Ijzim

Ijzim: A Depopulated Palestinian Village in the Haifa District

Ijzim was a Palestinian village in the Haifa District, located in the southwestern part of Mount Carmel, about 19.5 kilometres south of the city of Haifa, at an average elevation of approximately 50 metres above sea level. Together with Jaba' and Ayn Ghazal, Ijzim resisted several attempts to occupy the area during the Nakba before the three villages fell under Israeli control in late July 1948 during Operation Shoter, and their inhabitants were displaced in the context of the occupation of Palestine in 1948.

Basic Information

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Haifa
Distance from district center	19.5 km South of Haifa
Average Elevation	50 meters above sea level
Population in 1931	2,160 inhabitants - Official census
Number of Houses in 1931	442 houses - Official census including Ijzim and associated localities
Population in 1944/1945	2,970 inhabitants - Government of Palestine statistics
Estimated Population in 1948	About 3,445 inhabitants - a later demographic estimate, not an official census
Total Land Area in 1945	46,905 dunams
Attack and Depopulation	After the occupation of Haifa in April 1948, Ijzim, Jaba', and Ayn Ghazal remained in Palestinian hands in an area south of the city that became known as the “Little Triangle.” The three villages resisted for several months, and their defenders disrupted Israeli military movement and transportation along the coastal road between Haifa and Tel Aviv. PalQuest, drawing on sources used by Walid Khalidi, records that t...
Final Israeli Control	24-26 July 1948
Military Operation	Operation Shoter (“Policeman”)
Military Unit	Alexandroni Brigade, Golani Brigade, The Carmeli Brigade
Cause of Depopulation	Military assault by Zionist troops
Settlements Documented on Village Lands	Kerem Maharal

Location

Ijzim stood on one of the peaks in the southwestern section of Mount Carmel. A plain bordered the village to the northeast, while a broad valley known as Wadi Abu Madi lay to the south.

A secondary road connected the village with the main coastal road, which passed approximately 3 kilometres to the west and linked Haifa with areas farther south.

The lands of Ijzim bordered those of several Palestinian villages, including Umm al-Zinat, Daliyat al-Karmil, Ayn Hawd, al-Mazar, Jaba', and Ayn Ghazal.

Ijzim Through History

In 1596, Ijzim was a village in the Shafa subdistrict of the Lajjun district. Historical sources cited by PalQuest give an estimated population of about 55. The inhabitants paid taxes on wheat, barley, olives, goats, beehives, and other products.

Ijzim was the home of the al-Madi family, an influential Palestinian family that exercised considerable authority in the coastal region south of Mount Carmel and along the western slopes of the Nablus hills during the first half of the nineteenth century.

One of the family's most prominent figures was Shaykh Mas'ud al-Madi, who was a leading figure in the Haifa coastal region in the early nineteenth century and served for a period as governor of Gaza. The al-Madi family constructed a large fortified residence in Ijzim that remained one of the village's most important landmarks.

British vice-consul Edward Rogers visited Ijzim in 1859 and estimated its population at approximately 1,000. Yusuf al-Shafi'i, another notable resident of the village, later became a judge at the Beirut court in 1887.

Architecture and Village Landmarks

Ijzim was the second-largest village in the Haifa District in terms of land area. Its houses generally extended along a north-south axis and were built mainly of stone and cement.

The village had two mosques and an elementary school for boys, in addition to several economic and social facilities. It also contained three traditional olive presses and one mechanized olive press.

Among the most important historic buildings in Ijzim was the Diwan of Mas'ud al-Madi, a large two-storey stone building dating to the eighteenth century according to Walid Khalidi's documentation.

- Two mosques.
- An elementary school for boys.
- Girls' education documented in school correspondence from the final years of the British Mandate.
- Three traditional olive presses.
- One mechanized olive press.
- The Diwan of Mas'ud al-Madi.

Population

The population of Ijzim was 1,610 in the 1922 census and increased to 2,160 in the 1931 census. In the 1944/1945 Village Statistics, the population stood at 2,970.

Most of the village inhabitants were Muslims. PalQuest records that 140 Christians were living in the village in 1945.

Palestine Remembered gives an estimated population of 3,445 for 1948 and an estimated 21,157 refugees and descendants in 1998. These figures are later estimates and are not official British Mandate censuses.

Population of Ijzim

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
1596	55	Historical figure reported in the sources
1859	About 1,000	Estimate by Edward Rogers

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
1922	1,610	Official census
1931	2,160	Official census
1944/1945	2,970	Government of Palestine statistics
1948	About 3,445	Estimate published by Palestine Remembered
1998	21,157	Estimate of refugees and their descendants
The figures for 1948 and 1998 are estimates and are not official British Mandate censuses.		

Number of Houses

The 1931 census recorded 442 houses in the statistical unit that included Ijzim and a number of associated khirbas and localities. The figure of 704 houses for 1948, published by Palestine Remembered, is a later estimate and does not represent an official Government of Palestine census for that year.

Documented and estimated number of houses in Ijzim

Year	Number of Houses	Nature of Figure
1931	442	Official census including Ijzim and associated localities
1948	About 704	Later estimate
No official housing census for Ijzim was conducted in 1948.		

Land of Ijzim

According to the 1944/1945 statistics, the total land area of Ijzim amounted to 46,905 dunams, making it the second-largest village in the Haifa District by land area.

Arab ownership amounted to 23,619 dunams, while 23,286 dunams were classified as public land. The statistics record no Jewish land ownership within the boundaries

of Ijzim.

Total	46,905
Ownership Category	**Area in Dunams**
Arab ownership	23,619
Jewish ownership	0
Public land	23,286

Agriculture and Land Use

The inhabitants of Ijzim depended on agriculture, animal husbandry, and poultry raising. The village lands contained several springs, streams, and wells that supported agricultural activity.

Cereals were the main crop. In the 1944/1945 agricultural year, approximately 17,791 dunams were devoted to cereals, while 2,367 dunams were irrigated or used for plantations.

Ijzim was also particularly known for olive cultivation. During the 1942/1943 season, approximately 1,340 dunams were planted with olive trees. This figure belongs to a different agricultural year from the 1944/1945 land-use table and should therefore not be added as a separate category to that table.

Total	23,619	23,286	46,905
Type of Use	**Arab**	**Public**	**Total**
Cereals	17,791	0	17,791
Irrigated and plantation land	2,367	0	2,367
Built-up area	91	0	91

Total	23,619	23,286	46,905
Type of Use	**Arab**	**Public**	**Total**
Uncultivable land	3,370	23,286	26,656

Education

Ijzim had an elementary school for boys established around 1880 during the Ottoman period, according to PalQuest and Walid Khalidi's *All That Remains*.

Some material published by Palestine Remembered gives 1888 as the year of the school's establishment, creating a minor discrepancy in the sources. The wording “around 1880” has therefore been adopted here because it reflects the date given in the principal reference sources.

Educational correspondence preserved by Palestine Remembered confirms that the boys' school remained active during the 1940s. One letter dated 12 July 1945, sent by the mukhtars and notables of Ijzim to the education inspector, requested an increase in the number of teachers.

A further document dated 25 January 1947, issued by the headmistress of a school in Ijzim concerning a female teacher beginning her duties, supports the existence of formal education for girls in the village during the final years of the British Mandate.

Archaeology and Historic Sites

Ijzim was built over the remains of an earlier settlement, and archaeological remains were also found in its surroundings, particularly at Khirbat Kabbara and Khirbat al-Maqura.

Walid Khalidi records that these sites had not been archaeologically excavated at the time of his documentation. No specific date or cultural attribution should therefore be assigned to these remains without documented archaeological

evidence.

The Diwan of Mas'ud al-Madi is among the most important surviving historic buildings in the village and reflects the influence of the al-Madi family in the Haifa coastal region during the nineteenth century.

The Nakba and the Resistance of the “Little Triangle”

After the occupation of Haifa in April 1948, Ijzim, Jaba', and Ayn Ghazal remained in Palestinian hands in an area south of the city that became known as the “Little Triangle.” The three villages resisted for several months, and their defenders disrupted Israeli military movement and transportation along the coastal road between Haifa and Tel Aviv.

PalQuest, drawing on sources used by Walid Khalidi, records that the first attempt to capture the area took place on 18 June 1948 and ended in failure. A second attempt on 8 July also failed.

Operation Shoter and the Occupation of Ijzim

The Military Operation

The final assault on Ijzim, Jaba', and Ayn Ghazal was carried out during Operation Shoter, meaning “Policeman.” The operation was officially presented as a “police operation” against inhabitants who were said to refuse recognition of Israeli authority while the second truce was in effect.

PalQuest, drawing on Walid Khalidi's documentation and the sources he cites, explains that this designation was used to circumvent the restrictions imposed during the truce, while the operation itself was military in scale and execution.

Participating Brigades

Units from three Israeli brigades participated in the attack on the Ijzim–Jaba'–Ayn Ghazal area: the Alexandroni, Carmeli, and Golani brigades. The assault was also supported by artillery and aerial bombardment.

- Alexandroni Brigade.
- Carmeli Brigade.
- Golani Brigade.

Date of the Assault and Occupation

The final assault began on 24 July 1948. Palestine Remembered gives this date as the date of Ijzim's occupation, while PalQuest provides a more detailed sequence, stating that the assault began on 24 July and that the three villages fell after two days of intense artillery and aerial bombardment.

It is therefore more precise to distinguish between 24 July 1948 as the beginning of Operation Shoter and the final assault, and 26 July 1948 as the date by which Israeli forces had completed their military takeover of the Little Triangle, including Ijzim.

Bombardment and Displacement

The three villages were subjected to intense artillery and aerial bombardment during the assault. PalQuest reports that most of the inhabitants who remained were forced to leave or fled eastward toward the Wadi Ara area.

Former residents later testified that they were subjected to fire from troops and aircraft while fleeing.

United Nations observers investigated the capture of the Little Triangle. According to PalQuest, the investigation concluded that the inhabitants of all three villages had been forced to evacuate after the operation was completed.

The United Nations and the Displacement of the Three Villages

The occupation of Ijzim, Jaba', and Ayn Ghazal generated international concern because the attack took place during the second truce. PalQuest documents that United Nations mediator Count Folke Bernadotte addressed the case of the inhabitants of the three villages in his reports.

On 13 September 1948, Bernadotte ordered that the refugees be allowed to return to the three villages and that damaged homes be repaired or rebuilt. Israel refused to implement the order, and the inhabitants of Ijzim were not allowed to return to their village.

The sources give differing figures for the number of dead and missing in the three villages combined. Arab reports and United Nations reports vary in their estimates, and no specific casualty figure should therefore be attributed to Ijzim alone without independent evidence.

Fate of the Population and Buildings

The Palestinian inhabitants of Ijzim were displaced as a result of the military operations in late July 1948, and most became refugees and displaced Palestinians away from their village.

A large part of the village was destroyed after the occupation, but Ijzim was not completely demolished. A number of houses and historic buildings remained standing and were later used for different purposes.

Israeli Settlement Established on the Lands of

Ijzim

Kerem Maharal

In 1949, the Israeli settlement of Kerem Maharal was established directly on the site of the Palestinian village of Ijzim.

Settlement Established on the Site of Ijzim

Name	Year Established	Location
Kerem Maharal	1949	Established on the site of Ijzim
According to PalQuest and Walid Khalidi's *All That Remains*.		

Occupation and Depopulation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
The Military Operation	Not specified precisely	The final assault on Ijzim, Jaba', and Ayn Ghazal was carried out during Operation Shoter, meaning “Policeman.” The operation was officially presented as a “police operation” against inhabitants who were said to refuse recognition of Israeli authority while the second truce was in effect. PalQuest, drawing on Walid Khalidi's documentation and the sources he cites, explains that this designation was used to circumv...
Date of the Assault and Occupation	24 July 1948	The final assault began on 24 July 1948. Palestine Remembered gives this date as the date of Ijzim's occupation, while PalQuest provides a more detailed sequence, stating that the assault began on 24 July and that the three villages fell after two days of intense artillery and aerial bombardment.
Bombardment and Displacement	Not specified precisely	The three villages were subjected to intense artillery and aerial bombardment during the assault. PalQuest reports that most of the inhabitants who remained were forced to leave or fled eastward toward the Wadi Ara area.

The Site of Ijzim Today

According to the field documentation published by Walid Khalidi, Ijzim was partially destroyed, while a number of its buildings remained standing. The mosque survived but was left to deteriorate.

The Diwan of Mas'ud al-Madi, a two-storey building dating to the eighteenth century, also survived and was later incorporated into the site. According to *All That Remains*, the village school was converted into a synagogue and the former coffeehouse was used as a post office.

The adjacent plain was used for agriculture, while parts of the surrounding hilly areas were converted into recreational spaces.

This description is based primarily on Walid Khalidi's field documentation. More recent material published by Palestine Remembered also documents the continued presence of the mosque, the village school, and the Diwan of Mas'ud al-Madi, but this article does not claim to provide a comprehensive field survey of the site in 2026.

Sources

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- Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains*, entry on Ijzim.
- Nafez Nazzal, *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee, 1948*, Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, 1978.
- Government of Palestine, Department of Statistics, *Village Statistics,*

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- 1931 Census of Palestine, with the note that the statistical unit for Ijzim included a number of associated khirbas and localities.