Qaqun



Qaqun: A Depopulated Palestinian Village in the Tulkarm District

Qaqun was a depopulated Palestinian village in the Tulkarm District, located approximately 6 kilometers northwest of the city of Tulkarm. It stood on a hill overlooking the Qaqun Plain at an average elevation of about 25 meters above sea level.

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Tulkarm

Item	Information
Distance from district center	6 km northwest of Tulkarm
Average Elevation	25 m above sea level
Population in 1931	1,367
Number of Houses in 1931	260
Population in 1944/1945	1,970
Estimated Population in 1948	About 2,285 – a later demographic estimate, not an official census
Total Land Area in 1945	41,767 dunams
Attack and Depopulation	After an Irgun raid in March 1948 failed to penetrate the village, Israeli occupation forces, mainly the Third Battalion of the Alexandroni Brigade, attacked it on the night of 4–5 June 1948 with heavy mortar and artillery fire; Iraqi army units resisted from three lines of trenches until a violent attack in daylight decided the battle. Some of the village's inhabitants remained in their homes at least until July 1949.
Final Israeli Control	5 June 1948, after an attack that began on the night of 4–5 June, according to the History of the War of Independence as cited by Khalidi
Military Unit	Mainly the Third Battalion of the Alexandroni Brigade, according to the History of the War of Independence as cited by Khalidi; the Irgun had raided the village in March 1948
Cause of Depopulation	Direct military assault by Israeli occupation forces
Settlements Documented on Village Lands	Kibbutz ha-Ma'pil, built in 1945 on what had traditionally been village land, 3 km to the northwest; and Gan Yoshiyya, Ometz and 'Olesh (1949), Channi'el (1950) and Yikkon (early 1950s, a transit camp for new Jewish immigrants later made into a regional school), all on village land

Qaqun was historically and agriculturally important. Secondary roads linked it with Tulkarm and neighboring villages, while the Tulkarm–Haifa railway passed approximately half a kilometer east of the village. During the Nakba and the

occupation of Palestine in 1948, Israeli forces captured Qaqun on 5 June after a fierce battle with Iraqi army units. The principal attacking force was the Third Battalion of the Alexandroni Brigade.

Location of Qaqun

- Qaqun was located approximately 6 kilometers northwest of Tulkarm.
- Its average elevation was about 25 meters above sea level.
- The village stood on a hill overlooking the Qaqun Plain, with Tulkarm situated to its southeast.
- The Tulkarm–Haifa railway passed approximately half a kilometer east of the village.
- Secondary roads connected Qaqun with Tulkarm and neighboring Palestinian communities.

Qaqun Through History

Qaqun was an important historical site. During the Crusader period it was known by several names, including Quaquo, Chaco, and Caco, and was administratively associated with Caesarea.

In 1267, the Mamluk sultan Baybars captured Qaqun and ordered its fortress rebuilt. A church within the complex was renovated and converted into a mosque, the markets were re-established, and Qaqun subsequently became a commercial center with a khan serving merchants and travelers.

Under the Mamluks, Qaqun also served as a postal station on the Gaza–Damascus route.

In 1596, Qaqun was the center of the nahiya of Qaqun within the liwa' of Nablus and had an estimated population of 127. Its inhabitants paid taxes on wheat, barley, goats, beehives, and other products.

In 1799, Napoleon's forces defeated Ottoman troops sent to Qaqun to obstruct the

French advance toward Acre. The village was again destroyed in the nineteenth century by the army of Ibrahim Pasha after inhabitants of the area participated in the revolt against Egyptian rule.

The Built Environment and Facilities of Qaqun

In the late nineteenth century, Qaqun was described as a large village built around the central tower of its Crusader-Mamluk fortress. Houses constructed of stone and mud were dispersed across the hill.

By the end of the British Mandate period, the inhabitants were Muslims. The village mosque stood near the main market, and residents relied on wells for drinking water.

An elementary school for boys was established in Qaqun during the British Mandate.

Land Ownership in Qaqun

The total land area recorded for Qaqun in the 1944/1945 statistics was 41,767 dunums.

The Arabic Palestine Remembered table uses the categories “Palestinian,” “Transferred to Zionists,” and “Masha'.” These terms are preserved below to reflect the terminology of that source. The Government of Palestine statistics, as reproduced by PalQuest, classify the corresponding categories as “Arab,” “Jewish,” and “Public.”

Total	**41,767**
Ownership Category	**Area in Dunums**
Palestinian	35,611
Transferred to Zionists	4,642
Masha' / Communal	1,514

Land Use in Qaqun in 1944/1945

Official statistics show the extensive agricultural use of Qaqun's lands. A total of 37,809 dunums was devoted to cereals, consisting of 34,376 dunums of Arab land, 3,032 dunums of Jewish land, and 401 dunums of public land.

Citrus and bananas covered 2,289 dunums, consisting of 713 dunums of Arab land and 1,576 dunums of Jewish land. Plantations and irrigable land covered 243 dunums, including 210 dunums of Arab land and 33 dunums of Jewish land.

Total	**35,611**	**4,642**	**1,514**	**41,767**
Land Use	**Arab**	**Jewish**	**Public**	**Total**
Citrus and Bananas	713	1,576	0	2,289
Plantations and Irrigable Land	210	33	0	243
Cereals	34,376	3,032	401	37,809
Built-up Area	137	0	7	144
Non-Cultivable Land	175	1	1,106	1,282

Eighty dunums of the Arab-owned plantations were planted with olive trees. This area formed part of the 210 dunums classified as plantations and irrigable land and should not be added again as a separate land-use category.

Economic Life in Qaqun

Agriculture was the principal basis of Qaqun's economy. The inhabitants cultivated cereals, watermelons, vegetables such as cucumbers, olives, citrus fruit, and bananas.

The 1944/1945 statistics show that cereals occupied the largest portion of cultivated land, while citrus, bananas, irrigated cultivation, and plantations formed another important sector of the village economy.

Population of Qaqun

The 1922 census recorded 1,629 inhabitants in Qaqun, including 29 Christians, with the remainder Muslims. In the 1931 census, the population was 1,367, all Muslims, living in 260 houses.

The Government of Palestine's 1944/1945 statistics recorded a population of 1,970.

The figures of 2,285 inhabitants for 1948 and 14,034 refugees for 1998 published by Palestine Remembered are later estimates and are not official Government of Palestine censuses.

Palestine Remembered's statistical table currently gives 1,367 for both 1922 and 1931. However, the 1922 figure conflicts with the official 1922 census and with the site's own historical account of Qaqun, both of which give a population of 1,629 for that year.

Population of Qaqun

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
1596	127	Historical estimate based on Ottoman records
1922	1,629	Official census; 29 Christians and the remainder Muslims
1931	1,367	Official census; all Muslims
1944/1945	1,970	Government of Palestine statistics
1948	2,285	Estimate published by Palestine Remembered
1998	14,034	Estimated refugee population published by Palestine Remembered
Official censuses and statistics should be distinguished from later estimates.		

Number of Houses in Qaqun

The 1931 census recorded 260 houses in Qaqun. The figure of 434 houses for 1948 published by Palestine Remembered is a later estimate rather than an official

Government of Palestine census figure.

Number of Houses in Qaqun

Year	Number of Houses	Nature of Figure
1931	260	Official census
1948	434	Estimate published by Palestine Remembered
The officially documented house count is the figure recorded in the 1931 census.		

Education in Qaqun

An elementary school for boys was established in Qaqun during the British Mandate. Its building was among the principal village structures that survived the Nakba.

Archaeological and Historical Remains in Qaqun

Qaqun was an important archaeological and historical site. Its principal remains included the Crusader fortress later restored under the Mamluks, the Mamluk mosque, and architectural fragments from other structures.

The fortress was particularly associated with the Mamluk sultan Baybars, who captured Qaqun in 1267 and ordered it rebuilt. During the Mamluk period, the village also served as a postal station on the Gaza–Damascus route and as a commercial center for merchants and travelers.

The March 1948 Raid on Qaqun

Several months before its final occupation, Qaqun was subjected to a raid by the Irgun on 6 March 1948, according to Walid Khalidi, citing the *History of the Haganah*.

The Palestinian newspaper *Filastin* also reported an attack on the morning of 7 March. Citing a communiqué issued by Palestinian militia forces, the newspaper

stated that a large attacking force failed to penetrate the village and threw grenades that wounded two women.

The raid did not result in Qaqun's occupation, and the village remained one of the last Palestinian communities still standing in this section of the coastal plain during the following weeks.

The Attack and Occupation of Qaqun on 5 June 1948

On 9 May 1948, Haganah intelligence officers met to discuss the fate of Qaqun and several other Palestinian villages on the coastal plain. Walid Khalidi, citing Israeli historian Benny Morris, states that a decision was taken to subdue or evacuate these communities. This information is included because it is cited by the Palestinian source Khalidi/PalQuest rather than through independent reliance on an Israeli source.

The plan was not immediately implemented at Qaqun. A few days before the first truce, Israeli forces instead launched an offensive specifically intended to capture the village.

The attack began during the night of 4–5 June 1948 with heavy mortar and artillery fire. The attacking force consisted primarily of the Third Battalion of the Alexandroni Brigade.

The attackers encountered strong resistance from Iraqi army units defending Qaqun's northern approaches from three lines of trenches and fortified positions. Fighting continued into daylight before the attacking forces gained control of the village on 5 June.

The New York Times described the battle as one of the bloodiest fought up to that point and reported intense close-range fighting between the two sides.

Accounts of Iraqi casualties differ substantially. The official Israeli account cited by Khalidi claimed that an Iraqi force of approximately 450 men was wiped out, while Palestine Remembered describes a separate figure of 45 soldiers as an

unconfirmed report. Neither figure is therefore presented here as a verified final casualty count.

Name of the Military Operation

Walid Khalidi's account and the PalQuest entry do not provide a separate formal operation name for the attack that captured Qaqun. They describe it as an offensive launched specifically to seize the village, carried out primarily by the Third Battalion of the Alexandroni Brigade.

Palestine Remembered, however, classifies the capture of Qaqun under an operation it calls “Coastal Clearing.” Because Khalidi and PalQuest do not use this name for the Qaqun attack, it is presented here as the designation used by Palestine Remembered rather than as a name consistently established across the sources.

The Displacement of Qaqun's Inhabitants

The military assault and occupation resulted in the flight and displacement of most of Qaqun's Palestinian population. The village, however, was not completely emptied of its inhabitants immediately after its capture on 5 June 1948.

According to Walid Khalidi, some inhabitants remained in their homes until at least July 1949. At that time, the possible removal of Palestinians still living in Qaqun and several other villages was under discussion within the Israeli government amid international objections to further expulsions.

It is therefore important to distinguish between Qaqun's military occupation on 5 June 1948 and the longer process by which its Palestinian population was ultimately displaced.

Occupation and Depopulation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
Settlement on village lands	1945	Kibbutz ha-Ma'pil was built on what had traditionally been village land, 3 km to the northwest.
First attack on the village	6 March 1948; 7 March according to Filastin	The Irgun carried out a 'hit-and-run' raid on the village on 6 March, according to the History of the Haganah as cited by Khalidi, while the Palestinian newspaper Filastin reported an attack on the morning of 7 March. Quoting a communiqué of the Palestinian militia forces, the paper said the large attacking unit failed to penetrate the village and threw grenades that wounded two women.
Decision to expel or subdue the inhabitants	9 May 1948	Qaqun was one of the last remaining coastal communities north of Jaffa, and Haganah intelligence officers met to decide its fate, agreeing to 'expel or subdue' Qaqun and a handful of other villages on the coastal plain, according to Haganah records consulted by Morris as cited by Khalidi. The plan was not implemented immediately.
Shelling of the village and ground assault	Night of 4–5 June 1948	About a week before the first truce, Israeli occupation forces, mainly the Third Battalion of the Alexandroni Brigade, launched a two-pronged attack on the village that began with heavy mortar and artillery fire and met resistance from Iraqi army units defending its northern approaches, according to the History of the War of Independence as cited by Khalidi.
Final occupation	5 June 1948	By daybreak a large proportion of the Iraqi defenders still held their fortified positions, but 'a violent attack in the light of day decided the battle' in favour of the attackers, according to the Israeli account. The New York Times called the battle 'one of the bloodiest to date', with hand-to-hand fighting; the official Israeli version claimed that an entire Iraqi battalion (450 men) had been wiped out, and skirmishes continued around the village for several days.

Stage	Date	Details
Consideration of destroying the village	7 June 1948	Two days after the village's occupation, a top official of the Jewish National Fund was considering whether it should be destroyed, but the plan was not implemented immediately, according to Khalidi.
Some inhabitants remain in the village	Until at least July 1949	Some of the village's inhabitants remained in their homes at least until July 1949, when Israeli leaders were warned by the international community not to expel them. On 28 July 1949 Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett, referring to Qaqun and a number of other villages, noted that 'the Arabs learned the lesson; they are not running away'. The sources do not say when those who remained were removed.
Settlements on village lands	1949	Three settlements were founded on village land: Gan Yoshiyya, 1 km south of the village site; Ometz, 1 km to its north; and 'Olesh, 4 km to its southwest.
Settlement on village lands	1950	The settlement of Channi'el was built on village land.
Settlement on village lands	Early 1950s	Yikkon was built on village land to serve as a transit camp for new Jewish immigrants and was later made into a regional school.

Settlements Established on the Lands of Qaqun

Walid Khalidi identifies several settlements and institutions established on lands traditionally belonging to Qaqun before and after the Nakba:

- Ha-Ma'pil: established in 1945 on land traditionally belonging to Qaqun, approximately 3 kilometers northwest of the village site.
- Gan Yoshiyya: established in 1949 on village land, approximately 1 kilometer south of the site.
- Ometz: established in 1949 on village land, approximately 1 kilometer north of the site.
- 'Olesh: established in 1949 on village land, approximately 4 kilometers southwest of the site.

- Channi'el: established in 1950 on the lands of Qaqun.
- Yikkon: established in the early 1950s on village land as a transit camp for Jewish immigrants and later converted into a regional school.

Burgeta, established in 1949 approximately 5 kilometers southwest of Qaqun, was not built on village land according to Khalidi.

The Site of Qaqun After the Nakba

According to Walid Khalidi's field description, the principal surviving features of Qaqun included the fortress on top of the hill, a well that belonged to the Abu Hantash family, and the village school building.

The fortress was surrounded by stone rubble and the remains of demolished houses. Cactuses and an old mulberry tree grew south of the hill, while the surrounding lands were used for orchards and the cultivation of cotton, pistachios, and vegetables.

Khalidi also recorded an Israeli fodder-processing factory northeast of the village site.

At the time of the field survey conducted for *All That Remains*, the former village school building was still being used as a school by Israelis. This description reflects the condition of the site during the period of Khalidi's fieldwork and should not necessarily be treated as an updated survey of the site today.

Sources

- PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: Qaqun
- Institute for Palestine Studies: Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains*
- Palestine Remembered: Qaqun – Tulkarm District
- Palestine Remembered: History of Qaqun, including the 1922 population figure
- Government of Palestine: Report and General Abstracts of the Census of

1922 – copy hosted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

- Sami Hadawi: *Village Statistics 1945*, based on Government of Palestine statistics