

(Al-Tira (Haifa



Subdistrict: Haifa

Estimated population of al-Tira in 1948: 6,113

Date of occupation and depopulation: 16 July 1948

Military forces involved: A combined force drawn from the Golani, Carmeli, and Alexandroni Brigades, with support from Israeli naval units

Israeli settlements established on al-Tira's lands before 1948: None

Israeli settlements and localities established on al-Tira's lands from 1948 onward: Tirat Carmel, ha-Hotrim, Megadim, Kfar Galim, and Beit Tzvi

Al-Tira was a Palestinian village in the Haifa Subdistrict, situated approximately 7 kilometres south of the city of Haifa. It extended across the lower western slopes of Mount Carmel and overlooked the coastal plain. A secondary road connected it to the main coastal highway to the northwest.

Al-Tira was the most populous village in the Haifa Subdistrict and the second largest in land area after Ijzim. Its clustered stone houses formed a broadly cross-shaped settlement. The village had two elementary schools, one for boys and another for girls, as well as several springs. Its economy was based primarily on cereal cultivation, vegetables, fruit, olives, almonds, and animal husbandry.

Boundaries of al-Tira

Al-Tira was bordered by the following villages, towns, and geographical areas:

- North: Haifa.
- West: the Mediterranean Sea.
- Southwest: [Atlit](#).
- South: [Ayn Hawd](#).
- Southeast: [Khirbat al-Damun](#).
- East: [Balad al-Shaykh](#).

Architectural Form of al-Tira

In the late nineteenth century, al-Tira consisted of houses built of stone and mud at the foot of Mount Carmel. The nearby hills were marked by caves, while extensive olive groves surrounded the village. Its population was then estimated at approximately 1,200, and contemporary surveys reported that its residents cultivated 60 faddans. The faddan was not a uniform unit and could represent approximately 100–250 dunams in the records cited for the village.

The village's economy declined for a period after 1872 because of the burdens associated with

Ottoman conscription, but it subsequently recovered. By the mid-1940s, al-Tira had 5,240 Muslim residents and 30 Christians. Its stone houses were arranged in clusters, and the village's general plan was cross-shaped.

Economic Life in al-Tira

- The village lands contained several springs, while agriculture was based on cereals, vegetables, fruit, olives, and almonds. Some residents also raised livestock.
- In 1943, al-Tira reportedly produced more olives and olive oil than any other village in the Haifa Subdistrict. It had three mechanised olive presses, and approximately 4,600 dunams were planted with olive trees.
- The village was also known for its almond trees, which gave rise to the name *Tirat al-Lawz*, meaning “al-Tira of the Almonds.”
- According to the 1944/45 village statistics, 16,219 dunams of Palestinian-owned land were devoted to cereal cultivation, while 3,543 dunams were irrigated or used for orchards.

Land Ownership in al-Tira, 1944/45

Ownership category	Area (dunams)*
Palestinian ownership	23,940
Jewish ownership	6,553
Public land	14,769
Total	45,262

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Land Use in al-Tira, 1944/45

Land-use category	Palestinian ownership (dunams)*	Jewish ownership (dunams)*	Public land (dunams)*	Total (dunams)*
Irrigated land and orchards	3,543	66	0	3,609
Olive groves**	4,600	0	0	4,600
Cereal cultivation	16,219	1,028	85	17,332
Built-up area	224	677	0	901
Cultivable land	19,762	1,094	85	20,941
Uncultivated land	3,954	4,782	14,684	23,420

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

** The olive-grove figure is reported separately and should not be added to the cultivable-land total, because olive land may overlap with the orchard classification.

Archaeological Sites in al-Tira

The lands of al-Tira contained five archaeological khirbas whose remains indicate that the area had been inhabited in earlier historical periods. These included Khirbat al-Kanisa west of the village; Khirbat Ayn Umm al-Faraj to the north; Khirbat Ras Mithiliya and Khan Mithiliya to the south; Khirbat Kafr Samir to the north; and Khirbat al-Dayr, also north of the village.

Khirbat al-Dayr contained the remains of the Monastery of Saint Brocardus, caves that had previously been inhabited, a stone-built vaulted passage, and other archaeological remains.

An open-air archaeological site dating to the Middle Palaeolithic period was also identified south of the village.

Population of al-Tira

- In the late nineteenth century, the village population was estimated at approximately 1,200.
- The British Mandate census of 1922 recorded 2,346 residents.
- The 1931 census recorded 3,191 residents living in 624 houses. These figures included Tira Station, Neuhardhof, Kafr Samir Station, and al-Kababir.
- In 1945, the population was recorded as 5,270, comprising 5,240 Muslims and 30 Christians.
- The population in 1948 has been retrospectively estimated at approximately 6,113.
- The number of refugees descended from the village population was estimated at 37,542 in 1998. This is a demographic projection rather than an official census count.

Population of al-Tira

Year	Population
1596	286
Late nineteenth century	Approximately 1,200
1922	2,346
1931	3,191
1945	5,270
1948	Approximately 6,113
Estimated refugee population in 1998	37,542

The 1948 and 1998 figures are retrospective demographic estimates rather than contemporary census counts.

Education in al-Tira

Al-Tira had two elementary schools:

- A boys' elementary school offering instruction through the seventh grade.
- A girls' elementary school offering instruction through the fourth grade. Formal education for girls developed during the 1930s, and local accounts state that approximately 200 girls were enrolled shortly before the village's depopulation.

According to an account attributed to village mukhtar Abdullah Salman, the first female teacher to work in al-Tira was Fatima Sharaf al-Din from Egypt. She was followed by Mahfuza Said from Qisarya in the Haifa Subdistrict. Madiha Hammadi Bakir reportedly served as the girls' school headmistress during the 1940s. These details derive from local testimony and should be understood as part of the village's oral history.

The December 1947 Attack on al-Tira

On 12 December 1947, an Irgun unit attacked al-Tira with explosives, incendiary devices, and gunfire. Contemporary and later accounts agree that civilians, including children and elderly people, were among the casualties. PalQuest, drawing on *Filastin*, the *New York Times*, and military histories, records 13 people killed and 10 wounded, with one house destroyed and several others damaged.

Local village accounts identify the destroyed building as a two-storey house belonging to the Hujayr family and place the death toll at 17. Estimates therefore vary between sources: the contemporaneously reported figure of 13 fatalities is used as the principal documented count, while the higher figure of 17 is retained as a locally transmitted account.

Occupation and Depopulation of al-Tira

The Irgun attack of 12 December 1947 formed part of a series of attacks carried out in several Palestinian localities. In the weeks that followed, al-Tira was subjected to further assaults. A British communiqué reported that an attack on 5 February 1948 lasted approximately half an hour, caused no casualties, and drew no response from within the village.

A major attack was launched against al-Tira on 22 April 1948, alongside the Haganah

offensive against Haifa. Its stated military purpose was to prevent Arab reinforcements from reaching the city. A further attempt to capture the village began during the early hours of 25 April. According to Benny Morris, the attackers used mortars and machine guns, but British forces intervened and helped evacuate some women and children. The attack resumed the following morning and ended after another British intervention. On 5 May, approximately 600 additional residents were evacuated to the Jenin and Nablus areas.

Al-Tira continued to resist occupation for more than two months. On 13 May, an assault by the Alexandroni Brigade failed. The village was finally occupied on 16 July 1948, during the period between the two truces. A combined land force, supported by naval fire, participated in the operation. The warship *Eilat* bombarded the area before the ground forces advanced. The same wider operation also targeted Kafr Lam and al-Sarafand.

Most of the Palestinians who remained in al-Tira were subsequently expelled toward the Jenin–Nablus–Tulkarm Triangle, while others were detained in prisoner-of-war camps. Some village accounts state that several hundred residents had taken shelter in nearby caves before being assembled and transported toward the Jenin area.

Israeli Settlements Established on the Lands of al-Tira

- **ha-Hotrim** was established in June 1948, south of the village site.
- **Tirat Carmel** was established in 1949 on the village site and subsequently expanded over much of it.
- **Megadim** was established in 1949 farther from the village centre but on land belonging to al-Tira.
- **Kfar Galim** was established on village land in 1952.
- **Beit Tzvi** was added in 1953.

Some later development associated with Haifa and Tirat Carmel extended across additional parts of al-Tira's former lands. However, the available Palestinian reference sources specifically identify the five localities listed above; the attribution of the Deniya neighbourhood to al-Tira's lands could not be verified with sufficient confidence and is therefore not presented as an established fact.

Al-Tira Today

Tirat Carmel now occupies a substantial part of the former village site. Several Palestinian houses remain standing, including a house identified as having belonged to Irsan al-Dhib. The cemetery has been neglected, and a number of its gravestones are broken. The remains of two shrines are still visible.

Part of the former village school has continued to be used by students. Forested areas and residential buildings occupy parts of the surrounding mountain land, while sections of the coastal plain are cultivated.

Sources

- [PalQuest, “al-Tira — Haifa”](#).
- [PalQuest, “The Palestine War and the Nakba, 1947–1950”](#).
 - [Palestine Remembered, “al-Tira — Haifa”](#).
- Walid Khalidi (ed.), *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*, Institute for Palestine Studies, Washington, D.C., 1992.
- Government of Palestine, *Village Statistics, April 1945*.
- Government of Palestine, *Census of Palestine, 1931*.
- Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949*, cited only for the April–July 1948 attacks, evacuations, expulsions, and detentions.