# Al-Muftakhira

أراضي القرية ويستغلها اليوم المزارعون الإسرائيليون. وتبدو أنقاض من القرية في مقدم الصورة (خريف سنة ١٩٨٧) [المفتخرة]

## Al-Muftakhira – A Depopulated Palestinian Village in the Safad Subdistrict

Al-Muftakhira was a Palestinian village in the Safad Subdistrict, located approximately 25.5 km northeast of Safad in the central-eastern part of the Hula Plain, at an average elevation of about 75 meters above sea level.

The village stood on flat terrain near the Palestine–Syria frontier of the Mandate period. Agriculture formed the basis of its economy, and a nearby stream—identified in later Palestinian local documentation as Nahr al-Kali—provided water for drinking and irrigation.

Al-Muftakhira's population dispersed in two principal waves, on 1 May and 16 May 1948, during Operation Yiftach. Khalidi's account attributes the departure to fear of a Zionist attack, mortar fire, or being caught in the fighting.

| Item | Information |
|---|---|
| Subdistrict | Safad |
| Distance from Safad | Approximately 25.5 km northeast |
| Average elevation | Approximately 75 m above sea level |
| Population, 1931 | 231 |
| Population, 1944/45 | 350; the statistical figure includes al-Barjiyyat |
| Estimated population, 1948 | 406 |
| Total land area, 1944/45 | 9,215 dunums; includes al-Barjiyyat |
| First wave of displacement | 1 May 1948 |
| Final wave of depopulation | 16 May 1948 |
| Military operation | Operation Yiftach |
| Military force | Palmach / Yiftach forces at operation level; the First Battalion spearheaded the wider operation, while Khalidi's village entry does not conclusively identify a village-specific assault unit |
| Settlement established on village land | Shamir, established in 1944 |

## Location and Geography

Al-Muftakhira stood on flat terrain in the central-eastern Hula Plain close to the Syrian frontier.

Its location overlooked parts of the Hula landscape, with Syrian territory and the Golan to the east and the Hula lake and wetlands in the broader western and southwestern landscape.

Local tracks linked the village with neighboring communities, while nearby al-Khalisa served as an important market center for the people of the northern Hula Plain.

## Neighboring Villages and Areas

| Direction | Village or Area |
|---|---|
| North | al-Dawwara |
| Northeast | al-Hamra' |
| East | Syrian territory / the Golan |
| South and southeast | Khiyam al-Walid |
| West | al-Zawiya |
| Northwest | al-Salihiyya |

These directions reflect approximate geographical relationships documented in Palestinian local sources and should not be treated as substitutes for historical cadastral boundaries.

## Name of Al-Muftakhira

In Arabic, the name al-Muftakhira is the feminine form of the active participle derived from the verb *iftakhara*, “to take pride” or “to boast.”

The principal historical sources used here do not preserve a securely documented account explaining why this particular name was given to the village, so no speculative origin has been added.

## Built Form

Al-Muftakhira's houses were closely clustered.

The older dwellings were constructed of adobe brick and roofed with cane, reflecting building techniques and materials common in parts of the Hula Plain.

Newer houses were built of stone, concrete, and other masonry materials during the later Mandate period.

## Population of Al-Muftakhira

The official 1931 Census of Palestine recorded 231 inhabitants in al-Muftakhira, all Muslims, living in 51 occupied houses.

The 1944/45 Village Statistics recorded 350 inhabitants. An important statistical qualification is that this figure **includes al-Barjiyyat**. The same inclusion applies to the 1944/45 land-ownership and land-use figures.

Palestine Remembered later estimated the population at 406 in 1948 and the number of refugees and their descendants at 2,493 in 1998. These are retrospective estimates rather than official Mandate census counts.

| Year | Population | Nature of Figure / Notes |
|---|---|---|
| 1931 | 231 | Official census; all Muslims |
| 1944/45 | 350 | Official statistics; includes al-Barjiyyat |
| 1948 | 406 | Later estimate, not an official census |
| 1998 | 2,493 refugees | Later estimate of refugees and their descendants |

## Number of Houses

| Year | Houses | Nature of Figure |
|---|---|---|
| 1931 | 51 | Occupied houses recorded in the official census |
| 1948 | 89 | Later Palestine Remembered estimate, not an official Mandate count |

## Education

Khalidi records a small school in al-Muftakhira.

Later Palestinian documentary material adds useful detail. On 28 December 1946, village mukhtar Muhammad Hasan Mar'i al-Masri wrote to the Inspector of Education requesting a teacher for a school he had established in his own house.

A second letter dated 12 February 1947 concerned reopening the village school following repairs.

These documents indicate that local schooling existed and that villagers were actively seeking to regularize and staff it during the final years of the Mandate. The core sources used here do not provide a secure enrollment figure or a complete grade structure.

## Economic Life

Agriculture was the principal source of livelihood. Villagers cultivated wheat, maize, onions, animal fodder, and other seasonal crops.

Some residents also raised livestock and fished, while others engaged in trade.

Many villagers attended the weekly Tuesday market in neighboring al-Khalisa to sell agricultural produce and purchase goods.

In 1944/45, 924 Arab dunums were devoted to cereals and 3,597 Arab dunums were irrigated or used for plantations.

## Water and Nahr al-Kali

Khalidi records a stream near the village that supplied irrigation water.

Later Palestinian local documentation identifies this watercourse as **Nahr al-Kali**, describing it as flowing from Syrian territory toward al-Muftakhira and providing both drinking and irrigation water.

The availability of water helps explain the unusually large area devoted to irrigated land and plantations.

## Land Ownership in 1944/45

The official statistical unit for al-Muftakhira, **including al-Barjiyyat**, contained 9,215 dunums.

Using Palestine Remembered's simplified terminology:

| Ownership Category | Area in Dunums |
|---|---|
| Palestinian | 5,414 |
| Transferred to Zionists | 3,596 |
| Communal/Public | 205 |
| **Total** | **9,215** |

The official Village Statistics use the original categories Arab, Jewish, and Public: 5,414 dunums were Arab land, 3,596 Jewish, and 205 public.

These figures include al-Barjiyyat and should therefore not be presented as an entirely separate cadastral total for al-Muftakhira alone.

## Land Use in 1944/45

| Use | Arab | Jewish | Public | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Plantations and irrigable land | 3,597 | 0 | 0 | 3,597 |
| Cereals | 924 | 1,843 | 0 | 2,767 |
| Built-up land | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Non-cultivable land | 893 | 1,753 | 205 | 2,851 |
| **Total** | **5,414** | **3,596** | **205** | **9,215** |

Cultivable land totaled 6,364 dunums, approximately 69 percent of the statistical unit: 4,521 Arab and 1,843 Jewish dunums.

Non-cultivable land totaled 2,851 dunums, approximately 31 percent: 893 Arab, 1,753 Jewish, and 205 public dunums.

The printed Village Statistics table displays 3,767 as the cereal total, but this is an evident arithmetic error: 924 + 1,843 equals **2,767**. The corrected figure also reconciles exactly with the published cultivable-land total of 6,364 dunums.

Some simplified tables show 1,098 dunums as Palestinian non-arable land. That number combines 893 Arab dunums with 205 public dunums; the two categories have therefore been separated here.

Palestine Remembered also records two dunums of olive trees. This is a crop-specific subset of the agricultural land and should not be added independently to the statistical total.

## Archaeological Remains

Khalidi records a nearby khirba containing building foundations and wall remains.

Palestine Remembered identifies the locality as Khirbat al-Hamra or al-Hamrawi and places it southeast of the village.

The principal source does not provide a secure archaeological chronology, so no specific historical period has been assigned to these remains.

## Operation Yiftach

Operation Yiftach ran from 15 April to 25 May 1948 and was designed to establish Zionist control over eastern Galilee and the Hula region.

The operation was planned under Palmach commander Yigal Allon, and the Palmach's First Battalion spearheaded the wider campaign.

Operation Yiftach combined direct military attacks with psychological warfare. Between 10 and 15 May, a so-called “whispering campaign” was used to spread fear of an imminent assault and encourage Palestinians in the Hula region to leave.

PalQuest explicitly lists al-Muftakhira among the villages affected by Operation Yiftach.

## Depopulation of Al-Muftakhira

Khalidi, citing Israeli historian Benny Morris, states that the villagers dispersed in two waves.

The first occurred on **1 May 1948**, followed by a second and final wave on **16 May 1948**.

The departure is attributed to fear of a Zionist attack, mortar fire, or becoming caught in the fighting during Operation Yiftach.

It is therefore more precise to treat 1 May as the beginning of the village's depopulation and 16 May as the date by which the second major wave had completed the process.

## Military Unit

Operation Yiftach was a Palmach-led offensive in eastern Galilee, and PalQuest states that the **Palmach's First Battalion spearheaded the operation**.

Palestine Remembered and some later Palestinian secondary documentation identify the First Battalion as the attacking unit at al-Muftakhira on 16 May.

Khalidi's village-specific account, however, links the village's depopulation to Operation Yiftach without naming a specific battalion as the force that physically entered al-Muftakhira. The First Battalion is therefore securely identified as the principal force at the operation level, while the village-specific attribution should be treated with appropriate caution.

| Stage | Date | Details |
|---|---|---|
| Beginning of Operation Yiftach | 15 April 1948 | Palmach offensive begins in eastern Galilee |
| First wave of departure | 1 May 1948 | Part of al-Muftakhira's population leaves |

| Stage | Date | Details |
|---|---|---|
| Psychological-warfare campaign | 10–15 May 1948 | “Whispering campaign” encourages flight from Hula communities |
| Final wave of depopulation | 16 May 1948 | Second major wave disperses the remaining population |
| End of Operation Yiftach | 25 May 1948 | End of the main campaign in eastern Galilee |

## Zionist Settlements on and near Al-Muftakhira's Lands

**Shamir:** Established in 1944 on al-Muftakhira's lands east of the village site.

**Lahavot ha-Bashan:** Established in 1945 close to al-Muftakhira to the south, but on land belonging to neighboring Khiyam al-Walid rather than al-Muftakhira.

The Arabic and English PalQuest versions differ over whether Lahavot ha-Bashan lay southwest or southeast of the village. This article therefore avoids overstating the exact direction and preserves the more important land-ownership distinction.

## Al-Muftakhira Today

According to Walid Khalidi's field description in *All That Remains*, only stone rubble and occasional ruined walls remained to mark the former village.

A few eucalyptus trees grew on the site, which had been converted into an archaeological center, while surrounding lands were cultivated.

Palestine Remembered reproduces a documented photograph of the village ruins dated 1987, together with later community photographs of al-Muftakhira's lands.

Khalidi's description therefore provides a pre-1992 field baseline rather than direct verification of the site's condition in 2026. Later community material helps trace the landscape but does not constitute a comprehensive current archaeological or architectural survey.

## Sources


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- Government of Palestine – Village Statistics 1945: Safad Sub-District, Population and Land Ownership
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- Palestinian Villages Encyclopedia – al-Muftakhira: local geography, water sources, population, and documentation