

## Palestine Fair Trade Association

[www.palestinefairtrade.org](http://www.palestinefairtrade.org)

### *Trees for Life Program 2012*

*"They planted so we ate. We plant so they eat."  
Palestinian Proverb*



*The Trees for Life Program*, which is implemented by the Palestine Fair Trade Association (PFTA), provides olive saplings to Palestinian fair-trade and organic farmers. While the program covers the majority of the cost, the farmers pay a symbolic percentage as a demonstration of their commitment. PFTA General Assembly, which is composed of elected representatives of 43 farmers coops, elects a committee of farmers called Trees for Life Committee. This committee is responsible for identifying sapling recipients, distribution, and implementation. The local Trees for Life committee works within the priorities set by PFTA and targets young families, starter farmers, small farmers, women farmers, and farmers who have recently cultivated lands that have been

impacted by the Israeli wall or have been subject to field or tree destruction by the Israeli military. This year "2012" alone more than 10,000 saplings have been distributed to more than 230 farmers in various villages including Alrameh, 'Anin, Raba, Deir Ballout, Zbuba, Sanour, Anza, Kferet and other locations.

***Abdulkhikim Assa'di***, a farmer from the village of Al Jalamah near the city of Jenin, used to work in the land with his family since he was very young. During the "Nakba", the Exodus of Palestinians in 1948, Abdulkhikim's family " ***Assa'di***" were forced to leave their village (Almazar) toward Jenin area and lost all of their farm lands. Over the years Abdulkhikim's family re-established their farming activities in Al Jalameh village which fall right at northern boundary of the West Bank. In 2005, building the Israeli separation wall between West Bank and Israel cut off 50% of Abdulkhikim's land behind the wall. Accessing the land is very difficult both logistically and in terms of safety. When Abdulkhikim heard about the Trees for Life program through another farmer from his village he was very excited. He immediately visited the PFTA and applied for olive trees. He was a perfect candidate. His land is right next to the wall and 50% of it was cut off by Israel, his son is in the university and he has already prepared his land for planting.

In January, Abdulhakim planted all the 150 saplings he received from the PFTA, he visits his land daily to serve his newly born daughters (*the olive saplings*) as he says. Driving his old tractor through the hills, Abdulhakim describes his work in the land as a kind of non-violent resistance against the occupation and a way to verify his rights in the ownership of the land, which builds the soul of attachment to the land in the coming generations.



*Abdulhakim serving his newly planted trees, in his land near the separation barrier.*

***Iftekhar Yousef " Um Ikram"***, Another farmer from 'Anin village, 17 Km from Jenin city, she lives with her daughter alone in an old house located between the Rumi olive trees. Um Ikram is a self-dependent lady who accepted to take challenge. Her husband died in 2004 leaving her as a widow with one daughter to support. She owns 10 dunums of land, planted with olive trees. These trees are considered as the only source of financial income to her family.

Each morning, Um Ikram starts her day early preparing breakfast for her daughter who studies in the village school. There is a garden at Um Ikram's home, she planted it with several vegetables; tomatoes, cucumbers, thyme, lettuce and onions. These vegetables provide the daily needs for Um Ikram and her daughter.

Um Ikram participated with the Trees for Life Program through the PFTA local coordinator in the village, she applied for the program in order to increase the number of olive trees in her land, subsequently, increasing her family income. There is one big problem facing Um Ikram; the land she has planted with her hands is threatened of

confiscation by Israeli Authority under the claims of its location near the Separation Wall Israel is building around Palestinian lands. Even though, Um Ikram says she received olive saplings from the PFTA and she planted them in her land regardless of all threats, it



*Um Ikram Near Her Vegetables Garden*

is an action that helps her affirm her right to ownership and she hope it will help her save the land.

Um Ikram walks 6 km. back and forth daily in order to check on her newly planted olive trees saplings and protect them.

Um Ikram is happy with the Trees for Life program, she says the rewards will be great, and she is expecting the good returns in the future. She hopes to apply for the program in the coming years in order to increase the number of trees in her land.



*Khitam planting an olive tree*

***Khitam M. Mahameed*** is a starter young farmer who heard about the program: Trees for Life through the PFTA local chapter in the village and she applied for the program. She received a number of olive trees and planted them in her land. Khitam lives with her sister along with her three children after her husband left her divorced with her children and with no any financial income. At an early age of 29, Khitam is working on daily basis in order to provide the needs of her children who all go to school now. Her sister and her sister in law help her with what they can.

Khitam is planting olive trees for the first time, but she says that she always loved this tree, since she was a child. Khitam tries to improve

her skills and knowledge by reading about agriculture , especially the olive trees and how to grow in the business.

Khitam, who is also known by the name 'Um Hakim', checks on her land all the time, she checks on the saplings she planted and take care of them. She says that these trees will improve the financial income for her and her children in the coming years. Khitam hopes to have her own olive trees farm in the future and to be an important part within the fair trade producers around the world



*Saplings Distribution for 'Anza Women Cooperative.*



*Olive trees at the nursery before distribution*



*Olive tree distribution in Zboba Village.*

Trees for Life program is funded by PFTA's olive oil buyers, and a network of solidarity organizations in Europe and North America. PFTA farmers extend sincere thanks and gratitude to these organizations and the individuals who contributed through them to the livelihood sustainability of Palestinian farmers.

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