Khirbat al-'Umur

Khirbat al-'Umur – Depopulated Palestinian Village in Jerusalem Subdistrict

Khirbat al-'Umur was a Palestinian village in the Jerusalem subdistrict. It stood approximately 12 kilometers west of Jerusalem at an average elevation of about 625 meters above sea level.

The village occupied a small plateau on the southern slope of a mountain and faced south. Wadi al-Ghadir ran east to west at the foot of the mountain, while a ridge to the south separated the village lands from those of Dayr 'Amr.

Khirbat al-'Umur had 270 Arab Muslim inhabitants in the official 1944/45 statistics and a registered land area of 4,163 dunums.

Israeli forces occupied the village on 21 October 1948 during Operation Ha-Har. Walid Khalidi concludes from the timing of its fall that Khirbat al-'Umur was taken by the Har'el Brigade, although no independent detailed account of the village's capture is available.

Key Facts about Khirbat al-'Umur

Field	Information
Name	Khirbat al-'Umur
Subdistrict	Jerusalem
Distance from Jerusalem	Approximately 12 km west
Average elevation	Approximately 625 m above sea level
Population, 1931	187 in 45 houses
Population, 1944/45	270
Registered land area	4,163 dunums
Occupation date	21 October 1948
Military operation	Operation Ha-Har
Military unit	Har'el Brigade, inferred by Khalidi from the date and operational sequence
Cause of depopulation	Military pressure and assault; Palestine Remembered classifies it as direct military assault, while Khalidi describes the wider pattern as flight under pressure or expulsion
Extent of destruction	The village was largely destroyed; rubble, door and window frames, terraces, the cemetery, and 'Ayn al-'Umur survived in later documentation
Settlement on village land	Giv'at Ye'arim – 1950

Location

Khirbat al-'Umur stood on a small plateau on the southern slope of a mountain west of Jerusalem and faced south.

Wadi al-Ghadir ran east to west at the foot of the mountain, while a ridge to the south separated Khirbat al-'Umur's lands from those of Dayr 'Amr.

Dirt tracks connected the village with the Jerusalem–Jaffa highway, which passed a short distance to the north, and with neighboring villages.

Nearby communities included Saris, Abu Ghosh, Bayt Naqquba, Suba, Dayr 'Amr, Bayt Umm al-Mays, and Bayt Thul.

Palestine Remembered's boundary information specifically identifies the lands of Abu Ghosh, Dayr 'Amr, Suba, and Saris as adjoining the wider village lands.

Name and Historical Site

The term “Khirbat” reflects the village's location beside an older ruined site.

Walid Khalidi states that archaeological remains there probably dated to the Byzantine period, although the identification should remain qualified in the absence of specialist excavation evidence.

The late nineteenth-century Survey of Western Palestine described Al-'Umur as a small hamlet on a slope above a deep valley, with a perennial spring and olive trees below the village.

Late Ottoman lists also record a small population and a limited number of houses, although such nineteenth-century lists were not comprehensive modern censuses and sometimes counted males only.

Village Layout and Buildings

Khirbat al-'Umur had a rectangular plan, and its houses were built primarily of stone.

Two principal streets intersected in the center and divided the built-up village into four sections.

The official 1944/45 statistics recorded approximately 10 dunums as built-up land.

Agricultural plots and orchards extended south of the village and along Wadi al-Ghadir, while stone terraces covered portions of the surrounding slopes.

Population

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
1922	137	Official British Mandate census; all Muslims
1931	187	Official census; all Muslims
1944/45	270	Official Village Statistics; all Arab Muslims
1948	313	Later Palestine Remembered estimate, not an official census
1998	1,923	Later estimate of refugees and descendants reported by Palestine Remembered

The 1948 and 1998 figures are later estimates and should not be attributed to British Mandatory census statistics.

Number of Houses

Year	Houses	Nature of Figure
1931	45	Official Census of Palestine figure
1948	75	Later Palestine Remembered estimate, not an official census count

Land Ownership in Khirbat al-'Umur

The total registered village land area in 1944/45 was 4,163 dunums.

Ownership Category	Dunums
Palestinian	3,725
Transferred to Zionists	436

Ownership Category	Dunums
Communal/Public	2
Total	**4,163**

The figures balance exactly: 3,725 + 436 + 2 = 4,163 dunums.

The original official categories were 3,725 Arab dunums, 436 Jewish dunums, and 2 Public dunums.

Land Use in 1944/45

Land Use	Arab	Jewish	Public	Total
Cereals	1,279	172	0	1,451
Plantations and irrigable land	497	14	0	511
Built-up land	10	0	0	10
Non-cultivable land	1,939	250	2	2,191
Total	**3,725**	**436**	**2**	**4,163**

The figures balance exactly: 1,451 + 511 + 10 + 2,191 = 4,163 dunums.

Palestine Remembered's simplified table places 1,941 dunums of non-cultivable land in the Palestinian column. The official breakdown is 1,939 Arab dunums plus 2 Public dunums, so the Public category has been retained separately.

Olive Acreage

Approximately 98 dunums were planted with olives.

This acreage was part of the 497 Arab dunums classified as plantations and irrigable land and should not be added again to the land-use total.

Economic Life

Agriculture and orchards formed the foundation of village life.

Residents cultivated cereals, olives, and other fruit trees and irrigated some agricultural plots, particularly those in Wadi al-Ghadir and along the strip of land bordering the southern side of the village.

In 1944/45, 1,279 Arab dunums were devoted to cereals and 497 Arab dunums to plantations and irrigable cultivation.

Olives occupied approximately 98 dunums within the latter category.

Water and 'Ayn al-'Umur

The villagers obtained drinking and irrigation water from several nearby springs.

One of the principal springs was 'Ayn al-'Umur, which carried the same name as the village.

Nineteenth-century descriptions also mention a perennial spring below the village to the south.

'Ayn al-'Umur and the stone structure surrounding it remained visible in Khalidi's later field documentation.

Education

Khalidi and PalQuest do not document an independent school inside Khirbat al-'Umur.

A local historical account of education in Suba states, however, that children from Khirbat al-'Umur attended instruction in Suba.

The same account describes the local kuttab tradition there. It is therefore reasonable to state that at least some children from Khirbat al-'Umur received their

education in Suba, without claiming that a separate village school existed at Khirbat al-'Umur.

Archaeological Remains

The village stood beside an older ruined locality whose remains Khalidi considers probably Byzantine.

Stone terraces and older structural remains around the locality further indicate a long history of human occupation.

The remains should not all be assigned definitively to the Byzantine period without specialist archaeological evidence.

Operation Ha-Har

Operation Ha-Har began on 19 October 1948 and continued until 24 October.

The operation targeted the southern part of the Jerusalem corridor and sought to widen Israeli-held territory around the corridor and connect it with areas farther south toward the Hebron hills.

The Har'el, Etzioni, and Giv'ati brigades participated in the broader operation, while Egyptian forces opposed them in several sectors.

Khirbat al-'Umur was among the Palestinian villages affected, together with 'Allar, Bayt 'Itab, Bayt Umm al-Mays, Dayr al-Hawa, Dayr al-Shaykh, Khirbat al-Tannur, and others.

Occupation and Depopulation

Khirbat al-'Umur was occupied on 21 October 1948.

Walid Khalidi concludes from this date and the operational sequence that the village fell to the Har'el Brigade during Operation Ha-Har, although he does not provide a separate detailed battle account for Khirbat al-'Umur itself.

Khalidi reports, through the source he cites, that the broader pattern in the area was for villagers either to flee under military pressure or to be expelled by forces entering their villages.

Thousands were displaced during the operation, and some remained for weeks in surrounding valleys before being forced to move again.

Palestine Remembered classifies the immediate cause of Khirbat al-'Umur's depopulation as direct military assault.

Because there is no independent village-specific account of the moment of occupation, no particular expulsion order or precise evacuation route has been added without further evidence.

Ethnic Cleansing

Palestine Remembered describes the final outcome at Khirbat al-'Umur as complete ethnic cleansing.

Khalidi's more detailed narrative establishes the complete depopulation of the village during Operation Ha-Har and places it within a broader pattern of flight under military pressure and direct expulsion.

The term “ethnic cleansing” is therefore retained as an attributed characterization used by Palestine Remembered, while the directly established descriptive fact is the complete displacement of Khirbat al-'Umur's Palestinian community.

Occupation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
Beginning of Operation Ha-Har	19 October 1948	The offensive began in the southern Jerusalem corridor, involving Har'el, Etzioni, and Giv'ati formations.

Stage	Date	Details
Occupation of Khirbat al-'Umur	21 October 1948	The village fell during Operation Ha-Har; Khalidi identifies the Har'el Brigade as the likely occupying formation.
Depopulation	During the occupation	Khalidi describes the wider pattern as flight under military pressure or expulsion; Palestine Remembered classifies the village-specific cause as direct military assault.
End of Operation Ha-Har	24 October 1948	The operation ended after numerous villages in the southern Jerusalem corridor had been occupied.
Destruction	Precise date not documented	Most of the built-up village disappeared, leaving rubble, door and window frames, terraces, the cemetery, and the village spring.

Israeli Settlement on Khirbat al-'Umur's Lands

Settlement	Established	Relationship to Khirbat al-'Umur
Giv'at Ye'arim	1950	Established on village lands

Khirbat al-'Umur Today

According to Walid Khalidi's field description, stone rubble and door and window frames were scattered across the village site and partly obscured by wild grass.

Several stone terraces remained visible.

Cactus grew along the eastern and northern sides of the site, while almond, olive, fig, and cypress trees survived within the former village and on lands extending southward.

The cemetery south of the village was partly covered by soil and grass, although numerous graves and tombstones remained visible.

'Ayn al-'Umur and the stone structure surrounding it also survived.

This description derives from fieldwork undertaken before the publication of *All That Remains* in 1992 and is therefore a documented historical site description rather than comprehensive direct field verification of conditions in 2026.

Palestine Remembered also contains much more recent community documentation, including visits and videos uploaded in August 2026 showing Khirbat al-'Umur and its spring. These provide useful recent community documentation of particular features but do not constitute a comprehensive independent archaeological or cadastral survey of the village lands.

Sources

- PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: Khirbat al-'Umur
- PalQuest – Operation Ha-Har
- Palestine Remembered – Khirbat al-'Umur, Jerusalem District
- Walid Khalidi – All That Remains: Khirbat al-'Umur
- Palestine Remembered – Education and Culture in Suba, including children from Khirbat al-'Umur
- Government of Palestine – Census of Palestine 1922, PCBS reproduction
- Government of Palestine – Census of Palestine 1931, PCBS reproduction
- Institute for Palestine Studies – All That Remains, Walid Khalidi