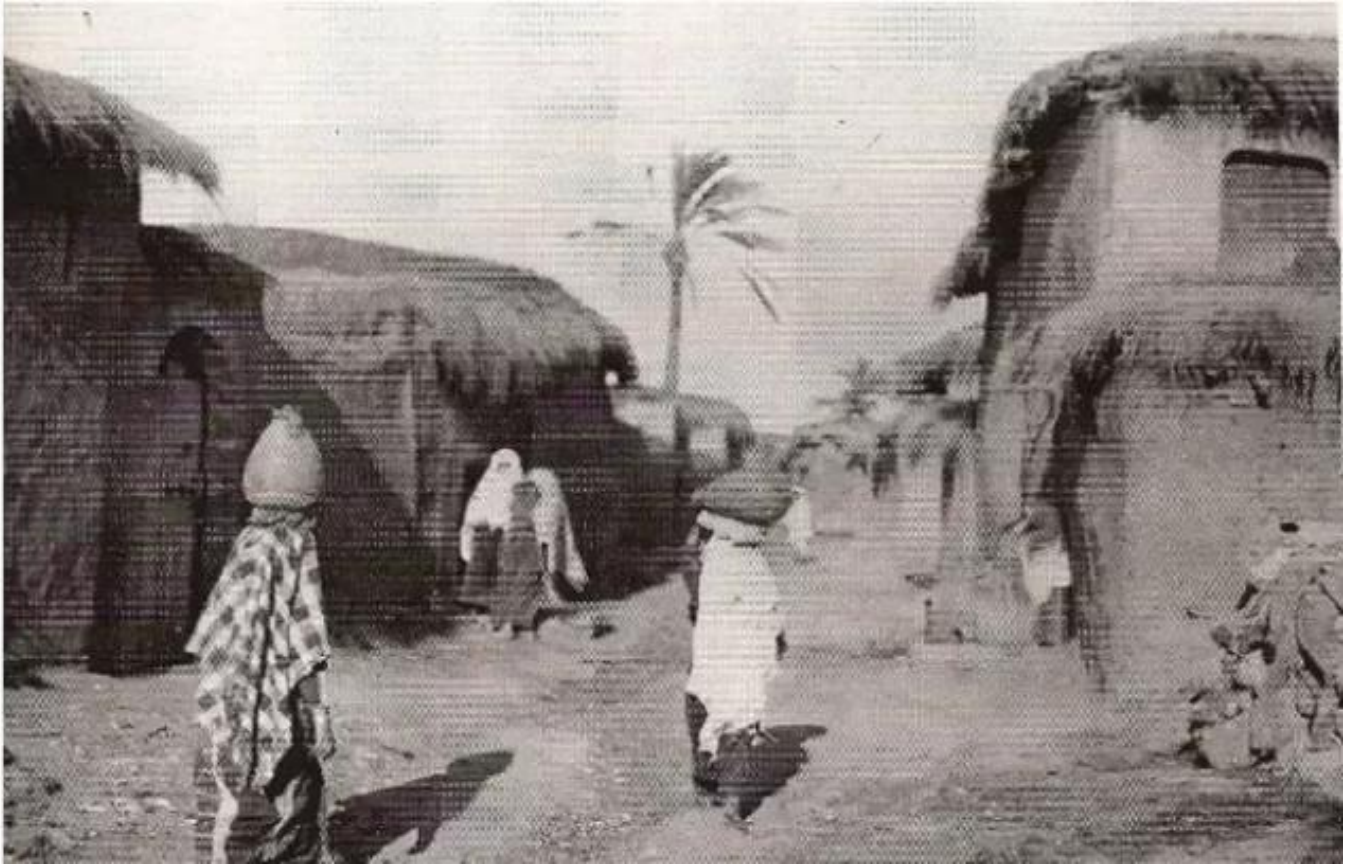


Isdud



Subdistrict: Gaza

Estimated Palestinian population of Isdud in 1948: 5,359

Date of occupation and depopulation: 28 October 1948

Military operation: Operation Yoav

Military force: Givati Brigade

Israeli settlements established on Isdud's lands before 1948: None

Israeli settlements established on the former built-up area of Isdud after 1948: None

Israeli settlements established on Isdud's lands after 1948: Bnei Darom, Sde Uziyahu, Shtulim, and Gan HaDarom

Isdud: A Depopulated Palestinian Village

Isdud was situated approximately 35 kilometres northeast of Gaza.

The village stood on a sandy hill overlooking extensive areas to the east, north, and south. A higher hill to the west consisted of accumulated remains from earlier settlements at the site.

Isdud was located approximately 5 kilometres from the Mediterranean coast, beside the coastal highway and railway line.

A masonry well and a pond were the village's two principal water sources. Both were surrounded by date-palm and fig groves. The Palestinian population was overwhelmingly Muslim, with a small Christian community documented in earlier British Mandate censuses.

Boundaries of Isdud

Isdud was bordered by the following Palestinian villages and geographical areas:

Northwest: [Arab Suqir, also known as Abu Suwayrih](#).

West: the Mediterranean Sea.

Southwest: [Hamama](#).

South: [Julis](#).

Southeast: [Bayt Daras](#).

East: [al-Batani al-Gharbi](#).

Northeast: [Barqa](#).



The Depopulated Palestinian Village of Isdud

The Depopulated Palestinian Village of Isdud

Architectural Form of Isdud

In the late nineteenth century, Isdud extended along the eastern curve of a low hill covered with orchards. A khan, already in ruins at the time, stood southeast of the village. Most houses were single-storey structures built of adobe brick. They generally included an enclosed courtyard surrounded by an adobe wall. The masonry well and pond that provided the principal water supply were surrounded by date-palm and fig groves.

Economic Life in Isdud

Agriculture formed the basis of Isdud's economy. Its principal crops included fruit—particularly citrus fruit, grapes, and figs—and cereals, especially wheat. According to the 1944/45 village statistics, 1,921 dunams of Palestinian-owned land were devoted to citrus and bananas, 8,322 dunams were irrigated or used for orchards, and 22,170 dunams were allocated to cereal cultivation.

Agriculture relied on rainfall as well as irrigation from wells ranging from approximately 15 to 35 metres in depth. In addition to farming, residents engaged in commerce. Isdud contained several shops and hosted a weekly market every Wednesday, attracting residents from surrounding villages. Trade was facilitated by the village railway station, which formed part of Palestine's coastal railway.

Mosques and Religious Shrines in Isdud

Isdud had two mosques and three shrines associated with Islamic religious figures. One shrine, incorporated into a mosque traditionally attributed to the reign of the Mamluk sultan al-Zahir Baybars, was locally associated with Salman al-Farisi, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad. The historical basis of this attribution remains uncertain.

The village also contained shrines associated with Shaykh al-Matbuli and Ahmad Abu al-Iqbal. One of these shrines remained visible after the village's destruction.

Education and Municipal Life in Isdud

Isdud had two elementary schools. The boys' school was established in 1922 and had 371 pupils by the mid-1940s. The girls' school opened in 1942 and had 74 pupils during the same period. Isdud also had a municipal council.

Archaeological Sites in Isdud

Nine archaeological khirbas in the vicinity of Isdud contained a wide variety of remains, including pottery fragments, mosaic floors, cisterns, and an ancient olive press. Archaeological excavations indicated that the site was inhabited almost continuously from at least the seventeenth century BCE until the village's depopulation in 1948. Its most prosperous periods in antiquity appear to have included the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BCE.

The village's name was derived from the ancient city of Ashdod. The inland settlement should be distinguished from the ancient coastal port, known during the classical period as Azotos Paralios and in Arabic as Minat al-Qal'a, which lay approximately 5 kilometres to the west beyond a belt of sand dunes.

Land Ownership in Isdud, 1944/45

Ownership category	Area (dunams)*
Palestinian ownership	32,905
Jewish ownership	2,487
Public land	12,479
Total	47,871

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Land Use in Isdud, 1944/45

Land-use category	Palestinian ownership (dunams)*	Jewish ownership (dunams)*	Public land (dunams)*	Total (dunams)*
Citrus and banana cultivation	1,921	1,356	0	3,277
Irrigated land and orchards	8,322	5	0	8,327
Cereal cultivation	22,170	1,126	466	23,762
Built-up area	131	0	0	131
Cultivable land	32,413	2,487	466	35,366
Uncultivated land	361	0	12,013	12,374

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Population of Isdud

Year	Palestinian population	Jewish population included with the statistical locality	Total
1596	413	—	413
1922	2,566	—	2,566
1931	3,140	—	3,140
1945	4,620	290	4,910
1948	Approximately 5,359	Not included in the Palestinian estimate	Approximately 5,359 Palestinians
Estimated refugee population in 1998	32,911	—	32,911

The official 1945 figure of 4,910 combined 4,620 Palestinian residents with 290 Jewish residents registered within the same statistical locality. The 1948 Palestinian population and the 1998 refugee population are retrospective

demographic estimates rather than contemporary census counts.

Number of Houses in Isdud

Year	Number of houses
1931	764
1948	Approximately 1,303

The 1931 figure is an official census count; the 1948 figure is a later estimate.

Occupation and Depopulation of Isdud

After Egyptian forces entered Palestine on 15 May 1948, establishing a defensive position at Isdud became one of their early military objectives. The Egyptian Ninth Battalion initially occupied the position. According to the memoirs of Gamal Abdel Nasser, who was then a staff officer in the Egyptian Sixth Battalion, Isdud was transferred to his battalion after a replacement unit reached the front on 22 May. Foreign press reports did not confirm the presence of Egyptian units at Isdud until 30 May, but Abdel Nasser's account provides direct testimony from the Egyptian side.

Isdud subsequently stood on the front line between Egyptian and Israeli forces. Israeli forces temporarily severed the road between al-Majdal and Isdud, but Egyptian forces reopened their supply route. The principal Israeli attempt to capture Isdud in early June formed part of Operation Pleshet, not Operation Barak. The assault began on the night of 2–3 June and included artillery and aerial bombardment, but it failed to capture the town.

Isdud remained under Egyptian military control until the closing stage of the second truce in October 1948. Beginning on 18 October, during Operation Yoav, Isdud and other positions in the area were bombed from the air for three successive nights. With the Egyptian force facing the danger of encirclement, it withdrew southward along the coastal road.

Most of the remaining Palestinian civilians departed alongside the withdrawing Egyptian

columns before Israeli forces entered Isdud on 28 October. According to Benny Morris, approximately 300 residents remained and displayed white flags, but they were expelled southward shortly after the Israeli forces entered. The occupation and complete depopulation of Isdud must therefore be understood within the broader military assault conducted during the Nakba and Operation Yoav.

Israeli Settlements Established on the Lands of Isdud

Bnei Darom was established north of Isdud in 1949 on land belonging to the village. Sde Uziyahu and Shtulim were established east of the village site in 1950, also on Isdud's lands.

Gan HaDarom was established farther north in 1953 on village land.

Some secondary lists also attribute Ezer, Emunim, Beit Ezra, and southern neighbourhoods of the modern city of Ashdod to Isdud. The principal Palestinian reference works consulted for this article specifically identify Bnei Darom, Sde Uziyahu, Shtulim, and Gan HaDarom. Beit Ezra is generally associated with the lands of the neighbouring Palestinian village of Hamama. The remaining attributions could not be verified with sufficient precision and are therefore not presented as established facts.

The modern city of Ashdod was founded in 1956 approximately 4 kilometres north of the former village. It was not constructed directly over Isdud's former built-up centre, although later urban expansion approached or extended into parts of the wider historical area.

Isdud Today

Most of Isdud's houses were destroyed, and the village site became covered with grass, weeds, and scattered rubble. A large ruined mosque remains visible, with some of its deteriorating columns still standing. The two former school buildings and one abandoned shrine also survived.

Avocado trees were planted in an orchard along the northern edge of the site, while cultivated fields extend parallel to its southern side. The surviving structures and archaeological remains

form part of the landscape of Tall Isdud.

Sources

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- Gamal Abdel Nasser, *Memoirs of the First Palestine War*, consulted for the deployment of the Egyptian Sixth Battalion at Isdud.
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