

Sataf



Subdistrict: Jerusalem

Population in 1945: 540

Estimated population in 1948: 626

Date of occupation and depopulation: 13–14 July 1948

Military operation: Operation Dani

Military unit: Harel Brigade (Palmach)

Israeli settlements established on the village lands before 1948: None

Israeli settlements established on the village site after 1948: None

Sataf was a depopulated Palestinian village in the Jerusalem Subdistrict, situated approximately 10 kilometres west of the city of Jerusalem. The village stood midway down the southeastern slope of a mountain overlooking Wadi al-Sarar, which ran approximately half a kilometre east of the village.

A secondary road connected Sataf with the Jerusalem–Jaffa highway to the northeast, while unpaved paths linked it to neighbouring Palestinian villages. Opposite Sataf, on a mountain slope south of Wadi al-Sarar, stood a monastery known as Dayr al-Habis. The village contained several shops, and its inhabitants obtained water for domestic use and irrigation from two principal springs.

Boundaries of Sataf

Sataf was situated among the following Palestinian villages:

- North: [Suba](#).
- Northwest: [Dayr ‘Amr](#).
- West: [Khirbat al-Lawz](#).
- Southwest: [Ras Abu ‘Ammar](#).
- Southeast: [al-Jura](#).
- East: [‘Ayn Karim](#).

Architectural Structure of Sataf

In the late nineteenth century, Sataf was described as a moderately sized stone-built village situated on the steep side of a valley. It was divided into four quarters. During the British Mandate, new construction extended along the road leading to ‘Ayn Karim and across the eastern side of the mountain slope toward Wadi al-Sarar.

The village’s inhabitants were Muslims. Its built environment included stone houses, several shops and domestic structures distributed across the terraced mountain slope.

Economic Life in Sataf

Agriculture formed the basis of the village economy. The inhabitants cultivated cereals, vegetables, olives and other fruit trees. Some crops were rainfed, while others were irrigated with water from the village springs. In 1944/45, 465 dunams were devoted to cereal cultivation, while 928 dunams were irrigated or used for orchards. Of the orchard land, approximately 403 dunams were planted with olive trees.

Trees, grasses and other vegetation growing on the surrounding heights were used as fodder for livestock. The villagers marketed their agricultural produce in Jerusalem.

Sataf had two principal springs, 'Ayn Sataf and 'Ayn al-Baqara. Their water flowed through channels and pools that supported household consumption and the irrigation of the village's agricultural terraces.

Land Ownership in Sataf

Ownership category	Land area (dunams)*
Palestinian ownership	3,769
Jewish ownership	0
Public land	6
Total	3,775

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Land Use in Sataf in 1945

Land-use category	Palestinian ownership (dunams)*	Public land (dunams)*	Total (dunams)*
Irrigated land and orchards	928	0	928

Land-use category	Palestinian ownership (dunams)*	Public land (dunams)*	Total (dunams)*
Olive cultivation*	403	0	403
Cereal cultivation	465	0	465
Built-up area	22	0	22
Cultivable land	1,393	0	1,393
Uncultivated land	2,354	6	2,360

* The olive-planted area was included within the irrigated land and orchards category and should not be added to it when calculating the total cultivable area.

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Population of Sataf

Year	Population
1922	329
1931	381
1945	540
1948	626 (estimate)
Estimated refugees and descendants in 1998	3,847

The figures for 1922, 1931 and 1945 derive from British Mandate censuses and village statistics. The 1948 figure is a retrospective demographic estimate rather than a contemporaneous census, while the 1998 figure estimates the number of refugees originating from Sataf and their descendants.

Number of Houses in Sataf

Year	Number of houses
1931	101
1948	165 (estimate)

Archaeological Remains at Sataf

Archaeological research has identified evidence of human settlement and agricultural activity at Sataf dating to the Chalcolithic period, approximately the fifth to fourth millennia BCE. Remains from later historical periods, including the Byzantine era, have also been identified. These discoveries indicate a long history of settlement and terraced agriculture at the site.

Dayr al-Habis, a monastery situated south of Wadi al-Sarar, formed part of the historical landscape facing the village.

Occupation and Depopulation of Sataf

Sataf was attacked on 13–14 July 1948 while Operation Dani was under way. The operation extended beyond al-Lydd and al-Ramla to include a group of Palestinian villages along the western approaches to Jerusalem.

According to the account cited by Walid Khalidi from Israeli historian Benny Morris, the attack on Sataf was carried out by the Palmach's Harel Brigade, which formed part of the force assembled for Operation Dani. The village was occupied and its Palestinian population was displaced during this military advance. Some sources list 13 July as the date of occupation, while others place the attack across 13–14 July; the latter formulation reflects the available evidence more accurately.

Israeli Settlements on the Lands of Sataf

No Israeli settlement was established on Sataf's village lands. The site and its agricultural terraces were later incorporated into a recreational and tourist area. Parts of the surrounding land were afforested by the Jewish National Fund, while the spring, pools and terraces became features of the tourist site.

Sataf Today

Many partially ruined stone walls remain at the village site, some retaining their arched doorways. The walls of several houses whose roofs have collapsed are still largely intact. Walid Khalidi's field survey also recorded a damaged military jeep among the stone ruins.

The area around the principal village spring, east of the ruins of a rectangular stone house, was converted into a tourist site. Numerous agricultural terraces remain visible and support almond, olive and fig trees, as well as cactus plants. A forest planted around the site extends from woodland established on the lands of the neighbouring depopulated Palestinian village of Khirbat al-Lawz.

Sources

- [PalQuest, "Sataf"](#).
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- Walid Khalidi, ed., *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*, Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992.
 - Government of Palestine, *Census of Palestine, 1922*.
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 - Government of Palestine, *Village Statistics, April 1945*.
- Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, Cambridge University Press, 2004.