

Iskaka Village Profile



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Background

This report is part of a series of booklets, which contain compiled information about each city, town, and village in the Salfit Governorate. These booklets came as a result of a comprehensive study of all localities in Salfit Governorate, which aims at depicting the overall living conditions in the governorate and presenting developmental plans to assist in developing the livelihood of the population in the area. It was accomplished through the "Village Profiles and Needs Assessment;" the project funded by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AECID).

The "Village Profiles and Needs Assessment" was designed to study, investigate, analyze and document the socio-economic conditions and the needed programs and activities to mitigate the impact of the current unsecure political, economic and social conditions in Salfit Governorate.

The project's objectives are to survey, analyze, and document the available natural, human, socioeconomic and environmental resources, and the existing limitations and needs assessment for the development of the rural and marginalized areas in Salfit Governorate. In addition, the project aims at preparing strategic developmental programs and activities to mitigate the impact of the current political, social, and economic instability with the focus on the agricultural sector.

All locality profiles in Arabic and English are available online at <http://vprofile.arij.org>.

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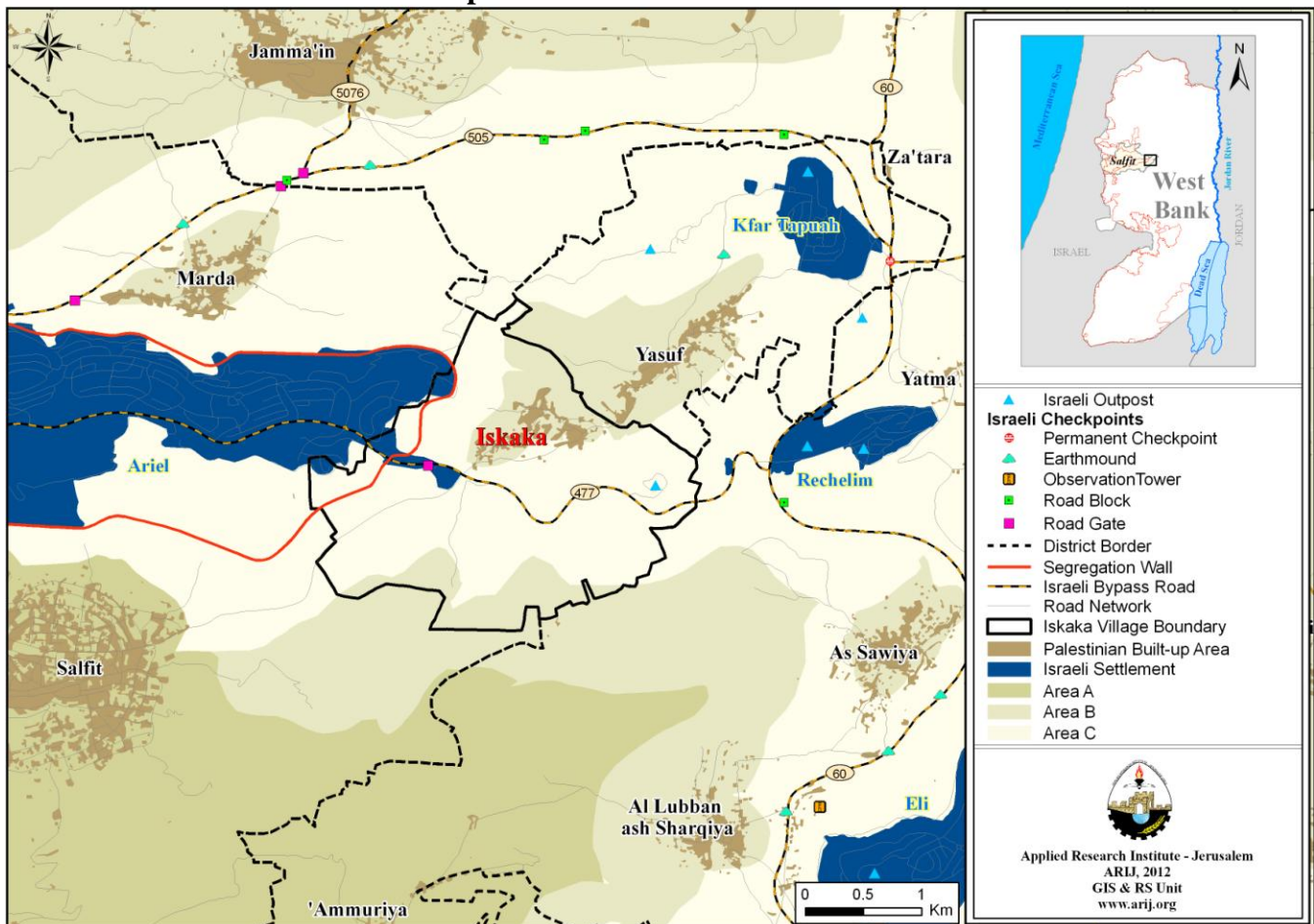
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Iskaka Village Profile

Location and Physical Characteristics

Iskaka is a Palestinian village in Salfit Governorate located 4.6 km east of Salfit City. Iskaka is bordered by As Sawiya and Al Lubban ash Sharqiya villages to the east, Salfit city and Al Lubban ash Sharqiya villages to the south, Salfit city to the west, and Marda, Yasuf and Jamma'in to the north. All of the surrounding villages and towns are located in Nablus Governorate (ARIJ-GIS, 2013) (See Map 1).

Map 1: Iskaka location and borders



Source: ARIJ - GIS Unit, 2013.

Iskaka is located at an altitude of 660 m above sea level with a mean annual rainfall of 619 mm. The average annual temperature is 18 C° and the average annual humidity is approximately 60.4% (ARIJ-GIS, 2013).

Since 1991, Iskaka has been governed by a Village Council which is currently administrated by 9 members appointed by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). There are 2 employees working in the council, which owns a permanent headquarters that is included within the ‘Joint Services Council of South Salfit.’ However, the Council does not own a much needed vehicle for the collection of solid waste (Iskaka Village Council, 2012).

It is the responsibility of the Village Council to provide a number of services to the residents of Iskaka, including (Iskaka Village Council, 2012):

- The establishment and maintenance of the drinking water and electricity networks.
- Solid waste collection.
- Implementation of projects and studies for the village.
- Protection of governmental properties.
- Protection of historical and archeological sites in the village.
- Provision of educational kindergartens.

History

Iskaka village’s name derives from its location in a rugged area in the middle of the mountain foothill. Another story says that the village was named after the origin of the village residents, whom are descendent from Iskaka al Hijaziya village.

The village was established more than 700 years ago, which can be proven by the presence of Omari Mosque constructed by Caliph Omar bin Abdul Aziz in 1364 AD. Most of the village residents are descendent from Bani Atta tribe of Al Hijaziya homes, whom came to Palestine and resided in Jalud, Bani Ni’ma and Gaza. Those tribes are from Harb, Thaher and Lami families, in addition to some families of At Tira village (Iskaka Village Council, 2012).

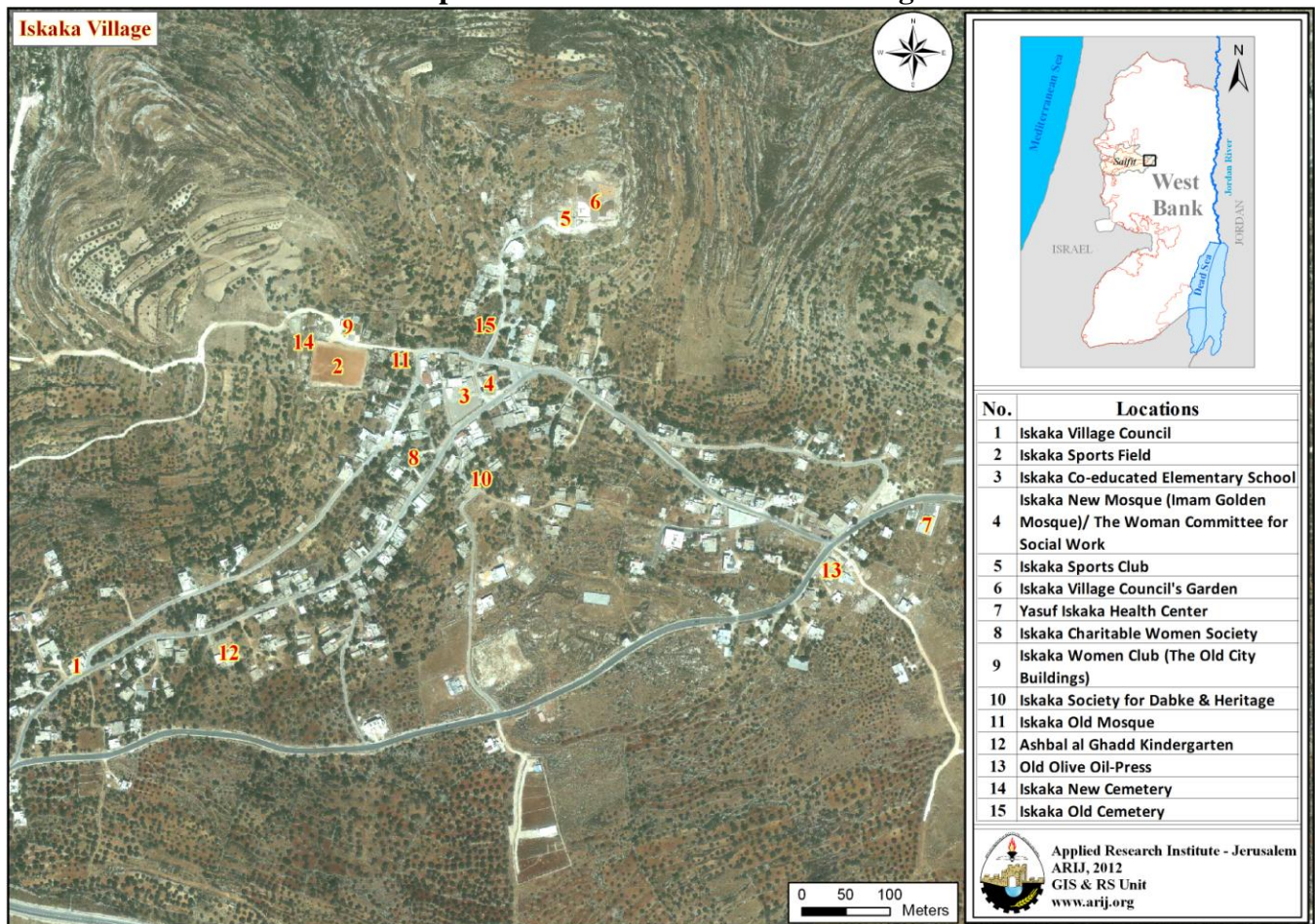
Photo of Iskaka



Religious and Archaeological Sites

There are two mosques in the village; Al Emam ath Thahabi and Iskaka Old Mosque. The village has several sites of archaeological interest including: Ad Deir Area, Khirbet Sha'b al Bir, the Omari Mosue and the Old City. One should note here that none of these sites are qualified for tourism (Iskaka Village Council, 2012) (See Map 2).

Map 2: Main locations in Iskaka Village



Population Source: ARIJ - GIS Unit, 2013.

Population

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the total population of Iskaka in 2007 was 900 of whom 486 were male and 414 female. There were additionally 155 households recorded as living in 193 housing units.

Age Groups and Gender

The ‘General Census of Population and Housing’ carried out by PCBS in 2007 showed the distribution of age groups in Iskaka is as follows: 40.2% were less than 15 years of age, 56.2% were between 15 and 64 years of age, and 3.4% were 65 years of age or older. Data also showed that the sex ratio of males to females in the village is 117.4:100, meaning that males and females constitute 54% and 46% of the population, respectively.

Families

Iskaka residents are from several families, including Lami, Harb and Thaher (Iskaka Village Council, 2012).

Education

According to the results of the PCBS Population, Housing and Establishment Census-2007, the illiteracy rate among Iskaka population is approximately 6.6%, of whom 77.2% are females. Of the literate population, 9.8% could only read and write, with no formal education, 22.1% had elementary education, 32.9% had preparatory education, 19.5% had secondary education, and 8.9% completed higher education.

Table 1 shows the educational level in the village of Iskaka by sex and educational attainment in 2007.

Table 1: Iskaka population (10 years and above) by sex and educational attainment

Sex	Illite- rate	Can read & write	Element- ary	Preparat- ory	Second- ary	Associate Diploma	Bachelor	Higher Diploma	Master	PhD	Un- known	Total
M	10	28	67	137	75	17	12	0	1	1	1	349
F	34	37	80	82	55	10	18	0	0	0	1	317
T	44	65	147	219	130	27	30	0	1	1	2	666

Source: PCBS, 2009.

There is one public school in the village ‘Iskaka Co-educated Elementary School’ run by the Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education (Directorate of Education in Salfit, 2012).

In the village there are 157 registered students, 13 teachers, and 8 classes. The average number of students per teacher in the school is nearly 12, whilst the average number of students per class is approximately 2. (Directorate of Education in Salfit, 2012).

Also, there is one kindergarten ‘Ashbal al Ghadd,’ in Iskaka village; which is run by a private organization. The kindergarten consists of two classrooms that are supervised by 3 teachers (Directorate of Education in Salfit, 2012).

Due to the lack of preparatory and secondary education levels in the village, students head to Yasuf Iskaka Boys Secondary School and Yasuf Iskaka Girls Secondary School in Yasuf village; each of which is 2 km away. Alternatively students can attend Salfit Secondary School in Salfit city which is 5

km away. On the other hand, students wishing to complete their education in an industrial school (to teach practical skills) head to Salfit Industrial School in Salfit city which is 5 km from Iskaka (Iskaka Village Council, 2012).

The educational sector in Iskaka village faces a number of obstacles, including (Iskaka Village Council, 2012):

- The difficult curriculum, mainly of the Tawjihi grade.
- The lack of school equipment.
- The lack of a teaching staff, especially for physical education and art.
- The lack of transportation for students.
- The lack of an emergency room for first aids within the school.

Health Status

Iskaka has a governmental health center and a mother and child care center. The village also has two ambulances; one is owned by the Red Crescent Society and the other is privately owned. In the absence of required health services or in emergencies, patients are transferred to Yasir Arafat Governmental Hospital in Salfit city (6 km away) or to Salfit Health Directorate in Salfit city (5 km away) (Iskaka Village Council, 2012).

The health sector in the village faces some obstacles and problems, principally (Iskaka Village Council, 2012):

- The lack of quick means to transport patients in emergency cases.
- The lack of a medical analysis laboratory in the village.
- The lack of a resident physician working permanently at the health center, and the lack of physicians of different specialties.
- The inadequate nursing staff The lack of an ambulance.

Economic Activities

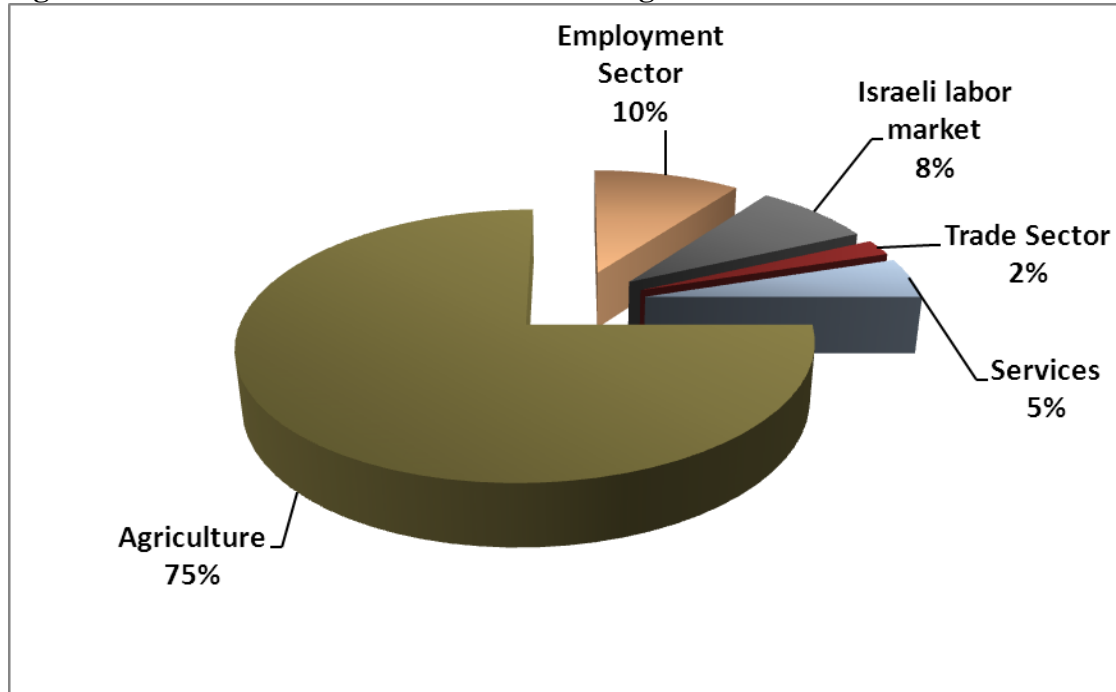
The economy in Iskaka is mainly dependent on the agriculture sector which absorbs approximately 75% of the village's workforce (Iskaka Village Council, 2012) (See Figure 1).

The results of a field survey conducted by the ARIJ team in 2012 for the distribution of labor by economic activity in Iskaka are as follows:

- Agriculture Sector (75%)
- Government or Other Employees Sector (10%)
- Israeli Labor Market (8%)
- Services Sector (5%)

- Trade Sector (2%)

Figure 1: The distribution of labor force among main economic activities in Iskaka



Source: Iskaka Village Council, 2012

Iskaka has 5 groceries, 2 service stores, 2 different professional workshops, an olive oil-press and a sanitary tools store (Iskaka Village Council, 2012).

In 2012, the unemployment rate in Iskaka reached 40%, and the groups most affected economically by the Israeli restrictions have been (Iskaka Village Council, 2012):

- Agricultural workers.
- Former workers in Israel.
- Workers in the services sector.

Labor Force

According to the PCBS Population, Housing and Establishment Census-2007, 30.9% of Iskaka’s labor force was economically active, of whom 92.7% were employed, 68.9% were not economically active, 59.9% were students, and 27.7% were housekeepers (See Table 2).

Table 2: Iskaka population (10 years of age and above) by sex and employment status

Sex	Economically active				Non-economically active						Not stated	Total
	Employed	Currently Unemployed	Unemployed (never worked)	Total	Student	House-keeping	Unable to work	Not working & not looking for work	Others	Total		
M	161	7	7	175	157	0	16	0	0	173	1	349
F	30	0	1	31	118	127	32	0	9	286	0	317
T	191	7	8	206	275	127	48	0	9	459	1	666

M: Male; F: Female; T: Total.

Source: PCBS, 2009.

Agricultural Sector

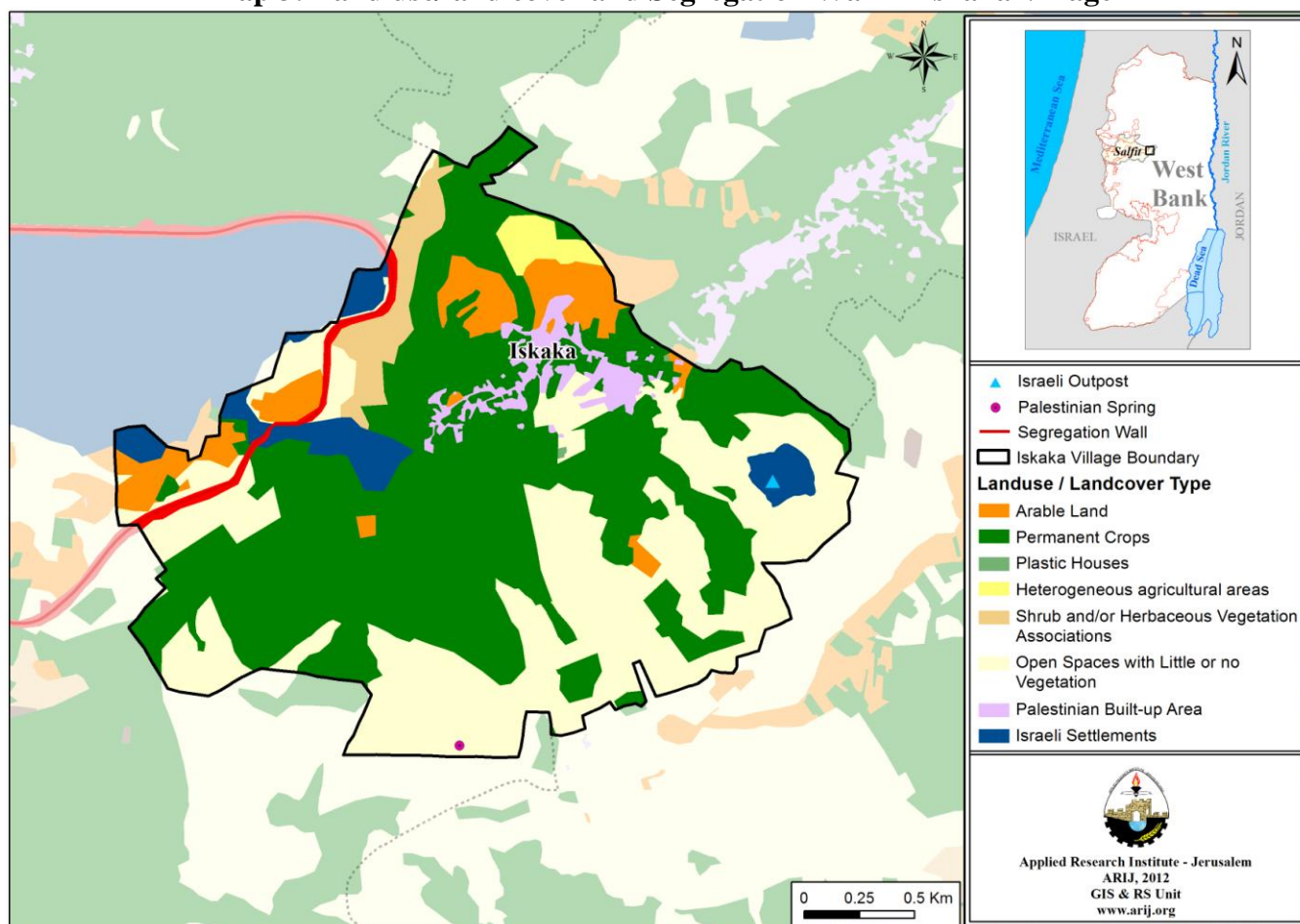
Iskaka has a total area of approximately 5,476 dunums of which 3,205 are 'arable' land and 162 dunums are registered as 'residential' (See Table 3 and Map 3).

Table 3: Land use and land cover in Iskaka village (area in dunum)

Total Area	Built up Area	Agricultural area (3,205)				Inland water	Forests	Open Spaces	Area of Industrial, Commercial & Transport Unit	Area of Settlements, Military Bases & Wall Zone
		Permanent Crops	Green-houses	Range-lands	Arable lands					
5,476	162	2,683	2	173	347	0	0	1,793	0	316

Source: ARIJ – GIS Unit, 2012.

Map 3: Land use/land cover and Segregation Wall in Iskaka Village



Source: ARIJ - GIS Unit, 2013.

Table 4 shows the different types of rain-fed and irrigated open-cultivated vegetables in Iskaka. The most commonly cultivated crops within this area are tomatoes, squash and okra.

Table 4: Total area of rain-fed and irrigated open cultivated vegetables in Iskaka (area in dunums)

Fruity vegetables		Leafy vegetables		Green legumes		Bulbs		Other vegetables		Total Area	
Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.
14	22	0	12	0	6	0	2	0	0	14	42

Rf.: Rain-fed; Irr.: Irrigated.

Source: Ministry of agriculture-Salfit, 2010

Table 5 shows the different types of fruit trees planted in the area. Iskaka is famous for olive cultivation and there are approximately 2,305 dunums of village lands planted with olive trees.

Table 5: Total area of horticulture and olive trees in Iskaka (area in dunums)

Olives		Citrus		Stone-fruits		Pome fruits		Nuts		Other fruits		Total Area	
Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.
2,305	0	0	0	132	0	10	0	0	0	47	0	2,494	0

Rf.: Rain-fed; Irr.: Irrigated.

Source: Ministry of agriculture-Salfit, 2010

In terms of field crops and forage in Iskaka, cereals (particularly wheat) are the most cultivated, covering an area of approximately 70 dunums (See Table 6).

Table 6: Total area of horticulture and olive trees in Iskaka (area in dunums)

Cereals		Bulbs		Dry legumes		Oil crops		Forage crops		Stimulating crops		Other crops		Total Area	
Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.	Rf.	Irr.
70	0	14	0	27	0	1	0	17	0	0	0	16	0	145	0

Rf.: Rain-fed; Irr.: Irrigated.

Source: Ministry of agriculture-Salfit, 2010

The difference between the two sets of results regarding the size of agricultural areas, obtained from the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and by ARIJ's GIS Unit is explained by the difference in each organization's definition of land coverage and ownership. The MoA and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2011) conducted a survey using a definition of agricultural areas based on land ownership. Therefore, the areas included in the survey were those of actual holdings of agricultural areas instead of seasonal ones. The survey did not consider fragmented and small seasonal cultivated areas in residential and agricultural areas. ARIJ's survey, however, indicated the existence of a high proportion of small and fragmented holdings (home gardens) throughout the occupied Palestinian territories. This therefore accounts for the larger area of agricultural holdings calculated by ARIJ.

The field survey conducted by ARIJ shows that just 2.5% of the residents in Iskaka rear and keep domestic animals such as sheep and goats (See Table 7).

Table 7: Livestock in Iskaka

Cows*	Sheep	Camels	Poultry	Bee Hives
1	281	0	13,000	36

*Including cows, bull calves, heifer calves and bulls

Source: Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture - Salfit, 2010

There are approximately 20 kilometers of agricultural roads in the village, divided as follows (Iskaka Village Council, 2012):

Table 8: Agricultural Roads in Iskaka Village and their Lengths

Suitability of Agricultural Roads	Length (km)
For vehicles	5.2
For tractors and agricultural machinery only	6.3
For animals only	6.5
Unsuitable	2

Source: Iskaka Village Council, 2012

The agricultural sector in the village faces a number of problems, including (Iskaka Village Council, 2012):

- The lack of water sources and harvesting cisterns for agricultural production.
- The confiscation of lands by occupation forces, The construction of the Segregation Wall and establishment of settlements which hinders taking equipment onto agricultural lands.
- The spread of wild pigs and settlers within the surrounding lands.

- The lack of economic feasibility for agricultural projects.
- Difficulty in marketing agricultural products, particularly olive oil.
- The lack of financial assistance to farmers for the reclamation and rehabilitation of lands.
- The lack of agricultural tools and equipment to assist farmers.

Institutions and Services

Iskaka village has no governmental institutions but a number of local institutions and associations that provide services to various sectors of society. These include (Iskaka Village Council, 2012):

- **Iskaka Village Council:** Founded in 1991 by the Ministry of Local Government, with the aim of taking care of the village's issues and providing various services to its population, such as infrastructure services.
 - **Iskaka Women Club:** Founded in 2009 by the Ministry of Interior, it is interested in women and children's affairs such as providing them with awareness campaigns and assisting educational courses.
 - **Iskaka Women Charitable Society:** Founded in 2004 by the Ministry of Interior, in order to implement various social, medical and educational activities. It established a kindergarten 'Palestine Flowers Kindergarten' and an elderly home, in addition to supplying medical equipment to the Village Council, implementing a child creativity program and others.
 - **Iskaka Youth Sports Club:** Founded in 2000 by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The Club is interested in the youth, developing their capacities and evolving their talents.
- Livestock Association:** Founded in 1992 and later registered by the Ministry of Interior, in order to serve farmers and providing them with assistance, such as the distribution of hives for bee producers.

Infrastructure and Natural Resources

Electricity and Telecommunication Services:

Iskaka has been connected to a public electricity network since 2005. It is served by the Israeli 'Qatariya Electricity Company,' which represents the main source of electricity in the village and all of the housing units in the village are connected to the network. The village residents face a number of problems concerning electricity, primarily the high costs of electricity, the weak power of the lower network, the old condition of electricity poles and the lack of a crane for the maintenance of the network (Iskaka Village Council, 2012).

Iskaka is also connected to a telecommunication network and approximately 90% of the housing units within the village boundaries are connected to phone lines (Iskaka Village Council, 2012).

Transportation Services:

There are 2 taxis in Iskaka. However, residents suffer from the existence of earth mounds and/or military checkpoints on roads, the poor infrastructure of roads and the lack of sufficient vehicles to serve the residents. Thus, village residents use Salfit Transportation Company Buses and taxi offices in Salfit city for transportations (Iskaka Village Council, 2012). It is noted that there are 1.8 km of main roads and 5 km of secondary roads in Iskaka (Iskaka Village Council, 2012) (See Table 9).

Table 9: Roads in Iskaka village

Status of Internal Roads	Road Length (km)	
	Main	Sub
1. Paved & in good condition	1.8	2.5
2. Paved but in poor condition	-	-
3. Unpaved	-	2.5

Source: Iskaka Village Council, 2012

Water Resources:

Iskaka is provided with water by the West Bank Water Department through the public water network established in 2004. Approximately 98% of the housing units are connected to the water network (Iskaka Village Council, 2012).

The quantity of water supplied to Iskaka village in 2010 was approximately 21,000 cubic meters/year which makes the estimated rate of water supply per capita approximately 58 liters/day (Iskaka Village Council, 2012). However, no Iskaka citizen consumes this amount of water due to water losses, which are estimated at 22% (PWA, 2010). These losses happen at the main source, major transport lines, in the distribution network, and at the household level. Therefore, taking into account water losses, the rate of water consumption per capita in Iskaka is actually 45 liters per day (Iskaka Village Council, 2012). The average water consumption of Iskaka residents is low compared with the minimum quantity of 100 liters per capita per day proposed by the World Health Organization. Each cubic meter of water from the public network costs 4 NIS (Iskaka Village Council, 2012).

The village has two springs with an annual pumping rate of 8 cubic meters/ day, however, they are not being used by the village residents. Also, there is a public water reservoir with a capacity of 200 cubic meters in addition to 158 rainwater harvesting cisterns (Iskaka Village Council, 2012).

Sanitation:

Iskaka lacks a public sewerage network and most of the population use cesspits and septic tanks, as a main means for wastewater disposal (Iskaka Village Council, 2012).

Based on the estimated daily per capita water consumption, the approximated quantity of wastewater generated per day, is 36 cubic meters, or 13,104 cubic meters annually. At the individual level, it is estimated that the per capita wastewater generation is approximately 36 liters per day. The wastewater collected by cesspits and septic tanks is discharged by wastewater tankers directly to open areas or nearby valleys with little regard for the environment. Here it is noted that there is no wastewater

treatment either at the source or at the disposal sites and this poses a serious threat to the environment and the public health (ARIJ - WERU, 2012).

Solid Waste Management:

The Joint Services Council of South Salfit is responsible for the collection and disposal of solid waste generated by citizens and establishments in the village. As the process of solid waste management is costly, a monthly fee amounting to 12 NIS/ month is charged to the population served by domestic solid waste collection and transportation services. However, the collected fees are not considered sufficient for a good management of solid waste, with the situation exacerbated by the fact that only 80% of these fees are collected from citizens (Iskaka Village Council, 2012)

Most of the population in Iskaka benefit from solid waste services, whereby waste is collected from households, institutions, shops, and public squares in plastic bags, and placed in 34 containers (of 0.5 m³ capacity) located around the Village Council. The Joint Council collects the solid waste three times a week and transports it using a waste vehicle to the village's dumping site, 5.5 km from the village, where it is subsequently burnt. This method of disposal represents a serious problem for both resident's health and the surrounding environment. (Iskaka Village Council, 2012)

The daily per capita rate of solid waste production in Iskaka is 0.7kg. Thus the estimated quantity of solid waste produced per day from the Iskaka residents is nearly 0.7 tons, or 253 tons per year (ARIJ-WERU, 2012).

Environmental Conditions

Like other towns and villages in the Governorate, Iskaka experiences several environmental problems which must be addressed and solved. These problems can be identified as follows:

Water Crisis

- Water is cut off by the West Bank Water Department for long periods of time during summer in numerous neighborhoods of the village for several reasons:
 1. Israeli control over Palestinian water resources causes problems in the organization of water pumping and its distribution among populations. The West Bank Water Department distributes water to various areas on an interval basis because the amount of water available is not sufficient to simultaneously supply everyone's needs. In addition, the West Bank Water Department purchase water from Israeli Companies in order to meet citizens' water needs.
 2. High rate of water losses, due to the water network's aged condition which is in need of rehabilitation and renovation.

Wastewater Management

- The absence of a public sewage network in the village means that Iskaka residents are forced to use unhygienic cesspits for the disposal of wastewater, and/or to discharge wastewater in the streets. This is particularly common in winter, as citizens cannot afford the high cost of sewage tankers during this period. These methods facilitate environmental damage, health problems, and the spread of epidemics and diseases in the village. This wastewater also contaminates the groundwater because most cesspits are built without lining, to avoid the need to use sewage tankers and allow wastewater to enter into the ground. Moreover, the untreated wastewater collected from cesspits by sewage tankers is disposed of in open areas without concern for the damage it causes to the environment and to residents' health.

Solid Waste Management:

- Zahrat al Finjan landfill in Jenin Governorate (approximately 32 km in distance from the center of Salfit Governorate), is considered the central sanitary landfill which is supposed to serve Salfit Governorate. However, the Municipalities and Village Councils in Salfit Governorate do not transfer the solid waste to Zahrat al Finjan landfill, but rather get rid of waste in random dumps scattered throughout the Governorate. This is due to the high costs of transporting and disposing waste in the landfill. As a result, wastes are being disposed randomly in these landfills causing serious health risks, and leading to the proliferation of harmful flies, insects, and mice, as well as the bad odors, toxic gases and black smoke which emits when burned. All of these have harmful effects on human health as well as the environment.
- The lack of a central sanitary landfill to serve Iskaka and other neighboring communities in the Governorate is due mainly to the obstacles created by the Israeli authorities for local and national institutions in granting licenses to establish such a landfill, because the appropriate land is within Area C and under Israeli control. Additionally, the implementation of such projects depends on funding from donor countries. The lack of a sanitary landfill is a source of pollution to the groundwater and soil through the leachate produced from the solid waste, which produces bad odors and a distortion of the landscape.

Impact of the Israeli Occupation

Geopolitical status in Iskaka

According to the Oslo II Interim Agreement signed between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel on 28th September 1995, Iskaka was divided into areas “B” and “C”. Approximately 1,366 dunums (25% of the village’s total area) were assigned as area B, where the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has a complete control over civil matters but Israel continues to have overriding responsibility for security. Area B constitutes most of the inhabited Palestinian areas, including municipalities, villages and some refugee camps. It is worth mentioning that most of the village’s population resides in area B. The rest of the village’s area, constituting 4,110 dunums (75% of the total

area), is classified as area C, where Israel retains full control over security and administration related to the territory (table 10). In area C Palestinian building and land management is prohibited unless through consent or authorization by the Israeli Civil Administration. Most of the lands lying within area C are agricultural areas and open spaces.

Table 10: The Geopolitical Divisions of Iskaka – Salfit Governorate

Area	Area in dunums	Percent of Total village area
Area A	0	0
Area B	1,366	25
Area C	4,110	75
Nature Reserve	0	0
Total	5,476	100

Source: ARIJ-GIS, 2013

The Israeli Occupation Practices in Iskaka Village

Iskaka village has been subjected to numerous Israeli confiscations for the benefit of the various Israeli objectives, represented in the construction of Israeli settlements, checkpoints, outposts and bypass roads on village territories. This is in addition to the Segregation Plan represented by the Segregation Wall which dismembers and confiscates Palestinian lands whilst also representing a hindrance of movement for village residents. That which follows is a breakdown of the Israeli confiscations to have negatively affected Iskaka village territories:

During their occupation of the Palestinian territories, Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) confiscated 181 dunums (5%) in Iskaka to establish “Ariel” settlement west of the village and north of Salfit city, which is considered the second largest Israeli settlements in the West Bank in terms of area, and which is separated from Iskaka village by the Segregation Wall. The settlement was established in 1978 on a total area of 5,184 dunums of lands of Iskaka, as well as Salfit city, Kifl Haris and Marda villages. Today, this settlement is inhabited by 17,559 Israeli settlers (ARIJ-GIS, 2012).

Following the outbreak of the Second Palestinian Intifada in September 2000, the Israeli occupation authorities established an Israeli military checkpoint on the northern entrance of Salfit city, which is represented as an iron gate established near the western entrance of Ariel settlement. Closing the northern entrance of Salfit city has had a negative impact on Palestinians lives during the last decade, as it has restricted their freedom of movement and connection with villages north of Salfit and the rest of the West Bank. This has caused numerous material losses for Palestinians and increased economic burden, as they are forced to use longer distances in order to reach villages in the north. The closure of this checkpoint, was carried out under the pretext of protecting settlers in Ariel settlement as well as other nearby settlements. This checkpoint represents a part of the Segregation Plan adopted by the occupation forces through the establishment of settlements, annexing them through the Segregation Wall into the Western Segregation Area and hindering Palestinians’ movement, through the establishment of military checkpoints on roads. The checkpoint north of Salfit was closed to Palestinians for more than 10 years and was recently partially opened (during 2011) for public vehicles only (taxis and buses), while private cars are still forbidden to cross it.

Due to the closure of this main entrance to Salfit city and its neighboring villages, citizens started using the eastern entrance of the city which passes through Yasuf and Iskaka villages, then to Salfit city. However, citizens are forced to cross through another military checkpoint that represents a commonly experienced suffering of Palestinians. The checkpoint is called “Za’tara” (Kfar Taffuh) military checkpoint which separates the center from north of the West Bank. Furthermore, the occupation authorities established another military checkpoint on Iskaka village lands to the west, represented as an road gate on an unpaved sub road in order to prevent Palestinians from using the Israeli road leading to Ariel settlement.

In addition, lands of Iskaka village have been forcefully seized by Israeli settlers to establish “Nofei Nehama” outpost south-east of the village on the road leading to “Rechelim” Israeli settlement which is established to the east on lands of As Sawiya village (of Nablus Governorate southern villages). This has been carried out in an attempt to connect the aforementioned settlement in the east with Ariel settlement to the west, as this outpost is located in the center between these two settlements. Moreover, during the past two decades Israel has constructed 232 outposts within the West Bank which are considered the nucleus for the development of new settlements. Outposts are composed of mobile caravans on lands stolen by the settlers and represent a contiguity of a mother settlement that is near. It is worth mentioning that the epidemic of Israeli outposts started with a “Sharonian” call for Jewish settlers to take control over Palestinian hilltops to prevent transferring them to Palestinians in negotiations¹. Although successive Israeli governments haven’t legalized this phenomenon, they have managed to find a security and logistic cover to justify the act and its continuity. After 2001 the then Prime Minister Ariel Sharon unleashed the expansion of outposts which has led to a significant increase in the number of outposts within Palestinian areas. In addition, Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) helped Israeli settlers to move and settle in those outposts, in addition to protecting and providing them with the necessary infrastructure to guarantee their continued existence.

Moreover, the Israeli Government has confiscated thousands of dunums of agricultural and non-agricultural lands to open several bypass roads stretching thousands of kilometers from the north to south of the West Bank. This has been carried out in order to link Israeli settlements, dismember Palestinian lands and enhance Israeli security control over them. Israel has also confiscated more lands from the south of Iskaka, for the construction of an Israeli settlement road that connects “Ariel” with “Rechelim” settlement to the east. This creates a two part separation of Iskaka village lands to the south and north, with the road extending over 3 km with a 20 meter width. The real threat of these bypass roads however lies in the buffer zone formed by the IOF, extending approximately 75 m on each side. These buffer zones dramatically increase the total area of land affected by the construction of the bypass roads.

The Israeli Segregation Wall Plan in Iskaka Village

The Israeli Segregation Wall plan has had a negative and destructive impact on Iskaka residents’. The latest route of the Israeli Segregation Wall Plan, published on the Israeli Ministry of Defense's website (April 30 2007), shows that wall constructed on Iskaka village’s land to the west, will confiscate 356

¹ Ariel Sharon, Israeli Foreign Minister, addressing a meeting of the Tsomet Party, Agence France Presse, Nov. 15, 1998. http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Talk:Ariel_Sharon

dunums, equivalent to 6.5% of the village's total area and isolate more lands for Israeli settlement activities. The majority of lands planned to be isolated by the Wall includes agricultural areas, open spaces and Israeli settlements (See Table 11).

Table 11: Land Classification of the Isolated lands in Iskaka Village – Salfit Governorate

No.	Land Classification	Area (in dunums)
1	Agricultural Areas	147
2	Open Spaces	94
3	Israeli Settlements	88
	Wall Zone	27
Total		356
Source: The Geo-informatics Department – ARIJ 2013		

Upon the completion of the Segregation Wall plan, , the Wall will isolate mainly fertile agricultural lands filled with trees to the west of Iskaka. This will threaten the future agricultural and economic situation of the local Palestinian population. The land will be utilized for the Ariel Finger" scheme² in the region, and will include many Israeli settlements within the Wall area known as the "Ariel Finger" scheme; of which the largest and most important is Ariel settlement. This will lead to the isolation of Iskaka village from Salfit western villages, as this plan aims to dismember Palestinian land, restricting the movement of the Palestinian population and confiscating and isolating more agricultural lands for Israeli settlement purposes.

Furthermore, Palestinian farmers in Iskaka village are being deprived by Israeli occupation authorities from accessing their land isolated behind the wall, which are usually confiscated for settlement purposes. However, lands that were not confiscated for purpose of settlement construction cannot be accessed without special permits issued by the Israeli civil administration office (ICA) and through special gates established on the wall route in the region.

One should also note that Salfit Governorate villages are known for their fertile soil, their beautiful nature and the abundance of water and large trees, especially olive trees. This makes the region an important target for Israeli settlement activities, in addition to being the second Governorate after Jerusalem in terms of land confiscations, wall and settlement construction.

² The 'Ariel finger' penetrates deep inside the northern part of the West Bank, on lands of Salfit Governorate, about 22 km east of the 1949 Armistice Line (Green Line), (ARIJ GIS, 2012). The Israeli updated Wall map of April, 2007 which was published on the [Israeli Ministry of Defense website](#) showed that the Wall around Ariel bloc will annex 21 Israeli settlements to Israel proper, at the same time, it will isolate more than 10 Palestinian communities from the center of life in Salfit city and the nearby Palestinian villages.

Military Orders Issued in Iskaka Village

The Israeli occupation Army has issued many military orders to confiscate lands in Iskaka village:

- Israeli Military Order No. 45/04/T: Issued on the 9th May 2004, to confiscate a total area of 267.4 dunums of land in Iskaka village and Salfit city in order to construct the Israeli Segregation Wall.
- Israeli Military Order No. 138/05/T: Issued on the 8th December 2005, confiscating a total area of 49 dunums of Iskaka village lands in order to construct the Israeli Segregation Wall.
- Israeli Military Order No. 33/05/T (extension of validity No. 3): Issued on the 8th December 2011, to confiscate a total area of 34 dunums of land in Iskaka and Marda villages in order to construct the Israeli Segregation Wall.
- Israeli Military Order No. 45/04/T (extension of validity No. 2): Issued on the 8th December 2011, to confiscate a total area of 81 dunums of land in Iskaka village and Salfit city in order to construct the Israeli Segregation Wall.

Development Plans and Projects

Implemented Projects

Iskaka Village Council has implemented several development projects in Iskaka during the past five years (See Table 12).

Table 12: Implemented Development Plans and Projects in Iskaka during the Last Five Years

Name of the Project	Type	Year	Donor
Renovating the Old City	Infrastructure	2007	SIDA
Constructing secondary roads	Infrastructure	2008	Ministry of Finance
Establishing Iskaka-Yasuf Health Clinic	Public Services	2009	CHF
Establishing a public garden	Public Services	2010	UNDP
Establishing a sport field	Public Services	2010	Iskaka Village Council & Medical Relief
The main road project (Iskaka –Salfit road link)	Infrastructure	2010	Ministry of Public Labor
Rehabilitating the water springs	Water	2011	World Vision
The electricity project A.B.C (lower pressure)	Infrastructure	2011	Iskaka Village Council & Energy Authority

Source: Iskaka Village Council, 2012

Proposed Projects

Iskaka Village Council, in cooperation with the village's civil society organizations and village residents, hopes to implement several projects in the coming years. The project ideas were developed during the PRA workshop conducted by ARIJ staff in the village. The projects are as follows, in order of priority from the viewpoints of workshop participants:

1. Establishing a sewerage network (6 km in length).
2. Providing a multi-purpose bus to transfer students to kindergarten and schools, and patients to the health center.
3. Rehabilitating Iskaka school playground, providing it with appropriate school seats, establishing umbrellas in the backyard and equipping the science laboratory.
4. Rehabilitating and maintaining Ashbal al Ghadd kindergarten of the village council, adding sand to the outside yard, renewing the indoor and outdoor children games, and providing it with new furniture.
5. Constructing and rehabilitating agricultural roads (7 km).
6. Rehabilitating Iskaka spring and establishing a park on it, in addition to paving the road leading to it (2 km).
7. Providing the water tank with a pump and expanding the internal water network (2 km).
8. Establishing household wastewater treatment units.
9. Marketing olive oil at a good price that fits with its production costs.
10. Introducing a modern olive oil-press.
11. Financing the already active institutions in the village for different development cultural and social projects.

Locality Development Priorities and Needs

Iskaka suffers from a significant shortage of infrastructure and services. Table 13 shows the development priorities and needs in the village, according to the Village Council's view point.

Table 13: Development Priorities and Needs in Iskaka

No.	Sector	Strongly Needed	Needed	Not a Priority	Notes
Infrastructural Needs					
1	Opening and paving roads	*			12.9 km [^]
2	Rehabilitation of old water networks			*	
3	Extending the water network to cover new built up areas	*			3 km
4	Constructing new water networks			*	
5	Rehabilitation/ construction of new wells and/ or springs	*			1 spring
6	Construction of water reservoirs	*			400 m ³
7	Construction of a sewage disposal network	*			5.7 km
8	Construction of a new electricity network	*			2.5 km
9	Providing containers for solid waste collection	*			20 containers
10	Providing vehicles for collecting solid waste			*	
11	Providing a sanitary landfill	*			
Health Needs					
1	Building new clinics or health care centres			*	
2	Rehabilitation of old clinics or health care centres			*	
3	Purchasing medical equipment and tools	*			
Educational Needs					
1	Building new schools	*			one elementary and secondary school
2	Rehabilitating old schools			*	
3	Purchasing new equipment for schools	*			all schools
Agriculture Needs					
1	Rehabilitating agricultural lands	*			5000 dunums
2	Building rainwater harvesting cisterns	*			50 cisterns
3	Constructing livestock barracks	*			20 barracks
4	Provision of veterinary services	*			
5	Provision of seeds and hay for animals	*			30 tons per year
6	Construction of new greenhouses	*			10 greenhouses
7	Rehabilitation of greenhouses	*			5 greenhouses
8	Provision of field crops seeds	*			
9	Provision of plants and agricultural supplies	*			

[^] 2.7 km main roads, 3.2 km secondary roads and 7 km are agricultural roads

Source: Iskaka Village Council, 2012

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