

Fajja



Subdistrict: Jaffa

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Jaffa
Distance from district center	15 km from Jaffa
Average Elevation	25 m above sea level
Population in 1931	707
Number of Houses in 1931	165

Item	Information
Population in 1944/1945	1,200 – Arab population; the same statistical unit also recorded 370 Jews (total 1,570)
Estimated Population in 1948	About 1,392 – a later demographic estimate, not an official census
Total Land Area in 1945	4,919 dunams
Attack and Depopulation	A Palmach unit infiltrated the village on 20 May 1947, and two villagers were killed and its coffeehouse blown up, according to the History of the Haganah; the Irgun attacked it on 17 February 1948, after which some villagers fled, and the Haganah and the Irgun then hit it repeatedly until by May 1948 only several dozen inhabitants remained. On 9 May 1948 Haganah intelligence officers decided to expel those who remained, and the last villagers left on 15 May 1948 because of “pressure” and “a whispering operation”, according to Israeli military intelligence as cited by Khalidi.
Final Israeli Control	15 May 1948, the day the last villagers left under Haganah pressure, according to Israeli military intelligence as cited by Khalidi; the available sources give no day on which Zionist forces entered the village
Military Unit	The sources do not identify a force that occupied the village: a Palmach unit attacked it on 20 May 1947 and the Irgun on 17 February 1948, it was hit repeatedly by the Haganah and the Irgun in the early months of 1948, and on 9 May 1948 Haganah intelligence officers decided to expel its remaining inhabitants
Cause of Depopulation	Expulsion of the remaining inhabitants, decided by Haganah intelligence officers and carried out through psychological warfare (“a whispering operation”), after repeated Haganah and Irgun attacks had driven out most of the population
Settlements Documented on Village Lands	'Ammishav, a transit camp for new immigrants set up on the village site in the early 1950s; the site has now become an eastern suburb of the settlement of Petach Tiqwa, which was established west of the village in 1878

Palestinian population in 1945: 1,200

Estimated Palestinian population in 1948: 1,392

Date of final depopulation: 15 May 1948

Military forces involved: Haganah, Palmach and Irgun units

Settlements established on the village lands before 1948: Petah Tikva had expanded near Fajja; some local compilations associate the Belinson area with its lands, although the principal Palestinian references do not establish the precise cadastral relationship.

Construction on the village site after 1948: The 'Ammishav transit camp was established on the site in the early 1950s. The area was subsequently incorporated into the eastern suburbs of Petah Tikva, including the present-day 'Ammishav-Hadar Ganim area.

Fajja was a depopulated Palestinian village in the Jaffa Subdistrict. It was situated approximately 15 kilometres northeast of the city of Jaffa, on relatively level ground in the central coastal plain.

The main road connecting Jaffa and al-Lydd passed near the village. Fajja stood about one kilometre east of Petah Tikva, a Zionist settlement established in 1878 west of the village. In the late nineteenth century, Fajja was described as a small settlement whose houses were built mainly of adobe. During the British Mandate, some newer houses were constructed of concrete. The village's Palestinian inhabitants were Muslims, and it had an elementary school.

Boundaries of Fajja

Fajja was situated among the following Palestinian villages and towns:

- North: [al-Mirr \(al-Mahmudiyya\)](#).
- Northwest: [al-Sawalima](#).

- West: [al-Jammasin al-Sharqi](#).
- Southwest: [al-Khayriyya](#).
- South: [Rantiya](#).
- Southeast: [al-Muzayri'a](#).
- East: [Majdal Yaba \(Majdal al-Sadiq\)](#).
- Northeast: Kafr Qasim.

Population of Fajja

Year	Palestinian population	Jewish population included in the statistical unit	Total
1922	194	—	194
1931	707	—	707
1945	1,200	370	1,570
1948	1,392 (estimate)	Not included in the Palestinian refugee estimate	—
Estimated Palestinian refugees and descendants in 1998	8,548	—	8,548

The 1945 statistical total of 1,570 combined 1,200 Palestinian Arab residents with 370 Jewish residents recorded within the wider statistical unit. The figure of 1,392 for 1948 is a retrospective estimate of Fajja's Palestinian population and should not be presented as a total that includes the 370 Jewish residents.

Land Ownership in Fajja

Ownership category	Land area (dunams)*
Palestinian ownership	3,215
Jewish ownership	1,580

Ownership category	Land area (dunams)*
Public land	124
Total	4,919

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Land Use in Fajja in 1945

Land-use category	Palestinian ownership (dunams)*	Jewish ownership (dunams)*	Public land (dunams)*	Total (dunams)*
Citrus and banana cultivation	602	166	0	768
Irrigated land and orchards	53	8	0	61
Cereal cultivation	2,457	1,406	0	3,863
Built-up area	7	0	0	7
Cultivable land	3,112	1,580	0	4,692
Uncultivated land	96	0	124	220

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Number of Houses in Fajja

Year	Number of houses
1931	165
1948	324 (estimate)

Education in Fajja

Fajja had an elementary school for boys that opened in 1922. By 1945, it enrolled 181 pupils, including 10 girls. Some reproductions of Walid Khalidi's village entry give the total as 781, but this appears to be a transcription or typographical error; the figure of 181 is reported in the village's statistical summary and is more consistent with its population and school facilities.

Economic Life in Fajja

Agriculture formed the basis of village life. The inhabitants cultivated cereals, vegetables, citrus fruit and bananas on most of their land. In 1944/45, 602 dunams under Palestinian ownership were devoted to citrus fruit and bananas, 2,457 dunams to cereals, and 53 dunams were irrigated or used for orchards. Cultivation depended on both rainfall and water drawn from wells.

Archaeological Remains in Fajja

Fajja was built over an archaeological site containing fragments of stone columns and capitals, building foundations and a cistern. These remains indicate that the location had been inhabited in earlier historical periods, although the available village references do not provide a definitive date for the site.

Attacks, Occupation and Depopulation of Fajja

Attacks on Fajja began before the broad military campaigns of the Nakba. On 20 May 1947—not 20 May 1948 as stated in some versions of the article—a Palmach unit entered the village, reportedly seeking suspects in the killing of two people from Petah Tikva. The unit approached a village coffeehouse where the suspects were alleged to be present, opened fire and planted an explosive charge that

destroyed the building.

Accounts of the casualties differ. The *History of the Haganah*, as summarized by Walid Khalidi, states that two villagers were killed during the shooting. The *Book of the Palmach* claims that no one was injured by the subsequent explosion. A local Palestinian account instead reports that four Egyptian workers were killed and seven villagers wounded. Because these accounts conflict, no single casualty figure should be treated as conclusive.

The Irgun launched another documented attack on 17 February 1948, after which part of the population left. Benny Morris reports that Fajja was repeatedly attacked by Haganah and Irgun forces during the first months of 1948. By May, only several dozen residents reportedly remained.

On 9 May, Haganah intelligence officers decided that the remaining population should be removed. According to a contemporary intelligence report cited by Khalidi and Morris, the last inhabitants departed on 15 May 1948 under military and psychological pressure, including a Haganah “whispering” campaign. Fajja’s depopulation was therefore a gradual process culminating on 15 May, rather than a single occupation on 1 May.

During June 1948, the Jewish National Fund initiated the village’s demolition. On 14 June, Ezra Danin, a senior Haganah intelligence officer and Jewish Agency official, informed Jewish National Fund official Yosef Weitz of the progress made in destroying Fajja. On 16 June, David Ben-Gurion recorded in his diary that Fajja and two other Palestinian villages had been demolished.

Occupation and Depopulation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
First attack on the village	20 May 1947	A Palmach unit infiltrated the village on the pretext of apprehending thieves who had murdered two people in Petach Tiqwa; according to the History of the Haganah, as cited by Khalidi, shooting broke out when the unit approached the coffeehouse and two villagers were killed, after which explosives experts stormed the coffeehouse and blew it up. The Book of the Palmach reports that the explosion was unnecessarily delayed and destroyed the coffeehouse without harming anyone.
Second attack and beginning of the exodus	17 February 1948	The Irgun launched the next recorded attack on the village, after which some villagers fled, according to Israeli sources cited by Khalidi.
Repeated attacks and flight of most of the inhabitants	Early months of 1948 – May 1948	Israeli historian Benny Morris, as cited by Khalidi, states that Fajja was hit “repeatedly” by both the Haganah and the Irgun in the early months of the war, so that by May 1948 only several dozen of its inhabitants remained.
Decision to expel the remaining inhabitants	9 May 1948	Haganah intelligence officers met and decided that the remaining inhabitants, whom they described as a “bothersome element”, should be expelled.
Expulsion of the remaining inhabitants	15 May 1948	The last villagers left, because of “pressure by us—a whispering operation”, according to Israeli military intelligence as cited by Khalidi.
Destruction of the village	June 1948	The Jewish National Fund set in motion the destruction of Fajja, among other villages; on 14 June Ezra Danin, a senior Haganah intelligence officer and Jewish Agency official, reported to JNF official Yosef Weitz on the progress made in destroying it, and two days later David Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary that Fajja and two other villages had been destroyed.
Transit camp for immigrants set up on the village site	Early 1950s	The site was first occupied by a transit camp for new immigrants called 'Ammishav, and then became an eastern suburb of the settlement of Petach Tiqwa, which had been established west of the village in 1878.

Construction on the Lands and Site of Fajja

Petah Tikva, established in 1878 west of Fajja, expanded eastward after the Nakba and eventually absorbed the village site and much of its surrounding land. The principal Palestinian references identify Petah Tikva as the urban area that now occupies Fajja's lands.

In the early 1950s, the former village site was used for a transit camp for newly arrived Jewish immigrants known as 'Ammishav. The site subsequently became part of Petah Tikva's eastern suburbs. Present-day neighbourhoods associated with the broader area include 'Ammishav and Hadar Ganim; local compilations also identify Yoseftal and Kiryat David El'azar. The precise cadastral relationship between every modern neighbourhood and Fajja's former boundaries requires comparison with detailed Mandate-period land-demarcation maps.

Fajja Today

The village was almost entirely demolished. According to Walid Khalidi's field survey, only one house and a pond remained identifiable. Eucalyptus trees and cactus plants mark parts of the site. Buildings cover some of the former village land, while the remaining open areas are cultivated.

Sources

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