

Lifta



Subdistrict: Jerusalem

Estimated population in 1948: approximately 2,960

Period of depopulation: December 1947–January 1948

Settlements established on the village's lands before 1948: None

Neighbourhoods and developments subsequently established on village land: Northern Jerusalem neighbourhoods, including Romema Illit, Kiryat Belz, Kiryat Sanz, Har Hotzvim, Sanhedria Murhevet, Ramat Eshkol, Giv'at HaMivtar, and Ramot Alon.

Village land located west of the 1949 Armistice Line: 6,003 dunams

Location of Lifta

Lifta was a Palestinian village situated on the western outskirts of Jerusalem. The historic village centre lay approximately five kilometres from the Old City and about two kilometres from the expanding urban edge of Jerusalem during the late Mandate period.

The village stood on the steep northern and northwestern slopes of a hill overlooking Wadi Salman. The principal Jerusalem–Jaffa road passed immediately southwest of the village, while unpaved roads connected Lifta with several neighbouring communities.

Lifta had two schools, two coffeehouses, and a social club. Its lands covered approximately 8,743 dunams and shared boundaries with several villages and with the city of Jerusalem.

Boundaries of Lifta

Lifta was bordered by the following villages and localities:

- To the northwest: Bayt Ikṣa.
- To the west: [Qalunya](#).
- To the southwest: [Dayr Yasin](#).
- To the south, southeast, and east: Jerusalem.
- To the northeast: Shu'fat.



The Depopulated Palestinian Village of Lifta

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Architecture and Built Environment

Most of Lifta's houses were constructed of stone and arranged in a band that followed the contours of the hill. Its older lanes likewise followed curved, organic routes shaped by the terrain. During the final decades of the British Mandate, the village expanded considerably.

New construction extended eastward up the slopes of Jabal Khallat al-Tarha, eventually connecting the village with buildings in Jerusalem's northwestern Romema neighbourhood.

Development also spread toward the lower southwestern slopes, parallel to the Jerusalem–Jaffa road.

Population of Lifta

Lifta's population was predominantly Muslim. In the mid–1940s, approximately twenty of its 2,550 inhabitants were Christians. The village centre contained a mosque, a shrine dedicated to Shaykh Badr—a locally revered religious figure—and several shops.

Economic Life

Lifta functioned in many respects as a suburb of Jerusalem and maintained strong economic ties with the city. Villagers sold their agricultural produce in Jerusalem's markets and relied on the city for a wide range of services.

Drinking water was obtained from a spring in Wadi al–Shami. The inhabitants cultivated cereals, vegetables, grapes, olives, and other fruit trees. Olive groves covered approximately 1,044 dunams. Rain–fed agriculture was concentrated in Wadi al–Shami, particularly in the depressions southwest of the village and along the surrounding slopes. In 1944–1945, a total of 3,248 dunams was allocated to cereal cultivation.

Land Ownership in Lifta

Ownership category	Area (dunams)*
Palestinian ownership	7,780
Jewish ownership	756
Public land	207
Total	8,743

Land Use in Lifta in 1945

Land–use category	Palestinian–owned land (dunams)*	Jewish–owned land (dunams)*
Olive groves	1,044	0

Land-use category	Palestinian-owned land (dunams)*	Jewish-owned land (dunams)*
Cereal cultivation	3,248	288
Built-up area	324	102
Total cultivable land	3,248	288
Uncultivated land	4,415	366

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Population Figures for Lifta

Year	Population*
1596	396
1922	1,451
1931	1,893
1945	2,550
1948	2,958
Estimated refugee population in 1998	18,165

Population sources are not fully consistent: the source article records 2,550 inhabitants in 1945, while the Government of Palestine's 1945 village statistics are commonly cited as recording 2,250. The 1948 and refugee estimates above reproduce the dataset used in the source article.

Education in Lifta

The village had an elementary school for boys and a separate school for girls, established in 1945.

Religious Sites

Lifta contained a shrine dedicated to Shaykh Badr. The shrine was later destroyed, and an Israeli synagogue was reportedly constructed on or near its remains.

The Depopulation of Lifta

Fighting in Lifta and the adjacent Jerusalem neighbourhoods of Romema and Shaykh Badr began during the earliest weeks of the 1947–1948 war. A decisive event occurred on 28 December 1947, when armed members of a Zionist paramilitary organization attacked a coffeehouse in or immediately adjacent to Lifta with gunfire and grenades, killing several people. The attack prompted many residents—particularly women and children—to leave, while others departed during the raids and demolitions that followed.

Haganah, Irgun, and Lehi forces subsequently carried out repeated attacks in Lifta and Romema. On 11 January 1948, Haganah members demolished the house of the mukhtar of neighbouring Shaykh Badr; further demolitions damaged houses in Shaykh Badr and on Lifta's eastern outskirts. Although some residents temporarily returned, continuing assaults, shortages, and insecurity led to the village's near-complete depopulation by late January or early February 1948.

Lifta Today

Large sections of Lifta's lands were incorporated into the expanding urban area of Jerusalem, including areas known today as Mei Neftoach and parts of Giv'at Shaul and the city's northern neighbourhoods. Most of the houses that remain within the historic village core are unoccupied, although some have been restored or reused.

Numerous stone houses, the mosque, the village club, agricultural terraces, and the historic spring complex remain visible. Although parts of the basin surrounding the spring in Wadi al-Shami have deteriorated, the spring and its associated structures remain among the most recognisable elements of the cultural landscape. Lifta is one of the most architecturally intact Palestinian villages depopulated during the Nakba and remains the subject of continuing heritage-preservation efforts.