Mallaha

Mallaha: A Depopulated Palestinian Village in the Safad District

Mallaha was a depopulated Palestinian village in the Safad District, located approximately 16 kilometers from the city of Safad at an average elevation of about 75 meters above sea level, near the northwestern corner of Lake al-Hula.

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Safad
Distance from district center	16 km northeast of Safad

Item	Information
Average Elevation	75 m above sea level
Population in 1931	654
Number of Houses in 1931	161
Population in 1944/1945	890 – joint figure including 'Arab al-Zubayd, not the village alone
Total Land Area in 1945	2,168 dunams – joint figure including the lands of 'Arab al-Zubayd, not the village alone
Attack and Depopulation	Zionist forces induced the villagers to flee through a campaign of psychological warfare, and Israeli occupation forces then seized the village on 25 May 1948, at the very end of Operation Yiftach. Khalidi does not rule out a direct attack, possibly including mortar fire, since most of the psychological warfare was conducted some ten days before the reported date of evacuation and several neighbouring villages were shelled with mortars at the time.
Final Israeli Control	25 May 1948, at the very end 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	A campaign of psychological warfare by Zionist forces to induce the inhabitants to flee; a direct military assault, possibly including mortar fire, cannot be ruled out, according to Khalidi
Settlements Documented on Village Lands	No Israeli settlements on village lands, according to Khalidi (PalQuest); Yesud ha-Ma'ala, founded in 1883, lies some 5 km to the southeast of the site

The village stood on the northern bank of Wadi Barid, and its Muslim inhabitants depended primarily on agriculture. During the Nakba and the occupation of Palestine in 1948, Zionist forces seized Mallaha on 25 May 1948, the final day of Operation Yiftach. Its inhabitants were displaced and the village was subsequently destroyed.

Location of Mallaha

- Mallaha was located approximately 16 kilometers from Safad.
- Its average elevation was about 75 meters above sea level.
- The village stood on the northern bank of Wadi Barid, a seasonal watercourse flowing into the northwestern corner of Lake al-Hula.
- It was situated close to the western side of the al-Hula plain.
- Mallaha lay along a main road leading toward Safad and Tiberias.

Wadi Barid and 'Ayn Mallaha

Wadi Barid was a seasonal watercourse that flowed into the northwestern corner of Lake al-Hula. Its waters were replenished by the spring of 'Ayn Mallaha, located south of the village.

Walid Khalidi describes 'Ayn Mallaha as one of the most abundant springs in Palestine, with a flow ranging between 1,800 and 2,700 cubic meters of water per hour.

Mallaha Through History

Walid Khalidi records that the area near Mallaha was close to the site of a battle in 1157 between the army of Nur al-Din Mahmud ibn Zangi and the forces of the Crusader king Baldwin III. The battle ended in a decisive victory for Nur al-Din's forces.

In the mid-eighteenth century, the Syrian Sufi traveler al-Bakri al-Siddiqi passed through a village called al-Mallaha, which Khalidi considers may have been the same village. The American scholar Edward Robinson also recorded in 1838 that Mallaha was situated northwest of Lake al-Hula.

The Built Environment of Mallaha

Modern Mallaha had a roughly rectangular layout extending from north to south,

and its inhabitants were Muslims.

The built-up area covered approximately 20 dunums according to the 1944/1945 statistics.

Population of Mallaha and 'Arab al-Zubayd

It is important to distinguish between Mallaha and 'Arab al-Zubayd when interpreting historical population figures. In the 1922 census, Mallaha itself had 440 inhabitants, all Muslims, while 'Arab al-Zubayd was recorded separately with 257 inhabitants. Their combined population was therefore 697.

In the 1931 census, Mallaha had 654 inhabitants living in 161 houses. The Government of Palestine's 1944/1945 statistics, however, combined Mallaha and 'Arab al-Zubayd into a single statistical unit with a total population of 890.

The estimates of 1,032 inhabitants in 1948 and 6,340 refugees in 1998 published by Palestine Remembered refer to Mallaha and 'Arab al-Zubayd together and are not official censuses of Mallaha alone.

Population of Mallaha and 'Arab al-Zubayd

Year	Population	Statistical Scope and Nature of Figure
1922	440	Official census of Mallaha alone
1922	257	Official census of 'Arab al-Zubayd, recorded separately
1931	654	Official census of Mallaha
1944/1945	890	Government of Palestine statistics combining Mallaha and 'Arab al-Zubayd
1948	1,032	Later estimate for Mallaha and 'Arab al-Zubayd published by Palestine Remembered
1998	6,340	Estimated refugee population from Mallaha and 'Arab al-Zubayd published by Palestine Remembered
The 1945 statistics and later estimates combine Mallaha and 'Arab al-Zubayd and should not be presented as figures for Mallaha alone.		

Number of Houses in Mallaha

The 1931 census recorded 161 houses in Mallaha. The figure of 254 houses for 1948 published by Palestine Remembered is a later estimate rather than an official Government of Palestine census figure.

Number of Houses in Mallaha

Year	Number of Houses	Nature of Figure
1931	161	Official census
1948	254	Estimate published by Palestine Remembered for Mallaha and 'Arab al-Zubayd
The officially documented house count is the figure recorded in the 1931 census.		

Land Ownership in Mallaha and 'Arab al-Zubayd

The Government of Palestine's 1944/1945 statistics combined the lands of Mallaha and 'Arab al-Zubayd into a single statistical unit totaling 2,168 dunums.

The Arabic Palestine Remembered table uses the categories “Palestinian,” “Transferred to Zionists,” and “Masha'.” These terms are preserved below to reflect the terminology used by that source. The Government of Palestine statistics classify the corresponding categories as “Arab,” “Jewish,” and “Public.”

Total	2,168
Ownership Category	**Area in Dunums**
Palestinian	1,838
Transferred to Zionists	294
Masha' / Communal	36

Like the 1945 population figure, these land figures cover Mallaha and 'Arab al-Zubayd together.

Land Use in Mallaha and 'Arab al-Zubayd in 1944/1945

A total of 2,055 dunums was devoted to cereals, consisting of 1,761 dunums of Arab land and 294 dunums of Jewish land. The built-up area covered 20 dunums. Non-cultivable land totaled 93 dunums, consisting of 57 dunums of Arab land and 36 dunums of public land.

Total	**1,838**	**294**	**36**	**2,168**
Land Use	**Arab**	**Jewish**	**Public**	**Total**
Cereals	1,761	294	0	2,055
Built-up Area	20	0	0	20
Non-Cultivable Land	57	0	36	93

Economic Life in Mallaha

Agriculture formed the mainstay of Mallaha's economy, with cereals constituting the principal crop in the lands statistically recorded with Mallaha and 'Arab al-Zubayd in 1944/1945.

The abundance of water around Wadi Barid and 'Ayn Mallaha supported agricultural activity in the surrounding area of the al-Hula plain.

Archaeological Remains in the Mallaha Area

Palestine Remembered identifies Mallaha as an archaeological site containing a mound of ruins and remains of earlier structures. It also refers to the cave of 'Arab al-Zubayd in the area west of Lake al-Hula.

Operation Yiftach

Mallaha was occupied during Operation Yiftach, a Zionist military operation carried out between 15 April and 25 May 1948 within the framework of Plan Dalet. Its objective was to gain control of eastern Galilee before the end of the British

Mandate.

Yigal Allon directed the operation at the Palmach level, and the Palmach's First Battalion spearheaded the offensive. The operation affected numerous Palestinian villages in the Safad District, including Mallaha, 'Arab al-Zubayd, Baysamun, and al-'Ulmaniyya.

The Occupation of Mallaha and the Displacement of Its Inhabitants During the Nakba

Zionist forces seized Mallaha on 25 May 1948, the final day of Operation Yiftach.

Palestine Remembered specifically identifies the Palmach's First Battalion as the force that attacked Mallaha, while PalQuest confirms that the First Battalion spearheaded Operation Yiftach as a whole.

According to Walid Khalidi, Zionist forces induced the inhabitants to leave through a campaign of psychological warfare. He nevertheless states that a direct attack, possibly involving mortar fire, cannot be ruled out because most of the psychological campaign had taken place approximately ten days before the reported evacuation date, while neighboring villages were subjected to mortar fire during the same period.

The firmly documented facts are therefore that Mallaha was occupied on 25 May during Operation Yiftach and that its inhabitants were displaced, while direct mortar bombardment of Mallaha itself remains a possibility cited by the source rather than a conclusively established event.

Palestinian local documentation indicates that some displaced families from Mallaha sought refuge in Syria, with families settling in places including Daraa, Sayyida Zaynab, and Jaramana. The available sources do not provide a comprehensive numerical distribution of all displaced villagers.

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 Mallaha among the villages it affected.
Psychological warfare campaign	About 10–15 May 1948	Zionist forces induced the people of Mallaha to flee through a campaign of psychological warfare, most of which was conducted some ten days before the reported date of evacuation, according to Khalidi. PalQuest dates the 'whispering campaign' devised by Yigal Allon to frighten the villagers of the Hula into fleeing to 10–15 May 1948.
Final occupation	25 May 1948	Israeli occupation forces seized Mallaha at the very end of Operation Yiftach. Khalidi does not rule out a direct attack, possibly including mortar fire, since Zionist forces were directing mortar fire at a number of neighbouring villages at the time in the context of the operation.

Settlements on the Lands of Mallaha

According to the village-specific entries in both PalQuest and Palestine Remembered, no Israeli settlement was established on the lands of Mallaha itself.

Yesud ha-Ma'ala, founded in 1883, lies approximately five kilometers southeast of the former village site.

A general settlement index on Palestine Remembered associates Yesud ha-Ma'ala with Mallaha and neighboring villages. However, the dedicated Mallaha page and Walid Khalidi's account explicitly state that the settlement was not established on Mallaha's lands. The more specific village-level description has therefore been followed here.

The Site of Mallaha After the Nakba

According to Walid Khalidi's field description, the sandy hill on which Mallaha once stood became covered with tall grass, wild vegetation, cactuses, and fig, eucalyptus, and date-palm trees.

Scattered stone rubble from the destroyed village houses remained visible among the vegetation, while the surrounding land was cultivated by residents of the nearby settlement of Yesud ha-Ma'ala.

This description is based on fieldwork conducted for Walid Khalidi's *All That Remains* and should not necessarily be treated as a field survey updated to the present day.

Sources

- PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: Mallaha
- PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: Operation Yiftach
- Institute for Palestine Studies: Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains*
- Palestine Remembered: Mallaha – Safad District
- Sami Hadawi: *Village Statistics 1945*, based on Government of Palestine statistics