Saqiya

Saqiya – A Depopulated Palestinian Village in the Jaffa Subdistrict

Saqiya was a Palestinian village in the Jaffa Subdistrict, situated approximately 8.5 km east of Jaffa on uneven ground in the central coastal plain, at an average elevation of about 25 meters above sea level.

Paved roads passing through or near the village connected it with Jaffa, Lydda, and neighboring Palestinian villages including al-Khayriyya, Kafr 'Ana, Bayt Dajan, and Yazur.

Saqiya was depopulated during the Nakba and the occupation of Palestine in 1948 in the course of Operation Hametz, an offensive designed to seize the Palestinian

villages east of Jaffa and isolate the city from its hinterland. Sources disagree on the exact occupation date, placing it between 25 and 29 April 1948. PalQuest's detailed Operation Hametz chronology identifies the Alexandroni Brigade as the force that attacked and captured Saqiya and al-Khayriyya.

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Jaffa
Distance from Jaffa	Approximately 8.5 km east
Elevation	Approximately 25 m above sea level
Population, 1944/45	1,100
Estimated population, 1948	1,276
Total land area	5,850 dunums
Date of occupation	Sources range from 25 to 29 April 1948; Palestinian and AP accounts place it on 27–28 April
Military operation	Operation Hametz
Village-specific military unit	Alexandroni Brigade
Brigades participating in Operation Hametz	Alexandroni, Kiryati, and Giv'ati
Israeli settlement established on village land	Or Yehuda, 1950

Location and Geography of Saqiya

Saqiya was built on uneven terrain in the central coastal plain. A network of paved roads passing through or close to the village provided access to Jaffa, Lydda, and surrounding Palestinian communities.

Its position east of Jaffa placed it in an intensively cultivated rural landscape close to the main road toward Lydda and the Lydda airport area.

Neighboring Villages and Localities

Mandate-era maps and Palestine Remembered's village maps indicate the following approximate geographical relationships:

- Northwest: al-Khayriyya.
- East: Kafr 'Ana.
- West and southwest: Yazur.
- South: Bayt Dajan.
- Southeast: the Lydda airport and al-Safiriyya area.
- North and northeast: the map labels Zionist colonies rather than a Palestinian locality called “Qubaniyat.”

These directions describe approximate geographical relationships and should not be treated as replacements for detailed cadastral boundaries.

Name of Saqiya

The Arabic name Saqiya refers to an irrigation channel or a water-lifting device, a name consistent with the agricultural environment of the village.

Saqiya under Ottoman Rule

In 1596, Saqiya was recorded in the nahiya of Ramla in the liwa' of Gaza, with an estimated population of about 270.

The villagers paid taxes on wheat, barley, fruit, sesame, goats, beehives, and vineyards.

In the mid-eighteenth century, the Syrian Sufi traveler al-Bakri al-Siddiqi recorded passing through Saqiya on his way to Jaffa.

Built Form of Saqiya

In the late nineteenth century, a well stood south of the village and the adobe-brick houses were closely clustered.

During the final years of the British Mandate, some concrete houses were built and the village expanded modestly.

The inhabitants were Muslims. A mosque was established late in the Mandate period, and the village also had an elementary school for boys.

Population of Saqiya

The official 1922 Census of Palestine recorded 427 inhabitants in Saqiya, all Muslims.

By the official 1931 census, the population had risen to 663, again all Muslims, living in 142 occupied houses.

The 1944/45 Village Statistics recorded 1,100 Arabs.

Palestine Remembered later estimated the population at 1,276 in 1948 and the number of refugees and their descendants at 7,836 in 1998. These are retrospective estimates rather than official British Mandate census counts.

Year	Population	Nature of Figure / Notes
1596	Approximately 270	Estimate derived from Ottoman tax records
1922	427	Official census; all Muslims
1931	663	Official census; all Muslims
1944/45	1,100	Official British Mandate statistics
1948	1,276	Later Palestine Remembered estimate, not an official census
1998	7,836 refugees	Later estimate of refugees and their descendants

Number of Houses

Year	Houses	Nature of Figure
1931	142	Occupied houses recorded in the official census

Year	Houses	Nature of Figure
1948	273	Later estimate reported by Palestine Remembered

Education in Saqiya

An elementary school for boys was established in Saqiya in 1936.

The school acquired 16 dunums of village land for agricultural training.

By the mid-1940s, 136 pupils were enrolled.

Land Ownership in Saqiya

The total area of Saqiya in the 1944/45 Village Statistics was 5,850 dunums.

Palestine Remembered presents the simplified ownership categories as follows:

Ownership Category	Area in Dunums
Palestinian	5,151
Transferred to Zionists	447
Communal/Public	252
Total	**5,850**

The official Village Statistics use the original categories Arab, Jewish, and Public: 5,151 dunums were classified as Arab, 447 as Jewish, and 252 as public land.

Land Use in 1944/45

Use	Arab	Jewish	Public	Total
Citrus and bananas	2,422	93	0	2,515
Plantations and irrigable land	145	0	0	145
Cereals	2,534	354	0	2,888
Built-up land	30	0	0	30
Non-cultivable land	20	0	252	272

Use	Arab	Jewish	Public	Total
Total	**5,151**	**447**	**252**	**5,850**

Cultivable land totaled 5,548 dunums, approximately 95 percent of the village area: 5,101 Arab dunums and 447 Jewish dunums.

This corrects a significant error in some simplified tables that give only 422 Arab dunums of citrus. The detailed official figure is 2,422 Arab dunums.

The 272 dunums of non-cultivable land also should not be assigned entirely to Palestinian private ownership: 20 dunums were Arab and 252 were public.

Economic Life

Agriculture formed the principal basis of life in Saqiya. Villagers cultivated fruit trees, particularly citrus, as well as cereals and vegetables.

In 1944/45, 2,422 Arab dunums were planted with citrus and bananas, making citrus one of the village's most important commercial crops.

Another 2,534 Arab dunums were devoted to cereals, while plantations and irrigable Arab land covered 145 dunums.

The village's proximity to Jaffa, Lydda, and the major road network facilitated the marketing of its agricultural produce.

Water

A well was recorded south of Saqiya in the late nineteenth century.

The village's intensive citrus and orchard cultivation also depended on groundwater and wells used for irrigation across the central coastal plain.

The Mosque

Saqiya's inhabitants were Muslims, and a mosque was established in the village during the final years of the British Mandate.

The principal source does not provide enough documentation about its construction date, dimensions, or architecture to support more detailed claims.

Occupation and Depopulation of Saqiya in 1948

During the final days of April 1948, Haganah forces launched a major offensive against Palestinian villages east of Jaffa in the context of Operation Hametz.

The precise date of Saqiya's occupation differs between sources. Israeli sources cited by Khalidi place the attack and capture on **25 April 1948**.

A Palestinian source and an Associated Press dispatch, however, state that Saqiya fell several days later, on **27–28 April**, together with al-Khayriyya and Kafr 'Ana.

PalQuest's detailed Operation Hametz chronology provides a third date. It states that the Haganah launched the main phase of the operation on **29 April 1948** and that Alexandroni units advanced from Kefar Azar, attacked Saqiya and al-Khayriyya, and captured both villages.

Because of this source conflict, no single day should be presented as uncontested. A cautious formulation places Saqiya's fall in the period **27–29 April 1948**, while noting that older Israeli sources give 25 April.

Operation Hametz and the Military Unit

Saqiya was one of the Palestinian villages targeted during **Operation Hametz**. The purpose of the operation was to seize villages along both sides of the railway east of Jaffa, isolate the city from its Palestinian hinterland, and facilitate its fall.

Three Haganah brigades participated in the operation: **Alexandroni, Kiryati, and Giv'ati**, under the overall command of Dan Epstein, commander of the Alexandroni Brigade.

The operational assignments were distinct. **Alexandroni Brigade** units attacked Saqiya and al-Khayriyya; Kiryati operated against Salama and the northern suburbs of Jaffa; Giv'ati operated south of the railway toward Yazur and Tall al-Rish.

The most accurate village-specific military-unit entry for Saqiya is therefore **Alexandroni Brigade**. Carmeli Brigade was not one of the brigades listed for Operation Hametz.

The *History of the Haganah*, as cited by Khalidi, states that Saqiya and neighboring villages were captured “without a fight,” but provides no detailed account of what happened to the inhabitants during the entry of the forces.

Stage	Date	Details
Israeli-source date cited by Khalidi	25 April 1948	Attack and capture of Saqiya
Palestinian source and Associated Press	27–28 April 1948	Saqiya falls together with al-Khayriyya and Kafr 'Ana
PalQuest Operation Hametz chronology	29 April 1948	Alexandroni attacks and captures Saqiya and al-Khayriyya
Military operation	Late April 1948	Operation Hametz, aimed at isolating Jaffa from its Palestinian hinterland
Village-specific force	Alexandroni Brigade	Kiryati and Giv'ati participated in other sectors of the wider operation

Israeli Settlements on the Lands of Saqiya

Or Yehuda: Established in 1950 on the lands of Saqiya to settle Jewish immigrants from Iraq and North Africa.

Ramat Pinqas: Established nearby in 1952, but according to Khalidi and PalQuest it was built on land belonging to neighboring al-Khayriyya rather than Saqiya.

Or Yehuda is therefore the settlement that should be listed as having been established on Saqiya's village lands after 1948.

Saqiya Today

According to the field description published by Walid Khalidi in *All That Remains*,

approximately ten village houses remained standing.

Some were occupied by Jewish families, one was being used as an automobile repair workshop, and others were deserted.

Khalidi described one inhabited house with a large front door and a sloping-roofed garret, a long rectangular house with numerous windows, and a two-storey house whose upper façade was decorated with broad pointed arches.

Ruined walls, adobe foundations, and other debris also remained at the site, together with cactus, sycamore, cypress, Christ's-thorn, and palm trees. Part of the surrounding land was cultivated while settlement construction covered other areas.

This description derives from fieldwork conducted before the publication of *All That Remains* in 1992 and does not constitute direct field verification of the condition or number of surviving houses in 2026.

Palestine Remembered contains later community photographs and documentation associated with Saqiya, but upload dates do not necessarily establish when photographs were taken, and the principal sources used here do not provide a comprehensive modern field survey capable of confirming the exact condition of the site in 2026.

Sources

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