

Al-Walajah

Introduction

People often mistakenly assume al-Walajah to be a Bethlehem village, when it is in fact a Jerusalem village and has always been part of the Jerusalem Governorate. It is also seen as unique among the uprooted villages of Palestine, because after being displaced, its community rebuilt the village and gave it the same name: al-Walajah or al-Walajah al-Jadidah (New al-Walajah), rebuilt in proximity to the lands on which their original village had stood.



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Location and Area

Al-Walajah sits eight kilometers southwest of the Old City of occupied Jerusalem at 750 meters above sea level.¹ Historian Mustafa Murad al-Dabbagh describes it as being located halfway between the villages of al-Joura and Battir, or as scholar Walid Khalidi describes it: “The village stood on a large hill on the side of a mountain, on the north side of Wadi al-Sarar, through which the Jerusalem-Jaffa railway passed.”² A secondary road linked it to a highway leading to Jerusalem.”³

Al-Walajah is bordered from the north by Ein Karem, al-Jurah and Khirbat al-Lawz; from the south by Beit Jala, Battir, al-Qabu and Ras Abu Ammar; from the east by al-Maliha, Sharafat and part of Beit Jala; and from the west by Aqqur, Ras Abu Ammar and part of Battir.

Al-Walajah is among the larger Jerusalem villages, with a land area of about 17,707 donums⁴ prior to the Nakba. The area of al-Walajah al-Jadidah today, on the eastern side of the railway, is only 2,500 dunums. According to the al-Walajah Village Council, about 100 donums of the village fall administratively within Area B, 1,400 donums within Area C and about 1,000 donums fall within the boundaries of the Occupation Municipality in Jerusalem.⁵

Origin and History

Regarding the name of the village and its association with its geographic characteristics, Khalidi states: “The name of the village (which meant “the opening” in Arabic) probably referred to the natural opening in the mountain chain through which transportation routes passed.”⁶ This feature is evident in al-Walajah’s natural topography of hills and valleys, especially from a distance, as it appears like an entrance to Jerusalem through the hills.

¹ *Palestine Remembered*. “Al-Walajah,” accessed at [al-walaja-jerusalem-البلجة \(أل-ولجة\) - Jerusalem](http://al-walaja-jerusalem-البلجة (أل-ولجة) - Jerusalem)

² The original location of the village prior to its uprootal in the Nakba was north and west of the railway. Today, al-Walajah al-Jadidah (the village that was built in the wake of the Nakba) is situated on the southeastern side of the Jerusalem-Jaffa railway, extending from the edges of Sharafat and the Wadi Ahmad area and Cremisan Monastery westwards to Battir Station, and from the Jerusalem-al-Walajah-Battir Road, parallel to the railway, it extends north to Beit Jala and the areas overlooking Wadi Halas in the south. After the 1948 war, the 14 km railway, essentially delineated the Armistice Line, whereby its eastern flank was Jordanian territory, and its western side fell under the control of the nascent Zionist state.

³ Khalidi, Walid (editor), *All that Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*. (Washington D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), 322.

⁴ See note 1.

⁵ These estimates were provided during an interview with Khader al-Araj (Abu Ramez) on December 20, 2017.

⁶ See note 3.

Population

The population of al-Walajah was estimated to be 1,650 people in 1945 and about 1,800 in 1948, with over 350 households.⁷ Today, the population of the village numbers about 3,500 people.⁸ The total number of al-Walajah natives, including those who were displaced, is estimated at around 12,000 people.⁹

There are four main clans from which the al-Walajah families descend: al-Wahadna, al-hajajlah, Al-Araj and Abd Rabbo. It is believed that 60% of the villagers living in al-Walajah today come from the al-Araj clan due to their ownership of land on the eastern side of the railway. The al-Hajajlah clan is the second largest, comprising about 30%, followed by the Abd Rabbo and al-Wahadna clans, which make up 5% each.¹⁰

Al-Walajah is quite significant historically among the clans of southern Jerusalem. It was dubbed *Kursi Bani Hassan* ("the Bani Hassan throne/seat"),¹¹ as it was home to the leadership of the Qaisi tribes in Jerusalem, who lived in the Bani Hassan villages, including al-Walajah, al-Maliha, Ein Karem, al-Jurah, Sataf, Khirbat al-Lawz, Sharafat, Beit Safafa, among others. The Bani Hassan are relatives of the Uthra tribe of the Arabian Peninsula. Their forefather Hassan arrived in the south of Jordan and settled in the al-Tafla area. Subsequently, Hassan's sons moved further north seeking food and water for their livestock and settling in the areas where they have remained to this day. Hassan's offspring proliferated to the point of creating their own tribe, which itself is divided into two parts: al-Thanya and Banu Huleil."¹²

Social and Economic Context

Al-Walajah was historically known for its expansive lands and abundance of water springs. Accordingly, its economy centered around farming. Al-Walajah was among the most productive villages in Jerusalem in terms of crop yield, which depended primarily on a summertime

⁷ Abu Khiara, Aziz; Fannush, Saleh; Suliman, Mahmoud; Ashur, Musa, Al-Walajah: Hadarah wa Tarikh (Al-Walajah: Civilization and History) (Amman: Jam'yat al-Walajah al-Ta'wuniya, 1993), 38.

⁸ See note 5.

⁹ See note 1.

¹⁰ According to information provided by Khader al-Araj, during a phone interview conducted on October 20, 2020.

¹¹ "In the tribal system that prevailed in olden and modern times, to resolve their problems, members of the tribe would resort to the sheikh, regarded the highest authority in the tribe. It is clear that al-Walajah was the most highly regarded among the villages of southwestern Jerusalem, given that all the people of the neighboring villages would seek the sheikh of the Bani Hassan, who was based in al-Walajah, to resolve any problems that may have arisen." Abu Khiara et al, Al-Walajah: Hadarah wa Tarikh.

¹² See note 7.

irrigation system. Its residents grew stone fruits, figs, grapes and olives, whose surplus crop would be sold in the Old City of Jerusalem.

During the 1948 War, upon being uprooted from their village, northwest of the railway, the people of al-Walajah moved to refugee camps in Jericho and to Bethlehem's Dheisheh camp, among others. Some sought refuge in Amman and others settled in Bethlehem villages like Beit Jala and Nahalin.¹³

A number of those displaced, however, especially those who owned land east of the railway, sheltered in caves and simple summer houses that they had built in that area of al-Walajah, as refugees on their own land. In the meantime, some would occasionally slip across the Armistice Line, defined by the railroad, to reach their occupied lands and harvest their crops.¹⁴ Al-Walajah al-Jadidah was thus established on what had originally been agricultural land. At first, they hastily built mud and stone structures, but they gradually began to expand and build more modern stone houses, joined by the villagers who had been displaced to other areas and refugee camps.¹⁵

Education

In old al-Walajah, towards the end of the Ottoman era, boys would learn Arabic, mathematics and religion in the village kuttab. With the arrival of British colonial rule, the state of education remained unchanged until 1938, when a public school was established to provide education for boys up to the seventh grade, with Abd al-Muti al-Barghouthi, "Abu Marwan," as its head teacher. Al-Barghouthi was arrested by the British authorities in 1939 for his activism with the Palestinian revolutionaries, and he was replaced with two teachers. The school continued to operate until the village was occupied and uprooted in 1948.¹⁶ The oral history notes that the principals and teachers at that school were from the Sinokrot and Amr families of Hebron. It is also noted that there were no schools for girls in al-Walajah before 1948.¹⁷

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ The original homes, west of the railway, were demolished in 1950.

¹⁶ See note 7, 69.

¹⁷ Nakba Oral History Project, "Interview with Khalil Abd Hussein from al-Walajah," (Palestine Remembered, 2006, minute 28): [مقابلة تاريخ شفوي للنكبة الفلسطينية مع السيد خليل حسين من الولاة - القدس - فلسطين المحتلة](#)

Al-Walajah al-Jadidah is home to one school today, al-Walajah School, which is run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). The co-ed school was established in 1963 and teaches up to the ninth grade, after which students transfer to high schools in Beit Jala and Bethlehem.

Landmarks

Springs

The villagers enumerate 24 springs in al-Walajah, 18 of which are documented in written sources:¹⁸

Springs north of the railway: al-Elliq, Abu Ghannam, Saif, al-Dalbah, Abu Samir (mineral and salty water), al-Balad¹⁹ (where the village mosque stood), al-Sheikh, Shaab Emeir, Fleilfel, Abu Ghazi, al-Eddis, al-Hilal and Qarya Saida.

Springs south of the railway (al-Walajah al-Jadidah): al-Hanniya, al-Jweiza, al-Hadfa, al-Asfur, al-Sharqiyah.

Zaitunat al-Badawy

Al-Walajah is home to what is regarded as the oldest olive tree in the world. Known as Zaitunat al-Badawy (The Bedouin's Olive), it is estimated to be at least 3,000 years old. The ancient tree is about 12 meters in height, 25 meters in diameter and covers some 250 square meters, with 22 trees that branch out from the mother tree.²⁰ The olive is in the care of Salah Abu Ali, whose family owns the plot on which the tree stands. Zaitunat al-Badawy is an al-Walajah landmark and tourist attraction.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ The Occupation authorities refer to it as Ein Itamar in reference to a colonist named Itamar Doron, who was killed near the spring in a Palestinian resistance operation in 1998.

²⁰ Abu Samra, Qais, "Akbar Shajarat Zaitun Filastiniya Muamera Tatahada Jidar al-Fasl al-Israeli" ("Palestine's Oldest Living Tree Fights the Israeli Annexation and Expansion Wall"). (Anadolu Agency, November 5, 2018): <https://bit.ly/35uF1fv>



History of Resistance

Al-Walajah has had an active role in the history of Palestinian resistance, beginning with the fight against British colonial rule and continuing in the present.

Al-Walajah in 1936

The people of al-Walajah recall their village's active participation in the 1936 Great Palestinian Revolt. Led by Ismail Ahmad Radwan, they formed a group comprised of 40 fighters, which worked in concert with the other rebel factions of the Jerusalem area, two of whose leaders were Sheikh Yassin al-Bakri from Jerusalem and Ahmad Abu Shaaban from the village of Lifta.²¹

²¹ Kabha, Mustafa, "Thawrat 1936-1939 wa al-Thakira al-Sha'biya al-Filastiniya" ("The 1936-1939 Revolution and Palestinian Popular Memory [Episode 16]"), (Arab 48.com, 2010): <https://bit.ly/30gmnpz>

The Battle of al-Walajah (1938)

The book *Al-Walajah: Hadara wa Tarikh* (*Al-Walajah: Civilization and History*) notes that al-Walajah was the setting of a 1938 battle against British forces: “In 1938, the late Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini arrived in al-Walajah and remained there for ten days. Upon departing with his group for another town, some British occupation forces and Jewish settlers attempted to advance on al-Walajah. Some villagers got wind of their impending arrival and set up an ambush with the participation of neighboring villagers in an area between al-Hanniya and Yalo springs. Led by the resistance fighter Abu Shaaban, the rebels positioned themselves among the oak trees on either side of the road. As soon as the vanguard of the attacking force appeared, the road was blocked ahead of them and to their rear. The battle raged and lasted for an entire day. Warplanes flew in to relieve the besieged British and Jews. The enemy lost 12 men, whereas the Arabs suffered minor casualties and seized some equipment and weapons. This battle is indelible in the people of al-Walajah’s annals of resistance.”²² Some narratives also note al-Walajah’s participation in the 1936 Revolt through the sabotage of the Jerusalem-Jaffa railway, which ran through village land, in an effort to capture equipment from British forces.²³

The 1948 Nakba

In testimony published on YouTube regarding the history of the village leading up to its occupation in 1948, Khalil Hussein recalls that the winds of war were palpable in the village following the Deir Yasin Massacre. He recalls the people of Deir Yassin who sought refuge in al-Walajah and what they recounted of the horrors that the Zionist forces committed against their kin in April of that year. Hussein notes that the flight of the Deir Yassin villagers to al-Walajah and all that was said about the massacres did not drive the people of al-Walajah to leave the village behind. Al-Walajah, however, was repeatedly attacked by Zionist forces, beginning in April 1948 and culminating with its occupation. Hussein adds that with the occupation of neighboring Jerusalem villages like Ein Karem and al-Maliha, and with the Zionists wresting control of what is known as Jabal Miskiri (Miss Carey)²⁴ or Jabal al-Rab (Mountain of God) in July 1948, al-Walajah became more vulnerable to the Zionist forces, especially since Jabal al-Rab is a hill near al-Jawza village, overlooking al-Walajah.²⁵

²² See note 12, 104.

²³ Ibid. Also, Awadallah, Khaled, “Yafa-al Quds: Tarikh Mujaz li Sikkat al-Isti’mar” (Jaffa–Jerusalem: a Brief History of the Colonial Railway”), Bab al-Wad: <https://bit.ly/2uH4apv>.

²⁴ For more about Jabal Miskiri: Marshud, Hala, “Maabad Miss Carey wa Bawader al-Tatbi’ al-Dini Fi Filastin” (“Miss Carey’s Temple and Early Religious Mainstreaming in Palestine”), (Bab al-Wad, 2018): <https://bit.ly/2NIG2z5>

²⁵ See note 17.

Local volunteers, as well Egyptian ones, most of whom belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood, in addition to Egyptian army personnel, resisted the frequent Zionist attacks on al-Walajah. Khalil Hussein recalls that the Egyptian military arrived in the village following the occupation of Ein Karem and al-Maliha in the summer of 1948, and that they assisted in fortifying the village with trenches and bunkers. Hussein also witnessed the Egyptians emptying sacks of ammunition that they had brought with them, remnants of the Second World War in Egypt. They would rummage through the heaps of bullets for ones that were in working condition: “for every twenty bullets, they found one that would work,” recalls Hussein. Leading the Egyptian forces defending al-Walajah was Mohammed Rashad, who would ultimately be martyred in defense of the village.²⁶ Following rounds of attacks and counterattacks that persisted for weeks, the village fell completely when the Zionists gained the upper hand in October 1948.²⁷

The Jaffa–Jerusalem Railway was central to the demarcation of the 1949 Armistice Line. In 1950, the Zionist forces demolished the original homes of al-Walajah, west of the railway; the lands on which they had stood, including the railway, fell under the control of the nascent “State of Israel.” On the other hand, the lands of al-Walajah al-Jadidah, east of the railway, came under Jordanian rule. Between 1949 and 1967, Palestinians often traversed that boundary into the occupied lands in order to harvest their crops. In 1967, the occupation of the entire village was completed when al-Walajah al-Jadidah was taken over, a process that included the annexation of 1,000 donums of its land to the jurisdiction of the Occupation Municipality in Jerusalem.

Colonization

Among the Occupation’s policies targeting al-Walajah, we will discuss the colonies and “national parks” that were established on village land, in addition to the hardships caused by the Annexation and Expansion Wall, the military checkpoint and the policy of home demolitions.

The Annexation and Expansion Wall

The Israeli Occupation authorities began constructing the Annexation and Expansion Wall around al-Walajah in 2010. During that year and in 2011, the village saw weekly confrontations in protest against the construction of the Wall, which was intended, and indeed succeeded, in separating the village community from its agricultural lands in the north and northwest. It also

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

cut them off from Ein al-Hanniya spring and the old village cemetery. The protesters would head towards the entrance of al-Walajah, adjacent to the entrance of Har Gilo colony, and face the Occupation forces, who in turn targeted them with teargas, and on some occasions, with live ammunition. In other instances, the demonstrators would head to their agricultural lands, where work was done in preparation for the Wall's construction, and they would obstruct the construction equipment and bulldozers. In addition to protests and popular resistance, the people of al-Walajah lodged an appeal to the Israeli Supreme Court against the construction of the Wall. In August 2011, the Israeli Supreme Court issued its rejection of the appeal,²⁸ and construction continued.

Today, the Wall surrounds the village on three sides, with only its eastern entrance left open to the road leading to Beit Jala and Bethlehem. Some sections of the Wall are concrete, and others take the form of solid metal sheets and barbed wire, separating al-Walajah from its adjacent agricultural lands.²⁹ The geographic link between the village and Jerusalem was thus severed, despite the hills of Jerusalem and its prominent landmarks being clearly visible from there. The Wall also cut off the home of Omar Hajajleh, on the edge of the village, from the rest of al-Walajah. Hajajleh fought this for many years until an Israeli court ruled that a gate be built to allow him access to his home and village on either side of the Wall. He had been frequently pressured and offered millions of shekels to sell his home, but he refused the offers and insisted on his right to his land, home and village.

Al-Walajah Springs and Colonization

Ein al-Hanniya

Ein al-Hanniya Spring and its associated landmarks are still present today on the eastern side of the railway. Its water emerges from the rock and flows through channels to a collection pool. The spring is located on land owned by the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and is surrounded by old buildings that belong to al-Seifi family,³⁰ natives of al-Walajah from the al-Araj clan. "It was a rest stop for convoys carrying crops and merchandise on their way from villages west of al-Walajah to the Old City."³¹

²⁸ Reider, Dimi, "Supreme Court Turns Village into Open-Air Prison." (+972 Magazine, August 24, 2011): [Supreme Court ruling turns village into open-air prison](#)

²⁹ Applied Research Institute - Jerusalem (ARIJ), "Al-Walajah Village Profile": http://vprofile.arij.org/bethlehem/pdfs/VP/Al%20Walaia_vp_en.pdf

³⁰ Photographs available on Palestine Remembered: [منير الصبيحي يعود لفلسطين لأول مرة قادماً من الشتات لفترة مؤقتة ليؤكد حقه في أرضه. من أمام منزل العائلة في الولجة، تغير الزمان ولم يتغير المكان - تصوير طارق البكري - 84911](#)

³¹ See note 12, 19.

Despite the spring being located east of the railway, close to al-Walajah al-Jadidah, it was still difficult for the displaced village community, forced out of its agricultural lands in 1948, to access the spring, owing to its proximity to the railway and the boundaries of the nascent Occupation state, which controlled the railway and its western flank. The people of the village recall that between 1948 and 1967, they would be fired upon if they came close to the spring to use its water, and that some were even killed for “approaching the border.”³²

After the occupation of the rest of the village in 1967, Ein al-Hanniya came under the control of the Occupation authorities in Jerusalem. On February 1, 2018, the so-called “Ein al-Hanniya Park” was inaugurated by then mayor of the Occupation Municipality Nir Barakat, in the presence of representatives of the Israeli Nature and Parks Authority and the Armenian Patriarchate.³³ The “park” was declared on about 1,200 dunums of al-Walajah lands, including Ein al-Hanniya, following the Israeli occupation authorities’ revamp of the spring at the cost of 14 million shekels.³⁴ The Occupation authorities converted the area into a tourist destination and park for Israeli colonists while completely depriving the original owners of the land from accessing an area that had once been a prominent recreational destination for al-Walajah and West Bank residents.³⁵

Ein Al-ElliQ Spring

Near Ein al-Hanniya is Ein al-ElliQ spring, which the Occupation authorities seized with the rest of al-Walajah in 1948 and named Ein Lavan. It is an abundant and reliable spring, whose water is collected in a pool shaped like a half-circle. As part of the “Jerusalem Park” project, the Occupation Municipality in Jerusalem, in collaboration with the Israeli Nature and Parks Authority, revamped this spring in 2015 and made it into a tourist attraction for Israeli colonists as well.³⁶

³² For more, see: Obeidat, Mohammad, “Ein al-Hanniya... Janna Filastiniya Yastabihuha al-Muhtal” (“Ein al-Hanniya... A Palestinian Paradise Usurped by the Occupier”). (Al-Arabi al-Jadid, February 2015): <https://bit.ly/2NpvKhu>

³³ al- Eisa, Usama, “Hadiqa Istitaniya ala Aradi Qaryat al-Walajah” (“A Colonial Park on the Lands of al-Walajah Village”). al-Hayat al-Jadida, http://www.alhayat-j.com/arch_page.php?nid=314603

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ For more (in Hebrew): “Ein al Haneyeh: a Jerusalemite Space of Great Value and History, Preserved by Palestinians” (Haaretz, March 2018): <https://www.haaretz.co.il/gallery/trip/.premium-MAGAZINE-1.5905496>

³⁶ Hebrew language report published Israel website Kol Hair on March 4, 2019: [למעלה מ-6,000 התנגדויות לבניית שכונה חדשה בדרום העיר | כל העיר](#)

Al-Walajah Military Checkpoint

In 2006, the Occupation authorities issued an order to seize about 40 donums of al-Walajah lands and parts of Beit Jala and Bethlehem in order to build a military checkpoint named Har Gilo at the eastern entrance of al-Walajah (between Jerusalem and Har Gilo Colony). The checkpoint was completed in 2011, preventing the entry of al-Walajah and West Bank residents to Jerusalem and allowing exclusive access to Israeli colonists and Palestinians with Israeli identity cards.

Subsequently, and in parallel with the plans for Ein al-Hanniya and the inauguration of the “park” and its facilities, the Occupation authorities began implementing a 2017 decision to transfer the al-Walajah military checkpoint further south from its current location, citing supposed security reasons that require a barrier between Ein al-Hanniya “Park” and the West Bank. At its current location, the checkpoint “allows” al-Walajah and West Bank residents to access the spring. Its planned relocation, south of the spring, will cut the al-Walajah community off from the historical spring belonging to their village by requiring them to cross the checkpoint in order to reach it — an impossibility for those without Israeli identification.

This policy, however, has not been implemented as of yet (January 2021), with pending appeals and suits filed by al-Walajah residents against the transfer of the checkpoint.³⁷ Nevertheless, its transfer is expected to be carried out soon, depriving dozens of Palestinian al-Walajah families from reaching their agricultural lands in the area of Ein al-Hanniya, 1,000 donums of which will be isolated with the erection of the new checkpoint.³⁸

Colonies

The colonies surrounding al-Walajah were built west of the railway, on the seized land where the original village homes had stood before being demolished in 1950.

In the wake of the Nakba, about 74% of al-Walajah’s land was seized. Aminadav colony was erected on the ruins of the village after the Zionists seized those lands in 1950 at the hands of Yemenite Jewish colonists. Gilo colony was established in 1970 and seized about 45 donums of al-Walajah land.

³⁷ According to information provided by attorney Ghayath Nasser during a phone interview conducted on January 28, 2021.

³⁸ More on this can be read (in Hebrew) on Walla News: [בית המשפט הורה לעצור הזזת מחסום ליד ים - העירייה המשיכה](#)



Har Gilo colony was built east of the railway, precisely opposite al-Walajah al-Jadidah on al-Walajah and Beit Jala lands. Established in 1968, and seizing 92 donums of al-Walajah land, Har Gilo was one of the first colonies to be built following the 1967 war.³⁹

Parts of Nahal Refaim “National Park,” approved in 2013, were declared on al-Walajah lands. It is projected to cover over 5,000 donums, thus becoming one of the largest “parks” in the Jerusalem area when completed.

Home Demolition Policy

The geographic constriction of al-Walajah in 1948 with the seizure of over 80% of the village was only the beginning of the story. The Oslo Agreement would thereafter designate over half of al-Walajah as Area C, meaning that any construction there would require licensing by the Occupation’s so-called Civil Administration, a very difficult approval to obtain. New homes built

³⁹ According to a Hebrew language Wikipedia entry, titled “Har Gilo”: [הר גילה – ויקיפדיה](#)

by Palestinians in al-Walajah are therefore demolished on a regular basis. Additionally, obtaining a license from the Occupation Municipality in Jerusalem for construction in the areas that fall under their jurisdiction (such as Ein al-Jweizah) is also very difficult, this despite the community's frequent efforts at presenting structural plans for their lands to the Occupation Municipality. Al-Walajah endures the demolition of homes that are still under construction on a yearly basis at the hands of Occupation forces.⁴⁰

Epilogue

Al-Walajah still maintains its rural character, evidenced by the stone-lined agricultural terraces and fields, as well as vestiges of old houses that were built in haste after the 1948 Nakba to shelter uprooted Palestinians.

In al-Walajah al-Jadidah, visitors can enjoy the beautiful sights of the natural landscape of southern and western Jerusalem, as well as the northwestern villages of Bethlehem, especially the view of the hills at sunset. The vantage from the village's elevated hills overlooks Beit Safafa, al-Maliha and Sharafat, as well as the western colonies of Jerusalem. The rural ambience that characterizes al-Walajah al-Jadidah, however, is changing due to increased construction by families from outside the village in the areas that fall within Occupation Municipality's jurisdiction.

A tour of the village can be organized through the local initiatives that operate in the village, such as the Local Council, the al-Walajah Feminist Club and the al-Rweisat Club, which runs a kitchen and a woodworks studio. This is organized in cooperation with the rest of the village institutions, which carry out remarkable collective work, reflecting a strong sense of community.

One cannot gloss over the association of al-Walajah with one of its most prominent figures: the martyr Basel al-Araj. His remarkable funeral and burial in his hometown of al-Walajah has made the village cemetery a national symbol. Al-Araj's hometown was his launching point to dozens of locales in the West Bank, where he set an example with his active resistance as a patriotic intellectual. He partook in many popular engagements and projects, which in addition to protest demonstrations, included the authorship of critical writings and research, raising awareness about the legacy of popular resistance and conducting field tours about the battles

⁴⁰ Daghlās, Atef, "Israel Tantaqim min al-Walajah: Hadem Manazel wa Jarha bil Jumla" ("Israel Exacts Revenge on al-Walajah: Home Demolitions and Scores of Casualties"), (al-Jazeera.net, September 3, 2018): <https://bit.ly/2POLxos>

of Palestinian national liberation and its history. Those tours, in addition to al-Araj's theoretical contributions that conceive of knowledge as a practical necessity and the duty of the masses rather than the elite, fostered a movement in which culture and intellect are themselves pragmatic actions, inextricable from history and present reality. His martyrdom in direct confrontation against the Occupation army in March 2017 reaffirmed al-Walajah's position on the map of the Palestinian national struggle of recent memory.

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