

Al-Sammu'i



Al-Sammu'i - Depopulated Palestinian Village of the Safad Subdistrict

Al-Sammu'i was a Palestinian village in the Safad Subdistrict. It stood on the eastern slope of Mount Zabud, overlooking Safad to the east, approximately 4 km west of the city and at an average elevation of about 675 metres above sea level. The Safad-Acre highway passed roughly 100 metres east of the village.

Al-Sammu'i had an official population of 310 in 1944/45 and a registered land area of 15,135 dunums. Agriculture formed the principal basis of village life, especially cereals, olives, and fruit trees. The village also had springs, a mosque, and a school documented in administrative correspondence from the 1940s.

Name of Al-Sammu'i

The village is recorded in the principal sources as al-Sammu'i. Palestine Remembered offers an interpretation linking the name to “Ishtamu'” and the meaning “obedience.” This derivation is not established as a linguistic fact in Walid Khalidi's detailed entry and is therefore treated as a secondary interpretation rather than a proven etymology.

Location

Al-Sammu'i stood on the eastern slope of Mount Zabud and overlooked Safad from the west. Its average elevation was approximately 675 metres above sea level.

The village was about 4 km west of Safad and approximately 100 metres west of the Safad–Acre highway. The Palestinian Encyclopedia places it southwest of Safad in the area between Mirun and al-Farradiyya.

Village lands bordered those of 'Ayn al-Zaytun, Mirun, Bayt Jann, al-Farradiyya, and al-Zahiriyya al-Tahta. Bedouin from 'Arab al-Madariba periodically pitched their tents southeast of the village during their annual migration cycle.

Al-Sammu'i Through History

In 1596, al-Sammu'i was part of the nahiya of Jira in the Ottoman district of Safad, with an estimated population of approximately 308. Villagers paid taxes on wheat, barley, olives, goats, beehives, vineyards, and a press used for processing olives or grapes.

In 1852, Victor Guérin estimated the village population at about 100 Muslims. When the Survey of Western Palestine reached al-Sammu'i in 1877, it recorded approximately 200 inhabitants and described the village as standing on a hill.

Village Layout

Al-Sammu'i had the form of a narrow rectangle. Its houses were constructed mainly from stone, and a number appeared to incorporate reused ancient building material.

The built-up area covered approximately 27 dunums in the 1944/45 statistics.

Population of Al-Sammu'i

Year	Population	Nature of Figure / Notes
1596	Approx. 308	Estimate derived from Ottoman fiscal records rather than a modern census.
1852	Approx. 100	Estimate recorded by Victor Guérin.
1877	Approx. 200	Estimate recorded by the Survey of Western Palestine.
1922	173	Official British Mandate census.
1931	213	Official census; 39 occupied houses were recorded.
1944/45	310	Official Government of Palestine statistics.
1948	360	Later Palestine Remembered estimate, not an official census.
1998	2,208 refugees	Later Palestine Remembered estimate of the village refugee population and descendants.

Number of Houses

Year	Number of Houses	Nature of Figure
1931	39	Official Government of Palestine census.
1948	65	Later Palestine Remembered estimate, not an official count.

Land Ownership in Al-Sammu'i

The registered lands of al-Sammu'i totalled 15,135 dunums in the 1944/45 statistics. Using the ownership terminology employed by Palestine Remembered, the distribution was:

Ownership Category	Area in Dunums
Palestinian	9,713
Transferred to Zionists	0
Communal/Public	5,422
Total	15,135

These figures correspond to the official categories of 9,713 Arab dunums and 5,422 Public dunums, with no land recorded in the Jewish ownership category.

Land Use in 1944/45

The following table keeps Public land separate from Arab land rather than folding it into the Palestinian non-cultivable total:

Land Use	Arab	Public	Total Dunums
Cereals	4,204	0	4,204
Plantations and Irrigable Land	422	0	422
Built-up Area	27	0	27
Non-Cultivable Land	5,060	5,422	10,482
Total	9,713	5,422	15,135

A total of 4,626 dunums was therefore classified as cultivated or cultivable, while built-up and non-cultivable land amounted to 10,509 dunums.

In the 1942/43 season, approximately 170 dunums were planted with olive trees. This is a crop-specific figure within the agricultural land and should not be added

again to the village total.

Economic Life in Al-Sammu'i

Agriculture was the principal economic activity. In 1944/45, 4,204 dunums were devoted to cereals and 422 dunums to plantations and irrigable cultivation.

Olive cultivation was particularly important, covering approximately 170 dunums in 1942/43. Fruit trees were also planted on lands south of the village.

Sixteenth-century records additionally document wheat, barley, olives, vineyards, goats, beekeeping, and a press used for olives or grapes.

Water Resources

Al-Sammu'i had several freshwater springs. A spring on the northern side of the village supplied drinking water, which the inhabitants stored in three tanks they had constructed.

The Palestinian Encyclopedia identifies 'Ayn al-Tina north of the village as a principal water source and notes the abundance of springs west of al-Sammu'i.

The Mosque and the Shrine of Shaykh Muhammad al-'Ajami

The population of al-Sammu'i was predominantly Muslim and the village had a mosque.

A local shrine dedicated to Shaykh Muhammad al-'Ajami also stood in the village according to Khalidi's detailed account. An automated Palestine Remembered field gives the name as Shaykh Ahmad al-'Ajami, but this article follows the name found in the detailed historical narrative.

Khalidi's principal village account does not document a church, so an automated reference to one on Palestine Remembered is not treated here as established

evidence of a church in the village.

Education

Administrative documents hosted by Palestine Remembered establish the existence of a school in al-Sammu'i during the 1940s. A letter from an education inspector dated 11 September 1945 concerned the need to register the village school, while another document dated 26 October 1945 listed prices for school furniture.

A further 1947 correspondence concerns the possible transfer of a teacher to al-Sammu'i. The available documents reviewed here do not provide a securely established foundation year or enrolment figure, so no unsupported numbers are added.

Archaeological Remains

Antiquities inspectors recorded a ruined columned building at al-Sammu'i together with other architectural fragments, indicating earlier occupation of the site.

Later Palestinian documentation also records wall foundations, rock-cut tombs, caves, column fragments, and cut stones. Khirbat Ra's al-Fawwar lay northwest of the village.

The available evidence does not securely date all of these remains, so they are not assigned to a specific historical period without further archaeological documentation.

Depopulation and Occupation of Al-Sammu'i

The depopulation and final occupation of al-Sammu'i occurred in two distinct stages and should not be reduced to a single date.

Walid Khalidi, discussing Israeli historian Benny Morris, states that al-Sammu'i was wholly or partially evacuated in May 1948. The initial flight probably occurred on

12 May, following the fall of Safad on 10–11 May.

The fall of Safad, combined with the Haganah's psychological-warfare campaign and mortar attacks on surrounding villages, produced a wider exodus from Palestinian communities in Upper Galilee. These events occurred during Operation Yiftach.

Al-Sammu'i, however, was not finally occupied in May. Khalidi states that the village was not taken militarily until late October 1948 during Operation Hiram.

Operation Yiftach and the Initial Exodus

Operation Yiftach ran from 15 April to 25 May 1948 and was carried out by Palmach forces with the objective of seizing eastern Galilee. The occupation of Safad on 10–11 May was followed by extensive population flight from surrounding Palestinian villages.

Palestine Remembered lists 12 May as al-Sammu'i's "occupation date" and associates the village with Operation Yiftach. Khalidi's more detailed account makes an important distinction: 12 May is best understood as the probable date of the initial exodus, not the final military occupation of the village.

Operation Hiram and the Final Occupation

In late October, al-Sammu'i lay within the remaining Upper Galilee pocket attacked by Israeli occupation forces during Operation Hiram, which ran from 28 to 31 October 1948.

Khalidi records, through the account he discusses, that al-Sammu'i offered resistance to the Israeli assault. The Israeli Minority Affairs Ministry was cited as referring to al-Sammu'i as an example of a village that resisted and was consequently depopulated through flight or a combination of partial flight and expulsion.

The village-specific source does not establish the precise day on which al-Sammu'i

fell during Operation Hiram, nor does it identify the specific brigade that entered the village.

Military Units

Operation Yiftach was carried out principally by Palmach forces, with the Palmach First Battalion serving as the spearhead of the operation as a whole. This stage, however, relates mainly to the May exodus rather than al-Sammu'i's final occupation.

Operation Hiram involved units from the Sheva', Carmeli, Golani, and Oded brigades. The principal al-Sammu'i entry does not identify which of these formations actually entered the village.

The most precise formulation is therefore: **initial exodus: during the context of Operation Yiftach; final occupation: during Operation Hiram; village-specific occupying unit: not independently established in the principal source.**

Occupation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
Beginning of Operation Yiftach	15 April 1948	Palmach forces began Operation Yiftach to seize eastern Galilee.
Fall of Safad	10–11 May 1948	Safad was occupied, producing widespread fear and population flight in surrounding Palestinian villages.
Initial exodus from al-Sammu'i	Probably 12 May 1948	Khalidi considers it likely that the village was wholly or partially evacuated after the fall of Safad. This was not the final military occupation of al-Sammu'i.
Village remained outside final occupation	May–October 1948	The available account states that al-Sammu'i was not militarily occupied in May despite the partial or complete population flight.

Stage	Date	Details
Beginning of Operation Hiram	28 October 1948	Israeli occupation forces launched their major offensive against the remaining Upper Galilee pocket.
Final occupation and resistance	28–31 October 1948	Al-Sammu'i fell during Operation Hiram. The village reportedly offered resistance, and final depopulation occurred through flight or a combination of flight and expulsion.

Israeli Settlements on Al-Sammu'i Village Lands

Kefar Shammai was established in 1949 on al-Sammu'i village land, immediately east of the former village site.

Amirim was established in 1950 on al-Sammu'i land farther south of the village site.

The Palestinian Encyclopedia gives 1961 as the establishment date of Kefar Shammai, but Khalidi and PalQuest date it to 1949. This article follows the 1949 date given in the principal village reference while noting the discrepancy.

Al-Sammu'i Today

In the field description published by Walid Khalidi in *All That Remains*, the village site was deserted. Only sections of stone walls, a well, and a canal remained from the former built environment.

A number of fig and olive trees grew across the site, while most of the surrounding land was being used by Israeli farmers for grazing.

Palestine Remembered also contains later community documentation of the ruins, including material dated February 2005. Such material can document the survival of features at that time, but it does not constitute a comprehensive field survey of the site in 2026.

Khalidi's own description derives from fieldwork conducted before the publication of *All That Remains* in 1992 and likewise should not be represented as direct current verification.

Sources

- [PalQuest – Al-Sammu'i](#)
- [PalQuest – Operation Yiftach](#)
- [PalQuest – Operation Hiram](#)
- [Palestine Remembered – Al-Sammu'i, Safad](#)
- [Palestine Remembered – Al-Sammu'i entry from Walid Khalidi's All That Remains](#)
- [Palestine Remembered – Administrative document on registering Al-Sammu'i School, 11 September 1945](#)
- [Palestinian Encyclopedia – Al-Sammu'i](#)
- [Institute for Palestine Studies – Walid Khalidi, All That Remains](#)
- [Government of Palestine – Village Statistics 1944/45, digital reference](#)