Dayr Tarif

Dayr Tarif: A Depopulated Palestinian Village in the Ramla District

Dayr Tarif was a Palestinian village in the Ramla District, situated at the edge of the coastal plain approximately 10 kilometres northeast of al-Ramla, at an average elevation of about 75 metres above sea level. Its population reached 1,750 in the 1944/1945 statistics. The village was subjected to an air raid in April 1948 and later became the scene of intense fighting during Operation Dani in July. Control changed hands before Israeli forces finally secured the village by 13 July 1948, and its Palestinian inhabitants were displaced during the Nakba and the occupation of Palestine in 1948.

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Ramla
Distance from district center	10 km northeast of Ramla
Average Elevation	75 m above sea level
Population in 1931	1,246
Number of Houses in 1931	291
Population in 1944/1945	1,750
Estimated Population in 1948	About 2,030 – a later demographic estimate, not an official census
Total Land Area in 1945	8,756 dunams
Attack and Depopulation	Zionist forces bombed the village from an airplane on 14 April 1948, wounding five villagers according to the newspaper Filastin; it was then occupied twice in the course of Operation Dani: first on 9 July, before an Arab Legion counter-attack forced the attacking force to withdraw, and finally by 13 July 1948. Benny Morris, as cited by Khalidi, indicates that the inhabitants were evacuated due to an Israeli attack on 10 July.
Final Israeli Control	By 13 July 1948, after a stiff fight around the village and neighbouring Bayt Nabala; it had been temporarily occupied on 9 July, and the New York Times, as cited by Khalidi, reported it occupied on 10 July.
Military Operation	Operation Dani
Military Unit	Units of the Armored Brigade (Eighth Brigade) and an infantry battalion of the Kiryati Brigade in the first capture (9 July), then the Armored Brigade's Ninth Commando Battalion (11 July); the sources do not name the unit that completed the final occupation
Cause of Depopulation	Direct military assault by Israeli occupation forces – according to Benny Morris as cited by Khalidi, the inhabitants were evacuated due to an Israeli attack on 10 July 1948

Item	Information
Settlements Documented on Village Lands	Beyt 'Arif, established in 1949 on the ruins of the village

Location

Dayr Tarif stood on uneven terrain at the eastern edge of the coastal plain, approximately 10 kilometres northeast of al-Ramla and about 7 kilometres from Lydda.

The village had an average elevation of approximately 75 metres above sea level and was about 3 kilometres east of Lydda airport.

A network of roads connected Dayr Tarif with Lydda, al-Ramla, al-'Abbasiyya, Jaffa, and the surrounding villages. It was also located close to a main road leading north toward Tulkarm.

A nearby railway running from northeast to southwest further improved the village's connections with surrounding urban areas.

Bayt Nabala lay to the east, al-Haditha to the south, al-Safiriyya to the west, and al-Tira to the north.

Dayr Tarif Through History

The site of Dayr Tarif has been identified with the Roman-period settlement of Bethariph.

In 1596, Dayr Tarif was a village in the nahiya of Ramla in the Gaza district, with an estimated population of approximately 270.

The inhabitants paid taxes on wheat, barley, sesame, fruit, goats, beehives, vineyards, and other forms of agricultural production.

In the late nineteenth century, Dayr Tarif was described as a small settlement at the edge of a plain.

Architecture

Dayr Tarif had an approximately trapezoidal layout and was divided into eastern and western sections separated by vacant land.

Most houses were built of adobe brick. Construction accelerated during the final years of the British Mandate, particularly in the eastern half of the village.

Dayr Tarif contained a mosque, several shops, and an elementary school.

The built-up area covered approximately 51 dunams in the 1944/1945 statistics.

Population

Dayr Tarif had 836 inhabitants in the 1922 census.

By the 1931 census, the population had increased to 1,246 people living in 291 houses.

According to the 1944/1945 statistics, the village population reached 1,750 Arabs.

The estimates of approximately 2,030 inhabitants in 1948 and 12,466 refugees and descendants in 1998 published by Palestine Remembered are later estimates rather than official British Mandate census figures.

Population of Dayr Tarif

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
1596	About 270	Historical estimate based on Ottoman records
1922	836	Official census
1931	1,246	Official census
1944/1945	1,750	Government of Palestine statistics

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
1948	About 2,030	Later estimate
1998	12,466	Estimate of refugees and their descendants

Number of Houses

The 1931 census recorded 291 houses in Dayr Tarif.

The estimate of approximately 474 houses for 1948 is a later figure rather than an official census count.

Education

Dayr Tarif's elementary school was established in 1920.

By 1947, the school had an enrollment of 171 pupils.

Local sources provide additional figures concerning teachers, the school library, and literacy in the village, but these details are not documented to the same degree in the principal Walid Khalidi and PalQuest account and are therefore not treated here as established official statistics.

Land of Dayr Tarif

According to the 1944/1945 statistics, Dayr Tarif had a total land area of 8,756 dunams.

Arab ownership amounted to 8,338 dunams, while 418 dunams were classified as public land. No Jewish-owned land was recorded within the village's statistical unit.

The entire 418 dunams of public land should not be described simply as roads and wadis, since the official statistics classify the category more broadly as public land.

Total	8,756
Ownership Category	**Area in Dunams**
Arab ownership	8,338
Jewish ownership	0
Public land	418

Agriculture and Economic Life

The inhabitants of Dayr Tarif practised both rain-fed and irrigated agriculture. Irrigation water was drawn from a number of artesian wells drilled on the southern and northwestern sides of the village.

Citrus fruits and bananas were important crops, alongside cereals, orchards, and olives.

According to the 1944/1945 statistics, 1,410 dunams were devoted to citrus and bananas, while 486 dunams were irrigated or used for plantations.

Cereal cultivation covered 5,989 dunams in total, including 5,981 Arab-owned dunams and 8 dunams of public land.

Palestine Remembered records approximately 714 dunams planted with olive trees. This represents a crop category within cultivated land and should not be added separately to the overall land-use totals.

Total	8,338	418	8,756
Type of Use	**Arab**	**Public**	**Total**
Citrus and bananas	1,410	0	1,410
Irrigated and plantation land	486	0	486
Cereals	5,981	8	5,989
Built-up area	51	0	51
Uncultivable land	410	410	820

Archaeology

Dayr Tarif was built on a mound covering a Roman-period site traditionally identified as Bethariph.

Remains of earlier buildings and fragments of ancient artifacts were found at the site.

Local sources provide additional descriptions of presses, cisterns, tombs, caves, and architectural fragments, but the principal reference material reviewed does not provide detailed dating for all of these remains. They should therefore not all be assigned to a single historical period without further archaeological evidence.

The April 1948 Air Raid

The first documented attack on Dayr Tarif took place on **14 April 1948**.

According to the Palestinian newspaper *Filastin*, as transmitted by Walid Khalidi and PalQuest, Zionist forces used an aircraft to bomb the village.

The raid wounded five villagers, including a two-year-old child.

Operation Dani

Operation Dani began on **9 July 1948** and continued until 18 July. It was one of the largest Zionist offensives conducted during the ten days between the two truces.

Its first phase, from 9 to 12 July, aimed to capture Lydda and al-Ramla and the Palestinian villages surrounding them.

Forces from the Harel, Yiftach, Eighth Armored, Kiryati, and Alexandroni brigades participated in this phase, while the second phase extended toward the Jerusalem corridor and al-Latrun.

Dayr Tarif was among the Palestinian villages directly affected by Operation Dani.

The Battle and Occupation of Dayr Tarif

Dayr Tarif experienced several stages of fighting and changes of control during Operation Dani, and its occupation cannot accurately be reduced to a single date without explanation.

First Capture on 9 July

On **9 July 1948**, units of the **Eighth Armored Brigade** and an infantry battalion of the **Kiryati Brigade** entered and captured Dayr Tarif at the beginning of Operation Dani.

The Transjordanian Arab Legion then launched a strong counterattack that forced the Israeli forces to withdraw.

Fighting on 10–11 July

The accounts transmitted by Walid Khalidi and PalQuest indicate that the villagers were displaced as a result of the Israeli attack around **10 July**.

On 11 July, the **Ninth Commando Battalion of the Eighth Armored Brigade** captured positions around Dayr Tarif and pushed Arab Legion defenders toward the village of Budrus, although complete control of Dayr Tarif was not yet secured at that moment.

Final Control

Fighting continued around Dayr Tarif as the offensive against Lydda and al-Ramla developed.

By **13 July 1948**, Dayr Tarif had finally fallen under Israeli control after intense fighting around the village and neighbouring Bayt Nabala.

Palestine Remembered's summary table gives 10 July as the occupation date,

while the detailed narrative shows that Israeli forces first entered on 9 July, were driven out, and did not secure final control until 13 July.

Israeli military accounts are cited here only as transmitted through Walid Khalidi and PalQuest and not through direct reliance on the original Israeli sources.

Occupation and Depopulation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
First attack on the village	14 April 1948	The newspaper Filastin reported that Zionist forces used an airplane to bomb Dayr Tarif, wounding five villagers, including a two-year-old child. According to Khalidi, this is the first recorded attack on the village.
Temporary occupation	9 July 1948	At the beginning of Operation Dani, units of the Armored Brigade (Eighth Brigade) and an infantry battalion of the Kiryati Brigade captured the village, but were forced to withdraw soon after entering it as a result of a “powerful counter-attack” by the Transjordanian Arab Legion, according to the History of the War of Independence as cited by Khalidi.
Depopulation of the village	10 July 1948	Benny Morris, as cited by Khalidi, indicates that the villagers were evacuated due to an Israeli attack on this day; this agrees with a New York Times report that the village was occupied late in the afternoon of 10 July, after Israeli occupation forces fended off an Arab effort to recapture Wilhelma.
Ground assault	11 July 1948	The Armored Brigade's Ninth Commando Battalion occupied positions surrounding Dayr Tarif and pushed its Arab Legion defenders back towards the village of Budrus, so that the village was temporarily bypassed, according to the History of the War of Independence as cited by Khalidi.
Final occupation	13 July 1948	Dayr Tarif finally fell to Israeli occupation forces by 13 July, after a stiff fight that raged around it and neighbouring Bayt Nabala. Khalidi considers it probable that it was reoccupied soon after 11 July, in preparation for the assault on Lydda and Ramla.

Stage	Date	Details
Settlement on village lands	1949	Israel established the settlement of Beyt 'Arif on the ruins of the village.

Displacement of the Population

The fighting during Operation Dani resulted in the displacement of Dayr Tarif's Palestinian inhabitants.

The account transmitted by Walid Khalidi associates the villagers' departure with the Israeli assault around 10 July 1948.

Once Israeli forces consolidated control by 13 July, the inhabitants were unable to re-establish their community at the village site, and most of the built environment was subsequently destroyed.

Israeli Settlements on the Lands of Dayr Tarif

Beyt 'Arif

Beyt 'Arif was established in 1949 on the ruins of Dayr Tarif.

Kefar Truman

Kefar Truman lies southwest of the Dayr Tarif village site but, according to Walid Khalidi and PalQuest, **it was not established on Dayr Tarif's lands**.

Israeli Settlements Associated with the Dayr Tarif Site

Name	Year Established	Relationship to the Village
Beyt 'Arif	1949	Established on the ruins of Dayr Tarif
Kefar Truman	1949	Located southwest of the site but not on Dayr Tarif's lands

Dayr Tarif After the Nakba

According to the field documentation relied upon by Walid Khalidi, rubble and debris from destroyed houses were scattered throughout the Dayr Tarif village site, which had become overgrown with thorns and other wild vegetation.

Several old olive and cypress trees remained standing.

The village school building also survived and was being used as a stable at the time of documentation.

The surrounding lands were cultivated with cotton and citrus fruits.

This description reflects the condition of the site during the field documentation relied upon by Walid Khalidi and should not necessarily be interpreted as a comprehensive survey updated to 2026.

Sources

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- PalQuest: Dayr Tarif.
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- Fawzi al-Qawuqji, Arab Liberation Army reports concerning fighting in the area.
- Government of Palestine, censuses of 1922 and 1931.
- Government of Palestine, Department of Statistics, *Village Statistics, 1945*.