

Jalazone Refugee Camp



Jalazone Refugee Camp in Ramallah: History, Villages of Origin, Beit El Settlement and the Current Situation

Jalazone Camp lies on a hilltop about 7 km north of Ramallah, beside the road to Nablus and just metres from the Israeli settlement of Beit El. It was established in 1949 on 253 dunums for refugees from some 36 towns and villages in central Palestine, above all Bayt Nabala and Lydda, as well as Innaba, al-Muzayri'a and al-Khayriyya. Home to about 14,500 registered refugees, it is one of the largest

camps in the West Bank. Its proximity to the settlement has made it a frequent flashpoint: in April 2025 a 16-year-old boy was killed during a raid, and in 2026 the camp faced repeated raids and a new settler road on its land.

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Quick Facts About Jalazone Camp

Jalazone Refugee Camp at a glance

Arabic name	مخيم الجلزون
Country / Region	Palestine, central West Bank
Governorate	Ramallah and al-Bireh, about 7 km north of Ramallah
Year established	1949

Area	About 0.25 km ² (253 dunums)
Registered refugees	About 14,500 (latest available estimates)
Residents	8,201 (Palestinian census, 2017)
Origin of residents	About 36 towns and villages, mainly in the Lydda, Ramla and Jaffa districts
Neighbours	Jifna, Dura al-Qar', Birzeit and the Beit El settlement
Known for	Its proximity to Beit El settlement and frequent confrontations at its entrance

The Nakba: Why Jalazone Camp Exists

Jalazone Camp was born from the **Nakba** (Arabic for "catastrophe"): the mass expulsion of Palestinians during the occupation of Palestine in 1948. Roughly 750,000 Palestinians were driven from their homes. In July 1948, the people of Lydda, Ramla and the surrounding villages were expelled and forced to walk east into the hills. Many families moved from village to village, sheltering in Ni'lin, Shabtin, Shuqba, Rantis, Deir Ammar and elsewhere, before settling in the camp built on the hill near Jifna.

The Right of Return

The **right of return** is the central demand of Jalazone's refugees. It rests on several foundations in international law:

- **UN General Assembly Resolution 194** (11 December 1948), paragraph 11, resolved that refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid to those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property.
- **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (Article 13) affirms everyone's right to leave any country, including their own, and to return to it.

- **UN General Assembly Resolution 3236** (1974) reaffirmed the "inalienable right" of Palestinians to return to their homes and property.

History of the Camp

From tents to rooms (1949-1960s)

The camp was set up in 1949 on a hilltop, on land rented from the people of Jifna and later leased by UNRWA from the Jordanian government. The International Committee of the Red Cross supervised it at first before UNRWA took over. Families lived in tents until rooms were built around 1955-1956, without electricity or running water; UNRWA installed public water points in the early 1960s. In 1956, the first schools and a health clinic were built.

Under occupation (1967 onward)

With the occupation of the West Bank in 1967, the camp came under Israeli military rule. It also received families displaced in 1967 from the villages of Beit Nuba and Imwas in the Latrun area, which were destroyed. In 1970, Israel seized 2,426 dunums of land nearby "for security purposes", and in 1977 the settlement of Beit El was established on land of al-Bireh, Ein Yabrud and Dura al-Qar', later expanding north towards the camp. The camp's people took part in both Intifadas.

After Oslo

Under the Oslo Accords, the camp's administrative affairs passed to the Palestinian Authority while security remained under Israeli control, and the land around it was classified as Area C. With the Second Intifada in 2000, parts of the road beside the camp were closed for years, cutting residents off from their jobs in Ramallah and al-Bireh.

Beside Beit El Settlement

Few camps in the West Bank live as close to a settlement as Jalazone. The houses of the Iskan al-Zir'a neighbourhood stand about **15 metres** from the settlement fence, and the boys' school is about 180 metres away. Israeli soldiers are permanently stationed in watchtowers and patrol the road alongside the camp. Confrontations frequently break out near the camp entrance and the school, where soldiers fire tear gas, rubber-coated metal bullets and live ammunition. According to UN OCHA, over a period of about five years some 160 Palestinians were injured by live fire and six killed, four of them minors, with the army raiding the camp almost weekly.

The Current Situation (2023-2026)

Since October 2023, raids on Jalazone have intensified:

- **23 October 2023:** two young men from the camp were killed by Israeli fire during a raid.
- **14-15 April 2025:** during a night raid in which troops cut electricity and communications, a soldier shot a **16-year-old boy** in the abdomen from about 30 metres. Ambulances were reportedly blocked at the camp gate; he was taken by private car to hospital and died after about 20 hours in intensive care. Defense for Children International – Palestine said the bullet was likely an expanding bullet.
- **1 January and 15 February 2026:** further raids on the camp.
- **11 April 2026:** Israeli forces spread through several parts of the camp, firing live ammunition.
- **2 August 2026:** Israeli forces shot a young man and began bulldozing a settler road on the camp's land, according to WAFA.
- **September-October 2026:** Israeli plans to reopen Street 463, a settler road built in 1994 to link Beit El and Dolev, threatened to cut off eight villages and two neighbourhoods north of Ramallah and to push

tens of thousands of Palestinians onto the already congested road beside the camp.

These raids come as the camps of Jenin, Tulkarm and Nur Shams in the north have been emptied of their residents since January 2025.

Origin of the Name

The camp takes its name from **Ein al-Jalazun**, a large, well-known spring in the area. According to the Encyclopedia of Palestinian Camps, the name is of Greek origin and means "land of abundant springs", fitting an area with hundreds of underground wells. A weaker account links it to a nearby valley known as Wadi al-Halazun ("snail valley").

Location and Geography

Jalazone Camp lies in the [Ramallah](#) and al-Bireh Governorate, on a hilltop about 7 km north of Ramallah, west of the main Ramallah–Nablus road. It is bordered by Jifna to the north, Dura al-Qar' to the east, Birzeit to the west and the Beit El settlement to the south-east. Birzeit Camp lies about 3 km to the north.

Area

The camp's official area is about **253 dunums** (0.25 km²), including land from Jifna leased for 99 years. Building space inside these boundaries has been exhausted, and about 2,000 people now live in neighbourhoods just outside them, such as Iskan al-Zir'a, Jabal al-Deek and the Education Suburb.

Villages of Origin

Jalazone's refugees come from about **36 towns and villages** in central Palestine. According to UNRWA archives, the largest groups came from Bayt Nabala and

Lydda:

- **Cities:** [Lydda](#), [Ramla](#), [Jaffa](#) and [Beersheba](#)
- **Ramla district:** [Bayt Nabala](#), the largest single group, [Innaba](#) and [Al-Muzayri'a](#)
- **Jaffa district:** [Al-Khayriyya](#)
- **Haifa district:** [Sabbarin](#) and [Umm al-Zinat](#)
- **Hebron district:** [Al-Dawayima](#) and [Al-Qubayba](#)
- **Other:** families from [Tiberias](#), and families displaced in 1967 from Beit Nuba and Imwas

Population and Demographics

Population of Jalazone Camp over time

Year	Population	Source
1967	About 3,071 in 635 families	Encyclopedia of Palestinian Camps
1997	7,160 registered refugees	UNRWA
2007	About 14,520 (estimate)	UN OCHA
2017	8,201 residents	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
Latest	About 14,579, including 5,151 under 18	Encyclopedia of Palestinian Camps

Note: Registered refugees are not the same as residents. Many refugees registered in Jalazone live in the neighbourhoods around the camp and in Ramallah and al-Bireh, so the census, which counts only those inside the camp, records fewer people. About 99% of residents are 1948 refugees and their descendants; the rest were displaced in 1967.

Housing and Living Conditions

The camp is severely overcrowded, with a density of more than 30,000 people per km². With no room to expand outward, residents build upward, and new families move to the edges of the camp, some of them within metres of the settlement fence. Repeated road closures have long cut off the roughly 2,000 residents who work in Ramallah and al-Bireh, and unemployment has risen sharply since Israeli work permits were halted in October 2023. Following the decline in UNRWA services, the camp's popular committee provides some alternative infrastructure services.

Health Situation

UNRWA's first clinic in the camp operated from tents before a health centre was built in 1956. Today the camp has an **UNRWA health centre**, two other health centres run by other bodies, a physiotherapy centre and private clinics. Residents rely on hospitals in Ramallah for advanced care; during raids, ambulances are often delayed or blocked at the camp gate.

Education

UNRWA built **two schools** in the camp in 1956, one for boys and one for girls. They began with about 350 pupils and now serve about 2,500 in the same buildings. UNRWA also built two more schools at the camp's main entrance, on Jifna land outside its official boundaries, attended by about 2,000 pupils. The boys' school, about 180 metres from Beit El settlement, is frequently exposed to tear gas and confrontations.

Social Life and Institutions

- **Youth Social Centre** (1953): founded by UNRWA and run by an

elected nine-member board, with football and chess teams; it has been closed several times by the Israeli army.

- **Popular Committee** (1996): under the PLO umbrella, handling social, health, economic and infrastructure needs.
- **Other institutions:** a women's centre, a rehabilitation centre for people with disabilities, an elderly association, a children's club, and UNRWA's food distribution, career guidance and community rehabilitation centres.

Frequently Asked Questions About Jalazone Camp

Where is Jalazone refugee camp located?

On a hilltop about 7 km north of Ramallah, west of the Ramallah–Nablus road, between Jifna, Birzeit and the Beit El settlement.

Why is it called Jalazone?

After Ein al-Jalazun, a large spring in the area. The name is said to be of Greek origin, meaning "land of abundant springs".

How close is Jalazone to Beit El settlement?

Very close: homes in the Iskan al-Zir'a neighbourhood are about 15 metres from the settlement, and the boys' school is about 180 metres away.

Where do Jalazone's refugees come from?

From about 36 towns and villages in central Palestine, mainly Bayt Nabala and Lydda, as well as Innaba, al-Muzayri'a, al-Khayriyya, Ramla, Jaffa and others.

What is happening in Jalazone Camp now?

The camp faces frequent raids. In April 2025, a 16-year-old boy was killed during a

raid, and in 2026 Israeli forces raided the camp repeatedly and began bulldozing a settler road on its land.

Conclusion

Jalazone began as tents on a hill near Jifna for the expelled people of Bayt Nabala, Lydda and the villages of central Palestine. Today it is one of the largest camps in the West Bank, pressed against a settlement that grew on the hills around it.

Despite overcrowding, raids and the loss of its children, its people continue to hold onto the right to return to the villages they left in 1948.

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