



# JOINT ADVOCACY INITIATIVE برنامج المناصرة المشترك

## *Annual Report*

### *Olive Tree Campaign*

**1 August 2022 - 31 July 2023**

#### **Introduction**

The Joint Advocacy Initiative (JAI) is a program of the East Jerusalem YMCA and YWCA of Palestine, which aims to establish a just peace in Palestine by mobilizing YMCAs, YWCAs, churches and church-based organizations, UN agencies, NGOs, and decision-makers worldwide to take actions that promote an end to Israel's military occupation of Palestine, and enforcement of international law as it applies to Israel and Palestine.

JAI raises awareness and advances change by collecting, analyzing, and conveying accurate data and information to international audiences, bringing internationals to Palestine to experience the occupation first-hand while providing them with opportunities to engage in non-violent resistance, training local youth from vulnerable communities in advocacy; and engaging in coalition-building with other grass-roots movements to unify the Palestinian message and coordinate activities that challenge the occupation.

JAI's Olive Tree Campaign distributes sponsored olive tree saplings to farmers as an act of solidarity and support to help 'Keep Hope Alive'. The sponsored olive trees get planted in the occupied West Bank, specifically in area "C" where olive trees have been uprooted and destroyed by the Israeli Military or the settlers, or where land is threatened to be confiscated by Israel.

#### **Context**

The olive tree is of great significance to the Palestinian people. It holds cultural, traditional, and economic value. The harvest gathers family and friends together to harvest, eat together, sing together, and laugh together. In recent decades the tree has also become a political symbol as its environmental resilience echoes the steadfastness that Palestinians strive for amongst the onslaught of a brutal, prolonged military occupation. Today, Palestinians also plant olive trees to protect their lands from being declared as absentee property and from being appropriated. Hence, the cultivation of olives in Palestine is also a form of non-violent resistance.

Palestinian farmers face several challenges in maintaining their olive groves. Many olive groves are in Area C, which according to the Oslo Accords is under full Israeli control, or in the Seam Zone, which is the walled-off area that still legally belongs to the West Bank despite its inaccessibility due to illegal wall placement. The majority of farmers who own these groves require permits from Israeli authorities to access their land.

Moreover, Israeli settlers are constantly attacking farmers to intimidate and incite fear of entering their land, some systematically vandalizing trees to de-incentivize farmers from wanting to return. These acts of violence and constant harassment result in poverty, displacement, land theft, settlement expansion, and eventually, annexation.

## Conservation Efforts

In 2002, the Joint Advocacy Initiative (JAI) started the Olive Tree Campaign (OTC) to replant olive trees on Palestinian lands that had their trees uprooted by Israeli settlers and soldiers. This was common at the time due to the construction of the Separation “Apartheid “ Wall . Since then, the OTC has also focused on strengthening the resilience of farmers with lands near settlers or at risk of confiscation.

This program also offers international visitors many opportunities to show solidarity and support with Palestine. Through the OTC, visitors visit vulnerable community where they experience local culture and bear a firsthand witness to the effects of Israel’s prolonged military occupation of Palestine. The program provides tools and encouragement for advocacy from these visitors that would push progressive policies to advance a just peace.

The solidarity these volunteers bring has given Palestinian farmers in geopolitically sensitive areas a glimmer of hope and empowered them to continue to stay rooted on their land.

### Methodology:

The 2022/2023 season was full of unforeseen and unprecedented operational challenges.

In August 2022, JAI met with local authorities, agricultural committees, and relevant NGOs in different areas to initiate the application process. Between September and November, JAI received more than 900 applications from farmers for olive tree saplings. After reviewing these applications and conducting field visits, JAI selected eligible plots based on the following criteria:

- The likelihood of confiscation due to the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements, bypass roads and the Separation Barrier
- The distance from settlements, bypass roads and the barrier
- The number of trees already uprooted
- The farmers’ demonstration of care for their land and crops
- Proof of land ownership
- Application details



*JAI staff distributing olive tree saplings in Hebron. January 2023*

In September 2022, JAI signed a contract with an olive tree nursery (which included tree selection criteria) to provide the OTC with tree saplings. JAI then purchased the olive trees from this nursery,

which is located in the West Bank. The specific species chosen is a native breed that is perfectly adapted to the dry environment of Palestine. The trees were at least one-meter high, two-years-old, straight standing, and free of physical damage.

These trees were planted in 682 fields in 47 villages around Bethlehem, Hebron, Salfet, Northern Vally, Tubas, Jerusalem, Abu Deei, Nablus and Ramallah. 35% of the plots that received olive trees are new areas of operation for JAI/OTC.

The table below details the distribution of the trees:

<b>Bethlehem</b>	Husan	23	1180
	Zaatara	4	200
	Al-Nouman	4	200
	Al-Manshyya	11	410
	Beit Jala	10	1300
	Al-Rashayda	7	230
	Tequaa	27	1225
	Nahalen	27	1600
	Shawawrah	1	50
	Al -Khader	40	3560
	Al Walaja	1	50
	Kesan	25	1000
	Ertas	8	475
	Al Ma'asara	2	150
	Wad Fouken	15	1020
	Batir	4	500
	Beit Sahour	1	50
Beit Skarya	18	900	
<b>Hebron</b>	Beit Oumer	10	630
	Doura	56	3145
	Hebron	22	1130
	Sua'ir	18	890
	Sourif	28	2000
	Yatta	60	3400
	Al Shioukh	23	1505
	Tarqoumia	7	1500
<b>Ramallah</b>	Tormusayya	8	850
	Sinjil	12	940
	Kufr Malik	5	365
	Al Mughayar	12	1000
<b>Salfet</b>	Salfet	13	900
	Qarawa Bnai Hassan	9	860
<b>Nablus</b>	Beita	13	850
	Jureesh	6	450
	Douma	8	900
	Oureef	8	800
	Majdal Bani Fadel	20	1850

	Yasuf	6	300
	Aqaraba	12	1000
<b>Tubas</b>	Atouf & Tayaseer	15	1400
<b>The Northen Valley</b>	Bardala	19	1650
<b>West of Jerusalem</b>	Beit 'Anan	12	800
	Beit Duqu	9	525
	Biddu	7	535
	Al-Qubeiba	7	350
	Beit Surik	16	1200
<b>Abu Deis</b>	Sawahera al-Sharqiya	13	1000
<b>Total</b>		<b>682</b>	<b>46825</b>

#### I. Olive Trees Sponsors:

During the reporting period, 25,493 sponsors from 10 countries, including Palestine, sponsored the planted olive trees. This is a direct outcome of the campaign's global efforts. The table below shows where the majority of sponsors come from:

Country*	Sponsors**
Denmark	78
Japan	88
Netherlands	25,000
South Korea	192
USA	12
Canada	15
sweden	5
switzerland	6
india	37
UK	20
Others***	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>25,493</b>

\* a country might include one or more partners. In the UK and the USA there are 5 partners /each

\*\* Sponsors could be individuals, groups or partner organizations (some organizations don't share the names of the sponsors due to internal policy).

\*\*\* Other sponsors came from Germany, Palestine, Austria, Norway, Those are usually the persons who do it directly with the JAI and not through a partner organization

Individual Sponsors and partner organizations can search for their sponsored tree(s) online, to see where it/they are planted along with the area, village, map, farmer's name, pictures, and story of the field, by clicking here [Sponsored Trees \(ej-ymca.org\)](http://ej-ymca.org)

### **Olive Picking Activities:**

#### *Global Safari Sunnmore Folkehogskule:*

On the morning of Friday October 7, 2022, a group of 29 Norwegian students and their leaders headed to Wad Fukin village. Wad Fukin is to the west of the Bethlehem area. This agricultural village is under severe threat of confiscation by the surrounding Israeli colonies of 'Bitar Illit' and 'Tzur Hadassa' expanding onto the village land. Volunteers picked olives growing on a plot of land belonging to Palestinian farmer Yaser Manasra and his family.

#### *Olive Picking Program:*

The Olive Picking Program lasted from October 15<sup>th</sup> through the 24<sup>th</sup> in 2022. In total, 35 international visitors from various countries around the world accompanied rural Palestinian families, helped pick olives, and offered a protective presence to mitigate vandalism, harassment, and violence by Israeli settlers and soldiers. Participants also heard farmers' testimonies and visited different areas of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, where they met local, non-violent activists and representatives of civil society organizations.

#### *Rønningen Folkehogskule:*

JAI arranged a program in Palestine from October 24 to the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2022 for 16 students and 2 teachers from a partner Norwegian YMCA-YWCA related Rønningen Folkehogskule. The students had one day of olive picking at a threatened field in the town of Beit Jala. During the activity, the group met the Palestinian family and talked with them about their experience farming under occupation and the ongoing challenges they face.

### **Olive Tree Planting Activities:**

As part of the partnership between the JAI and three Danish Afterskoles, the four organizations collaborated to create a program in Palestine for three different Danish schools which included planting around 900 olive trees in total.

#### **1. Midtsjællands Efterskole.**

JAI organized and hosted a week program in Palestine, from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2023, for a Global Citizenship class with 25 students and 3 leaders from the Danish partner Midtsjællands Efterskole. Their week including olive planting with Palestinian JAI-trained students at a Palestinian field in Al Khader village threatened by annexation.

#### **2. Dronninglund Efterskole:**

From the 10<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> of March 2023, 31 students and 5 leaders from a partner Danish school called the Dronninglund Efterskole (DE) participated in an olive planting activities together with Palestinian students. The planting activity was implemented in a threatened field close to Al-Khader village.



*Danish and Palestinian students planting olive trees in March, 2023*

### **3. Nørre Nisum Efterskole:**

A week program in Palestine, from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of March 2023, was arranged and hosted by the JAI for the Global Teenagers class, with 31 students and 4 leaders from the Danish partner Nørre Nisum Efterskole (NNE). Students had one day of olive planting at the threatened fields of the Al-Khader village, southwest of the Bethlehem area. Participants planted 300 olive trees in total together with Palestinian students.

- *Other planting activities:*



*Olive tree planting activity by a dutch group. March 2023*

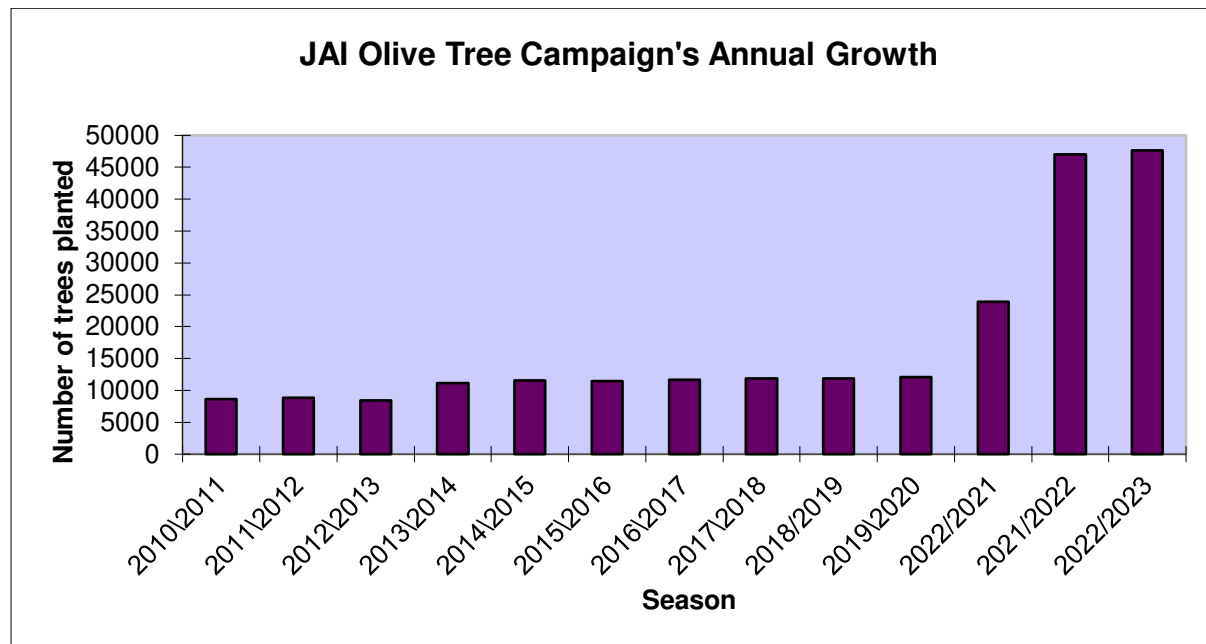
1. In coordination with our partner in the Netherlands. JAI organized a day olive planting activity with 35 participants from the Netherlands. Together with the JAI staff, the group planted 250 olive trees in a threatened field near Al Khader village.
2. JAI organized a day olive planting activity with a Danish group of 12 participants during their visit to Palestine. The group managed to plant 150 olive trees.
3. JAI organized a day olive planting activity with a group from the Netherlands. The 25 participants managed to plant 200 olive trees in a threatened field in the town of Beit Jala.

## General Achievements

During the reporting period, the OTC purchased and distributed 46,825 olive trees that were sponsored by 25,493 internationals. Some 700 Palestinian families (3,500 members) benefited from olive planting and picking activities.



During the past 21 years, the OTC planted 294,000 olive trees that were sponsored by 175,500 patrons, distributed to 3,642 families, and planted by more than 2,100 international volunteers as shown in the graph below:



### Promotional Materials

The OTC issued the annual Olive Tree Campaign calendar this year to interested parties. The calendar contained different stories about Palestinian farmers, the work of our partners, and issues related to Palestinians who live under the Israeli occupation. JAI also produced promotional material such as T-shirts, calendars, caps, and notebooks to help promote the OTC here in Palestine and internationally. Some of these were sent to JAI partners and friends, but were mainly distributed among participants during JAI's activities and among visitors.

### OTC Speaking Tours and Visits

1. **OTC Officer's Visit to Denmark:** From the 26<sup>th</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2022, two JAI-trained students, together with Muhanad Al-Qaisi, JAI's Olive Tree Campaign Officer, had a week-long program at a partner Danish Efterskoles, the Nørre Nisum Efterskole. Various talks were given by the Palestinian students to the Danish Efterskole students and other surrounding public-school students about their life as teenagers in Palestine, human rights violations by the Israelis on their livelihoods, their schools in Palestine, their social life, and lastly their expectations of Danish students and the international community. JAI Olive Tree Campaign Officer also gave various presentations and talk on the Olive Tree Campaign and its impacts, where the Danish Efterskoles and students also do annual fundraising for this campaign.

- 2. OTC Vist to Boarding Schools in Norway:** Muhanad and two trained students from the JAI attended a trip to partner schools and organizations in Norway which lasted from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 2022, hosted by Rønningen Folkehøgskole, Sunnmøre Folkehøgskule, and KFUK-KFUM Global. The trip included presentations, talks, and interactive activities at various classes, schools, and local YMCAs-YWCAs. There, they communicated the Palestinian cause, their life under occupation, the JAI advocacy work, and its “Keep Hope Alive - Olive Tree Campaign”, as well as some aspects of their Palestinian culture.

## Challenges

1. During the reporting period, 825 sponsored olive trees were uprooted and destroyed by the Israeli settler attacks. These attacks took place in Hebron, Bethlehem and Nablus.  
*(in Cooperation with our partner Plant een Olijfboom these trees have been replanted).*
2. One of the main challenges that the campaign faced was accessing the land during the planting and harvest seasons, due to the military’s classification of certain areas as restricted, which affected our plans.
3. Difficulties of installing the plaques and taking photos after planting the olive trees in some areas, due to Israeli security measures.
4. Having limited OTC partners in the global south.

## Future Plans

1. The OTC plans to plant 35,000 olive trees in the 2023/2024 season, and to cover more villages in the Northern Districts.
2. The OTC will work on changing some aspects of the Olive Picking \ Planting programs for the next season, to make it feasible for participants to join more than once in a given season.
3. JAI is working on having an online paying system to make it easier for people to sponsor olive trees, and to receive support for other JAI activities.
4. JAI will work on developing more partnerships and engaging more organizations to promote the OTC, with a particular focus on Asia and the Pacific.
5. JAI will work to develop an online application to make information more accessible.

## Thank You Note

JAI would like to thank its partners and every person, organization, or group, for their valuable efforts and support. We extend our deepest thanks to our sponsors from around the world. JAI appreciates your solidarity. The achievements of the Olive Tree Campaign could not have been possible without the efforts exerted by our friends, partners and sponsors. The achievements of this year come as a result of the overwhelming support of:

- Plant een Olijfboom (Plant an Olive Tree) - Netherlands
- Watersheds Foundation (USA)
- Embrace the Middle East (UK)

- Christian Aid/ UK
- St. Mary's Iffley Church (UK)
- Y Care International (UK)
- Olive Tree Peace Network In Korea
- Goyang YMCA/Korea
- The Presbyterian Church in Canada
- Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ
- YWCA of Japan
- Indo Palestine Solidarity Network
- Korean Peace Foundation/ South Korea
- Rønningen Folk High School (Norway)
- Nørre Nissum Efterskole (Denmark)
- Midtsjællands Efterskole (Denmark)
- Dronninglund Efterskole (Denmark)
- Council for World Mission
- The United Church of Canada
- Sumud Palestine (UK)
- Y Global (Norway)
- YMCA of Japan
- EJW (Germany)
- World Alliance of YMCAs
- The First Presbytery Church in San Anselmo (USA)
- Keep Hope Alive (USA)
- The National Council Of YMCAs of Korea
- National Council of Churches in Korea
- Horyzon (Switzerland)
- Danish Church Aid (Denmark)
- Trinity Presbyterian Church (USA)
- United Reformed Church Trust (UK)
- The Methodist Church / USA
- Kairos Palestine/Sweden
- YMCA India

JAI also expresses its gratitude to all the individual supporters from *Scotland, Sweden, Germany, India, South Korea, and Palestine* and very special thanks to the participants who came to Palestine to help the Palestinian farmers in the planting and the olive-picking program. We extend our gratitude to JAI's volunteers who exerted effort here in the OPT and in their sending organizations which contribute to the support and the promotion of the OTC campaign. We appreciate the cooperation and coordination made by the Palestinian local councils and the Palestiniang Ministry of Agriculture in the targeted villages and local agricultural committees, as well as ATG, Applied Research Institute in Jerusalem (ARIJ), Kairos Palestine, the Alternative Information Center, and Badil for working closely with JAI in this campaign and its related programs.



*Danish and Palestinian students planting olive trees in March, 2023*

**Keep Hope Alive**