

# Bedouins Without Borders

Guardians of the Desert



By Wisam Salah

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edouins without Borders (BWB) is exactly what the name implies: An organization that has Bedouins at its heart and a soul that connects to everyone, everywhere. For more than a decade, Bedouin activists and the founders of this organization have worked and served Palestinian Bedouins in their communities with whatever means were available. Back in 2015, few understood the importance of starting an organization that truly understands and advocates the whispering Bedouin call for attention and support.

Palestinian people have a vast and diverse culture. Palestinian Bedouins with their rich history, unique traditions, important production, lifestyle, and huge tribal lands and frontiers play a principal role in the geopolitical struggle against the occupation. Take demolitions, confiscations, military zones, forced relocation, confinement, deprivation of basic human rights, and cultural distortion and top that with devastating marginalization, and you have the experience of the average Palestinian Bedouin.

Though the Bedouin struggle started much earlier, 1948 was the year when thousands of Bedouins were removed from the map. Ninety percent of the Bedouins who had lived in Al-Naqab fled from their ancestral lands and grazing fields to the West Bank, Gaza, and the surrounding countries. In 1967, almost the same ratio of West Bank Bedouins who had lived in the upper and lower Jordan Valley and Jerusalem Desert fled, mainly to Jordan, some of them displaced for the second time (1948 refugees). UNRWA does not recognize many of these as refugees due to their



**BEDOUNS  
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unorthodox relocation, as they moved away from designated refugee camps into areas deep in the desert.

Whether they live in a recognized ghetto-like village with no access to land and are prohibited from keeping animals or whether they dwell in an unrecognized village that continuously



During the inauguration of the Desert Tourism project between Bedouins Without Borders and the UNDP/PAPP in December 2019. Photo by Bedouins Without Borders media team.



Guardians of the Desert in a field tour of Petra in Jordan in July 2019.  
Photo by Bedouins Without Borders media team.

endures demolition and lacks all basic services, they will suffer. All Bedouins – in historical Palestine that was occupied in 1948, the West Bank, or Gaza – face the same violations, albeit expressed in different terminology.

BWB-Palestine pledges to be a true and authentic Bedouin voice with the aim to serve Palestinian Bedouins, wherever they are, through all means possible, keeping alive the warm Bedouin welcome, generous hospitality, fascinating history, and much-needed strength of will.

Due to a lack of specialized organizations working with and for Bedouins in Palestine, BWB is an initiative that works from within, was founded by Bedouins, and is located on Bedouin land. BWB will always be sensitive and perceptive to Bedouin culture and heritage, relying on its three major departments that engage in research and documentation, foster development, and take part in advocacy. Initiatives and interventions are based on the findings of the First Bedouin Forum\* and local communities' direct needs assessment and carried out with

a deep understanding of Bedouin culture.

A young organization that faces huge tasks, BWB is trying to keep Bedouin chins up and hold on to their smiles. Proud Palestinian Bedouins, we are and will always remain true to our culture and heritage, singing the shepherds' song in a borderless desert.

\*The first Bedouin Forum took place at Maqam Nabi Musa, near Jericho, in 2019, with the participation of 18 major Bedouin tribes from across historical Palestine.

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