Umm al-Zinat

Umm al-Zinat: A Depopulated Palestinian Village in the Haifa District

Umm al-Zinat was a Palestinian village in the Haifa District, situated on a rocky cliff in the southeastern part of Mount Carmel, approximately 20.5 kilometres southeast of the city of Haifa, at an average elevation of about 325 metres above sea level. The Fourth Battalion of the Golani Brigade occupied the village on 15 May 1948, and its inhabitants were displaced during the Nakba and the occupation of Palestine in 1948.

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Haifa

Item	Information
Distance from district center	20.5 km southeast of Haifa
Average Elevation	325 m above sea level
Population in 1931	1,029
Number of Houses in 1931	209
Population in 1944/1945	1,470 – 1,450 Muslims and 20 Christians
Estimated Population in 1948	About 1,705 – a later demographic estimate, not an official census
Total Land Area in 1945	22,156 dunams
Attack and Depopulation	On the night of 19–20 January 1948 the village was raided by a Zionist unit of ten militiamen dressed in British army uniforms; the raid was driven back, according to the newspaper Filastin. The Golani Brigade's Fourth Battalion then occupied the village on 15 May 1948, according to the History of the War of Independence as cited by Khalidi; the available sources do not describe how its inhabitants left.
Final Israeli Control	15 May 1948, according to the History of the War of Independence as cited by Khalidi
Military Operation	Operation Bi'ur Hametz – PalQuest lists Umm al-Zinat among the villages affected by this operation (22–24 April 1948), but the village was occupied on 15 May 1948, and the available sources name no other operation for its occupation
Military Unit	The Golani Brigade's Fourth Battalion, according to the History of the War of Independence as cited by Khalidi
Cause of Depopulation	Military occupation of the village by Israeli occupation forces; the available sources do not describe how its inhabitants left
Settlements Documented on Village Lands	Elyaqim, established in 1949 on the southern side of the village site

Location

Umm al-Zinat stood on a rocky cliff in the southeastern part of Mount Carmel overlooking Bilad al-Rawha'.

The village had an average elevation of approximately 325 metres above sea level and lay about 20.5 kilometres southeast of Haifa.

A secondary road connected it with both the coastal highway and the Haifa–Jenin road, giving the village an important position along inland routes leading toward Haifa.

Architecture

In the late nineteenth century, Umm al-Zinat was described as a stone-built village situated on a saddle-shaped hill, with approximately 350 inhabitants at the time.

During the British Mandate, it became one of the ten largest villages in the Haifa subdistrict in terms of both population and land area.

The village layout resembled a tennis racquet, with a narrow extension running toward the northeast, while its stone houses were clustered closely together.

The built-up area amounted to approximately 69 dunams in the 1944/1945 statistics.

Population

The official 1922 Census of Palestine recorded 787 inhabitants in Umm al-Zinat.

In the 1931 census, the population reached 1,029, living in 209 houses.

According to the 1944/1945 statistics, the population was 1,470, including 1,450 Muslims and 20 Christians.

The estimate of approximately 1,705 inhabitants for 1948 and 10,472 refugees and descendants in 1998, published by Palestine Remembered, are later estimates rather than official British Mandate censuses.

Population of Umm al-Zinat

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
Late nineteenth century	About 350	Historical estimate
1922	787	Official census
1931	1,029	Official census
1944/1945	1,470	Government of Palestine statistics: 1,450 Muslims and 20 Christians
1948	About 1,705	Later estimate
1998	10,472	Estimate of refugees and their descendants

Number of Houses

The 1931 census recorded 209 houses in Umm al-Zinat.

The figure of approximately 346 houses for 1948 found in later tables is an estimate rather than an official Government of Palestine count.

Education

A boys' elementary school was established in Umm al-Zinat around 1888 during the Ottoman period.

Local accounts provide additional details concerning seventh-grade education, the school's location in the area known as 'Arus al-Bayadir, and the subjects taught there. These details do not appear in the same form in the principal Walid Khalidi and PalQuest account and are therefore not presented here as fixed official statistics.

Land of Umm al-Zinat

According to the 1944/1945 statistics, Umm al-Zinat had a total land area of 22,156 dunams.

Arab ownership amounted to 18,684 dunams, Jewish ownership to 51 dunams, while 3,421 dunams were classified as public land.

Total	22,156
Ownership Category	**Area in Dunams**
Arab ownership	18,684
Jewish ownership	51
Public land	3,421

Agriculture and Economic Life

The inhabitants of Umm al-Zinat depended on agriculture and the raising of livestock and poultry. They cultivated cereals, vegetables, and fruit trees and obtained domestic water from several wells.

The village was particularly noted for olive cultivation. In 1943, approximately 1,834 dunams were planted with olive trees, which Walid Khalidi describes as the largest area devoted to olive trees in the Haifa subdistrict at the time.

Umm al-Zinat also had four manual olive presses.

According to the 1944/1945 statistics, cereal cultivation covered 9,920 dunams, including 9,879 Arab-owned dunams and 41 Jewish-owned dunams.

Irrigated and plantation land covered 1,742 dunams, all Arab-owned.

The 1,834 dunams planted with olives represent a crop category within the cultivated land and should not be added separately to the overall land-use totals.

Total	18,684	51	3,421	22,156
Type of Use	**Arab**	**Jewish**	**Public**	**Total**
Cereals	9,879	41	0	9,920
Irrigated and plantation land	1,742	0	0	1,742
Built-up area	69	0	0	69
Uncultivable land	6,994	10	3,421	10,425

Archaeology

Umm al-Zinat contained archaeological remains indicating earlier settlement at the site, including building foundations, rock-cut tombs, and a stone sarcophagus in the eastern part of the village.

Khirbat al-Haramis lay approximately 1 kilometre south of the village and contained the ruins of an ancient settlement whose precise date is not established in the principal sources.

The Nakba and the Attacks on Umm al-Zinat

The January 1948 Raid

Umm al-Zinat was raided on the night of 19–20 January 1948 by a Zionist unit of approximately ten armed men wearing British military uniforms.

The Palestinian newspaper *Filastin*, as reproduced by Walid Khalidi and PalQuest, reported that the raid was repelled and did not mention casualties.

Operation Bi'ur Hametz

Following the fall of Haifa in April 1948, the Haganah carried out Operation Bi'ur Hametz between 22 and 24 April and occupied a number of villages and positions around Haifa.

Umm al-Zinat's final occupation occurred approximately three weeks after that operation had ended. It is therefore inaccurate to state that the village itself was captured directly during Operation Bi'ur Hametz.

The Occupation of Umm al-Zinat

The **Fourth Battalion of the Golani Brigade** occupied Umm al-Zinat on **15 May 1948**.

Walid Khalidi and PalQuest transmit this information from the Israeli *History of the War of Independence* through the Palestinian source; this article does not rely directly on the original Israeli account.

The village stood along an inland route considered by the Haganah to be an alternative supply road to Haifa because the coastal road south of the city remained vulnerable to disruption by Palestinian resistance in the area known as the Little Triangle until late July.

The principal Palestinian sources reviewed do not identify a separate, conclusively documented named military operation for the final capture of Umm al-Zinat on 15 May.

Occupation and Depopulation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
First attack on the village	19–20 January 1948	A Zionist unit of ten militiamen dressed in British army uniforms carried out a night raid on the village, a tactic commonly used to gain entry to Arab villages. The newspaper Filastin reported that the raid was driven back and did not mention any casualties.

Stage	Date	Details
Beginning of the military operation	22–24 April 1948	In the aftermath of the fall of Haifa, the Haganah carried out Operation Bi'ur Hametz, conducted mainly by Carmeli Brigade units, and occupied a number of villages in the surrounding area; PalQuest lists Umm al-Zinat among the villages affected by the operation. Umm al-Zinat itself was occupied on 15 May 1948.
Final occupation	15 May 1948	The Golani Brigade's Fourth Battalion occupied Umm al-Zinat, according to the History of the War of Independence as cited by Khalidi; the village lay on what the Haganah considered its 'alternate supply route' to Haifa. The New York Times reported on the same day, citing Haganah sources, that these forces had taken 'several' Arab villages on the slopes of Mount Carmel and near Afula.
Settlement on village lands	1949	Zionists established the settlement of Elyaqim on the southern side of the village site.

Displacement and Destruction

The occupation of Umm al-Zinat resulted in the displacement of most of its Palestinian inhabitants, who were not permitted to re-establish their village community.

Palestinian local sources state that several families remained on the outskirts of the village and in its surrounding groves after the occupation and that military forces expelled them on 8 August 1948, after which the village buildings were demolished the following day.

These specific dates of 8 and 9 August do not appear in the principal Walid Khalidi and PalQuest account and are therefore presented as a Palestinian local-source account rather than as a chronology agreed upon by all sources.

Israeli Settlement on the Lands of Umm al-Zinat

Elyaqim

The settlement of Elyaqim was established in 1949 on the southern side of the Umm al-Zinat village site and on its lands.

Settlement Established on the Lands of Umm al-Zinat

Name	Year Established	Relationship to Village Lands
Elyaqim	1949	Established on the southern side of the village site and on Umm al-Zinat's lands

The Site of Umm al-Zinat After the Nakba

According to the field documentation relied upon by Walid Khalidi, the village houses were reduced to rubble scattered throughout the site.

Thorns, shrubs, cactus plants, fig trees, and pomegranate trees covered the area, while a small forest grew over part of the site.

The village cemetery remained visible. Parts of the surrounding land were used as cattle pasture, while other areas were planted with fruit and olive trees.

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

- PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: Umm al-Zinat.
- PalQuest: Umm al-Zinat.
- PalQuest: Operation Bi'ur Hametz.
- Palestine Remembered: Umm al-Zinat, Haifa District.

- Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains*: Umm al-Zinat, as reproduced by Palestine Remembered.
- Land Research Center: Palestinian documentation concerning Umm al-Zinat and the later displacement.
- Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains*, entry on Umm al-Zinat.
- Government of Palestine, censuses of 1922 and 1931.
- Government of Palestine, Department of Statistics, *Village Statistics, 1945*.