Yarda

Yarda – Depopulated Palestinian Village in Safad Subdistrict

Yarda was a small Palestinian village in the Safad subdistrict of Galilee. It lay approximately 10.5 kilometers northeast of Safad at an average elevation of about 225 meters above sea level. The village stood on volcanic terrain sloping northward toward the al-Hula Plain.

Yarda was among the smallest communities in the Safad subdistrict. Its population numbered 13 Muslims in the official 1931 census and 20 inhabitants in the official

1944/45 statistics. The area was notably rich in water resources, enabling villagers to cultivate rice, clover, maize, and vegetables.

The occupation and depopulation of Yarda cannot be reduced to a single securely established date. Walid Khalidi states that the village may first have been occupied during Operation Yiftach in April–May 1948. It subsequently lay on the edge of the Demilitarized Zone established after the Syrian-Israeli Armistice Agreement of 1949, leaving uncertainty over whether inhabitants remained or returned before a later removal.

Key Facts about Yarda

Field	Information
Name	Yarda
Subdistrict	Safad
Status	Depopulated Palestinian village
Distance from Safad	Approximately 10.5 km northeast
Average elevation	Approximately 225 m above sea level
Population in 1931	13 – official census
Population in 1944/45	20 – official statistics
Houses in 1931	3 – official census
Land area	Source discrepancy: 1,368 dunums in PalQuest versus 1,367 Arab dunums in the reproduced official Village Statistics; see land section
Probable military operation	Operation Yiftach
Unit that specifically occupied Yarda	Not independently documented; the Palmach's First Battalion spearheaded Operation Yiftach as a whole
First occupation	Uncertain; Khalidi suggests April–May 1948
Final depopulation	Not precisely established; a later removal between 1949 and 1956 is possible if inhabitants remained or returned

Field	Information
Settlements associated with village land	Ayyelet ha-Shahar and the new Mishmar ha-Yarden

Location of Yarda

Yarda lay in the eastern part of the Safad subdistrict on terrain descending toward the al-Hula Plain and not far west of the Jordan River and the former Palestine-Syria frontier. Its landscape was characterized by volcanic rock and relatively abundant water resources.

Maps and Palestinian sources place Yarda among the eastern Galilee and Hula-area villages, near al-Wayziyya, Kirad al-Baqqara, Kirad al-Ghannama, and Mansurat al-Khayt, within the broader vicinity of Jisr Banat Ya'qub.

The Name Yarda

The village appears in Arabic sources as both Yarda and Yārda. The principal sources used here do not establish a single definitive etymology, and no proposed linguistic derivation is therefore presented as a proven fact.

Yarda before the Nakba

The village stood on volcanic rock in an area sloping northward toward the al-Hula Plain. All of its inhabitants were Muslims.

Despite the very small size of the population, the surrounding area had relatively abundant water. These resources allowed the cultivation of water-intensive and irrigated crops, particularly rice, as well as clover, maize, and vegetables.

A khan, or caravanserai, also stood in the village. Portions of its walls remained visible after the destruction of Yarda and became one of the most prominent surviving features recorded in Walid Khalidi's field documentation.

Population of Yarda

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
1931	13	Official census; all Muslims
1944/45	20	Official British Mandate statistics
1948	23	Later estimate reported by Palestine Remembered; not an official census
1998	143 refugees	Later estimate reported by Palestine Remembered

The principal sources reviewed do not provide a separately verified 1922 population figure for Yarda, so no unverified number has been added.

Number of Houses

Year	Houses	Nature of Figure
1931	3	Official 1931 census figure
1948	5	Later estimate reported by Palestine Remembered

The estimate of five houses in 1948 should not be described as an official census count.

Yarda's Land and the Statistical Discrepancy

A small but significant discrepancy exists in the recorded land area of Yarda. PalQuest gives a total of 1,368 dunums, all listed in the Arab category, and Palestine Remembered likewise presents 1,368 dunums as Palestinian land.

However, Sami Hadawi's reproduction of the official 1945 Village Statistics lists the combined statistical entry “Aiyelet hash Shahar and Yarda” with 1,367 dunums in the Arab ownership category. Moreover, the land-use figures associated with Yarda—1,359 dunums of cereals and 8 dunums of uncultivable land—sum to 1,367 dunums.

Source	Figure	Note
PalQuest	1,368 dunums	Shown entirely in the Arab land category
Palestine Remembered	1,368 dunums	Palestinian 1,368; Transferred to Zionists 0; Communal/Public 0; its displayed total contains an obvious error
Village Statistics / Hadawi	1,367 Arab dunums	Within the combined statistical unit with Ayyelet ha-Shahar; consistent with Yarda's published land-use total

The discrepancy should not be silently erased. For analysis of land use, this article uses 1,367 dunums because that figure is internally consistent with the official land-use breakdown, while noting that PalQuest records 1,368 dunums.

Land Use in 1944/45

Land Use	Dunums
Cereals	1,359
Uncultivable land	8
Total	**1,367**

This official classification should be distinguished from the crop list recorded by Khalidi. His references to rice, clover, maize, and vegetables describe agricultural activity but do not provide separate official acreage for each crop.

Economic Life in Yarda

Yarda's economy was based primarily on agriculture. Abundant water was a defining resource and made possible the cultivation of rice, a water-intensive crop, as well as clover, maize, and vegetables.

The official land-use data indicate that the great majority of the recorded land was devoted to cereals, totaling 1,359 dunums.

The principal sources reviewed do not provide sufficient documentation to describe

trade, crafts, or livestock raising as major separate economic sectors, and such details have therefore not been added without evidence.

Water Resources

Walid Khalidi describes Yarda as well endowed with water resources. This abundance made possible a relatively diverse agricultural pattern despite the village's very small population, including rice, clover, maize, and vegetable cultivation.

The village entry does not provide a comprehensive list of named springs or wells, so specific water-source names have not been added without independent documentation.

Archaeology and Khirbat Waqqas

Khirbat Waqqas, also called Khirbat al-Qadah, lay west-northwest of Yarda. Walid Khalidi records that the site was identified with the ancient city of Hazor.

Palestinian sources also record remains of buildings and walls, cut stones, cisterns, and a press in the archaeological area. Because the identification and boundaries of archaeological sites in this region are complex, Yarda itself should be distinguished from Khirbat Waqqas and neighboring ancient remains rather than treating them all as a single undifferentiated site.

Education and Institutions

The principal sources reviewed do not provide documented evidence of an independent school in Yarda, its founding date, or student enrollment. Given the village's very small population, no local educational institution should be assumed without an explicit source.

Operation Yiftach

Operation Yiftach was carried out between 15 April and 25 May 1948 as part of the military campaign for control of eastern Galilee. The operation was planned under Palmach commander Yigal Allon, and the Palmach's First Battalion served as its spearhead at the operational level.

PalQuest lists Yarda among the villages affected by Operation Yiftach. This does not, however, independently establish that the First Battalion was the unit that specifically entered Yarda. The village entry itself does not identify the attacking unit at village level.

Occupation and Depopulation of Yarda

The precise date of Yarda's first occupation is not known. Walid Khalidi cautiously states that the village may first have been occupied during Operation Yiftach in April–May 1948.

For this reason, the date 1 April 1948 displayed in Palestine Remembered's summary table is not treated here as established. It predates the formal beginning of Operation Yiftach on 15 April, while the detailed narrative on the same page reproduces Khalidi's qualified April–May chronology.

Following the Syrian-Israeli Armistice Agreement of July 1949, Yarda lay on the periphery of the Demilitarized Zone. Khalidi writes that if Yarda remained inhabited through the end of Operation Yiftach, or if inhabitants later returned, they may have shared the fate of other Palestinian communities within the Demilitarized Zone.

In that broader context, Khalidi cites an account that residents of DMZ villages were removed by Israeli authorities between 1949 and 1956 through direct and indirect pressure. This does not establish a village-specific final expulsion date for Yarda, and the 1949–1956 period should therefore remain a qualified possibility rather than a precise date of depopulation.

Palestine Remembered classifies Yarda's depopulation as complete ethnic cleansing and gives direct military assault as the cause of exodus. In more narrowly descriptive terms supported by the principal source, Yarda's depopulation was connected first to the military campaign in eastern Galilee and subsequently to the conditions created in and around the Demilitarized Zone, while the precise date of final removal remains uncertain.

Occupation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
Beginning of Operation Yiftach	15 April 1948	The Palmach began the wider operation to gain control of eastern Galilee.
Possible first occupation of Yarda	April–May 1948	Walid Khalidi states that Yarda may first have been occupied during Operation Yiftach; no exact date is given.
End of Operation Yiftach	25 May 1948	The village entry does not establish with certainty that Yarda was already permanently empty of its inhabitants at this point.
Armistice and Demilitarized Zone	July 1949	Yarda subsequently lay on the periphery of the Syrian-Israeli Demilitarized Zone.
Possible later removal	1949–1956	If residents remained or returned, Khalidi suggests that they may have shared the fate of other DMZ villagers who were removed under direct and indirect pressure. No village-specific date is established.
Destruction	Precise date not documented	Most structures were destroyed, although parts of house walls and the village khan survived.

Israeli Settlements on Yarda's Lands

An important distinction must be made between an existing Zionist settlement that took over Yarda land after 1948 and a new settlement subsequently established

directly on village land.

Settlement	Date	Relationship to Yarda
Ayyelet ha-Shahar	Established before 1948	Khalidi states that it took over land belonging to Yarda in 1948; it was not founded in 1948
Mishmar ha-Yarden	1949	Established on Yarda's land approximately one kilometer east of the village site

The Mishmar ha-Yarden established in 1949 on Yarda's lands should not be confused with an older settlement bearing the same name that had been founded in 1890 near Jisr Banat Ya'qub.

Yarda Today

In Walid Khalidi's field documentation, truncated sections of some house walls remained standing, together with walls of the village khan. Stones from destroyed houses were scattered across the site, and part of the land was being used as pasture.

PalQuest dates Khalidi's field photographs of Yarda to August 1987. His description therefore documents the site in that period rather than providing direct field verification of its condition in 2026.

Palestine Remembered also contains later community documentation of the khan and village site, including images captioned as dating from 2005 and 2014 and more recent contributions labeled 2022 and 2023. These materials indicate that elements of the khan and village remains continued to be documented at later dates, but they do not constitute a comprehensive independent survey of all village lands or present-day conditions.

Sources

- PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: Yarda

- PalQuest – Operation Yiftach
- Palestine Remembered – Yarda, Safad District
- Walid Khalidi – All That Remains: Yarda
- Institute for Palestine Studies – All That Remains, Walid Khalidi
- Village Statistics of 1945 – Sami Hadawi reproduction of Government of Palestine statistics