



**Press Release by Palestinian Central
Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) and the
Environment Quality Authority on
International Day for Biological
Diversity: "Island Biodiversity"**

On this day, every year the United Nations celebrates International Day for Biological Diversity, adopted at the Convention on Biological Diversity during the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The Convention on Biological Diversity aims to ensure the conservation, sustainable use of biological diversity, fair and equitable distribution of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.

This year, the theme of International Day for Biological Diversity is "Island Biodiversity" to raise awareness of the importance of islands and sustaining their ecosystems.

Concept of Biodiversity

Diversity is a concept that refers to the range of variation or differences among various entities. It is used to describe the number and variety of living organisms.

Biodiversity is important in many fields of life. Protection of biodiversity contributes to the stability of the ecosystem; it is also a natural inherited asset that assists sustainable development. Biodiversity is scientifically important in developing and improving global food resources.

Global Facts about Biodiversity

Experts estimate the number of species available on the planet at around 8.7 million species, of which 6.5 million species live on land and 2.2 million live in the depths of seas and oceans.

A study published by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) found that there are 7.8 million

species of animals, 298 thousand species of plants, 611 thousand species of fungi, 36,400 of protozoa and 27,500 species of chromists.

Reasons for Biodiversity in Palestine

Despite the small area of the state of Palestine, it is one of the most beautiful parts of the world. Its natural world is characterized by the diversity of vegetation caused by variations in geography, climate and rainfall distribution, plus the diversity of soil and different geology. In addition, there are obvious contrasts in natural topography that range from areas of desert, mountainous areas reaching a height of more than 1000 meters above sea level, to the plains and coastal regions at sea level and areas 394 meters below sea level. As a result, Palestine is a natural repository full of immense wealth, including many wild plants and all kinds of organisms.

Plants and Wild Flowers in Palestine

EQA data reveal that about 2,750 species of plants have been identified in Palestine within 138 families, of which 261 are endemic to Palestine and 53 are special to Palestine.

In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, there are about 2,076 plant species, of which 90 species are threatened with extinction and 636 species are recorded as very rare species.

In the West Bank, there are estimated to be 391 rare plant species (20% of the total plant species in Palestine) and 68 are classified as very rare species (3.5% of the total plant species in Palestine).

In Gaza Strip, there are 155 rare plant species (12% of the total plant species), and 22 are classified as very rare species (1.8% of the total plant species).



Natural Reserves in Palestine

United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) studies recorded that there are around 10,000 natural reserves in the world covering about 6% of the planet.

In Palestine in 2011, nature reserves covered about 514.7 km² and the total area of forest was about 101.4 km².

Israeli Violations are the main causes of Biodiversity deterioration

Based on 2012 data from ARIJ Research Institute, the Expansion and Annexation Wall has a total length of about 780 kilometers, of which 61% has been completed. The route of the Wall has isolated 680 km² of Palestinian land between the Wall and the Green Line, comprising approximately 12.0% of the West Bank. This land comprises about 454 km² of agricultural, pasture land and open areas, 117 km² that were confiscated for Israeli settlements and military bases, 89 km² of forest and 20 km² Palestinian built-up land.

During 2013, more than eight thousand dunums of land were confiscated from Palestinians and more than 15 thousand horticultural trees were destroyed, causing considerable damage to the Palestinian environment and biodiversity.

The Israeli settlements and military bases also contribute in the biodiversity deterioration since there were 482 Israeli settlements and military bases in the West Bank at the end of 2013 contained around 563,546 settlers at the end of 2012.

Climate change is the most important natural factor that contributes to biodiversity degradation in Palestine. More animal and plant species have become under serious threat of becoming rare due to low rainfall, high temperatures and the changing characteristics of the four seasons, in which drought is creeping into winter and spring.

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