Kafr 'Ana

Kafr 'Ana: A Depopulated Palestinian Village in the Jaffa District

Kafr 'Ana was a depopulated Palestinian village in the Jaffa District, located approximately 11 kilometers east of the city of Jaffa on flat terrain in the central coastal plain. Its average elevation was about 35 meters above sea level.

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Jaffa

Item	Information
Distance from district center	11 km east of Jaffa
Average Elevation	35 m above sea level
Population in 1931	1,824
Number of Houses in 1931	449
Population in 1944/1945	2,800 – Arab population; the same statistical unit also recorded 220 Jews (total 3,020)
Estimated Population in 1948	About 3,248 – a later demographic estimate, not an official census
Total Land Area in 1945	17,353 dunams
Attack and Depopulation	The village was occupied in the course of the Haganah's Operation Hametz, which was designed to isolate Jaffa, and it was probably seized on 29 April 1948 together with the neighbouring village of Saqiya, which the Alexandroni Brigade occupied, according to Khalidi. On 13 September 1948 it was placed on a list of fourteen villages that Ben-Gurion asked permission to destroy, and those villages were levelled soon afterwards, according to Morris as cited by Khalidi.
Final Israeli Control	Probably 29 April 1948, the day the neighbouring village of Saqiya fell, according to Khalidi; the sources give no confirmed date for the fall of the village itself
Military Operation	Operation Hametz
Military Unit	Probably the Haganah's Alexandroni Brigade; Khalidi considers it likely that the village fell together with the neighbouring village of Saqiya, which this brigade occupied
Cause of Depopulation	Direct military assault by Zionist forces (the Haganah) in the course of Operation Hametz
Settlements Documented on Village Lands	Yagel, established in 1950 on village lands south of the village site; and Newe Efrayim, established in 1953 on or very near the village site

The village was connected by roads to Jaffa, Lydda, and Ramla, while a secondary

railway line connected Kafr 'Ana with the main railway running between Lydda and Tulkarm. During the Nakba and the occupation of Palestine in 1948, Kafr 'Ana was occupied by Haganah forces in the course of Operation Hametz. Its Palestinian inhabitants were displaced, and most of the village was subsequently destroyed.

Location of Kafr 'Ana

- Kafr 'Ana was located approximately 11 kilometers east of Jaffa.
- Its average elevation was about 35 meters above sea level.
- The village stood on flat terrain in the central coastal plain.
- Two roads connected it with the road network leading to Jaffa, Lydda, and Ramla.
- A secondary railway line connected Kafr 'Ana with the main line running between Lydda and Tulkarm.
- Nearby Palestinian villages included Saqiya, al-'Abbasiyya, al-Safiriyya, Rantiya, and Bayt Dajan.

Kafr 'Ana Through History

Walid Khalidi suggests that Kafr 'Ana may have been built on the site of the Canaanite settlement of Ono, which was mentioned in the Karnak list associated with the Egyptian pharaoh Thutmose III in the fifteenth century BCE, rather than the fifth century BCE as stated in the earlier draft.

The source also indicates that it appears to have been a fortified town during the Iron Age and that it was known as Onous during the Byzantine period.

In 1596, according to the PalQuest entry on Kafr 'Ana, the village had a population of 116. Its inhabitants paid taxes on agricultural products including wheat, barley, olives, and fruit, as well as goats, beehives, and vineyards.

The Built Environment of Kafr 'Ana

In the late nineteenth century, Kafr 'Ana was described as a village built of adobe

bricks and surrounded by palm trees. Its later houses were constructed along the two principal roads, and the village expanded westward and northward toward the Jaffa–Lydda road.

The built-up area covered approximately 90 dunums in the 1944/1945 statistics.

Population of Kafr 'Ana

Kafr 'Ana had 1,374 inhabitants in the official 1922 census, all of them Muslims. By the 1931 census, the population had increased to 1,824 Muslims living in 449 houses.

The Government of Palestine's 1944/1945 statistics recorded a total population of 3,020 within the Kafr 'Ana statistical unit, consisting of 2,800 Arabs and 220 Jews.

The figures of 3,248 inhabitants for 1948 and 19,946 refugees for 1998 published by Palestine Remembered are later estimates and are not official Government of Palestine censuses.

Population of Kafr 'Ana

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
1596	116	Historical estimate based on Ottoman-era records as cited by Walid Khalidi
19th century	121	Figure published by Palestine Remembered; not an official census with a clearly specified year
1922	1,374	Official census under the British Mandate
1931	1,824	Official census; all inhabitants were Muslims
1944/1945	3,020	Government of Palestine statistics: 2,800 Arabs and 220 Jews
1948	3,248	Estimate published by Palestine Remembered
1998	19,946	Estimated refugee population published by Palestine Remembered
Official censuses and statistics should be distinguished from historical and later estimates.		

Land Ownership in Kafr 'Ana

The total land area recorded for Kafr 'Ana in the 1944/1945 statistics was 17,353 dunums.

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

Total	**17,353**
Ownership Category	**Area in Dunums**
Palestinian	14,358
Transferred to Zionists	2,334
Masha' / Communal	661

Land Use in Kafr 'Ana in 1944/1945

The land-use statistics demonstrate the importance of agriculture in Kafr 'Ana, particularly citrus, bananas, cereals, and orchards. In this table, the term “Jewish” is retained because that is the classification used by the source for land-use statistics.

Total	**14,358**	**2,334**	**661**	**17,353**
Land Use	**Palestinian**	**Jewish**	**Public**	**Total**
Citrus and Bananas	2,214	163	0	2,377
Irrigated Land and Plantations	597	0	0	597

Total	14,358	2,334	661	17,353
Land Use	**Palestinian**	**Jewish**	**Public**	**Total**
Cereals	11,022	2,171	1	13,194
Built-up Area	90	0	0	90
Non-Cultivable Land	435	0	660	1,095

Economic Life in Kafr 'Ana

The inhabitants of Kafr 'Ana depended heavily on agriculture and also raised poultry and kept bees. In 1944/1945, 2,214 dunums of Palestinian land were devoted to citrus and bananas, 11,022 dunums to cereals, and 597 dunums were irrigated or used for orchards.

The extensive cultivation of citrus and cereals reflected the village's location on the central coastal plain and its agricultural links with the areas surrounding Jaffa and Lydda.

Education in Kafr 'Ana

Kafr 'Ana had two schools, one for boys and one for girls. The boys' school was founded in 1920 and owned 22 dunums of land. It had 270 pupils in 1944.

The girls' school was established in 1945. The English PalQuest entry and the structured education data on Palestine Remembered record 57 girls enrolled that year, while the Arabic reproduction of the *All That Remains* narrative on Palestine Remembered gives a figure of 75. Because the source itself contains this discrepancy, the figure of 57 is used here while the alternative figure is explicitly noted.

Archaeological Remains in Kafr 'Ana

Kafr 'Ana itself was an archaeological site, and another archaeological site, Khirbat Kafrajun, lay immediately to the east.

Walid Khalidi tentatively associates the village site with the Canaanite Ono mentioned in the list of Thutmose III. The settlement was later known as Onous during the Byzantine period.

The Occupation of Kafr 'Ana and the Displacement of Its Inhabitants During the Nakba

Kafr 'Ana was among the Palestinian villages east of Jaffa targeted by the Haganah during Operation Hametz in late April 1948. The immediate objective of the operation was to seize the villages around the roads and railway linking Jaffa with its Palestinian hinterland, thereby isolating the city and preparing the way for its occupation.

At the operational level, Operation Hametz involved three Haganah brigades: Alexandroni, Kiryati, and Giv'ati. PalQuest states that the main assault was launched on 29 April under the command of Dan Epstein, commander of the Alexandroni Brigade, whose units attacked villages east of Jaffa.

Regarding Kafr 'Ana itself, Walid Khalidi considers it probable that the village was occupied on the same day as neighboring Saqiya, on 29 April 1948, by the Alexandroni Brigade.

This date differs from the Palestine Remembered data table, which lists 25 April 1948 as the date of occupation and identifies the Alexandroni Brigade as the attacking unit. Because the sources differ, 29 April is presented here as the probable date in Khalidi's account, while 25 April is retained as an alternative date given by Palestine Remembered.

The attack resulted in the displacement of the village's Palestinian inhabitants during the Nakba. Approximately four months later, on 13 September 1948, Kafr 'Ana was among fourteen villages placed on a list for demolition. Walid Khalidi, citing Israeli historian Benny Morris, notes that Morris's sources do not make clear whether formal authorization for the demolitions was granted, but state that the villages were levelled shortly afterward. This information is included because it is

cited by the Palestinian source PalQuest/Khalidi and is not based on independent use of an Israeli source.

Occupation and Depopulation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
Beginning of the military operation	29 April 1948	Four days after the Irgun's frontal attack on Jaffa, the Haganah launched Operation Hametz with units from the Alexandroni, Kiryati and Giv'ati Brigades, aiming to seize the villages on both sides of the railway linking Jaffa to its Arab hinterland and to isolate the city. Kafr 'Ana was one of the villages north of the railway targeted by the operation.
Final occupation	Probably 29 April 1948	Khalidi considers it probable that the village fell on the same day as the neighbouring village of Saqiya, which the Alexandroni Brigade occupied on 29 April, as one of the cluster of villages east of Jaffa occupied in the course of Operation Hametz.
Destruction of the village	13 September 1948 (request for permission to destroy), and shortly afterwards	Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion placed Kafr 'Ana on a list of fourteen villages he asked his cabinet for formal permission to destroy. Morris, as cited by Khalidi, does not make clear whether permission was granted, but notes that the villages were levelled soon afterwards.
Designation of the village as a site for settling Jewish immigrants	Late September 1948	Later that month, Kafr 'Ana was mentioned as a site for the settlement of new Jewish immigrants, according to Khalidi.
Settlement on village lands	1950	The settlement of Yagel was established on village lands, south of the village site.
Settlement on village lands	1953	The settlement of Newe Efrayim was established on or very near the village site.

Settlements Established on the Lands of Kafr 'Ana

Walid Khalidi identifies two settlements established on the lands of Kafr 'Ana after the Nakba:

- Yagel: established in 1950 on village land, south of the village site.
- Newe Efrayim: established in 1953 on or very near the village site.

The Site of Kafr 'Ana After the Nakba

According to Walid Khalidi's field description, part of the village site had become vacant land, while olive trees continued to grow in other areas alongside cypress and eucalyptus trees planted after the Nakba. No traces of the old houses were discernible at the time of that survey, and apartment buildings and a small park had been constructed on surrounding land.

Palestine Remembered describes the village as having been extensively destroyed and documents the mosque of Kafr 'Ana as one of the principal surviving landmarks. The available site descriptions were recorded at different times and should therefore not be treated as a comprehensive field survey updated to the present day.

Sources

- PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: Kafr 'Ana
- PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: Operation Hametz
- Institute for Palestine Studies: Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains*
- Palestine Remembered: Kafr 'Ana – Jaffa District
- Village Statistics of 1945: Population and Land Ownership in the Jaffa District, based on Government of Palestine statistics
- Government of Palestine: Census of Palestine, 1931