

# Friends of Freedom and Justice Bilin

Bil'in Village, past, present and Future:

Bil'in, a small, peaceful village surrounded by hills and valleys, is a Palestinian village that is struggling to exist. It is fighting to safeguard its land, its olive trees, its resources&hellip; its liberty. Lying halfway between Yaffa and Jerusalem, Bil'in is among a number of local villages that fall under the governorate of the nearby city of Ramallah. It has a population of 1800 in an area approximately 4000 dunums in size.

The people of Bil'in are known for their simplicity, hospitality and good nature. They love peace and freedom, and struggle on a daily basis to reject injustice and oppression.

The residents of Bil'in depend on agriculture as their main source of their income. Traditionally such income has been generated by raising cattle and poultry, and collecting the produce of bees and olive trees. Close to 60% of Bil'in's land, and some of its best farming land, has been annexed for Israeli Settlements and the construction of Israel's Apartheid Wall- the state of Israel is strangling the village. Every day it destroys a bit more, creating in an open air prison for Bil'in's inhabitants.

Bil'in and its residents have stood up to the confiscation of their land time and time again. At the beginning of the 1980s, the Matityahu settlement was built on a portion of Bil'in land and, at the beginning of the 1990s, another portion of land was confiscated for the Kiryat Sefer settlement. At the start of the millennium, yet another new settlement (Matityahu East) was built on Bil'in's land. In April 2004, Israel began construction of its illegal Apartheid Wall on the western side of the village, expropriating about 2300 dunums of the land of Bil'in.

Bil'in residents have continued to withstand these injustices despite the increase in the number of night raids the Israeli Soldiers inflict upon their town, the increasing number of arrests of its inhabitants and of activists. But now, the army has toughened the oppression by systematically arresting members of the Bil'in Committee in charge of organizing the non-violent demonstrations in an attempt to discourage residents from participating and to reduce their resistance to the occupation.

Supported by Israeli and international activists, Bil'in residents peacefully demonstrate every Friday in front of the "work-site of shame". And every Friday the Israeli army responds with both physical and psychological violence. Working side-by-side with international and Israeli Activists, the people of Bil'in have managed to achieve the recognition of the Israel High Court, which recently ruled that the route of the Apartheid Wall near in the village is illegal and must be changed.

In line with their love of freedom and justice, an active group of young men and women decided to initiate a new society in the village called "The Bil'in Friends of Freedom and Justice". The society aims to build a wide network of people from all over the globe who support Freedom and Justice for all. It aims to strengthen the steadfastness of the Palestinian People, to make spread the community's methods of non-violent resistance and to help and support the education of Palestinian youth at schools and universities. Our message:

Together we can remove borders and cross all barriers.

Together we can build bridges of trust and achieve Justice.

Through our friends we can see the promising future, a future where all live in Peace, security and dignity, a future free of racism, where all have the right to a full and free life. For more information:

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