936 service stores, 130 various professional workshops, 9 stone cutters, 12 driving schools, 43 garages, 65 restaurants, 63 coffee shops, 9 internet cafes, 7 factories, 9 libraries, 4 hotels, and 10 banks (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012).

Labor Force

According to the PCBS Population, Housing and Establishment Census-2007, 40.6% of Al Bireh labor force was economically active, of whom 92.9% were employed, 58.9% were not economically active, 54% were students, and 33.3% were housekeepers (See Table 4).

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

Sex	Economically active				Non-economically active							Total
	Employed	Currently Unemployed	Un-employed (never worked)	Total	Student	House-keeping	Unable to work	Not working & not looking for work	Others	Total	Not stated	
M	6,806	278	197	7,281	3,883	7	539	317	194	4,940	100	12,321
F	2,536	124	120	2,780	3,989	4,844	665	117	34	9,649	40	12,469
T	9,342	402	317	10,061	7,872	4,851	1,204	434	228	14,589	140	24,790

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

Source: PCBS, 2009.

Agricultural Sector

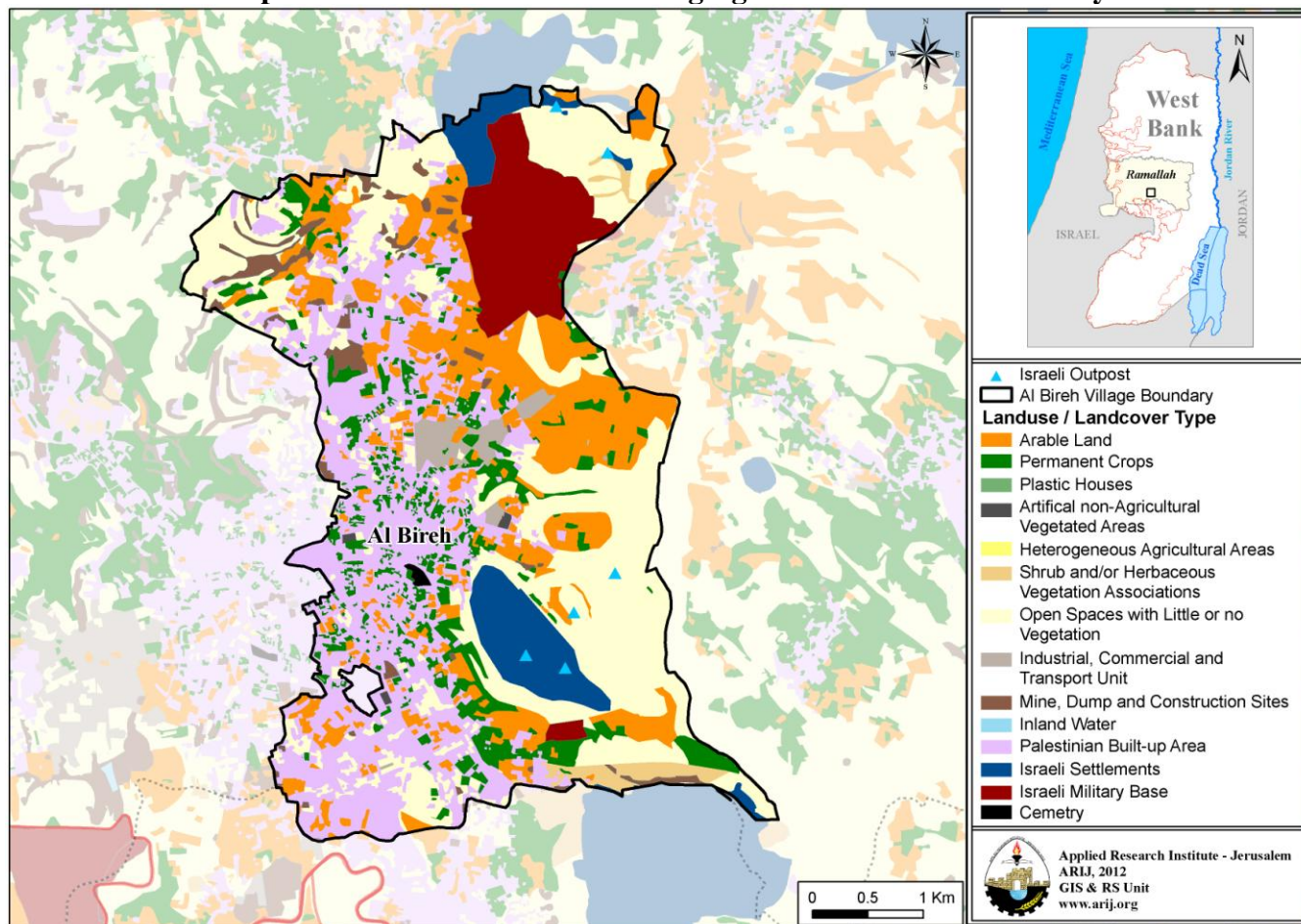
Al Bireh has a total area of around 20,491 dunums of which 5,824 are considered ‘arable’ lands and 5,263 dunums are registered as ‘residential’ (See Table 5 and Map 3).

Table 5: Land use and land cover in Al Bireh city in 2010 (area in dunum)

Total Area	Built up Area	Agricultural area (5,824)				Inland water	Forests	Open Spaces	Area of Industrial, Commercial & Transport Unit	Area of Settlements, Military Bases & Wall Zone
		Permanent Crops	Green-houses	Range-lands	Arable lands					
20,491	5,263	1,779	1	288	3,756	0	0	5,636	860	2,908

Source: ARIJ – GIS Unit, 2012.

Map 3: Land use/land cover and Segregation Wall in Al Bireh City



Source: ARIJ - GIS Unit, 2012.

Table 6 shows the different types of rain-fed and irrigated open-cultivated vegetables in Al Bireh. The most commonly cultivated crops within this area are tomatoes and squash.

Table 6: Total area of rain-fed and irrigated open cultivated vegetables in Al Bireh (area in dunums)

Fruity vegetables		Leafy vegetables		Green legumes		Bulbs		Other vegetables		Total Area	
Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.
15	0	0	2	5	0	0	0	0	0.5	20	2.5

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

Source: Ministry of agriculture-Ramallah, 2009

Table 7 shows the different types of fruit trees planted in the area. Al Bireh is famous for olive cultivation and consequently there are 708 dunums of land planted with olive trees in the city.

Table 7: Total area of horticulture and olive trees in Al Bireh (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.
708	0	0	0	21	0	1	0	10	0	45	0	785	0

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

Source: Ministry of agriculture-Ramallah, 2009

In terms of field crops and forage in Al Bireh, cereals (particularly wheat) are the most cultivated, covering an area of approximately 35 dunums (See Table 8).

Table 8: Total area of horticulture and olive trees in Al Bireh (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.
35	0	18	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	73	0

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

Source: Ministry of agriculture-Ramallah, 2009

The difference between the two sets of results obtained from the Ministry of Agriculture and by ARIJ's GIS Unit in sizes of agricultural areas is explained by the fact that the Ministry of Agriculture and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2010) 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 instead of seasonal ones. The survey did not consider fragmented and small seasonal cultivated areas in residential and agricultural areas. ARIJ's survey, however, includes the existence of a high proportion of small and fragmented holdings (home gardens) throughout the occupied Palestinian territories, thus accounting for the larger area of agricultural holdings calculated by ARIJ.

The field survey conducted by ARIJ shows that not many of the residents in Al Bireh rear and keep domestic animals such as sheep and goats (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012) (See Table 9).

Table 9: Livestock in Al Bireh

Cows*	Sheep	Goats	Camels	Horses	Donkeys	Mules	Broilers	Layers	Bee Hives
0	422	496	0	0	0	0	4,800	23,600	0

*Including cows, bull calves, heifer calves and bulls

Source: Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture - Ramallah, 2009

There are no agricultural roads in the city (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012).

The agricultural sector in the city faces problems, including (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012):

- The confiscation of lands for the purpose of settlement construction close to the city.
- The lack of agricultural labor force sufficient to exploit lands.
- The lack of economic viability in agricultural projects.
- The implementation of agricultural projects is limited to these with no need of water, due to the scarcity of water in the city.
- The lack of economic capital for entrepreneurial projects.

Institutions and Services

Al Bireh city has several governmental institutions: a post office, post division, fire station, police station, a national security center, offices for the Ministries of Labor, Agriculture, Social Affairs, Interior and a Chamber Commerce. It also has a number of local institutions and associations which provide services to various sectors of society. These include (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012):

- **Al Bireh Municipality:** Founded in 1937 and currently registered in the Ministry of Local Government, the municipality takes care of the city issues and provides different services to its residents.
- **Al Bireh Cultural Club.**
- **Al Bireh Youth Institution.**
- **Revival of Family Society.**
- **Sports Unity Club.**

Infrastructure and Natural Resources

Electricity and Telecommunication Services:

Al Bireh has been connected to a public electricity network since 1942. It is served by Jerusalem Electricity Company, which is the main source of electricity in the city, and approximately 95% of the housing units in the city are connected to this network (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012).

Al Bireh is additionally connected to a telecommunication network. Approximately 90% of the housing units within the city boundaries are connected to phone lines (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012).

Transportation Services:

There are 110 public taxis in Al Bireh to serve the residents (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012). There are 12 km of main roads and 144 km of secondary roads in Al Bireh (See Table 10) (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012).

Table 10: Roads in Al Bireh city

Status of Internal Roads	Road Length (km)	
	Main	Sub
1. Paved & in good condition	4	76
2. Paved but in poor condition	8	39
3. Unpaved	-	29

Source: Al Bireh Municipality, 2012

Water Resources:

Al Bireh is provided with water by the Jerusalem Water Authority through the public water network established in 1950. Approximately 95% of the housing units are connected to this network (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012)

The quantity of water supplied to Al Bireh city in 2010 was approximately 1,635,717 cubic meters. The estimated rate of water supply is therefore calculated per capita, at approximately 125 liters/day. However, no Al Bireh citizen consumes this amount of water due to water losses, which are estimated at 26.5%. These losses typically occur at the main source, major transport lines, in the distribution network, and at the household level. Therefore, the rate of water consumption per capita in Al Bireh is 92 liters per day (Jerusalem Water Authority, 2011). This is considered a low rate compared with the minimum quantity proposed by the World Health Organization, which is set at 100 liters per capita per day.

To determine water costs, the water authority has adopted an upward rate system where the price of water increases alongside increasing consumption. Table 12 shows the price of water by category of consumption.

Table 11: Water tariffs of Jerusalem Water Authority adopted since 01.01.2012

Consumption Category (m ³)	Domestic (NIS/m ³)	Industrial (NIS/m ³)	Tourist (NIS/m ³)	Commercial (NIS/m ³)	Public Institutions (NIS/m ³)
0 – 5	4.5	5.6	5.6	5.6	5.4
5.1 – 10	4.5	5.6	5.6	5.6	4.5
10.1 – 20	5.6	6.8	6.8	6.8	5.6
20.1 – 30	6.8	8.1	8.1	8.1	6.8
30.1+	9	9.9	10.8	9	9

Source: Jerusalem Water Authority, 2012

Sanitation:

Al Bireh has been connected to a public sewerage network since 1950 (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012). According to the results of a community survey conducted by the Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ) in 2010¹, 92% of Shabtin housing units use the sewerage network as a means for wastewater disposal, while the rest of housing units (8%) use cesspits (ARIJ & CENTA, 2010).

¹ As part of the project "A Proposed Environmentally Sound Wastewater Management System for the West Bank"

Based on the estimated daily per capita water consumption, the estimated amount of wastewater generated per day is approximately 2635 cubic meters, or 961,802 cubic meters annually. At the individual level in the city it is estimated that the per capita wastewater generation is 46 liters per day, depending on the consumption rate. The estimated amount of wastewater collected through the sewerage network is approximately 884,858 cubic meters annually. Also, approximately 76,944 cubic meters of wastewater is being collected by cesspits and discharged by wastewater tankers. It is worth mentioning that wastewater flowing in the sewerage network is being treated in the wastewater treatment unit in Al Bireh city. Citizens pay an amount of 1.8 NIS per each cubic meter of consumed water for the services of the sewerage network and wastewater treatment (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012).

However, the wastewater collected by cesspits is discharged by wastewater tankers directly to open areas or nearby valleys with no treatment which poses a serious threat to both environmental and public health (ARIJ - WERU, 2012).

Solid Waste Management:

Al Bireh Municipality is responsible for the collection and disposal of solid waste generated by citizens and establishments in the city. As the process of solid waste management is costly, a yearly fee amounting to 36 Jordanian Dinar (JD)/ year is charged to the population served by domestic solid waste collection and transportation services. However, the collected fees are not sufficient for good management of solid waste. In addition only 30% of these fees are collected from the citizens, thus Al Bireh Municipality covers the rest of costs from its operational budget (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012)

Most of the population in Al Bireh benefits from the solid waste services, whereby waste is collected from households, institutions, shops, and public squares in plastic bags, and placed in containers distributed throughout the city's neighborhoods. The Municipality collects the solid waste once a day and transports it using the municipality's waste vehicle (the municipality owns 6 vehicles, each of 21 cubic meters capacity) to Al Bireh municipality dumping site, 2 km from the city, where it is buried (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012). The disposal of solid waste in this dumping site costs 30 NIS per ton (Al Bireh Municipality, 2012).

The daily per capita rate of solid waste production in Al Bireh is 1.05kg. Thus the estimated amount of solid waste produced per day from the Al Bireh residents is nearly 37.7 tons, or 13,762.5 tons per year (ARIJ-WERU, 2012).

Environmental Conditions

Like other cities, towns and villages in the governorate, Al Bireh experiences several environmental problems which must be addressed and solved. These problems can be identified as follows:

Water Crisis

- Water is cut off by the Jerusalem Water Authority for long periods of time during summer in several neighborhoods of the city for several reasons:

- (1) Israeli control over Palestinian water resources causes problems in the organization of water pumping and its distribution among populations. The Jerusalem Water Authority distributes water to various areas on an interval basis because the amount of water available is not sufficient to supply everyone's needs simultaneously.
- (2) High rate of water losses, because the water network is old and in need of rehabilitation and renovation.

Wastewater Management

- The absence of a public sewage network in some neighborhoods (8% of the neighborhoods) means that Al Bireh residents are forced to use unhygienic cesspits for the disposal of wastewater, and/or to discharge wastewater in the streets. This is particularly common in winter, as citizens cannot afford the high cost of sewage tankers during this period. These methods facilitate environmental damage, health problems, and the spread of epidemics and diseases in the city. This wastewater also contaminates the groundwater given that the majority of cesspits are built without lining, allowing wastewater to enter into the ground and avoid the need to use sewage tankers. Moreover, the untreated wastewater collected from cesspits by sewage tankers is disposed of in open areas without concern for the damage it causes to both the environment and to residents' health.

Solid Waste Management:

- The lack of a central sanitary landfill to serve Al Bireh and the other neighboring communities in the governorate is due mainly to the bureaucratic obstacles created by the Israeli authorities for local and national institutions in granting licenses to establish such a landfill. Often the reason cited by Israeli forces is that the appropriate land to use for a sanitary landfill site falls with classified area C, and therefore under full Israeli administrative and security control. Additionally, the implementation of such projects depends on funding from donor countries. The lack of a sanitary landfill is a source of pollution to the groundwater and soil through the leachate produced from the solid waste, and produces bad odors and distortion of the landscape.

Impact of Israeli occupation

Geopolitical status in Al Bireh City

According to the Oslo II Interim Agreement signed between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel on 28th September 1995, Al Bireh city was divided into politically classified areas "A", "B" and "C". Approximately 8,157 dunums (39.8% of the city's total area) are classified as area "A" where the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) holds all responsibilities for internal security and public order. It is noted that most of the population in Al Bireh city resides in area "A". 1,033 dunums (5% of the city's total area) are classified as area B, where the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has complete control over civil matters and Israel continues to have overriding security responsibility. Area "B" currently constitutes most of the inhabited Palestinian areas, including municipalities, villages and some refugee camps. The rest of the city's area, constituting 11,302 dunums (55.2% of the total area), is

classified as area “C”, where Israel retains full control over security and administration related to the territory (table 1). In area “C”, Palestinian building and land management is prohibited unless through a consent or authorization by the Israeli Civil Administration. It is worth mentioning that most of the lands lying within area “C” in the city are classified as open spaces, agricultural areas, Israeli settlements and military bases, in addition to the existence of Palestinian urban and built-up areas within this area.

Table 12: The Geopolitical Divisions of Al Bireh City according to Oslo II Agreement 1995 – Ramallah Governorate

Classification	Area in dunums	Percent from Total city area
Area A	8,157	39.8
Area B	1,033	5
Area C	11,302	55.2
Nature Reserve	0	0
Total	20,493	100

Source: ARIJ-GIS, 2011

Al Bireh city and the Israeli Occupation Practices

The Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) confiscated 1,126 dunums (5.5% of the city’s total area) in Al Bireh to establish two Israeli settlements: “Pesagot” and “Beit El.” Pesagot settlement was built wholly on Al Bireh city territories (in its southern parts), whilst Beit El was semi built on the city’s northern territories, in addition to on the lands of Al Bireh and Dura al Qar’ localities. The two settlements are currently inhabited by more than 7,000 Israeli settlers (table 13).

Table 13: Israeli settlements established on the lands of Al Bireh City

Settlement Name	Establishment Date	Area of lands confiscated from Al Bireh	Settlement’s Population 2009
Pesagot	1981	780	1623
Beit El	1977	346	5499
Total		1126	7122

Source: The Geo-informatics Department – ARIJ 2011

Moreover, Israeli Occupation Forces confiscated an additional 1,422 dunums (7% of the city’s total area) in Al Bireh to establish “Beit El” Military Base to the north of the city, which was built on its territory near “Beit El” settlement. This Military Base includes the central Israeli Civil Administration office in the West Bank in addition to a detention center and a military area. The Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) through establishment of these military bases in the heart of Palestinian territory are aiming at intensifying their military presence within Palestine and strengthening their political and security control over the Palestinian people.

IOF have established several barriers in Al Bireh city and its surroundings following the outbreak of the second Intifada during the year 2000. The barriers remain today, with most of them located close to “Beit El” settlement and military base. A permanent checkpoint was established at the eastern entrance of Ramallah and Al Bireh near “Beit El”, which is located on the road that links the city with Israeli

controlled main road no. 60. This prevents Palestinians from entering and leaving the city of Ramallah, which has added suffering to the Palestinians for more than twelve years who are now forced to drive for long distances to enter or leave the city of Ramallah, and they have to use alternative roads with high levels of traffic congestion. This is experienced especially at the Qalandiya Crossing south of Ramallah. Moreover, the IOF established many other barriers in Al Bireh city including roadblocks (4 barriers), road iron gates (3 Barriers) and earth-mounds (4 barriers) on the roads surrounding “Beit El” military base to prevent the Palestinians from approaching this location. These barriers and restrictions also prevents them from reaching the main road no. 60, restrict the movement of Palestinians and to strengthen Israel’s control over them.

Furthermore, IOF have also confiscated hundreds of thousands of dunums of Palestinian lands to construct numerous Israeli bypass roads which are extended for thousands of kilometers over the West Bank. These roads have resulted in the confiscation of agricultural and non-agricultural lands to connect settlements and to divide Palestinian land in a way that strengthens security control over them. In Al Bireh city, IOF have confiscated further lands to construct two Israeli bypass roads: the first connects road no. 60 with “Beit El” settlement, and the second connects road no. 60 with “Pesagot” settlement, with a total length of about 8 km for both roads. However, 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 the roads’ sides.

In addition, lands of Al Bireh city have been forcefully seized by Israeli settlers to establish six Israeli outposts around “Pesagot” and “Beit El” settlements in an attempt to expand these settlements and controlling further Palestinian lands. It is noted that during the past two decades, Israel has constructed 232 outposts in the West Bank which are considered the nucleus for new settlement development. Outposts are typically composed of mobile caravans which are located on lands stolen by the settlers and represent a contiguity of a near-by mother settlement. It is worth mentioning that the epidemic of Israeli outposts started with a “Sharonian²” call for Jewish settlers to take control over Palestinian hilltops to prevent transferring them to Palestinians in negotiations. Although the successive Israeli governments haven’t legalized this phenomenon, they have managed to find both security and logistical cover to justify the act, existence and continuity. After 2001 the Prime Minister of that time, Ariel Sharon, unleashed the expansion of outposts which has led to a significant increase in the number of outposts within Palestinian areas. In addition, IOF have consistently aided Israeli settlers to move to these outposts, through assisting them with the necessary security protection and infrastructure to guarantee their continued existence.

² Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon (2001-2006)

Development Plans and Projects

Implemented Projects

Al Bireh Municipal Council has implemented several development projects in Al Bireh during the past five years (See Table 14).

Table 14: Implemented Development Plans and Projects in Al Bireh during the Last Five Years

Name of the Project	Type	Year	Donor
Developing the industrial zone	Infrastructure	2011	Al Bireh Municipality
Establishing a garden	Public Services	2006	State Fund
Paving and rehabilitating Nablus Road	Infrastructure	2010-2011	Al Bireh Municipality & Ministry of Finance
Paving and rehabilitating Bir Zeit Road	Infrastructure	2010	USAID & Ministry of Finance
Constructing the Turkish School	Educational	2011	Turkey Embassy
Constructing the Future School	Educational	2006-2007	Al Bireh Municipality
Constructing the Unity School	Educational	2010	UNDP
The new lighthouse project	Public Services	2011-2012	Al Bireh Municipality
Amending Al Bireh city structural plan	Public Services	2012	Al Bireh Municipality

Source: Al Bireh Municipality, 2012

Locality Development Priorities and Needs

Al Bireh suffers from a significant shortage of infrastructure and services. Table 15 shows the development priorities and needs in the city, according to the municipal council's point of view.

Table 15: Development Priorities and Needs in Al Bireh

No.	Sector	Strongly Needed	Needed	Not a Priority	Notes
Infrastructural Needs					
1	Opening and pavement of roads	*			12.66 km [^]
2	Rehabilitation of old water networks		*		135 km
3	Extending the water network to cover new built up areas			*	
4	Construction of new water networks			*	70 km
5	Rehabilitation/ construction of new wells or springs			*	
6	Construction of water reservoirs			*	
7	Construction of a sewage disposal network			*	
8	Construction of a new electricity network			*	
9	Providing containers for solid waste collection			*	
10	Providing vehicles for the collection of solid waste			*	
11	Provision of a sanitary landfill	*			
Health Needs					
1	Building of new clinics or health care centres		*		2 health centers
2	Rehabilitation of old clinics or health care centres		*		1 health center
3	Purchasing new medical equipment and tools		*		
Educational Needs					
1	Building new schools	*			all levels
2	Rehabilitation of old schools	*			all schools
3	Purchasing new equipment for schools			*	
Agriculture Needs					
1	Rehabilitation of agricultural lands			*	
2	Building rainwater harvesting cisterns			*	
3	Construction of livestock barracks			*	
4	Provision of veterinary services			*	
5	Provision of seeds and hay for animals			*	
6	Construction of new greenhouses			*	
7	Rehabilitation of greenhouses			*	
8	Provision of Field crop seeds			*	
9	Provision of plants and agricultural supplies			*	

[^] 8.73 km main roads and 3.93 km secondary roads

Source: Al Bireh Municipality, 2012

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