Ghabbatiyya

Ghabbatiyya – Depopulated Palestinian Hamlet in Safad Subdistrict

Ghabbatiyya was a Palestinian hamlet in the Safad subdistrict of Upper Galilee. It stood approximately 12 kilometers northwest of Safad at an average elevation of about 875 meters above sea level.

The hamlet occupied a rocky hill between Mount al-Jarmaq, approximately 1,208 meters high, and Mount 'Adathir, approximately 1,009 meters high. It lay about two kilometers east of the Druze village of Hurfaysh.

The Mandate-era Palestine Index Gazetteer classified Ghabbatiyya as a farm or hamlet. Its official 1944/45 population was 60 Arab Muslims, and its registered land area was 2,933 dunums.

Ghabbatiyya was occupied on 30 October 1948 during the second phase of Operation Hiram, as Israeli forces advancing from the eastern and western fronts converged in a large pincer movement around neighboring Sa'sa'.

Key Facts about Ghabbatiyya

Field	Information
Name	Ghabbatiyya
Subdistrict	Safad
Distance from Safad	Approximately 12 km northwest
Average elevation	Approximately 875 m above sea level
Mandate classification	Farm / hamlet
Population, 1922	9 Muslims
Population, 1931	No independently documented figure identified in the principal sources used
Population, 1944/45	60 Arab Muslims
Registered land area	2,933 dunums
Occupation date	30 October 1948
Military operation	Operation Hiram – second phase
Military unit	Seventh/Sheva' Brigade is probable and is attributed by Palestinian secondary sources; Khalidi's village entry does not explicitly identify the direct village-level unit
Defenders	Arab Liberation Army forces in the wider area; no independent village-specific garrison strength is established

Field	Information
Cause of depopulation	Military occupation during Operation Hiram; Palestine Remembered classifies the cause as direct military assault
Extent of destruction	Most of the built-up hamlet was destroyed; ruins and walls of one demolished house remained
Israeli settlements on village land	None documented

Name of the Village

The village is recorded in Palestinian sources as Ghabbatiyya.

Some Palestinian local-history sources suggest that the name may derive from a Syriac expression meaning a densely wooded place.

This remains a proposed linguistic interpretation rather than a firmly established historical etymology in Khalidi's village entry.

Location

Ghabbatiyya stood in the mountains of Upper Galilee on a rocky hill between Mount al-Jarmaq and Mount 'Adathir.

It was approximately two kilometers east of Hurfaysh. Local Palestinian geographical documentation places Sa'sa' to the north, Safsaf to the east, Hurfaysh to the west, Sabalan to the southwest, and Bayt Jann to the south.

The village extended generally east–west along the northern side of a secondary road linking it with neighboring communities.

This road connected with larger roads leading toward Safad and the Mediterranean coast.

Village Layout

Ghabbatiyya was a small, relatively compact settlement with an east–west rectangular orientation.

Its Mandate classification as a hamlet reflects the small size of its built-up nucleus in comparison with larger villages in the Safad district.

The 1944/45 land-use table does not provide a separate built-up acreage, so no independent built-up figure has been inferred.

Population

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
1922	9	Official British Mandate census; all Muslims
1931	Not independently available	No separate documented figure identified in the principal sources used
1944/45	60	Official Department of Statistics estimate; all Arab Muslims
1948	70	Later Palestine Remembered estimate, not an official census
1998	427	Later estimate of refugees and descendants, not an official census

Ghabbatiyya was among the smallest Palestinian communities in the Safad subdistrict by population.

The 1948 and 1998 figures are later estimates and should not be attributed to British Mandatory census statistics.

Number of Houses

No independently documented house count for Ghabbatiyya in 1931 or 1948 was identified in the principal sources reviewed.

No estimate has therefore been inferred from population totals or historical photographs.

Land Ownership

The total registered village land area in 1944/45 was 2,933 dunums.

Ownership Category	Dunums
Palestinian / Arab	2,381
Transferred to Zionists	0
Communal/Public	552
Total	**2,933**

The figures balance exactly: 2,381 + 552 = 2,933 dunums.

A figure of 3,453 dunums appears in some secondary webpages. The underlying 1945 statistical table and PalQuest, however, list Ghabbatiyya with 2,381 Arab dunums and 552 Public dunums, for a correct total of 2,933 dunums.

Land Use in 1944/45

Land Use	Arab	Public	Total
Cereals	412	0	412
Plantations and irrigable land	15	0	15
Non-cultivable land	1,954	552	2,506
Total	**2,381**	**552**	**2,933**

The land-use figures balance exactly:

412 + 15 + 2,506 = 2,933 dunums.

No separate built-up acreage appears in the table used by PalQuest.

Correction to the Cereal Figure

The version of Khalidi's text reproduced on Palestine Remembered contains the number 421 dunums for cereal cultivation.

PalQuest and the statistical table give 412 dunums, which is also the number required for the totals to balance:

412 + 15 + 2,506 = 2,933 dunums.

This article therefore uses 412 dunums as the consistent official figure.

Economic Life

Agriculture and livestock raising formed the basis of Ghabbatiyya's economy.

In 1944/45, 412 dunums were devoted to cereals and 15 dunums to irrigated cultivation or orchards.

The mountainous terrain, seasonal wadis, and access to springs and wells also supported animal husbandry.

Water Resources and Wadis

Three wadis passed close to the village, supplying water during the rainy season and contributing usable agricultural ground during the dry season.

Local Palestinian geographical sources identify Wadi al-Marran south of the village, Wadi al-Manba' farther south, and Wadi Khallat Zawana to the north.

Wadi al-Marran and Wadi al-Manba' joined near the southern edge of the village lands and became part of a drainage system eventually flowing toward Wadi al-Qarn.

A well stood near the northwestern edge of the village, while springs southeast of the village included 'Ayn Ghabbatiyya, 'Ayn al-Khayra or al-Khubayza, 'Ayn al-'Arr,

and Bir al-Sukkar according to local Palestinian documentation.

Khalidi's core village description confirms three nearby wadis and additional springs and wells but does not provide the full list of names.

Education and Public Services

Khalidi and PalQuest do not independently document a village school, founding date, or enrollment figure for Ghabbatiyya.

The principal village entry likewise does not identify a mosque, market, or other formal public institution.

Given the small size of the hamlet, institutions from neighboring communities should not be attributed to Ghabbatiyya without direct evidence.

Archaeological Remains

The Ghabbatiyya area contained remains of earlier settlement.

In 1881 the Survey of Western Palestine recorded foundations of walls and an olive press at Khirbat Ghabbatiyya.

Palestinian local-history sources additionally record a pool, cisterns, caves, rock-cut tombs, and a square rock-cut basin near 'Ayn Ghabbatiyya.

Nearby Khirbat al-Tannuriyya reportedly contained foundations, stone heaps, and a cistern, while Khirbat al-Humayma lay to the east.

The sources reviewed do not securely date all these remains, so they have not been assigned collectively to a single archaeological period.

Operation Hiram

Operation Hiram began on 28 October 1948 and ended on 31 October.

It targeted the last large Arab-held pocket in Upper Galilee after the second truce.

At the campaign level, forces from the Sheva'/Seventh, Carmeli, Golani, and 'Oded brigades participated, while PalQuest's operation data also list Giv'ati.

The offensive employed a broad pincer movement in which forces advanced from eastern, western, and southern axes toward the strategically important Sa'sa' road junction.

Occupation and Depopulation

Ghabbatiyya was occupied on 30 October 1948 during the second phase of Operation Hiram.

At approximately noon that day, forces advancing from the eastern and western fronts converged in a pincer movement around neighboring Sa'sa'.

The following day an Israeli military spokesman, cited in the contemporary report reproduced by Khalidi, said that several hundred members of the Arab Liberation Army garrison in the wider area had been killed and several hundred captured.

Those figures refer to the regional Arab Liberation Army force during Operation Hiram and should not be interpreted as casualty totals for Ghabbatiyya itself.

Military Unit

Palestine Remembered and some Palestinian secondary sources attribute Ghabbatiyya's occupation to the Seventh Brigade, also known as the Sheva' Brigade.

This attribution is geographically consistent with the Seventh Brigade's advance toward Sa'sa' during Operation Hiram.

Khalidi's Ghabbatiyya entry, however, does not explicitly name the battalion or brigade that entered the hamlet and instead places its occupation within the convergence of the two operational fronts around Sa'sa'.

The most accurate formulation is therefore: **the Seventh/Sheva' Brigade is probable and is attributed by Palestinian secondary sources, but the direct village-specific unit is not explicitly identified in Khalidi's Ghabbatiyya entry.**

Cause of Depopulation

Khalidi does not provide a separate detailed account establishing whether Ghabbatiyya's residents fled immediately before the occupation or were directly expelled after forces entered the hamlet.

The village nevertheless fell during Operation Hiram, an offensive that produced widespread flight and expulsions throughout Upper Galilee.

Palestine Remembered classifies Ghabbatiyya's cause of depopulation as direct military assault.

No undocumented village-specific written expulsion order has therefore been added.

Ethnic Cleansing

Palestine Remembered characterizes the final outcome at Ghabbatiyya as complete ethnic cleansing.

Khalidi documents the occupation and complete depopulation of the hamlet during Operation Hiram but does not provide an independent detailed account of the precise mechanism by which every resident left.

The term “ethnic cleansing” is therefore retained as an attributed characterization used by Palestine Remembered, while the directly documented outcome is the disappearance of Ghabbatiyya's Palestinian community following its occupation.

Occupation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
Beginning of Operation Hiram	28 October 1948	The large-scale offensive against the remaining Arab-held pocket in Upper Galilee began.
First phase	28–29 October 1948	Israeli forces advanced on several axes and occupied villages and positions across Upper Galilee.
Second phase	30 October 1948	The pincer maneuver continued toward Sa'sa' as eastern and western forces converged.
Occupation of Ghabbatiyya	30 October 1948	The hamlet was occupied as the operational fronts converged around neighboring Sa'sa'.
Probable military formation	30 October 1948	Seventh/Sheva' Brigade according to Palestinian secondary sources; Khalidi's village entry does not explicitly identify the direct unit.
Depopulation	During the occupation	The Palestinian community disappeared from the hamlet; the precise village-specific mechanism of departure is not independently documented.
End of Operation Hiram	31 October 1948	The operation ended after Israeli forces gained control of most of Upper Galilee.
Destruction	Precise demolition date not documented	Most village buildings were destroyed; portions of one ruined house and other stone remains survived.

Israeli Settlements on Ghabbatiyya's Lands

Khalidi and PalQuest explicitly state that **no Israeli settlement was established on Ghabbatiyya's village lands**.

Settlements or other facilities in the surrounding region should therefore not be attributed to Ghabbatiyya without independent cadastral evidence.

Ghabbatiyya Today

According to Walid Khalidi's field description, the former village site was deserted and covered with grass, stones, and the ruins of stone houses.

A few fig trees remained, and the walls of one demolished house were still standing.

The surrounding lands were used for grazing, while forests covered nearby Mount 'Adathir.

The site photograph reproduced by PalQuest and Khalidi is dated July 1987. The description therefore documents the site's historical condition during fieldwork undertaken before the publication of *All That Remains* in 1992 rather than providing comprehensive direct field verification for 2026.

Later community documentation includes photographs from 2003 showing house ruins, stone remains, and rock-cut tomb entrances. These materials provide useful later evidence of individual surviving features but do not constitute a comprehensive archaeological survey of all village lands.

Sources

- PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: Ghabbatiyya.
- PalQuest – Operation Hiram.
- Palestine Remembered – Ghabbatiyya, Safad District.
- Walid Khalidi – *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*.
- Institute for Palestine Studies – *All That Remains*.
- Government of Palestine – Village Statistics 1945.
- Government of Palestine – Census of Palestine 1922.
- Survey of Western Palestine – archaeological description of Khirbat Ghabbatiyya.

- Palestinian Villages Encyclopedia – Ghabbatiyya, drawing on Mustafa Murad al-Dabbagh, Walid Khalidi, and additional Palestinian sources.