Our Palestine — Depopulated village — Gaza — 08 July 1948

Al-Masmiyya al-Saghira

Al-Masmiyya al-Saghira (Masmiyyat al-Hurani, al-Huraniyya) – Depopulated Palestinian Village of the Gaza District

Al-Masmiyya al-Saghira, also known as Masmiyyat al-Hurani and al-Huraniyya, was a depopulated Palestinian village in the Gaza District. It stood on the southern coastal plain, approximately 42 kilometers northeast of Gaza, at an average elevation of about 60 meters above sea level.

Its inhabitants were displaced during the Nakba and the 1948 occupation of

Palestine, amid military operations carried out by the Giv'ati Brigade during the Ten Days between the two truces in July 1948. The available sources indicate that the village was most probably occupied on 8–9 July 1948, at roughly the same time as its larger sister village, al-Masmiyya al-Kabira, and several surrounding villages.

Location and Geography

Al-Masmiyya al-Saghira stood on the southern coastal plain. Wadi al-Zurayqa ran immediately north of the village, and the built-up area extended generally from northwest to southeast, parallel to the course of the wadi.

A short local road linked the village with a junction of major roads leading toward al-Majdal to the southwest and Ramla to the northeast, as well as with the main Jerusalem–Jaffa road network.

Al-Masmiyya al-Kabira was its closest sister village. The lands of Qastina, Tall al-Turmus, and Tall al-Safi were among the neighboring village lands, while al-Tina, al-Khayma, and other villages lay within the wider surrounding area.

PalQuest and Palestine Remembered give the distance from Gaza as approximately 42 kilometers. The Palestinian Encyclopedia gives a different figure of 47 kilometers. The 42-kilometer figure is used here because it is consistent with the digitized Walid Khalidi entry and Palestine Remembered.

Name and Establishment

The adjective *al-Saghira*, meaning “the small,” distinguished the village from neighboring al-Masmiyya al-Kabira, “the large.” The village was also known as Masmiyyat al-Hurani or al-Huraniyya, after the al-Hurani hamula.

According to Walid Khalidi, the village was established in the second half of the nineteenth century by members of the al-Hurani hamula who had previously lived in al-Masmiyya al-Kabira. Following disputes with other residents there, they left and founded the settlement that became al-Masmiyya al-Saghira.

Population and Houses

The inhabitants of al-Masmiyya al-Saghira were Palestinian Arab Muslims. Official Mandate-era figures show that the population increased from 261 in 1922 to 354 in 1931 and 530 in 1945.

Year	Population	Note
1922	261	Official Mandate census
1931	354	Official census; all residents were Muslims
1945	530	Official Village Statistics
1948	About 615	Later estimate, not an official British census
1998	About 3,776 refugees and descendants	Later estimate published by Palestine Remembered

The 1931 census recorded 73 houses in the village. Palestine Remembered gives a later estimate of approximately 126 houses for 1948, but this figure should not be presented as an official Mandate census figure.

Built Environment, Education, and Services

The village's built-up area covered approximately 18 dunams in the 1944/45 statistics. It was a relatively small settlement compared with neighboring al-Masmiyya al-Kabira.

The principal sources reviewed do not document an independent school inside al-Masmiyya al-Saghira. Children from the village attended school in al-Masmiyya al-Kabira. Walid Khalidi also records seven small shops that supplied residents with basic daily necessities.

The population was entirely Muslim. However, the principal sources reviewed do not provide firm documentation for a particular mosque, shrine, or other religious structure within the village. No such structure has therefore been added without evidence.

Water Resources

The Palestinian Encyclopedia states that there were no springs within the village lands, making wells and collected rainwater particularly important.

Walid Khalidi, drawing on Abdullah al-Hurani's 1987 documentation, records that villagers obtained domestic water from privately owned wells or cisterns that collected rainwater and from a communal artesian well located beneath an old Christ's-thorn tree. Groundwater was also used to irrigate the citrus groves.

Economic Life

Agriculture and animal husbandry formed the basis of the village economy. Cereals were the dominant crops, alongside citrus, bananas, and a small area of irrigated orchards.

Most crops depended on rainfall, while citrus groves were irrigated from artesian wells. Residents also raised sheep, goats, cattle, camels, mules, and poultry. Khalidi, citing Abdullah al-Hurani's local documentation, gives an estimate of approximately 4,000 animals of various kinds.

Villagers participated in the weekly Thursday market at al-Faluja. Agricultural and livestock products were also marketed in Jaffa, al-Majdal, Gaza, Lydda, Ramla, Jerusalem, and al-Faluja.

Land Ownership, 1944/45

The total land area of al-Masmiyya al-Saghira was 6,478 dunams. Using the terminology of the official Village Statistics, ownership was distributed as follows:

Total	**6,478**
Ownership Category	**Area in Dunams**
Arab	6,340
Jewish	0

Total	6,478
Ownership Category	**Area in Dunams**
Public	138

Palestine Remembered presents the same figures using its simplified terminology: 6,340 dunams “Palestinian,” 0 dunams “Transferred to Zionists,” and 138 dunams “Communal/Public.” These labels should not be confused with the categories used in the official Government of Palestine table.

Land Use, 1944/45

Total	6,478
Land Use	**Area in Dunams**
Cereals	6,126
Citrus and bananas	147
Plantations and irrigable land	7
Total cultivable/cultivated land	6,280
Built-up area	18
Non-cultivable land	180

The Palestinian Encyclopedia also records approximately two dunams planted with olives in 1943. This is a crop-specific detail within the agricultural land and should not be added again to the overall land-use total.

Occupation and Depopulation

The precise circumstances of al-Masmiyya al-Saghira's occupation require some caution because the available sources differ in their level of detail. Walid Khalidi does not provide a separately confirmed day for the village's capture; instead, he states that its circumstances were probably identical to those of al-Masmiyya al-Kabira, which was occupied on 8–9 July 1948.

Khalidi, citing Benny Morris through his own account, states that an operation carried out by the Giv'ati Brigade during the Ten Days between the two truces precipitated the evacuation of the village. The Ten Days extended from 8 to 18 July 1948.

Palestine Remembered indexes the occupation of al-Masmiyya al-Saghira to 8 July 1948 and associates it with Operation An-Far and the Giv'ati Brigade. Operation An-Far began on 8 July and continued until 15 July, involving a Giv'ati offensive south of Ramla and around the meeting point of the Gaza, Hebron, and Ramla districts.

There is, however, an important documentary qualification. PalQuest's dedicated page for Operation An-Far lists al-Masmiyya al-Kabira and several neighboring villages among the affected localities but does not explicitly list al-Masmiyya al-Saghira. It is therefore more accurate to state that al-Masmiyya al-Saghira was most probably occupied and depopulated on 8–9 July 1948 in the context of the Giv'ati operations associated with An-Far, while recognizing that its explicit inclusion in the operation is less firmly documented than that of al-Masmiyya al-Kabira.

The village-specific evidence identifies the Giv'ati Brigade as the military formation associated with the depopulation. Although the First Battalion led Operation An-Far at the operational level, the sources reviewed do not establish that this battalion specifically entered al-Masmiyya al-Saghira. It should therefore not be presented as the confirmed village-level unit.

Occupation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
Beginning of Operation An-Far	8 July 1948	The Giv'ati Brigade began Operation An-Far on the southern front. Its First Battalion led the operation at the general operational level.

Stage	Date	Details
Occupation of al-Masmiyya al-Kabira and nearby villages	8–9 July 1948	Al-Masmiyya al-Kabira and several other localities were occupied during the Giv'ati advance.
Occupation and depopulation of al-Masmiyya al-Saghira	Probably 8–9 July 1948	Khalidi considers its circumstances probably identical to those of al-Masmiyya al-Kabira. Palestine Remembered indexes the village to 8 July and Operation An-Far.
End of Operation An-Far	15 July 1948	The operation ended after a series of attacks and population expulsions or flights throughout the area.
Destruction of the village	Date not firmly documented	The principal sources reviewed do not provide a precise date for the destruction of the village buildings.

Israeli Settlements on Village Lands

Walid Khalidi reports, through the sources he cites, that a settlement established on the village lands in 1949 was initially known as “Masmiyya Bet” and was later called “Masmiyya Shalom.”

Khalidi also records a significant source discrepancy: another geographical gazetteer places the seed-growing farm known as Mashmi'at Shalom on the lands of neighboring al-Masmiyya al-Kabira rather than al-Masmiyya al-Saghira. The location of Masmiyya Shalom/Mashmi'at Shalom should therefore not be presented as entirely undisputed.

Kfar HaRif, by contrast, is identified by Khalidi as having been established on the lands of al-Masmiyya al-Saghira in 1956.

Al-Masmiyya al-Saghira Today

According to the field description published in Walid Khalidi's *All That Remains*, virtually no recognizable feature of al-Masmiyya al-Saghira remained at the time of the survey. The site was covered with wild vegetation, tall grasses, and scattered

eucalyptus trees.

This description should not be treated as a field verification of the site in 2026. The fieldwork for the *All That Remains* project was carried out between 1987 and 1990. The description above therefore records the condition of the site during that research period; the principal sources reviewed here do not provide a comprehensive recent field survey that would justify a more current description.

Sources

- PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: al-Masmiyya al-Saghira
- Palestine Remembered – al-Masmiyya al-Saghira, Gaza District
- PalQuest – Operation An-Far
- Institute for Palestine Studies – Walid Khalidi, All That Remains
- PalQuest – All That Remains: Methodology