Al-Jiyya



al-Jiyya: A Depopulated Palestinian Village in the Gaza District

al-Jiyya was a Palestinian village in the Gaza District, located approximately 19 km northeast of Gaza city on the southern coastal plain. Its inhabitants were displaced and the village was destroyed during the Nakba and the occupation of Palestine in 1948. Israeli occupation forces took the village on 4–5 November 1948, at the end of Operation Yoav.

Location of al-Jiyya

al-Jiyya stood on a sandy site surrounded by hills on the southern coastal plain. Several wadis descended around the village and periodically exposed it to flooding.

The village was approximately 19 km northeast of Gaza. PalQuest records an average elevation of 50 metres above sea level, whereas Palestine Remembered gives an elevation of 25 metres. The two sources therefore differ on this figure.

The coastal highway and railway line ran close to the western side of the village. The lands of Ni'ilya lay to the west, Barbara to the south and southwest, Bayt Tima to the east and northeast, and al-Majdal to the northwest.

Name and History of al-Jiyya

Walid Khalidi associates the name al-Jiyya with the physical character of its site and the wadis surrounding it, noting a meaning related to a place where water collects. The village has also been identified with a settlement recorded in Crusader documents as Algie.

According to the villagers, al-Jiyya had once been destroyed and was later rebuilt during the period of Muhammad Abu Nabbut, who governed Jaffa and Gaza between 1807 and 1818.

Archaeological remains found at al-Jiyya included a stone column and the remains

of a Roman mill.

Community and Services in al-Jiyya

The inhabitants of al-Jiyya were Muslim, and the village had its own mosque. Children from al-Jiyya attended school in the neighbouring village of Barbara.

The villagers installed a pump on one of the wells in the area to draw water for domestic use.

Economic Life in al-Jiyya

Agriculture was the principal source of livelihood in al-Jiyya. The villagers cultivated cereals as well as citrus and other fruit crops, while livestock raising and dairy production also contributed to the local economy.

al-Jiyya was particularly known for cheese and other dairy products that were sold in Gaza and al-Majdal.

In the 1944/45 statistics, 8,004 dunums were allocated to cereals, 189 dunums to citrus and bananas, and 26 dunums were irrigated or used for plantations.

Land Ownership in al-Jiyya

The total land area of al-Jiyya was 8,506 dunums. PalQuest classifies 8,274 dunums as Arab-owned and 232 dunums as public land. Palestine Remembered presents the corresponding categories as Palestinian and communal land and records no land as having been transferred to Zionists.

Total	**8,506**
Category	**Area in dunums**
Arab / Palestinian	8,274
Transferred to Zionists	0

Total	8,506
Category	**Area in dunums**
Public / communal	232

Land Use in al-Jiyya, 1944/45

Land use in al-Jiyya

Land use	Area in dunums
Citrus and bananas	189
Plantations and irrigable land	26
Cereals	8,004
Built-up area	45
Cultivated / cultivable land	8,219
Non-cultivable land	242
Of the 242 dunums classified as non-cultivable, PalQuest records 10 as Arab land and 232 as public land.	

Population of al-Jiyya

Population of al-Jiyya in selected years

Year	Population	Nature of figure
1922	667	Official British Mandate census
1931	899	Official British Mandate census
1944/45	1,230	Official statistics
1948	1,427	Later estimate published by Palestine Remembered
Estimated refugees in 1998	8,762	Later estimate published by Palestine Remembered
The 1948 and 1998 figures are later estimates and should not be treated as official British Mandate census figures.		

Number of Houses in al-Jiyya

Number of houses in al-Jiyya

Year	Number of houses	Nature of figure
1931	188	Official census figure
1948	298	Later estimate published by Palestine Remembered
The 1948 figure is not an official British Mandate census figure.		

Occupation and Depopulation of al-Jiyya during the Nakba

al-Jiyya fell to Israeli occupation forces at approximately the same time as the city of al-Majdal, on 4–5 November 1948, during the final stage of Operation Yoav, one of the major military operations carried out in southern Palestine during the Nakba.

Operation Yoav began on 15 October 1948 and ended on 4 November 1948. PalQuest lists al-Jiyya among the villages affected by the operation. The operation as a whole involved the Givati, Yiftach, Negev, and Harel brigades against Egyptian forces.

Walid Khalidi's dedicated entry for al-Jiyya does not identify a specific brigade as the unit that captured the village itself. Palestine Remembered, however, identifies the Givati Brigade as the attacking unit and the Egyptian Army as the defending force. This attribution is therefore presented with its source rather than as a detail unanimously stated by all references.

- Date of occupation and displacement: 4–5 November 1948; Palestine Remembered specifically lists 4 November.
- Military operation: Operation Yoav.
- Attacking unit: Palestine Remembered identifies the Givati Brigade, while Khalidi's dedicated village entry does not specify a brigade.
- Defending force: Palestine Remembered identifies the Egyptian Army; PalQuest lists Egyptian forces as the Arab military force opposing Operation Yoav as a whole.

- Fate of the inhabitants: Khalidi considers it likely that residents fled or were expelled toward the Gaza Strip, which was already receiving large numbers of Palestinian refugees.
- Fate of the village: its built-up features were subsequently destroyed.

Settlements Established on the Lands of al-Jiyya

Two settlements were established on the lands of the village after the Nakba:

- Ge'a: established in 1949 on the lands of al-Jiyya.
- Beyt Shiqma: established in 1950 on the lands of al-Jiyya.

al-Jiyya Today

According to the field description published by Walid Khalidi in *All That Remains*, all visible traces of the built-up village had been obliterated, while some sycamore trees remained at the site. The surrounding lands were being cultivated, and the source specifically recorded cantaloupe cultivation by residents of Beyt Shiqma.

This description derives from field research published in Khalidi's book in 1992. The approved sources used here do not provide a comprehensive independent field verification of the condition of every part of al-Jiyya's site in 2026. It should therefore be treated as the latest available reference description rather than a real-time account of the site.

Sources

- PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: al-Jiyya
- PalQuest – Operation Yoav
- Palestine Remembered – al-Jiyya, Gaza District
- Institute for Palestine Studies – All That Remains, Walid Khalidi