Hawsha

Hawsha – Haifa Subdistrict

Hawsha was a depopulated Palestinian village in the Haifa subdistrict, situated approximately 13 km east of Haifa at an average elevation of about 100 meters above sea level, on the low hills separating the Haifa Plain from Marj ibn 'Amir.

A broad wadi west of the village separated Hawsha from neighboring Khirbat al-Kasayir. The two settlements remained distinct Palestinian communities but were closely linked geographically, socially, statistically, and during the fighting of April 1948. They also shared a cemetery.

The official 1922 Census of Palestine recorded 165 Muslim inhabitants in Hawsha. In 1931, Hawsha and Khirbat al-Kasayir together had 202 Muslim inhabitants living

in 53 houses. In 1944/45, Hawsha itself had 400 Arab Muslim inhabitants.

Hawsha and al-Kasayir became the center of an intense battle between the Arab Liberation Army and the Haganah in April 1948. After several stages of fighting, two companies of the Carmeli Brigade secured final control of both villages on 16 April 1948.

Location of Hawsha

Hawsha stood on low hills separating the Haifa Plain from Marj ibn 'Amir, overlooking the wider area between Haifa and Shafa 'Amr.

The village was oriented along an east–west axis, with its houses clustered around a small center containing a water cistern.

A broad wadi immediately to the west formed the natural dividing line between Hawsha and Khirbat al-Kasayir.

Hawsha and Khirbat al-Kasayir

Hawsha and Khirbat al-Kasayir should be understood as two neighboring Palestinian communities rather than two names for one village.

Al-Kasayir stood immediately west or northwest of Hawsha, across the wadi.

Their relationship was nevertheless close: they shared a cemetery, were combined in the 1931 census, and were drawn into the same major battle in April 1948.

Palestinian community testimony also explicitly distinguishes the families of Hawsha from those of al-Kasayir, even though the paired name “Hawsha and al-Kasayir” became common in collective memory.

Neighboring Areas

Palestinian local documentation places the village approximately within the following geographical setting:

Direction	Village / Area
East	Shafa 'Amr
West / Northwest	Khirbat al-Kasayir
South	Wadi Saffuriyya and the Ras 'Ali area
Farther west	Haifa Plain

These descriptions indicate the general geographical neighborhood. Original Mandate cadastral maps remain the best source for exact land boundaries.

The Name and the Ancient Site

Some scholars historically associated Hawsha with an older settlement known as Usha or Hosha, although the archaeological and biblical identification has not been universally accepted.

A Palestinian local tradition also associates the village name with the shrine of Nabi Hushan located at the site.

This article therefore distinguishes the modern Palestinian village from the much older archaeological layers and does not present a single etymology as conclusively established.

Formation of the Modern Community and Algerian Origins

The formation of the modern Palestinian community at Hawsha was closely connected with Maghrebi migrants, particularly Algerians who settled in northern Palestine during the nineteenth century.

Palestinian documentation and recent academic research record Algerian families settling at Hawsha during the 1880s, including migrants associated with the regions of Constantine, Guelma, and Oum el-Bouaghi.

Local memory also links a number of Hawsha families with migrants associated with Amir 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jaza'iri.

This Algerian background concerns the modern Palestinian community and should not be confused with the site's much older archaeological history.

Built Environment

The Palestine Index Gazetteer classified Hawsha as a hamlet.

Its houses formed a dense cluster around the village center and its water cistern.

The built-up area followed a generally east–west orientation.

The 1944/45 land-use statistics record 50 dunums of built-up land, but the statistical unit also included the settlement of Usha; the full 50 dunums should therefore not automatically be attributed to the Palestinian built-up area alone.

Population of Hawsha

Year	Population	Nature of figure / Notes
1922	165	Official Census of Palestine; Hawsha alone, all inhabitants Muslim
1931	202	**Combined Hawsha and Khirbat al-Kasayir**; all inhabitants Muslim
1944/45	400 Arabs	Palestinian Muslim population of Hawsha
1944/45	180 Jews	Residents of Usha included in the same statistical unit
1944/45 – combined unit	580	400 Arabs + 180 Jews; not the population of Palestinian Hawsha alone
1948	464	Later Palestine Remembered demographic estimate; not an official census
1998	2,850 refugees and descendants	Later demographic estimate published by Palestine Remembered

Number of Houses

Year	Houses	Notes
1931	53 occupied houses	**Combined total for Hawsha and Khirbat al-Kasayir**
1948	121	Later Palestine Remembered estimate; not an official house census

Land Ownership in 1944/45

Hawsha's land statistics require particular care because the official 1944/45 statistical unit included the Jewish settlement of **Usha**, established in 1937.

The combined unit totaled 901 dunums:

Official ownership category	Dunums
Arab	0
Jewish	894
Public	7
Total	**901**

The absence of registered Arab-owned dunums in this table does not mean that Hawsha's Palestinian inhabitants were not farmers or did not use agricultural land. Khalidi explicitly describes agriculture and animal husbandry as the basis of the village economy.

The figures instead reflect formally registered ownership within a statistical unit that included Usha by 1945.

Palestine Remembered's current simplified ownership display is incomplete because it omits the 894 dunums registered in the official Jewish ownership category. This article therefore follows the official categories reproduced by PalQuest.

Land Use in 1944/45

The following land-use figures also refer to the statistical unit that included Hawsha

and Usha:

Land-use category	Dunums
Cultivable / cultivated land	717
Built-up land	50
Remainder of statistical unit	134
Total	**901**

PalQuest's main table does not provide an Arab/Jewish breakdown of the 717 cultivable dunums, so none has been inferred.

Khalidi's qualitative account is clearer regarding Hawsha's Palestinian economy: grain was the principal crop, with a small northern area devoted to fruit and olive trees.

Economic Life in Hawsha

Agriculture and animal husbandry formed the basis of the Palestinian village economy.

Grain was the principal crop and was concentrated in the lands southwest of the village.

A small area north of the built-up village was planted with fruit and olive trees.

Livestock raising and grazing supplemented cultivation and formed an important part of household livelihoods.

Water

A water cistern stood at the center of Hawsha, around which the houses clustered.

The archaeological site also contained an old well and other water-related features.

The core source does not provide a detailed list of other late-Mandate village springs or wells, so none has been added without documentation.

Education

No independent school in Hawsha is securely documented in Khalidi or PalQuest.

The principal sources reviewed do not provide a school founding year or verified pupil enrollment.

No educational institution has therefore been added without evidence.

Religious Life and the Shrine of Nabi Hushan

The Palestinian inhabitants of Hawsha were Muslims.

The village site contained a shrine known as **Maqam Nabi Hushan**, one of Hawsha's best documented religious and archaeological landmarks.

Hawsha and neighboring Khirbat al-Kasayir shared a cemetery south of the village site.

That cemetery was still being used by nearby Bedouin communities at the time of Khalidi's later field survey.

Archaeological Remains

Hawsha occupied a site rich in earlier archaeological remains.

Documented features included ancient building foundations, a well, rock-cut tombs, a mosaic floor, and the shrine of Nabi Hushan.

Some scholars historically associated the site with ancient Usha or Hosha, but the identification is not treated here as an uncontested archaeological fact.

Hawsha before the Nakba

By the spring of 1948, the area between Shafa 'Amr and the Jewish settlements east of Haifa had become an active military zone involving the Haganah and the Arab Liberation Army.

The fighting at Hawsha and al-Kasayir developed within the wider military context of the battle around Mishmar ha-'Emeq farther south.

Arab Liberation Army Positions – 12 April 1948

On 12 April 1948, an Arab Liberation Army force composed largely of Druze fighters from Syria and Palestine took positions at Hawsha and Khirbat al-Kasayir.

Its snipers began firing on nearby Jewish settlements in an attempt to relieve pressure on Arab Liberation Army forces fighting at Mishmar ha-'Emeq.

The deployment transformed Hawsha and al-Kasayir into the center of a major confrontation over the following days.

Carmeli Brigade Attack – Around 14 April

Two days later, around 14 April, a unit of the Haganah's **Carmeli Brigade** attacked Hawsha and Khirbat al-Kasayir.

Intense fighting followed with the Arab Liberation Army, including close-quarter combat and the use of edged weapons.

The attacking Zionist force lost this first round, after which the Carmeli command decided to mount another assault and take both villages.

Final Occupation – 16 April 1948

At dawn on **16 April 1948**, two companies of the Carmeli Brigade entered Hawsha and al-Kasayir.

According to the account relayed by Khalidi, only a small number of guards were present in the villages at that moment.

The Arab Liberation Army immediately mounted a counterattack that continued throughout the day.

Fighting took place at extremely close range. The Druze ALA force reportedly came

close to turning the battle in its favor before an additional machine gun reached the Zionist force and shifted the balance.

By evening, the **Carmeli Brigade** had consolidated control of Hawsha and Khirbat al-Kasayir. The ALA did not renew its counterattack the following day.

Casualties in the Battle

The battle of Hawsha and al-Kasayir was one of the fiercest engagements in the area during April 1948.

A contemporary New York Times correspondent reported that many Arabs were killed in the fighting.

The following day, the Haganah claimed that it had killed 130 Druze fighters in the seizure of Hawsha.

This figure is presented here specifically as a **Haganah claim relayed through the sources used by Khalidi**, not as an independently verified final casualty count.

Depopulation of Hawsha

Khalidi does not establish the exact day on which every Palestinian inhabitant left Hawsha.

He considers it probable that depopulation began as the battle opened, if the report that the village was already largely empty on 16 April is accepted.

The chronology should therefore distinguish between **the beginning of civilian flight during the battle** and **the final military occupation securely dated to 16 April 1948**.

Palestine Remembered classifies the cause of depopulation as direct Zionist military assault, a characterization consistent with the overall military context, although the sources do not document the departure of each family individually.

The Battle of Hawsha and al-Kasayir and Mishmar ha-'Emeq

Some statistical summaries describe the military context as the “Mishmar ha-'Emeq operation.”

A more precise formulation is that the battle at Hawsha and al-Kasayir was **connected to the broader fighting around Mishmar ha-'Emeq**. The ALA deployed forces in the two Palestinian villages partly to relieve pressure on its troops farther south.

The engagement is also referred to in later literature as the Battle of Hawsha and al-Kasayir or the Battle of Ramat Yohanan, after the nearby Jewish settlement bloc.

Military Units

The Zionist formation that carried out the final occupation was the **Carmeli Brigade of the Haganah**.

At dawn on 16 April, **two Carmeli companies** occupied Hawsha and Khirbat al-Kasayir and then defended them against the ALA counterattack.

The principal Arab defenders were forces of the **Arab Liberation Army**, particularly a Druze contingent containing fighters from Syria and Palestine.

Occupation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
Escalation of the Mishmar ha-'Emeq fighting	Early April 1948	Fighting south of Hawsha directly influenced the Arab Liberation Army's deployment toward Hawsha and al-Kasayir.
ALA takes positions in Hawsha and al-Kasayir	12 April 1948	A Druze ALA force composed of Syrian and Palestinian fighters occupied positions in the two villages and fired on nearby Jewish settlements to relieve pressure at Mishmar ha-'Emeq.

Stage	Date	Details
First Carmeli attack	Around 14 April 1948	A Carmeli Brigade unit attacked the villages. Intense close-quarter fighting followed, and the attacking force lost that round.
Decision to seize both villages	After the 14 April battle	Following the failure of the first assault, the Carmeli command decided to launch a renewed attack and establish permanent control.
Alternative local date	15 April 1948	Some Palestinian local sources index this as the occupation date, but Khalidi's detailed chronology places the final takeover at dawn the following day.
Carmeli companies enter the villages	Dawn, 16 April 1948	Two Carmeli Brigade companies occupied Hawsha and al-Kasayir, where only a small number of guards reportedly remained.
ALA counterattack	16 April 1948	The Druze ALA force launched a counterattack lasting throughout the day, with extremely close-range fighting.
Battle decided	Evening, 16 April 1948	After additional machine-gun support reached the Zionist force, Carmeli consolidated control of both villages.
Palestinian civilian flight	During or before the completion of the battle	The precise date is unknown. Khalidi considers it probable that most villagers left as fighting began because Hawsha was reportedly largely empty by 16 April.
Final military occupation	16 April 1948	Haganah control became permanent and the Arab Liberation Army did not launch another attempt to retake the villages.
Destruction of the village	Later; exact date not established	Hawsha's houses were demolished, although portions of the walls of about twenty buildings remained.

Refugees from Hawsha

Palestine Remembered estimates Hawsha's Palestinian population in 1948 at

approximately 464. This is a later demographic estimate rather than an official Mandate census.

The same source estimates that Hawsha refugees and their descendants numbered approximately 2,850 in 1998.

Community testimony documents families from Hawsha in Lebanon and Syria after the Nakba. The core sources, however, do not provide a complete official distribution of all displaced village families.

Settlements and Land after Hawsha

The relationship between Hawsha's land and surrounding settlements requires a distinction between the Palestinian village site and the combined 1945 statistical unit.

Settlement / Area	Established	Relationship to Hawsha
Usha	1937	Established approximately 2 km west of the Palestinian village site and included in the official Hawsha/Usha statistical land unit by 1945
Ramat Yohanan	1932	Located nearby; Khalidi's Hawsha entry does not specifically state that it was founded on Hawsha village land
Shafa 'Amr	Existing Palestinian town	Khalidi states that Hawsha's village lands were later incorporated into the lands of Shafa 'Amr

Because Usha already existed before the Nakba and was included in the 1945 statistical land unit, the 894 Jewish-owned dunums should not be presented as a post-1948 settlement created after Hawsha's depopulation.

Hawsha Today

In Walid Khalidi's field description, Hawsha had been almost completely destroyed, fenced off, and declared an archaeological site.

No complete village house remained, although portions of the walls of roughly twenty houses were still standing and the outlines of doors and windows could be seen in the masonry.

A single palm tree stood among fig trees and cactus.

The cemetery south of the village continued to be used by nearby Bedouin communities, while a shrine remained nearby. A cypress grove stood north of the site and an avocado orchard to the south.

This core description derives from the field research conducted for *All That Remains* between **1987 and 1990** and is not direct field verification of conditions in 2026.

Palestine Remembered contains later Palestinian photographs and site visits from 2003–2007 showing cactus, figs, olives, rubble, and surviving wall remains. These materials help trace later conditions but do not constitute a comprehensive contemporary cadastral and field survey of all former Hawsha lands.

Sources

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- Palestine Remembered – Hawsha, Haifa District
- Palestine Remembered – Hawsha entry from Walid Khalidi's All That Remains
- Institute for Palestine Studies – Walid Khalidi, All That Remains
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- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics – Historical Census Archive
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- CAREP Paris – Academic study of Algerians in Palestine, Hawsha, and the 1948 exile
- PalQuest – All That Remains: Methodology and Field Research