



HANWELL FRIENDS of SABASTIYA (HAFSA)



What is HAFSA?

HAFSA is a twinning organisation set up in 2010 to forge grassroots links between Hanwell in London and Sabastiya in the West Bank, Palestine. Twinning brings friendship and understanding and encourages visits both ways.

Why Twin with Sabastiya?

People in Sabastiya, like all Palestinians in the West Bank, have been living under military occupation since 1967. They feel isolated and forgotten by the world. A friendship/twinning link offers the people of Hanwell a better understanding of the present situation as well as an appreciation of the history and rich culture of Palestine. We seek to give the people of Sabastiya a window to the outside world.

Where is Sabastiya?

Sabastiya is located in the Palestinian West Bank. It is a large village of some 3000 people located on a hill eight miles northwest of the city of Nablus (population 100,000+). It is surrounded by beautiful fertile valleys where olives, figs, almonds, lemons, pomegranates, grapes and other fruit and vegetables are grown.

Sabastiya's History

Because of its long history Sabastiya can be proud of a number of important archaeological monuments.

Today you can see the ruins of ancient Sabastiya and feel the power of seven successive cultures dating back 10,000 years: Canaanite, Israelite, Hellenistic, Herodian, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman.

According to religious tradition, the head of John the Baptist was buried there.



Sabastiya today

Sabastiya is a fascinating village with a Muslim majority and a very small Christian population. It relies on Nablus for many of its services, shopping and employment. The people go to Nablus for hospital treatment and to study at university. However, Israeli military check points can make travelling difficult.

Living under illegal military occupation makes life hard and challenging, yet, there is a great spirit. Education is seen as very important – there are 3 schools and 2 kindergartens. The many community initiatives include: several youth groups and football teams and a thriving Women's Association which organises all kinds of training courses and summer play schemes.



Sabastiya was once a popular **tourist destination**; now the area is being economically strangled as a result of the Israeli military occupation. Some of its land has been stolen by the neighbouring illegal Israeli settlement of Shaveh Shomron. The area of the ruins is under threat of confiscation by the Israelis.

Tourism is gradually returning – despite everything! Sabastiya has 3 guest houses now. HAFSA is happy to have been part of helping to develop one of them (<https://kayedpalace.wordpress.com>).

Sabastiya is surrounded by many olive groves, and the olives are used to produce Fair Trade olive oil. Local women make olive oil soap and also jam from the many fruit trees growing there.

What are our aims?

- To encourage visits by individuals and groups to broaden mutual understanding of a cultural, recreational and educational nature.
- To encourage twinning projects between Hanwell and Sabastiya in education and training, as well as local crafts and produce.
- We are not a political organisation, but we will draw attention to the hardships suffered by the people of Sabastiya and to abuses of human rights.

Our achievements so far

Hafsa has provided much appreciated moral and practical support to help the inhabitants keep their land, which is constantly threatened by confiscation by the Israeli Government – this is especially true of the famous Ruins areas. We have run workshops in Sabastiya: football, English for Tourism and keep fit.

Fundraising projects have included: furniture and equipment for the Al Kayed Palace guest house; hens and cockerels for 66 families; equipment for environmental volunteers in the village (see picture); 430 sapling olive trees with water tanks for their irrigation; 30 tarpaulins and 10 ladders for community use during olive harvests; equipment for the women's soap-making project; a food handling training course for women; 150 fruit trees for 40 families.

Future projects:

- Zataar plants (ie thyme) used extensively in cooking
- Grey water, capture and recycle
- A Disability Centre, which is a long term project for children and young people with learning and other disabilities.



SO.....COME AND JOIN US!

By joining you get information about our many activities (stalls, film nights, social evenings, trips to Sabastiya,) and other events and receive our regular bulletin. We welcome any new ideas you may have to further our aims - and encourage you to get involved! You don't have to be a resident of Hanwell to join us, any support is welcome.



E-mail:

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Phone: 07761 104609

Facebook Group: Hanwell Friends of Sabastiya- HAFSA

Website: <http://hafsa.org.uk/>

We sell Zaytoun Fair Trade products (olive oil, soap, herbs, cooking ingredients) - contact us via our email address if you want to purchase any items

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I want to join HAFSA

Name.....

Address.....

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Email.....

Telephone.....

MEMBERSHIP £5 per year, donations welcome

**Send cheques payable to HAFSA to: HAFSA Treasurer,
109 Southdown Ave, Hanwell, London W7 2AE or by BACS to:
Co-operative Bank, Acc no: 65449004, Sort Code: 089299**

