Dimra

Dimra – Gaza Subdistrict

Dimra was a depopulated Palestinian village in the Gaza subdistrict, situated on the southern coastal plain approximately 12 km northeast of Gaza at an average elevation of about 50 meters above sea level. The village stood on distinctive reddish-brown soil, while its agricultural lands were periodically threatened by the eastward movement of coastal sand dunes.

The official 1931 Census of Palestine recorded 324 inhabitants, and the 1944/45 statistics recorded 520. Dimra's registered lands totaled 8,492 dunums.

Military violence reached Dimra as early as February 1948, but the village remained outside final Israeli control through much of the Nakba. On 31 May, Palestinians expelled from neighboring Huj were sent to Dimra. The village's final occupation occurred only in the closing stages of Operation Yoav or immediately afterward. Walid Khalidi does not establish an exact date, suggesting either 28 October 1948, following the Egyptian withdrawal along the coastal road, or 4–5 November after the occupation of al-Majdal.

Location of Dimra

Dimra stood on the southern coastal plain on soil characterized by its reddish-brown color.

A short secondary road linked it to the main coastal highway, while other local roads connected it with neighboring villages. The coastal railway passed a short distance west of the village.

The Palestinian Encyclopedia places Dimra approximately 5 km northeast of Bayt Hanun, within an agricultural zone drained toward Wadi al-Hasi.

Neighboring Villages and Lands

Palestine Remembered identifies Najd, Simsim, Dayr Sunayd, Bayt Lahiya, and Bayt Hanun among the lands immediately surrounding Dimra.

Its village map shows the following wider geographical setting:

Direction	Village / Area
Northwest	Dayr Sunayd
North	Bayt Jirja
Northeast	Simsim
East	Najd
Southeast	Huj
South	Bayt Hanun

Direction	Village / Area
Southwest	Bayt Lahiya

These geographical relationships should be distinguished from exact cadastral boundaries, for which original Mandate land maps remain the strongest evidence.

Name and Earlier History

Archaeological and historical evidence indicates that the Dimra site had a long history of occupation.

Khalidi states that remains suggest settlement at least by the Crusader period.

The fifteenth-century writer al-Qalqashandi recorded Dimra as a dwelling place of Bani Jabir, an Arab tribe.

In 1838, American traveler Edward Robinson passed the village and described it as lying near a bend in a wadi.

Built Environment

The center of Dimra developed around the intersection of two principal roads.

During the British Mandate, the village expanded eastward and southward along roads leading toward neighboring communities.

The official 1944/45 statistics recorded 18 dunums of built-up land.

Earlier descriptions indicate that much of the village housing was constructed of adobe, a common building material in the southern coastal plain.

Population of Dimra

Year	Population	Nature of figure / Notes
1922	251	Official Census of Palestine; all inhabitants were Muslims

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1931	324	Official Census of Palestine; all inhabitants were Muslims
1944/45	520	Official Government of Palestine statistics; all were recorded as Arabs
1948	603	Later Palestine Remembered estimate; not an official census
1998	3,704 refugees and descendants	Later demographic estimate published by Palestine Remembered

The online Palestinian Encyclopedia gives 351 inhabitants for 1922, but this conflicts with the official 1922 figure of 251 reproduced in other Palestinian references. The official figure of 251 is therefore used here.

Number of Houses

Year	Houses	Nature of figure
1931	100	Official Census of Palestine
1948	186	Later Palestine Remembered estimate; not an official census figure

Land Ownership in 1944/45

Dimra's registered lands totaled 8,492 dunums.

Using Palestine Remembered's simplified terminology:

Ownership category	Dunums
Palestinian	8,257
Transferred to Zionists	0
Communal/Public	235
Total	**8,492**

The official categories record 8,257 Arab dunums and 235 Public dunums, with no land registered in the Jewish ownership category.

Land Use in 1944/45

Land use	Arab	Public	Total dunums
Citrus and bananas	96	0	96
Plantations and irrigable land	388	0	388
Cereals	7,412	0	7,412
Built-up land	18	0	18
Non-cultivable land	343	235	578
Total	**8,257**	**235**	**8,492**

The land-use figures balance exactly with the official ownership totals.

Palestine Remembered's simplified table places 578 dunums of non-arable land in one Palestinian column. The official breakdown shows that 343 dunums were Arab and 235 were Public.

Economic Life in Dimra

Most villagers depended on agriculture.

Cereal cultivation dominated land use, occupying 7,412 dunums in 1944/45. Another 388 dunums were irrigated or used for orchards, and 96 dunums were planted with citrus and bananas.

The agricultural lands were periodically threatened by the movement of coastal sands from the west.

Palestinian photographs from the early 1940s also document village threshing floors, consistent with the central importance of grain cultivation.

Water Sources

Agricultural wells were located outside Dimra, especially in the bottoms of gullies draining toward Wadi al-Hasi.

These wells were generally between 20 and 25 meters deep.

Winter flooding in Wadi al-Hasi helped recharge underground water resources, and the wells supplied irrigation water for orchards and crops.

Education

An elementary school opened in Dimra in 1946.

Its initial enrollment was 47 pupils.

The school's establishment only two years before the Nakba reflects the expansion of formal education in the village during the final years of the British Mandate.

Religious Life

The inhabitants were Muslims according to the Mandate-era censuses and statistics.

Khalidi's core village entry does not provide securely documented information on a named mosque or shrine in Dimra, so none has been added without supporting evidence.

Archaeological Remains

Dimra occupied an archaeological site containing foundations of earlier buildings, a cemetery, columns, and severed column capitals.

Two additional archaeological sites containing varied remains were located on village land.

The Palestinian Encyclopedia also records carved stones, cisterns, and rock-cut tombs, indicating multiple periods of human occupation in the area.

The 16 February 1948 Incident

Military tension reached Dimra early in the Nakba.

On 16 February 1948, the Jaffa newspaper *Filastin* reported that a Jewish convoy passed through Dimra and opened fire on villagers.

The report stated that the villagers returned fire.

The Arrival of the People of Huj

On 31 May 1948, inhabitants expelled from neighboring Huj were sent to Dimra.

Khalidi relays that they were repeatedly prevented from returning to Huj, indicating that they remained in Dimra during this period.

This is significant because it demonstrates that Dimra had not yet been finally occupied or depopulated by the end of May 1948.

Operation Yoav

Operation Yoav began on 15 October 1948 and formally ended on 4 November.

Its principal objective was to break the Egyptian lines separating Israeli forces in the Negev from Israeli-held territory farther north and to bring as much of southern Palestine as possible under Israeli control.

The Giv'ati, Yiftach, Negev, and Har'el brigades participated at the broader operational level, while Egyptian forces were the principal Arab military formation on the southern front.

The Israeli occupation forces used intensive aerial bombardment, artillery, and ground assaults during the offensive, which resulted in the capture of most Gaza-district villages outside the shrinking Egyptian-held coastal zone.

Occupation and Depopulation of Dimra

The exact occupation date of Dimra cannot be established with certainty.

Palestine Remembered lists **28 October 1948** as the occupation date and associates the village with Operation Yoav.

Khalidi's detailed account is more cautious. He states that Dimra was probably occupied during the final stages of Operation Yoav and gives two possibilities:

First: 28 October 1948, following the withdrawal of Egyptian forces along the coastal road.

Second: 4–5 November 1948, following the occupation of al-Majdal.

The second possibility requires an important chronological qualification: PalQuest dates the formal end of Operation Yoav to 4 November, so an occupation on 5 November would have occurred immediately after the operation rather than within its formal dates.

The most accurate formulation is therefore that **Dimra was occupied during the final stages of Operation Yoav or immediately afterward, within a likely window from 28 October to 4–5 November 1948.**

Depopulation

From mid-October onward, the southern front was subjected to intensive aerial and artillery attacks, and Palestinian civilians increasingly moved southward toward the coastal strip that remained under Egyptian control.

Khalidi relays a contemporary report from 22 October describing one Palestinian village after another as deserted and civilians fleeing toward the Egyptian-held coastal zone.

The source does not establish the exact day on which the last inhabitants of Dimra left or provide a complete village-specific sequence of the departure.

It is therefore inappropriate to assume that every family left on one date or under identical circumstances.

Military Unit

Palestine Remembered identifies the **Giv'ati Brigade** as the attacking formation.

Operation Yoav as a whole, however, involved the Giv'ati, Yiftach, Negev, and Har'el brigades.

Khalidi's Dimra-specific entry does not independently identify one brigade as the unit that physically entered the village.

The most cautious formulation is therefore that Dimra was occupied by **Israeli occupation forces during the final stages of Operation Yoav, with Palestine Remembered attributing the village's capture to the Giv'ati Brigade but without independent village-specific confirmation in Khalidi's detailed text.**

Occupation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
Exchange of fire	16 February 1948	*Filastin* reported that a Jewish convoy fired on villagers and that the inhabitants returned fire.
Expellees from Huj arrive	31 May 1948	Residents expelled from Huj were sent to Dimra, demonstrating that Dimra remained outside final Israeli control at that time.
Beginning of Operation Yoav	15 October 1948	Israeli occupation forces launched the major offensive against Egyptian positions in southern Palestine.
Heavy bombardment and regional displacement	15–22 October 1948	Air and artillery attacks intensified, while Palestinian civilians increasingly fled toward the Egyptian-held coastal strip.
First possible occupation date	28 October 1948	Khalidi suggests that Dimra may have been taken following the Egyptian withdrawal along the coastal road; this is the date indexed by Palestine Remembered.
Occupation of al-Majdal	4 November 1948	The fall of al-Majdal further weakened Egyptian control of the northern Gaza coastal area.

Stage	Date	Details
Second possible occupation date	4–5 November 1948	Khalidi allows for the possibility that Dimra was taken in the wake of al-Majdal; an occupation on 5 November would have been immediately after Operation Yoav's formal end.
Destruction of the village	Later; exact date not established	Most of the built-up village was demolished, leaving limited traces of houses, walls, a basin, and a well.

Refugees from Dimra

Palestine Remembered estimates Dimra's population in 1948 at approximately 603. This is a later demographic estimate rather than an official Government of Palestine census figure.

The same source estimates that refugees from Dimra and their descendants numbered approximately 3,704 in 1998.

The broader Operation Yoav record indicates that large numbers of Palestinian civilians from southern Palestine fled toward Gaza and the Egyptian-held coastal zone, but the core sources do not provide a complete later distribution of every Dimra refugee family.

Israeli Settlements on Dimra Village Lands

In **1949**, the Israeli settlement of **Erez** was established on part of the former Dimra village site.

This relationship is explicitly stated by Khalidi and PalQuest and is therefore more secure than descriptions that merely place Erez in the general vicinity.

Dimra Today

In Walid Khalidi's field description, most of the village site was fenced and used as pasture.

Almost nothing remained of the built-up village except a crumbling stone water basin, concrete house rubble, a ruined wall, and a well topped by an old non-operating pump.

Additional rubble lay in a wooded section of the site, while cactus formerly used as fencing, shrubs, and thorny vegetation grew on surrounding land.

This description does not constitute direct field verification of conditions in 2026. Field research for *All That Remains* was carried out between **1987 and 1990**, before the book's publication in 1992.

Palestine Remembered contains later photographs and community documentation of the site. These sources are useful for tracing surviving remains but do not constitute a comprehensive contemporary field and cadastral survey of all former Dimra lands.

Sources

- PalQuest – Dimra
- PalQuest – Operation Yoav
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- Palestine Remembered – Dimra entry from Walid Khalidi's All That Remains
- Institute for Palestine Studies – Walid Khalidi, All That Remains
- Government of Palestine – Census of Palestine 1922
- Government of Palestine – Census of Palestine 1931
- Village Statistics 1945 – Official population and land statistics
- Palestinian Encyclopedia – Dimra
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- PalQuest – All That Remains: Methodology and Field Research