

Imwas



Imwas: A Depopulated Palestinian Village in the Latrun Area

Imwas was a Palestinian village that belonged to the Ramla Subdistrict during the

British Mandate. Following the Nakba and the occupation of Palestine in 1948, it remained within the West Bank under Jordanian administration and became administratively associated with the Ramallah area. Israeli forces occupied the village in June 1967, expelled its residents, demolished most of its buildings, and prevented its inhabitants from returning.

Basic Information

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Ramla
Distance from district center	12 km Southeast of al-Ramla
Average Elevation	200 meters above sea level
Population in 1931	1,021 inhabitants - Official British Mandate census
Population in 1944/1945	1,450 inhabitants - Official population estimate
Estimated Population in 1948	No separate official 1948 count is documented; the village remained inhabited after the Armistice, and the Jordanian census recorded 1,955 inhabitants in 1961
Total Land Area in 1945	5,167 dunams
Attack and Depopulation	Imwas remained outside Zionist control after the Nakba, then Israeli occupation forces seized it in the first days of June 1967, expelled its inhabitants, demolished most of its buildings, and barred their return
Final Israeli Control	6-7 June 1967
Cause of Depopulation	Expulsion by Zionist troops
Settlements Documented on Village Lands	No Israeli residential settlement is documented on the village's officially recorded lands; Canada Park was later laid out over large parts of them

Location and Strategic Importance

Imwas was situated in the Latrun area, approximately 25 kilometres northwest of Jerusalem, 12 kilometres southeast of al-Ramla, and about 28 kilometres from

Jaffa.

The village occupied a strategically important position overlooking the Jaffa–Jerusalem road. The Latrun area formed the western gateway to Jerusalem and was therefore crucial to controlling movement between the coastal plain and the city. Roads connected Imwas with Yalu, Bayt Nuba, al-Latrun, Dayr Ayyub, Bayt Susin, Salbit, and al-Qubab.

Imwas During the Nakba and the Occupation of Palestine in 1948

Residents of Imwas and the neighbouring Latrun villages participated in defending their area during the Nakba and the occupation of Palestine in 1948. Arab forces prevented Zionist forces from occupying the Latrun area, and Imwas consequently remained within the West Bank after the 1949 Armistice Agreements.

The claim that the principal Battles of Latrun were fought under the command of Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni is historically inaccurate. Al-Husayni was killed in the Battle of al-Qastal on 8 April 1948, whereas the principal Battles of Latrun took place later, with the Jordanian Arab Legion serving as the main regular force defending the area.

The armistice lines and the no-man's-land created after the Nakba deprived the villagers of access to extensive agricultural lands they had traditionally used west of the village. Local accounts describe a broader historical territory than the area officially registered under the village's name in the 1945 statistics.

Historical and Religious Significance

The Plague of Amwas

The village gave its name to the Plague of Amwas, which occurred in Greater Syria in 18 AH, corresponding approximately to 638–639 CE, during the caliphate of

Umar ibn al-Khattab. Historical accounts indicate that the epidemic spread across extensive parts of Greater Syria and affected the armies stationed there.

Common historical estimates place the number of deaths across the wider region between 20,000 and 25,000. This figure should not be interpreted as the population of Imwas or as the number of people who died within the village alone. Prominent early Muslims reported to have died during the epidemic included Abu Ubayda Amir ibn al-Jarrah, Muadh ibn Jabal, Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan, and Shurahbil ibn Hasana.

Two shrines traditionally associated with Abu Ubayda Amir ibn al-Jarrah and Muadh ibn Jabal survived at the village site, although reports have noted the deteriorating condition of the shrine attributed to Muadh ibn Jabal.

Imwas in Christian Tradition

A longstanding Christian tradition identifies Imwas with ancient Emmaus-Nicopolis and connects it with the Gospel of Luke's account of the resurrected Jesus appearing to two disciples on the road to Emmaus. The precise location of the biblical Emmaus remains the subject of scholarly debate, and several possible sites have been proposed.

Archaeological remains in the area include the ruins of a Byzantine church whose site was rebuilt during the Crusader period. The nearby Latrun monastery was established by Trappist monks in 1890. The Trappists are a Roman Catholic monastic order whose name derives from La Trappe Abbey in France.

Land and Agriculture

According to the official Village Statistics of 1945, the registered land area of Imwas amounted to 5,167 dunams. Local accounts describe a considerably broader area of agricultural land traditionally used by the villagers west of the village before the establishment of the armistice lines. The officially registered area must therefore be distinguished from this broader traditional agricultural territory.

The villagers cultivated cereals, legumes, almonds, figs, grapes, olives, and cactus fruit. Imwas and its surroundings also contained springs and wells used for drinking, agriculture, and domestic needs. One of the best known was Bir al-Hilwa, near the Latrun monastery.

Land Ownership in 1945

Ownership of land in Imwas according to the British Mandate Village Statistics

Ownership category	Area in dunams
Palestinian ownership	5,151
Jewish ownership	0
Public land	16
Total	5,167

Land Use in 1945

Use of land in Imwas according to the British Mandate Village Statistics

Land-use category	Area in dunams
Irrigated land and orchards	606
Olive cultivation	15
Cereal cultivation	3,612
Built-up area	148
Cultivable land	4,218
Uncultivable land	785
The area planted with olive trees was included within the agricultural land classifications and should not be added separately when calculating the total area.	

Population

The 1922 British Mandate census recorded 824 residents in Imwas. By 1931, its population had increased to 1,021 people living in 224 houses. The official Village

Statistics of 1945 estimated the population at 1,450.

The Jordanian Population and Housing Census, conducted on 18 November 1961, recorded 1,955 inhabitants. This figure does not represent the village's population in 1967, and no separate official census establishing its exact population at the time of occupation has been identified in the consulted sources.

Population censuses and estimates for Imwas

Year	Population	Classification
1922	824	Official British Mandate census
1931	1,021	Official British Mandate census
1945	1,450	Official population estimate
1961	1,955	Official Jordanian census
The 1961 figure should not be presented as the population of Imwas at the time of its occupation in 1967.		

Education and Social Life

Imwas had two mosques and a boys' school founded in 1919, initially with one teacher. By 1947, it had become a complete elementary school staffed by six teachers and attended by 187 pupils.

Educational facilities expanded after the Nakba to include separate schools for boys and girls. In 1967, the boys' school had 304 pupils and a library containing 376 books, while the girls' school had 172 pupils.

Economic Life

The economy of Imwas was severely affected when the villagers lost access to much of the agricultural land they had traditionally used before the Nakba. Agriculture nevertheless remained an important part of village life, while increasing numbers of residents pursued education, skilled trades, construction work, and professional employment. The community included doctors, engineers, and

teachers.

Approximately forty villagers worked at the nearby Latrun monastery. Before its destruction, Imwas had thirteen grocery shops, two bakeries, two barbershops, a butcher's shop, a vegetable shop, and a hand-weaving workshop associated with a local development initiative.

The Occupation and Depopulation of Imwas in 1967

Date of Occupation and Expulsion

Israeli forces occupied Imwas during the Naksa of June 1967. Some sources state that the forces entered the village and expelled its residents on 6 June, while others date the expulsion and the beginning of systematic demolition to 7 June. It is firmly established that the occupation, expulsion, and destruction occurred during the first days of June 1967.

The selected Palestinian sources do not provide a consistently documented name for a separate military operation specifically directed against Imwas. They also do not conclusively identify the brigade or unit responsible for expelling the residents and demolishing the village. The event has therefore not been attributed here to a specific operation or military unit.

Expulsion of the Residents and Destruction of the Village

Israeli forces ordered the residents of Imwas to leave their homes, forcing most of them to walk eastwards towards Ramallah. Many displaced residents sought refuge in Ramallah, al-Bira, and other parts of the West Bank, while others continued to Jordan.

Bulldozers began demolishing buildings in Imwas, Yalu, and Bayt Nuba as early as 7 June 1967. Homes, schools, mosques, wells, and other public facilities were destroyed, and the residents were prevented from returning.

The available demographic and housing records do not support the claim that 3,200 houses were demolished in Imwas alone. No definitive and universally accepted figure exists for the number of buildings destroyed, but the sources agree that the village's residential and public structures were almost entirely demolished.

The Fate of the Village Site

During the 1970s, Canada Park, also known as Ayalon Park, was established over extensive portions of the lands of Imwas, Yalu, and the destroyed Latrun villages. The project was financed by the Canadian branch of the Jewish National Fund; it was not a donation made by the Canadian government.

The consulted sources do not establish that a residential settlement was built within the 5,167 dunams officially registered as the lands of Imwas. Mevo Horon, which appears in studies of the wider Latrun area, is principally associated with the lands of Bayt Nuba and al-Latrun and should not be categorically listed as a settlement built on the registered lands of Imwas.

The village site now lies within the park, where planted trees and recreational paths cover large parts of its remains. Some trees, cemetery markers, and archaeological and religious remains have survived. These include the shrines traditionally attributed to Abu Ubayda Amir ibn al-Jarrah and Muadh ibn Jabal, together with remains associated with Emmaus-Nicopolis and the adjoining Latrun religious complex.

Occupation and Depopulation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
Imwas During the Nakba and the Occupation of Palestine in 1948	8 April 1948	Residents of Imwas and the neighbouring Latrun villages participated in defending their area during the Nakba and the occupation of Palestine in 1948. The claim that the principal Battles of Latrun were fought under the command of Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni is historically inaccurate.
Date of Occupation and Expulsion	June 1967	Israeli forces occupied Imwas during the Naksa of June 1967. Some sources state that the forces entered the village and expelled its residents on 6 June, while others date the expulsion and the beginning of systematic demolition to 7 June.
Expulsion of the Residents and Destruction of the Village	7 June 1967	Israeli forces ordered the residents of Imwas to leave their homes, forcing most of them to walk eastwards towards Ramallah. Many displaced residents sought refuge in Ramallah, al-Bira, and other parts of the West Bank, while others continued to Jordan.

Sources

- [Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question – Places and the digitised edition of All That Remains](#)
- [Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question – al-Latrun](#)
- [Palestine Remembered – Imwas, Ramla District](#)
- [Institute for Palestine Studies – Walid Khalidi’s All That Remains](#)
- [BADIL – Imwas: Canada Park’s Concealed Crime](#)