Habitat is not your usual word. A look at the English dictionary definition reveals a number of meanings:

1. The natural environment of an organism; a place that is natural for its life and growth. For example, a desert habitat and all the wildlife thriving there.

2. A place where an organism is usually found. For example, Nablus is a major habitat for *knafeh* chefs and sweet shops in Palestine.

3. A special environment in which organisms reside over an extended period. For example, the village habitat in Palestine is special for both humans and animals.

If we take a look at the beautiful old houses in Palestinian villages, towns, and cities, we find that they easily integrate with their surrounding habitats. They have been built by the descendants of people who have lived and been nurtured in this habitat for thousands of years. A totally different perspective from the one you get when you are struck by the illegal Israeli settlements that intrude on the natural habitat of Palestine and impose ugly structures that have little to do with their surrounding environment.

In the pages of this issue you will discover the unique floral aspects of Palestine, its rich wildlife, and just how little you know about it all. We hope that you will gain a greater appreciation of the village habitat, the way Jerusalem produced its own kind of habitat, and how all of it is endangered mainly because of the occupation but also because of other social and economic factors.

Habitat is not just a word in Palestine; it is a way to affirm and preserve our identity and way of life!

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