'Islin

Islin – Depopulated Palestinian Village of Jerusalem

Islin was a Palestinian village in the Jerusalem Subdistrict, situated in the western foothills of the Jerusalem mountains approximately 21 kilometers west of Jerusalem and at an average elevation of about 280 meters above sea level.

The village stood on a plateau along the southern slope of a mountain, with a wadi running along its western and southern sides. It lay approximately one kilometer west of the road linking Bayt Jibrin with the Jerusalem-Jaffa highway. Dirt tracks

connected it with neighboring Ishwa', 'Artuf, Sar'a, Bayt Susin, and Bayt Mahsir.

Islin had a population of 260 in the official 1944/45 statistics and a total land area of 2,159 dunums. Its economy was based primarily on rain-fed agriculture, including cereals, fruit trees, olives, and vineyards, while springs and wells supplied drinking water.

Forces of the Har'el Brigade occupied Islin during the second phase of Operation Dani on the night of 17–18 July 1948. The village and neighboring communities were subjected to mortar fire. Some residents had already left the front-line area before the final assault; most of those remaining fled as Har'el forces approached and the bombardment began, while those who remained at the village sites were expelled.

Basic Information

Field	Information
Name	Islin / 'Islin
Arabic name	عِسْلين
Subdistrict	Jerusalem
Location	West of Jerusalem in the western foothills of the Jerusalem mountains
Distance from Jerusalem	Approximately 21 km according to Khalidi and PalQuest; some Palestinian sources give approximately 28 km
Average elevation	Approximately 280 m above sea level
Palestine Grid	150/132
Population in 1922	132, all Muslims
Population in 1931	186, all Muslims
Houses in 1931	49
Population in 1944/45	260

Field	Information
1948 population estimate	302 – later estimate, not an official 1948 census
Total land area	2,159 dunums
Occupation date	Night of 17–18 July 1948; 18 July is commonly used as the occupation date
Military operation	Operation Dani – second phase
Military unit	Second Platoon, B Company, Fourth Battalion, Har'el Brigade
Cause of depopulation	Earlier flight under wartime pressure followed by mortar bombardment and military assault; most remaining residents fled and those still present were expelled
Extent of destruction	Most of the village was destroyed, although partial walls, stone terraces, and rubble survived
Post-1948 settlement	Eshta'ol, founded in 1949 on lands belonging to Islin and neighboring Ishwa'

Name and Earlier History

Walid Khalidi identifies Islin with the sixteenth-century village of Islit recorded in Ottoman tax registers.

In 1596, the village belonged to the nahiya of Ramla within the Gaza administrative district and had an estimated population of approximately seventy-seven. Taxes were levied on wheat, barley, fruit trees, goats, and beehives.

Palestinian local documentation preserves several explanations for the village name, including interpretations connecting it with fertile land and older Canaanite names. These proposed etymologies are not independently established with sufficient linguistic evidence and are therefore not adopted as definitive.

Abandonment and Resettlement

In the 1870s, the site was recorded by the Survey of Western Palestine as

uninhabited, although ruins of the earlier village remained visible.

Khalidi considers it probable that the site was permanently resettled around the beginning of the twentieth century.

Palestinian oral and local historical accounts associate an earlier destruction of Islin with nineteenth-century fighting during the period of Ibrahim Pasha and describe families returning afterward. Because the site was still recorded as uninhabited in the 1870s, the exact chronology of permanent resettlement remains uncertain. This article therefore follows Khalidi's more cautious formulation.

Location and Geography

Islin stood on a plateau along the southern slope of one of the western Jerusalem hills. A wadi bordered the site on its western and southern sides.

The village was approximately one kilometer west of the road connecting Bayt Jibrin with the Jerusalem-Jaffa highway, providing access toward Bab al-Wad, Jerusalem, and Jaffa.

Dirt tracks linked Islin with Ishwa', 'Artuf, Sar'a, Bayt Susin, and Bayt Mahsir. The village depended especially on neighboring Ishwa' for a number of services and commercial connections.

Built Environment

Islin consisted of two principal sections, eastern and western, with later construction extending beyond the older village core.

Houses were built primarily of stone and mud, and the official built-up area in 1944/45 covered approximately 20 dunums.

Palestinian local documentation describes the eastern section as containing part of the older village core, while families resettling the locality expanded particularly into its western section.

Population

Year	Population	Status of Figure
1596	Approx. 77	Estimate derived from an Ottoman tax register
1922	132	Official Government of Palestine census; all Muslims
1931	186	Official census; 102 males and 84 females, all Muslims
1944/45	260	Official Mandate-period estimate
1948	302	Later Palestinian estimate, not a census conducted in 1948
1998	1,852	Later Palestine Remembered estimate of refugees and descendants

Number of Houses

The official 1931 Census of Palestine recorded **49 houses** in Islin.

Some secondary sources incorrectly give forty houses, but the original census table clearly records forty-nine.

No official house census was conducted in 1948. Palestine Remembered gives a later estimate of seventy-nine houses, while Palestinian local documentation gives approximately sixty. Neither should be presented as an official Government of Palestine count.

Land Ownership, 1944/45

Total	2,159
Ownership Category	**Dunums**
Palestinian	2,157
Transferred to Zionists	0
Public	2

The original Government of Palestine table used the categories Arab, Jewish, and Public. No land was recorded in the Jewish ownership category.

The figures balance exactly: 2,157 + 2 = 2,159 dunums.

Land Use, 1944/45

Total	2,157	2	2,159
Land Use	**Palestinian**	**Public**	**Total**
Cereals	830	0	830
Plantations and irrigable land	104	0	104
Built-up area	20	0	20
Non-cultivable land	1,203	2	1,205

The land-use figures balance exactly: 830 + 104 + 20 + 1,205 = 2,159 dunums.

Olive Cultivation

Palestine Remembered separately lists approximately 25 dunums planted with olives.

This is a crop-specific figure within cultivated land rather than an additional official land-use category. It is therefore not added again to the 2,159-dunum total.

Economy and Agriculture

Islin's economy was based primarily on rain-fed agriculture and livestock raising.

Cereals occupied the largest recorded cultivated area, alongside fruit trees, olives, and vineyards. The principal agricultural lands extended north and southeast of the village site.

The sixteenth-century tax record likewise documented wheat, barley, fruit trees, goats, and beehives, demonstrating the long agricultural history of the site.

Water Resources

The inhabitants obtained drinking water from local springs and wells.

Agriculture was predominantly rain-fed, making cereals and Mediterranean tree crops particularly important to the village economy.

Education

According to Palestinian local documentation, Islin did not initially have its own independent school, and children attended schools in neighboring villages.

In 1944, a joint school serving Ishwa', Islin, 'Artuf, and Sar'a was reportedly established in a location convenient to the four villages.

The local account states that the school building stood on Islin land although it was known as the Ishwa' Government School, and that instruction reached the seventh grade.

These details derive from Palestinian community documentation and are not supplied in Khalidi's shorter village profile, so they remain explicitly attributed.

Mosque, Cemetery, and Shrine

Palestinian local documentation records a small old mosque in Islin where congregational prayers were held, with the village cemetery lying to the north.

The same documentation records a shrine or religious landmark in the western part of the village lands, associated in local tradition with Shaykh Abu Qabus.

A locally published translation of a sixteenth-century Ottoman document also refers to an imam and olive trees endowed for the village mosque.

Because these details are not all independently described by Khalidi, no unsupported construction date or architectural description is added.

Archaeology and Historical Identification

Khalidi identifies Islin with the sixteenth-century settlement of Islit documented in Ottoman records.

Local traditions that identify Islin directly with specific Canaanite or Roman towns are more contested. In particular, ancient Eshta'ol is more commonly associated with neighboring Ishwa' or Dayr Abu al-Qabus, and such identifications should not be transferred automatically to Islin.

Khirbat Dayr Abu al-Qabus, north of the village, is part of the wider archaeological landscape, but its precise historical identification requires specialist archaeological evidence.

Operation Dani

Operation Dani began on 9 July 1948 and ended on 18 July. It was the largest military offensive launched during the Ten Days between the two truces.

During its first phase, from 9 to 12 July, Israeli forces captured Lydda and al-Ramla and numerous surrounding villages.

The second phase, from 13 to 18 July, focused on extending control toward al-Latrun, the Ramallah-al-Latrun road, and villages along the Jerusalem corridor.

Islin, Ishwa', 'Artuf, Sar'a, and several other Jerusalem-area villages were affected during this second phase.

The Assault on Islin – Night of 17–18 July 1948

Islin and neighboring villages were subjected to mortar fire during the final phase of Operation Dani.

The available sources place their capture during the night of 17–18 July 1948, with 18 July commonly used as Islin's occupation date.

The village had already been situated along an active front for several months, and a portion of the population had left the area before the final assault.

Military Unit

PalQuest's account of neighboring 'Artuf provides unusually specific information about the force operating along the same axis.

The attacking formation was the **Fourth Battalion of the Har'el Brigade**, specifically the **Second Platoon of B Company**.

Armed with mortars and machine guns, this platoon first drove the remaining inhabitants from Ishwa' and Islin and then continued toward 'Artuf.

This is therefore the most precise military-unit attribution available for Islin and is preferable to assigning all brigades involved in Operation Dani to the village.

Cause of Depopulation

Palestine Remembered classifies the depopulation as resulting from direct military assault.

The more detailed account shows a staged process. Villages along this front had been under military pressure since spring 1948, and many inhabitants had already left before the final operation.

As Har'el forces approached on 17–18 July and mortar fire began, most of the remaining inhabitants fled. The small number of people still present when the forces entered the villages were expelled.

The most accurate formulation is therefore: **earlier flight under prolonged wartime pressure, followed by mortar bombardment and direct military assault, with the remaining residents fleeing and the few still present being expelled.**

Destruction

Most of Islin's built environment was destroyed after the village was occupied.

Descriptions stating that it was completely erased require qualification: Khalidi's fieldwork still recorded partially standing walls, stone terraces, and substantial stone rubble.

The more precise description is therefore extensive destruction of the village as a functioning community, with visible architectural remains surviving at the site.

Ethnic Cleansing in Source Classification

Palestine Remembered uses the term “complete ethnic cleansing” to classify Islin's depopulation. The term is retained here only as an attributed source classification.

The directly documented sequence consists of earlier population flight under wartime pressure, mortar bombardment and a Har'el Brigade assault, the flight of most remaining residents, the expulsion of those still present, and the prevention of the original Palestinian community from re-establishing permanent residence in the village.

Occupation Chronology

Date	Event
Spring 1948	The Bab al-Wad and Jerusalem corridor become a major zone of fighting, increasing military pressure on surrounding Palestinian villages.
Before July 1948	Part of the population of villages along the front leaves as fighting and insecurity intensify; no household-by-household departure chronology is available for Islin.
9 July 1948	Operation Dani begins.
13 July 1948	The second phase of Operation Dani begins, extending toward al-Latrun and the Jerusalem corridor.

Date	Event
Night of 17–18 July 1948	Islin and neighboring villages are subjected to mortar fire as the Fourth Battalion of the Har'el Brigade advances.
Night of 17–18 July 1948	The Second Platoon of B Company drives the remaining inhabitants from Ishwa' and Islin before advancing toward 'Artuf.
18 July 1948	Islin is under final Israeli military control as Operation Dani reaches its end.
After occupation	Most of the village's built environment is demolished, although walls, terraces, and rubble remain visible.
1949	Eshta'ol is established on lands belonging to Islin and neighboring Ishwa'.

Israeli Settlements on Islin's Lands

The settlement of **Eshta'ol** was established in 1949 on lands belonging jointly to Islin and neighboring Ishwa'.

Khalidi and PalQuest identify this land relationship directly, so Eshta'ol is properly listed among the settlements established on Islin's village lands.

Other nearby localities should not be added merely because of geographical proximity unless cadastral evidence places them within Islin's boundaries.

Islin Today

According to the field description used by Walid Khalidi before the publication of All That Remains in 1992, partially destroyed walls and stone terraces remained visible across the village site.

Dense forest, bushes, and grasses grew over and around the stone rubble. Carob trees and some olive trees survived around the northern edge, while eucalyptus and fir trees grew toward the south.

A tree nursery had been established on the southern edge of the former village, and part of the site was being used as a bus-repair yard.

This description derives from fieldwork conducted before the 1992 publication of All That Remains. It is documented historical field evidence rather than a comprehensive direct survey of Islin's condition in 2026. No sufficiently comprehensive recent Palestinian field survey was located in the sources reviewed to replace Khalidi's description in full.

Sources

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- Palestinian Villages Encyclopedia – Islin: local history, education, mosque, and cemetery
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