

Suba



Subdistrict: Jerusalem

Estimated population of Suba in 1948: approximately 720

Date of occupation and depopulation: Night of 12–13 July 1948

Military operation: Operation Dani

Military unit: Har'el Brigade of the Palmach

Israeli settlements established on the village's lands before 1948: None

Israeli settlements established on the village's lands after 1948: Ameilim, later renamed

Suba

Suba was a Palestinian village in the Jerusalem Subdistrict, approximately 10 kilometres west of Jerusalem. The Har'el Brigade occupied and depopulated the village during Operation Dani in July 1948, as part of Israel's occupation of Palestine—the Nakba. Ameilim was established on the village's lands later in 1948 and was subsequently renamed Kibbutz Tzova.

Location of Suba

- Suba stood south of the main Jerusalem–Jaffa road. A paved secondary road approximately 3 kilometres long connected it with the highway. Dirt tracks also linked it to Ayn Karim, Sataf, Khirbat al–Lawz, al–Jawda, Khirbat al–'Umur, Bayt Umm al–Mays and Al–Qastal.
 - The village occupied the summit of a steep, conical hill in the Jerusalem mountains, at an average elevation of approximately 750 metres above sea level.

Wadi al–Sarar flowed about 3 kilometres to the south.
- Suba was approximately 10 kilometres west of Jerusalem.
- Its elevated position provided extensive views over the surrounding mountains. This location also gave the village strategic importance because it overlooked approaches to the Jerusalem–Jaffa road.

Boundaries of Suba

Suba was situated among the following Palestinian villages and localities:

- To the north: [Bayt Naqquba](#).
- To the north–west: [Ayn Naqquba](#).
- To the west: [Dayr 'Amr](#).

- To the south–west: [Khirbat al–Lawz](#).
- To the south: [Sataf](#).
- To the south–east: [Ayn Karim](#).
- To the east: [Deir Yasin](#).
- To the north–east: [Al–Qastal](#).

History of Suba

Some scholars have identified Suba with the ancient town of Rabba, possibly the place called Rubute in the Egyptian Amarna letters. Archaeological excavations at the site, however, indicate that its earliest securely identified settlement layers date to the Persian and Hellenistic periods. The proposed identification with the Bronze Age town of Rubute therefore remains uncertain.

During the Roman period, the site was reportedly known as Seboim among some inhabitants of the region, while Greco–Roman sources used names such as Soba or Sobetha. The history of the settlement during the early Islamic period remains insufficiently documented.

The Crusaders constructed a fortress at the site and called it Belmont. In 1596, Suba formed part of the nahiya of Jerusalem within the liwa' of Jerusalem. Ottoman tax records indicate an estimated population of 369. The inhabitants paid taxes on wheat, barley, olives, goats, beehives and molasses.

During the mid–nineteenth century, Suba came under the influence of the Abu Ghawsh family, which controlled much of the surrounding area from Qaryat al–'Inab. The family constructed a fortified residence within the walls of the Crusader fortress. This residence and parts of the fortress walls were destroyed during Ibrahim Pasha's Egyptian campaign in Palestine in the 1830s.

Architectural Structure of Suba

In the late nineteenth century, Suba was described as a medium–sized, stone–built village

occupying the summit of a steep, conical hill. Olive groves and vineyards surrounded the settlement. An unusually tall house stood near its centre alongside the remains of the Crusader fortress.

The original stone houses were closely clustered inside the outer enclosure of the fortress. New houses were later constructed south of the older centre along the road leading to the Jerusalem–Jaffa highway, giving the expanded village a broadly rectangular layout.

All the inhabitants were Muslims. A shrine dedicated to Shaykh Ibrahim stood south of the village site.

Archaeological and Religious Landmarks in Suba

- The village site contains substantial remains of the Crusader fortress of Belmont, including walls, foundations and a large stone gateway uncovered during archaeological excavations.
- A shrine dedicated to Shaykh Ibrahim stood south of the village.
- Archaeological remains from the Persian, Hellenistic, Roman and later periods have been identified at the site, although interpretations of its earliest history differ among researchers.

Economic Life in Suba

The village's principal crops were cereals, cultivated mainly on the valley floors, and fruit and olive trees planted on the mountain slopes. In 1944/45, 712 dunams were allocated to cereal cultivation, while 1,435 dunams of Palestinian-owned land were irrigated or used for orchards.

Approximately 150 dunams within the orchard area were planted with olive trees.

Several springs near the village supplied water for domestic consumption and irrigation. The agricultural terraces surrounding the hill supported olives, grapes, figs, almonds and other fruit trees.

Land Ownership in Suba

Ownership category	Land ownership (dunams)*
Palestinian ownership	4,082
Jewish ownership	15
Public land	5
Total	4,102

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Land Use in Suba in 1945

Land-use category	Palestinian ownership (dunams)*	Jewish ownership (dunams)*	Public land (dunams)*	Total (dunams)*
Irrigated land and orchards	1,435	11	0	1,446
Olive cultivation*	150	0	0	150
Cereal cultivation	712	0	0	712
Built-up area	16	0	0	16
Cultivable land	2,147	11	0	2,158
Uncultivated land	1,919	4	5	1,928

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres. Olive cultivation was included within the broader category of irrigated land and orchards and should not be added separately when calculating the total cultivable area.

Population of Suba

Ottoman tax records indicate an estimated population of 369 in 1596. The official 1922 census recorded 307 residents, all Muslims. In 1931, Suba and Dayr 'Amr had a combined population

of 434 living in 110 houses. The inclusion of Dayr 'Amr should be noted when interpreting this figure.

In 1945, Suba had 620 residents, all Muslims. Its projected population immediately before its depopulation in 1948 was approximately 719, commonly rounded to 720.

Year	Population*
1596 estimate	369
1922	307
1931	434*
1945	620
1948 estimate	719
Estimated refugees and descendants in 1998	4,417

* The 1931 figure includes Dayr 'Amr. The 1948 and 1998 figures are demographic estimates rather than contemporaneous census totals.

Occupation and Depopulation of Suba

According to the Palestinian newspaper *Filastin*, Zionist forces first attacked Suba on 3 April 1948, following an assault on nearby Al-Qastal. Despite receiving aerial support, the attacking forces were repelled, and the village remained outside their control for approximately three more months.

Two further attempts to occupy Suba were reportedly made in mid-April during the battles around al-Latrun, but neither succeeded. The village was eventually occupied by the Har'el Brigade of the Palmach during the night of 12–13 July 1948 as part of Operation Dani.

The final assault involved artillery and mortar bombardment. A substantial proportion of the population had already been displaced by the earlier attacks and deteriorating military conditions. Those who remained fled under bombardment or were expelled after the village was occupied. Suba was subsequently depopulated and largely destroyed during Israel's

occupation of Palestine—the Nakba.

Israeli Settlements on the Lands of Suba

A settlement named Ameilim was established later in 1948 approximately one kilometre south-west of the village site, on Suba's lands. It was subsequently renamed Kibbutz Tzova.

A school called Yedida was established to the north-west in 1964. Although located near Suba, it was built on land traditionally belonging to the Palestinian village of Abu Ghawsh and should not be classified as an institution established on Suba's lands.

Suba Today

Many village buildings remain partially standing. Some have lost sections of their walls, while others no longer have roofs. Arched doors, gateways and windows remain visible on several façades. Other houses were almost entirely demolished, leaving only their foundations.

Archaeological excavations uncovered a large stone gateway and sections of walls, while the remains of the Crusader fortress of Belmont continue to dominate the site. The village cemetery lies at the southern foot of the hill. Networks of trenches dug by Israeli forces remain visible on the north-eastern side of the summit.

A water reservoir was constructed on the hill, with a pipe descending along its northern slope. Fig, almond and cypress trees, together with cactus plants, grow on the agricultural terraces surrounding the lower slopes.

Sources

- [Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: Suba](#), Institute for Palestine Studies and the Palestinian Museum.
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