

Olive Tree Cultivation

Thousands of Years Old

Olive trees in Palestine are thousands of years old, and some considered among the oldest in the world. One of the oldest trees is in the village of al-Walaja near the outskirts of Bethlehem in the West Bank. It is estimated to be between 4000 and 5000 years old. It is often called “Al Badawi”, which translates to “the Great One” in Arabic.



Al-Badawi Tree in Al-Walaja Village



Integral to Economy

Olive cultivation plays an integral role in the economy through table olives, olive oil, and soap production. Nearly half of all cultivated land in the occupied West Bank and Gaza is planted with more than 10 million olive trees of mostly native, drought-resilient varieties. In 2022, an estimated 100,000 tons of olives and 20,000 tons of olive oil were produced by Palestinian farmers.

Cultural Significance

Olive trees are symbolic of Palestinian heritage and stewardship of the land. Because olive trees are drought-resistant and grow under poor soil conditions, they represent Palestinian resilience to harsh living conditions and steadfastness. Since the forced dispossession of Palestinian land in 1947 and beyond, more than one million olive trees have been uprooted and destroyed by occupation forces or settlers. Illegal settlers routinely target olive trees to cut off food and income. Since October 2023, over 75% of olive trees in Gaza have been destroyed, and more than ten thousand trees in the West Bank have been intentionally destroyed or vandalized.