

## Zaraba / al-Azazmeh

### Zaraba / al-Azazmeh - Palestinian Bedouin Clan of the Beersheba Subdistrict

Zaraba, also rendered Zarabeh, was a Palestinian Bedouin clan of the al-Azazmeh tribe in the Beersheba Subdistrict. Some modern Palestinian databases incorrectly label it “Zaraba / Jabarat,” but the principal historical sources—including 'Arif al-'Arif, the official 1931 Census of Palestine, and Salman Abu Sitta's registers—consistently classify Zaraba under al-Azazmeh.

Zaraba did not constitute a single nucleated village with one permanent built-up center. 'Arif al-'Arif locates its dwellings at Rakhma, Bir Ibn Turkiya, and Khalasat al-Saba', all within the broader al-Azazmeh tribal domain.

| Item                         | Information                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| District                     | Beersheba                                                                                                         |
| Tribe                        | al-Azazmeh - not Jabarat                                                                                          |
| Type of Community            | Dispersed Bedouin clan rather than a single nucleated village                                                     |
| Historic Dwelling Areas      | Rakhma, Bir Ibn Turkiya, and Khalasat al-Saba'                                                                    |
| Population in 1922           | 1,080 - official Mandate estimate in the Census of Palestine                                                      |
| Population in 1931           | 429 - official Census of Palestine                                                                                |
| Population in 1944/1945      | Approximately 719 in late-Mandate data reproduced in Salman Abu Sitta's Atlas                                     |
| Estimated Population in 1948 | 873 according to Salman Abu Sitta's Register - a later estimate, not an official census                           |
| Displacement Period          | No single documented date; members were dispersed between the Naqab and Egypt/Sinai during post-1948 displacement |

| Item                     | Information                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Military Operation       | No independently documented Zaraba-specific operation; Operation Yoav forms part of the wider regional context only |
| Military Unit            | No brigade or battalion is independently documented at the Zaraba clan level                                        |
| Land Area                | No independently documented Zaraba total; multi-million-dunum figures concern al-Azazmeh as a whole                 |
| Settlements on Clan Land | No specific Israeli settlement can be reliably assigned to Zaraba land without a clan-level cadastral map           |

## Correction of the Tribal Classification

Several modern databases label the community “Zaraba / Jabarat.” This classification is not supported by the principal historical record.

'Arif al-'Arif identifies Zaraba as one of the ten principal al-Azazmeh clans, alongside the Muhammadiyin, Subhiyin, Subayhat, Farahin, Mas'udiyin, 'Usiyat, Sawakhneh, Mri'at, and Sarahin.

The official 1931 census likewise places *Zaraba* directly under the heading *El Azazma*, while Salman Abu Sitta consistently records the community as *Zarabeh/Azazema*.

The modern page titled “Zaraba / Jabarat” mainly reproduces general information about the Jabarat tribe rather than clan-specific evidence for such an affiliation.

## Zaraba within al-Azazmeh

Zaraba was one of the principal clans of al-Azazmeh, whose tribal territory extended across large parts of the central and southern Beersheba Subdistrict.

A genealogical tradition recorded by 'Arif al-'Arif links Zaraba and Sarahin to the same wider branch of the traditional al-Azazmeh lineage. This is presented as tribal tradition rather than independently verified documentary genealogy.

## Clan Leadership

'Arif al-'Arif identifies the Zaraba shaykh as:

**'Id bin Suwaylim bin 'Awwad bin Rabi'a.**

## Subdivisions

'Arif al-'Arif and 'Umar Rida Kahhala identify two principal Zaraba subdivisions:

- al-Batatira.
- al-Ghuraba.

Later tribal accounts sometimes add more detailed family classifications, but these two divisions are those explicitly recorded in the earlier historical source.

## Historic Dwelling Areas

'Arif al-'Arif records Zaraba dwellings at:

- Rakhma.
- Bir Ibn Turkiya.
- Khalasat al-Saba'.

These locations formed part of the wider al-Azazmeh domain.

Zaraba therefore cannot accurately be assigned one conventional village coordinate, elevation, or fixed distance from Beersheba.

## Population in 1922

The official 1922 Census of Palestine recorded Zaraba as follows:

| <b>Total</b>    | <b>1,080</b>  |
|-----------------|---------------|
| <b>Category</b> | <b>Number</b> |
| Males           | 549           |
| Females         | 531           |

A methodological qualification is necessary. The Beersheba Bedouin population was not enumerated in 1922 in precisely the same manner as settled urban and village populations. Mandate officials relied substantially on administrative estimates, tax records, and information from tribal shaykhs.

The 1,080 figure is therefore official, but should be regarded as an official estimate rather than a complete person-by-person enumeration.

## Population in 1931

The 1931 Census of Palestine explicitly listed Zaraba under *El Azazma*:

| <b>Total</b>    | <b>429</b>    |
|-----------------|---------------|
| <b>Category</b> | <b>Number</b> |
| Males           | 236           |
| Females         | 193           |

This exactly matches the population recorded by 'Arif al-'Arif.

The apparent decline from the 1922 estimate should not automatically be interpreted as proven demographic collapse. Changes in Bedouin enumeration, mobility, and the classification of tribal groups may have significantly affected the two figures.

## Households

'Arif al-'Arif describes Zaraba as approximately **95 “houses”**.

In a Bedouin context, “house” normally refers to a household, tent, or family unit

rather than necessarily a masonry building in a compact village.

## Population in 1944/1945

Late-Mandate statistics reproduced in Salman Abu Sitta's *Atlas of Palestine* give approximately **719 people** for Zarabeh.

This should be treated as late-Mandate statistical data for a tribal community rather than a new conventional census equivalent to the 1931 census.

## Estimated Population in 1948

Salman Abu Sitta's Register gives an estimated **873 people** for Zarabeh / Azazema in 1948.

This is a retrospective demographic estimate rather than an official census conducted in 1948.

| Year      | Population | Nature of Figure                              |
|-----------|------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 1922      | 1,080      | Official Mandate estimate                     |
| 1931      | 429        | Official Census of Palestine                  |
| 1944/1945 | 719        | Late-Mandate data reproduced in the Atlas     |
| 1948      | 873        | Later estimate in Salman Abu Sitta's Register |

## Land and Property

The 1945 Village Statistics do not provide a complete independent Zaraba ownership table from which a reliable clan-specific land total can be constructed.

Salman Abu Sitta gives roughly 5.7 million dunums for the entire al-Azazmeh tribal domain. This territory belonged to the wider tribal grouping and must not be reassigned to Zaraba alone.

No Palestinian / Transferred to Zionists / Communal-Public ownership table is

therefore supplied without independent Zaraba cadastral boundaries.

## Economic Life

Zaraba shared the predominantly pastoral economy of al-Azazmeh, based on livestock raising and movement between grazing grounds and water sources.

Seasonal cereal cultivation was also practiced within the wider al-Azazmeh domain where rainfall permitted.

No independent agricultural table provides crop acreage specifically for Zaraba, so figures belonging to the wider tribe are not reassigned to the clan.

## Water, Education, and Services

The clan's recorded dwelling areas at Rakhma, Bir Ibn Turkiya, and Khalasat al-Saba' reflect the importance of wells and water access in the Bedouin landscape.

No complete Zaraba-specific inventory of wells or educational institutions has been identified in the principal sources used here.

Institutions at al-Khalasa or Beersheba are therefore not automatically described as Zaraba facilities without direct evidence.

## Zaraba and the Nakba

Salman Abu Sitta does not provide a single 1948 displacement date for Zaraba and does not assign the clan a specific operation code such as that used for communities explicitly linked to Operation Yoav.

This distinguishes Zaraba from localities whose depopulation can be tied to one documented military attack on one date.

Later Palestine Land Society tables classify Zaraba as **displaced within the territory under Israeli control and in Egypt**, reflecting a divided post-Nakba outcome.

# Post-1948 Displacement

The displacement and relocation of Naqab Bedouins continued after the principal fighting of 1948.

Al-Azazmeh communities were subjected over subsequent years to expulsions, relocation, restrictions on movement, and loss of access to extensive tribal lands.

For Zaraba specifically, later Palestine Land Society data records members both within the Naqab and in Egypt, indicating that the clan was not completely removed in a single event.

## Occupation and Displacement Chronology

| Stage                                          | Period           | Details                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pre-Nakba Encampments                          | Until 1948       | Zaraba dwellings were located at Rakhma, Bir Ibn Turkiya, and Khalasat al-Saba' within the al-Azazmeh domain.                 |
| War in the Naqab                               | 1948             | Military operations transformed control across the Beersheba region, but no independent Zaraba depopulation date is recorded. |
| Operation Yoav and the Occupation of Beersheba | October 1948     | A major regional turning point, but Abu Sitta does not identify Yoav as a Zaraba-specific operation.                          |
| Dispersal and Relocation                       | Late 1940s-1950s | Zaraba members were dispersed between the Naqab and Egypt/Sinai within the wider displacement and relocation of al-Azazmeh.   |

## Military Operation and Unit

**Military Operation:** No single operation is independently documented as “the occupation of Zaraba.”

Operation Yoav and the October 1948 occupation of Beersheba form an important

regional context but are not identified by Abu Sitta as a specific Zaraba operation.

**Military Unit:** No particular brigade or battalion is independently documented at the Zaraba clan level.

## Cause of Displacement

The dispersal of Zaraba was linked to the military and political transformation of the Naqab during the Nakba and to subsequent policies affecting Bedouin movement and land access.

The available evidence does not support reducing this experience to a single attack or one depopulation date.

The most accurate description is therefore a **multi-stage process of displacement and relocation, with members ending up both in the Naqab and in Egypt/Sinai.**

## Destruction of Encampments

There was no single compact masonry village called Zaraba for which a reliable destruction percentage can be calculated.

The clan occupied several dwelling areas, and the sources reviewed do not provide a complete inventory of tents, houses, wells, or structures destroyed at each location.

No unsupported statement such as “completely destroyed” or numerical destruction percentage is therefore used.

## Settlements on Zaraba Land

The reviewed sources do not provide a separate cadastral map defining Zaraba land within the much wider al-Azazmeh tribal territory.

No specific Israeli settlement is therefore assigned to Zaraba land without clan-

level boundary or ownership documentation.

## **Zaraba / al-Azazmeh Today**

Zaraba did not disappear as a clan after the Nakba. Palestine Land Society data indicates that some members remained or were relocated within the Naqab while others were displaced to Egypt/Sinai.

Palestinian accounts of the Naqab after 1948 likewise include Zaraba among al-Azazmeh branches of which some members remained inside the region under severe restrictions and land-loss policies.

There is consequently no single former “Zaraba village site” to describe today; the clan's pre-Nakba geography was dispersed from the outset.

This section summarizes the documented historical trajectory and is not a comprehensive 2026 demographic or field survey of all Zaraba descendants and locations.

## **Sources**

- [Government of Palestine – Census of Palestine, 1922: Zaraba](#)
- [Government of Palestine – Census of Palestine, 1931: Zaraba / El Azazma](#)
- ['Arif al-'Arif – Tarikh Bir al-Saba' wa-Qaba'iliha](#)
- ['Umar Rida Kahhala – Mu'jam Qaba'il al-'Arab: Zaraba](#)
- [Salman Abu Sitta – Atlas of Palestine 1917-1966: Zarabeh / Azazema](#)
- [Salman Abu Sitta – Register of Depopulated Palestinian Localities: Zarabeh / Azazema](#)
- [Palestine Land Society – People of the Beersheba District Before and After the Nakba: Zarabeh / Azazema](#)
- [PalQuest – Operation Yoav, for the wider military context in the Naqab](#)