

Al-Tantura



Subdistrict: Haifa

Estimated population in 1948: approximately 1,730

Date of occupation and depopulation: 22–23 May 1948

Military unit: 33rd Battalion, Alexandroni Brigade

Israeli settlements established on the village's lands before 1948: None

Israeli settlements established on or near the village site after 1948: Nahsholim and Dor

General Information about al-Tantura

Al-Tantura was a Palestinian coastal village in the Haifa Subdistrict, approximately 24 kilometres south of Haifa. It stood on a low hill rising slightly above the surrounding sandy shoreline. A secondary road connected it with the main coastal highway and, through that route, with Haifa and other urban centres. The village also had a railway station serving the coastal line.

Al-Tantura was established beside the archaeological remains of the ancient city and port of Dor. In the late nineteenth century, it was described as a coastal village extending from north to south, with its harbour immediately to the north.

Boundaries of al-Tantura

Al-Tantura was situated among the following Palestinian villages and localities:

- To the north: [Kafr Lam](#).
- To the west: the Mediterranean Sea.
 - To the south: [Qisarya](#).
- To the south-east: Zammarin.
 - To the east: Furaydis.
- To the north-east: [Ayn Ghazal](#).



The depopulated Palestinian village of al-Tantura

Origin of the Name al-Tantura

The village stood beside the remains of ancient Dor, a major Canaanite and Phoenician coastal city whose ruins remain visible north of the village site. The Arabic name “al-Tantura” is commonly associated with the idea of a raised or pointed feature, possibly referring to the nearby archaeological mound.

A local account links the name with Egyptian soldiers who settled in the area during the nineteenth-century campaigns of Ibrahim Pasha and who were said to have originated from the Egyptian city of Tanta. According to this account, the names Tanta and Dora were gradually combined to form al-Tantura. This explanation belongs to local oral tradition and has not been conclusively established by historical or linguistic research.

Economic Life in al-Tantura

The residents of al-Tantura worked in agriculture as landowners, tenant farmers and agricultural labourers engaged in ploughing, weeding and harvesting. Seasonal crops occupied a larger area than fruit trees. The principal crops included wheat, sorghum, barley, sesame, chickpeas, broad beans, peas, cucumbers, potatoes and watermelons. Olive, citrus, cactus, mulberry and fig trees were also cultivated.

Fishing was an important component of the village economy because of al-Tantura’s coastal location and harbour. Some residents worked as professional fishermen, while animal husbandry included sheep, cattle, camels, horses and poultry. British Mandate statistics for 1945 classified approximately 8,325 dunams as cultivable land under Palestinian and Jewish ownership.

Land Ownership in al-Tantura

Ownership category	Land ownership (dunams)*
Palestinian ownership	11,758
Jewish ownership	2,051
Public land	711
Total	14,520

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres. Published totals sometimes vary because sources used different cadastral boundaries and classification methods.

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Land Use in al-Tantura in 1945

Land-use category	Palestinian ownership (dunams)*	Jewish ownership (dunams)*
Citrus cultivation	26	0
Irrigated land and orchards	287	573
Olive cultivation*	20	0
Cereal cultivation	6,777	662
Built-up area	120	3
Cultivable land	7,090	1,235
Uncultivated land	5,259	813

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres. Olive cultivation was included within the broader orchard category and should not be added separately when calculating the total cultivable area.

Population of al-Tantura

During the nineteenth century, population estimates varied considerably; one frequently cited

estimate placed the population at approximately 1,200. The official British Mandate census of 1922 recorded 750 residents. The population rose to 953 in the 1931 census, when the village had 202 inhabited houses.

In 1945, al-Tantura had 1,490 residents, comprising 1,470 Muslims and 20 Christians. Its projected population immediately before its depopulation in 1948 was approximately 1,728, commonly rounded to 1,730.

Year	Population*
Nineteenth-century estimate	Approximately 1,200
1922	750
1931	953
1945	1,490
1948 estimate	1,728
Estimated refugees and descendants in 1998	10,614

* The 1948 and 1998 figures are demographic estimates rather than contemporaneous census totals.

Education in al-Tantura

Until the Nakba, al-Tantura had two elementary schools. The boys' school was founded in 1889 and provided instruction through the seventh elementary grade. A girls' school was opened in 1937/38 and taught pupils through the fourth grade. The village also retained the traditional *kuttab* system, in which pupils received elementary instruction in reading, writing, arithmetic and religious studies.

Archaeological Sites in and around al-Tantura

Al-Tantura stood beside the extensive archaeological remains of ancient Dor, an important Mediterranean port whose history extends through the Canaanite, Phoenician, Hellenistic,

Roman and later periods. Archaeological remains and inscriptions discovered in the wider area date to several historical periods, including the Late Bronze Age.

Occupation and Depopulation of al-Tantura

By May 1948, al-Tantura was among the last Palestinian villages remaining along this section of the coastal plain. On the night of 22–23 May, the 33rd Battalion of the Alexandroni Brigade attacked the village from the landward approaches, while the coast was also placed under military control. Palestinian defenders resisted the assault until their ammunition was depleted, after which the village was occupied on the morning of 23 May.

Following the occupation, women, children and some elderly residents were expelled towards neighbouring Furaydis. Many of the surviving men were separated from their families and transferred to detention camps, including a camp at Ijlil. Other villagers were displaced beyond the borders of Palestine. The occupation, expulsions and killings formed part of Israel's occupation of Palestine—the Nakba.

The Tantura Massacre

Palestinian testimonies collected shortly after the Nakba and during subsequent decades describe the execution of prisoners and unarmed residents after the village had surrendered.

According to these accounts, the attackers assembled the inhabitants near the beach, separated men and older boys from women and children, and transported the latter group towards Furaydis.

Survivor accounts state that groups of detained men were selected and taken away, while others were compelled to collect and bury bodies from the village streets. Some testimonies name an Alexandroni officer, Shimshon Mashvitz, as having participated in selecting detainees. These detailed sequences are based primarily on Palestinian oral testimony and should be presented as survivor accounts rather than as a complete surviving military record.

Contemporary Palestinian writer Nimr al-Khatib documented reports of killings at al-Tantura

soon after the Nakba. Later research by Mustafa al-Wali, published by the Institute for Palestine Studies, drew upon extensive testimony from village survivors. Walid Khalidi referred to evidence concerning the methodical shooting and collective burial of approximately forty young men. Other investigations estimated that more than 200 people may have been killed during and after the assault.

The precise number of victims has not been conclusively established. Estimates vary between sources, partly because some totals combine those killed during the battle with prisoners and civilians executed after the village's surrender. A figure of approximately 220 has been cited in some accounts, but it should not be treated as a definitive total. The available Palestinian testimonies and subsequent investigations nevertheless provide substantial evidence that executions occurred and that victims were buried in one or more collective graves.

For additional information, see [the Tantura Massacre](#).

Israeli Settlements on the Lands of al-Tantura

Nahsholim was established in June 1948 on the lands of al-Tantura, north-east of the former village centre. Dor was subsequently established east of the village site in 1949. Parts of the former village and its coastal lands were later incorporated into recreational and tourist facilities.

Al-Tantura Today

Only a limited number of structures and landmarks remain, including a shrine, a fortified structure, an old well and several houses. One surviving residence belonging to the al-Yahya family bears an inscription dating its construction to 1882. Palm trees and patches of cactus remain scattered across the site.

Much of the former village site and shoreline has been transformed into recreational and tourist facilities, including a beach resort and swimming areas. Areas identified by Palestinian testimonies and later investigations as possible collective burial sites are located within or near

the present recreational zone.

Sources

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