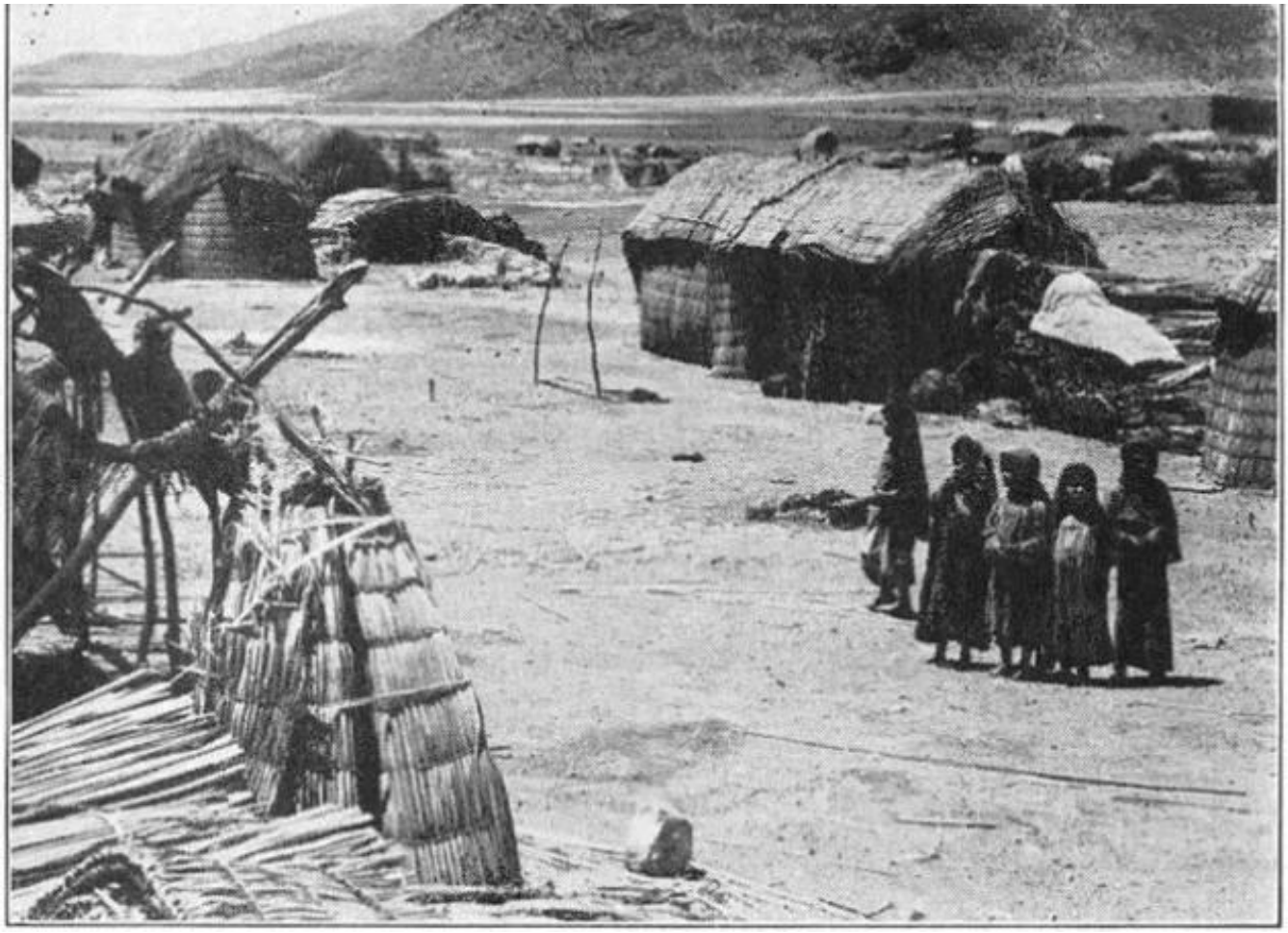
Al-Salihiyya



al-Salihiyya: A Depopulated Palestinian Village in the Safad District

al-Salihiyya was a Palestinian village in the Safad District, situated on flat terrain in the al-Hula Plain approximately 25 kilometres northeast of Safad, at an average elevation of about 75 metres above sea level. Its population reached 1,520 in the 1944/1945 statistics. The village fell on 25 May 1948 during the final day of Operation Yiftach. Its inhabitants were displaced and the village was completely destroyed during the Nakba and the occupation of Palestine in 1948.

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Safad
Distance from district center	25 km northeast of Safad
Average Elevation	75 m above sea level
Population in 1931	1,281
Number of Houses in 1931	257
Population in 1944/1945	1,520
Estimated Population in 1948	About 1,763 – a later demographic estimate, not an official census
Total Land Area in 1945	5,607 dunams
Attack and Depopulation	The village fell to Israeli occupation forces on 25 May 1948 in the course of Operation Yiftach, on the day the operation ended. Khalidi (PalQuest) gives no details of the attack on the village or of how its inhabitants were displaced.
Final Israeli Control	25 May 1948, the final day of Operation Yiftach
Military Operation	Operation Yiftach
Military Unit	The sources do not identify the unit that entered the village; Operation Yiftach was carried out by the Palmach (Yiftach Brigade), with its First Battalion as the spearhead, according to PalQuest
Cause of Depopulation	The fall of the village to Israeli occupation forces in the course of Operation Yiftach; Khalidi (PalQuest) does not state whether the inhabitants fled under direct attack or because of the psychological warfare that accompanied the operation in eastern Galilee
Settlements Documented on Village Lands	No Israeli settlements on village lands, according to Khalidi (PalQuest); Kefar Blum, founded in 1943, lies just northwest of the site on lands that traditionally belonged to the village of Qaytiyya

Location

al-Salihiyya stood on flat terrain in the al-Hula Plain, approximately 25 kilometres northeast of Safad and at an average elevation of about 75 metres above sea level.

It was located near the intersection of the Jordan River and Wadi Tur'an, which flowed toward Lake al-Hula approximately 4 kilometres south of the village.

A network of secondary roads connected al-Salihiyya with neighbouring Palestinian villages, and the village houses clustered around these routes.

Neighbouring Villages and Areas

Historical maps and local geographical documentation place a number of Palestinian villages around al-Salihiyya.

- Qaytiyya to the north.
- al-Dawwara to the northeast.
- al-Muftakhira to the east.
- Khiyam al-Walid approximately to the southeast.
- Lake al-Hula and the al-Hula Plain to the south.
- al-Zawiya to the southwest.
- al-Na'ima to the west.

These directions describe the relative locations of neighbouring communities and should not be treated as precise cadastral boundaries without reference to official land-demarcation maps.

al-Salihiyya in the Late Ottoman Period

Travellers and surveyors who visited al-Salihiyya in the late nineteenth century described it as an adobe-built village situated on cultivable land in a plain near

marshes and waterways.

The Survey of Western Palestine estimated approximately 90 inhabitants in 1881.

A small marketplace stood at the centre of the village, while houses clustered around the local road network.

Architecture and Public Facilities

The houses of al-Salihiyya were originally constructed primarily of adobe, reflecting the building traditions of the al-Hula Plain.

The village contained a small marketplace, a mosque, and an elementary school for boys.

The 1944/1945 statistics recorded a built-up area of 119 dunams within the statistical unit: 94 Arab-owned dunams and 25 Jewish-owned dunams.

Population

The 1931 census recorded 1,281 inhabitants in al-Salihiyya living in 257 houses.

The detailed census recorded 1,279 Muslims and two Christians.

According to the 1944/1945 statistics, the village population reached 1,520.

The figure of approximately 1,763 inhabitants in 1948 is a later demographic estimate rather than an official British Mandate census figure.

Palestine Remembered estimates the number of refugees and their descendants at approximately 10,828 in 1998.

Population of al-Salihiyya

Year	Population	Note
Late nineteenth century	About 90	Survey of Western Palestine estimate
1931	1,281	1,279 Muslims and two Christians; 257 houses
1944/1945	1,520	Government of Palestine statistics
1948	About 1,763	Later estimate
1998	10,828	Estimate of refugees and their descendants

Number of Houses

The 1931 census recorded 257 houses in al-Salihiyya.

The figure of approximately 353 houses in 1948 is a later estimate rather than an official census count.

Education

al-Salihiyya had an elementary school for boys.

Local Palestinian documentation states that the Mandate authorities opened the school during the 1942/1943 academic year and that its highest grade was the fourth elementary grade.

Walid Khalidi's principal village entry does not specify the school's opening year, and 1942/1943 is therefore presented here as a detail from local Palestinian documentation.

Economic Life

Agriculture formed the main basis of al-Salihiyya's economy, benefiting from the fertile land and abundant water of the al-Hula Plain.

The inhabitants cultivated cereals extensively, while vegetables and fruit were grown particularly in the eastern and northern portions of the village lands.

Livestock and animal products provided additional income, together with limited commercial and craft activities.

Land Ownership

According to the 1944/1945 statistics, al-Salihiyya had a total land area of 5,607 dunams.

Arab ownership amounted to 4,528 dunams, Jewish ownership to 789 dunams, while 290 dunams were classified as public land.

Total	**5,607**
Ownership Category	**Area in Dunams**
Arab ownership	4,528
Jewish ownership	789
Public land	290

Land Use

According to the 1944/1945 statistics, cereal cultivation covered 4,994 dunams: 4,230 Arab-owned dunams and 764 Jewish-owned dunams.

A further 23 Arab-owned dunams were irrigated or used for plantations.

The built-up area covered 119 dunams: 94 Arab-owned and 25 Jewish-owned.

Uncultivable land covered 471 dunams: 181 Arab-owned dunams and 290 dunams of public land.

Total	4,528	789	290	5,607
Type of Use	**Arab**	**Jewish**	**Public**	**Total**
Irrigated and plantation land	23	0	0	23
Cereals	4,230	764	0	4,994
Built-up area	94	25	0	119
Uncultivable land	181	0	290	471

Operation Yiftach

Operation Yiftach was conducted from **15 April to 25 May 1948** in eastern Galilee and the al-Hula region.

It was carried out by Palmach forces reorganized within the **Yiftach Brigade**, with the **Palmach's First Battalion** serving as the spearhead of the operation.

The operation sought to establish Zionist control over eastern Galilee, Safad, and the al-Hula region and affected dozens of Palestinian villages, including al-Salihiyya.

Military assaults were accompanied by psychological warfare.

One of the most significant measures was a so-called “whispering” or rumour campaign conducted between 10 and 15 May, which sought to frighten Palestinian inhabitants of eastern Galilee and the al-Hula villages into leaving.

Details originating in Israeli accounts are cited here only as transmitted through PalQuest, a Palestinian intermediary source, and not through direct reliance on the original Israeli material.

The Occupation and Depopulation of al-Salihiyya

al-Salihiyya fell on **25 May 1948**, the final day of Operation Yiftach.

The date **1 May 1948** that appears in some cards or compilations does not apply

to al-Salihiyya and most likely reflects confusion with nearby al-Hula villages that were attacked or depopulated during the first days of May.

Palestine Remembered attributes the direct action at al-Salihiyya to the **Palmach's First Battalion**.

PalQuest confirms that al-Salihiyya was affected by Operation Yiftach and identifies the First Battalion as the operation's spearhead, but its village-specific entry does not independently identify the battalion that directly entered al-Salihiyya.

The most precise formulation is therefore that al-Salihiyya was occupied during Operation Yiftach, with the Palmach First Battalion identified by Palestine Remembered as the attacking unit.

The psychological warfare conducted in the al-Hula region, together with direct military advances, contributed to the depopulation of Palestinian communities across the area.

By the end of the operation, al-Salihiyya had been emptied of its Palestinian inhabitants, and the village was subsequently completely destroyed.

Occupation and Depopulation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
Beginning of the military operation	15 April 1948	Operation Yiftach, launched by the Palmach under Yigal Allon to seize eastern Galilee before the end of the British Mandate on 15 May 1948, began; PalQuest lists al-Salihiyya among the villages it affected.
Final occupation	25 May 1948	Al-Salihiyya fell in the course of Operation Yiftach, on the day the operation ended, according to Khalidi (PalQuest). The available sources do not name the unit that entered the village or say when its inhabitants left.

Israeli Settlements and al-Salihiyya's Lands

Shamir

Shamir was not established on al-Salihiyya's lands. It was founded in 1944 on lands belonging to the neighbouring Palestinian village of **al-Muftakhira**.

Kefar Blum

According to Walid Khalidi and the village-specific PalQuest entry, no Israeli settlement was established directly on al-Salihiyya's lands.

Kefar Blum, founded in 1943, lies immediately northwest of the village site and is identified by the village-specific account as standing on lands traditionally belonging to **Qaytiyya**.

A broader Palestine Remembered settlement index also associates Kefar Blum with al-Salihiyya and al-Na'ima. In the absence of a detailed cadastral reconciliation of this discrepancy, this article follows the village-specific Walid Khalidi and PalQuest account while noting the differing broader index.

al-Salihiyya After the Nakba

According to the field documentation relied upon by Walid Khalidi, al-Salihiyya was completely obliterated and no visible trace of the village remained.

The surrounding lands were cultivated, particularly by residents of nearby Kefar Blum.

Khalidi's description reflects the condition of the site during his field documentation and should not necessarily be treated as a comprehensive survey updated to 2026.

Sources

- PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: al-Salihiyya.
- PalQuest: الصالحية.
- PalQuest: Operation Yiftach.
- PalQuest: al-Muftakhira, for the location of Shamir.
- Palestine Remembered: al-Salihiyya, Safad District.
- Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains*: al-Salihiyya, as reproduced by Palestine Remembered.
- Palestinian Villages Encyclopedia: al-Salihiyya – local documentation on education and social history.
- Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains*, entry on al-Salihiyya.
- Government of Palestine, Census of Palestine, 1931.
- Government of Palestine, Department of Statistics, *Village Statistics, 1945*.