

Salama



Salama: A Depopulated Palestinian Village in the Jaffa District

Salama was a Palestinian village in the Jaffa District, situated on the central coastal plain approximately 5 kilometres east of the city of Jaffa, at an average elevation of about 25 metres above sea level. Its population reached 6,730 in the 1944/1945 statistics, making it one of the largest villages in the Jaffa subdistrict. Salama was subjected to repeated attacks beginning in December 1947 and fell to Haganah forces on 29 April 1948 during Operation Hametz, after most of its inhabitants had

been compelled to leave.

Basic Information

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Jaffa
Distance from district center	5 km East of Jaffa
Average Elevation	25 meters above sea level
Population in 1931	3,691 inhabitants - Official census
Number of Houses in 1931	800 houses
Population in 1944/1945	6,730 inhabitants - 6,670 Muslims and 60 Christians
Estimated Population in 1948	About 7,807 inhabitants - a later demographic estimate, not an official census
Total Land Area in 1945	6,782 dunams
Attack and Depopulation	Salama was surrounded by several Jewish settlements and came under repeated attacks and sniper fire beginning on 5 December 1947. A further assault on 19 December failed, while Palestinian historian Arif al-Arif records another attack on 28 December that the defenders of Salama succeeded in repelling.
Final Israeli Control	29-30 April 1948
Military Operation	Operation Hametz
Military Unit	Haganah forces in Operation Hametz; the accounts differ between Alexandroni, Kiryati, and Givati
Cause of Depopulation	Military assault by Zionist troops

Location

Salama stood on flat terrain on the central coastal plain, north of the main road leading to Jaffa.

The village had an average elevation of approximately 25 metres above sea level

and lay about 5 kilometres east of Jaffa.

Its proximity to Jaffa and the surrounding road network facilitated close economic and commercial connections with the city.

The Village Name and the Shrine of Sayyiduna Salama

The inhabitants believed that their village was named after a Companion of the Prophet who was buried at the site in 634 CE. His tomb, in the northwestern part of the village, became known as the shrine of Sayyiduna Salama.

Walid Khalidi and PalQuest give the name as “Salama Abu Hashim,” while some local Palestinian sources identify the figure as “Salama ibn Hisham al-Makhzumi.”

Because Palestinian sources themselves differ over the precise identification, it is more appropriate to record the local tradition and the existence of the shrine without presenting one detailed identification as conclusively established.

Salama Through History

In 1596, Salama was a village in the nahiya of Ramla in the Gaza district, with an estimated population of approximately 94.

The inhabitants paid taxes on wheat and barley, as well as goats, beehives, and other forms of agricultural property.

The Syrian Sufi traveller al-Bakri al-Siddiqi visited the shrine of Sayyiduna Salama while travelling through the region in the mid-eighteenth century.

In the late nineteenth century, Salama was described as a village built mainly of adobe brick, with several gardens and wells.

Architecture

During the British Mandate, Salama was divided into quarters, each generally inhabited by a hamula, or clan, or one of its branches.

The houses of each clan were typically grouped around a large communal courtyard, or hawsh, with a shared entrance. It provided space for household work, children's play, family gatherings, and social occasions.

Some families also constructed houses in the orchards outside the main built-up area.

Most village houses were built of adobe brick, although some were constructed of stone or in the locally known Baghdadi style, using wood, mud, and lime for insulation.

The Arab built-up area amounted to approximately 114 dunams in the 1944/1945 statistics.

Population

Salama had 1,187 inhabitants in the 1922 census.

By the 1931 census, the population had increased to 3,691, living in 800 houses.

According to the 1944/1945 statistics, Salama had 6,730 inhabitants, including 6,670 Muslims and 60 Christians.

The estimates of approximately 7,807 inhabitants in 1948 and 47,942 refugees and descendants in 1998 published by Palestine Remembered are later estimates rather than official British Mandate censuses.

Population of Salama

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
1596	About 94	Historical estimate based on Ottoman records

Year	Population	Nature of Figure
1922	1,187	Official census
1931	3,691	Official census
1944/1945	6,730	6,670 Muslims and 60 Christians
1948	About 7,807	Later estimate
1998	47,942	Estimate of refugees and their descendants

Number of Houses

The 1931 census recorded 800 houses in Salama.

The figure of approximately 1,692 houses for 1948 is a later estimate rather than an official census count.

Education and Social Life

Salama had two elementary schools, one for boys and one for girls.

The boys' school opened in 1920 and the girls' school in 1936. In 1941, they enrolled 504 boys and 121 girls respectively.

The villagers also supported a football team, while Salama contained shops and a variety of economic and social institutions.

Economic Life

The inhabitants of Salama worked primarily in agriculture and related occupations, while smaller numbers were employed in commerce and the civil service.

The village had numerous shops and five coffeehouses.

During the British Mandate, the Salama-al-'Abbasiyya Automobile Company was established. It owned cars and buses and included partners from neighbouring al-

'Abbasiyya.

Agriculture was both rain-fed and irrigated, with approximately 85 artesian wells providing irrigation water.

Farmers shipped produce to the markets of Jaffa and also sold part of their output in nearby Jewish settlements. Milk was transported to a dairy factory in Jaffa owned by two men from Salama.

Land of Salama

According to the 1944/1945 statistics, Salama had a total land area of 6,782 dunams.

Arab ownership amounted to 5,633 dunams, Jewish ownership to 885 dunams, while 264 dunams were classified as public land.

Total	6,782
Ownership Category	Area in Dunams
Arab ownership	5,633
Jewish ownership	885
Public land	264

Land Use and Agriculture

Citrus cultivation was particularly important in Salama. Citrus and banana plantations covered a total of 3,248 dunams, including 2,853 Arab-owned dunams and 395 Jewish-owned dunams.

Irrigated and plantation land covered 684 dunams, including 370 Arab-owned dunams and 314 Jewish-owned dunams.

Cereal cultivation covered 2,406 dunams, including 2,266 Arab-owned dunams and 140 Jewish-owned dunams.

Palestine Remembered records approximately 25 dunams of Arab-owned land planted with olive trees. This represents a crop category within cultivated land and should not be added separately to the overall land-use totals.

Total	5,633	885	264	6,782
Type of Use	Arab	Jewish	Public	Total
Citrus and bananas	2,853	395	0	3,248
Irrigated and plantation land	370	314	0	684
Cereals	2,266	140	0	2,406
Built-up area	114	0	0	114
Uncultivable land	30	36	264	330

Attacks on Salama Before Its Occupation

Salama was surrounded by several Jewish settlements and came under repeated attacks and sniper fire beginning on 5 December 1947.

A further assault on 19 December failed, while Palestinian historian Arif al-Arif records another attack on 28 December that the defenders of Salama succeeded in repelling.

In early January 1948, the villagers erected defensive roadblocks and trenches. Al-Arif states that the villagers themselves organized a local militia of approximately thirty men after the UN Partition Resolution.

The 18 January Attack

PalQuest, through Walid Khalidi, who in this case relies on Benny Morris and military documentation, reports that the Third Battalion of the Alexandroni Brigade launched a major assault against northern Salama on 18 January 1948.

The military orders transmitted through the Palestinian source indicate that the attack was intended to inflict casualties, blow up houses, and burn property.

Several houses were reportedly destroyed.

This Israeli military material is cited only as transmitted through Walid Khalidi and PalQuest and not through direct reliance on Israeli sources.

The February and April Attacks

Salama faced another major attack on 28 February 1948. Twenty Arab Liberation Army fighters joined the local defenders during the battle.

According to an Arab communiqué published by the Palestinian newspaper *Filastin*, a large attacking force participated in the assault, and casualties were sustained on both sides.

A further attack and mortar bombardment took place on 15–16 April.

As the attacks and siege continued and ammunition became increasingly scarce during the second half of April, growing numbers of residents began to leave Salama.

Operation Hametz and the Occupation of Salama

Operation Hametz

Operation Hametz was a major Haganah offensive designed to occupy Palestinian villages east of Jaffa and on both sides of the railway, severing Jaffa from its Palestinian hinterland and facilitating the city's eventual fall.

PalQuest dates the operation as a whole from 24 April to 13 May 1948, while its detailed narrative states that the coordinated offensive by the Alexandroni, Kiryati, and Giv'ati brigades was launched on 29 April.

The operation was under the overall command of Dan Epstein, commander of the Alexandroni Brigade.

The Occupation of Salama

Salama fell to **Haganah forces on 29 April 1948** during Operation Hametz.

There is an important discrepancy regarding the force directly responsible. The PalQuest entry for Salama, reproducing the account used by Walid Khalidi, attributes the village's occupation to **units of the Alexandroni Brigade**.

However, PalQuest's detailed page on Operation Hametz states that the **Kiryati Brigade** advanced from Tel Aviv to attack Salama and that by the evening of 29 April the village had fallen to units of the **Kiryati and Giv'ati brigades**.

Because this discrepancy exists within the Palestinian source itself, the most accurate formulation is to attribute the occupation to **Haganah forces participating in Operation Hametz**, while noting that the sources differ over which brigade entered Salama directly.

Arif al-Arif states that the forces did not enter until they were certain that the village had been evacuated and that Salama was empty by 30 April. Contemporary reports also described the village as surrendering on that date.

Displacement of the Inhabitants

The depopulation of Salama did not take place in a single event on the day of occupation. It developed gradually after months of attacks, shelling, siege, and declining defensive capacity.

Some families began leaving as early as December 1947, while the exodus accelerated during the second half of April 1948 as the defenders ran short of ammunition and Zionist forces closed in on Jaffa and its surrounding villages.

PalQuest, through Walid Khalidi, records that displaced inhabitants of Salama were scattered across several areas, including the Ramallah and Nablus regions, Gaza, and Jordan.

Salama After the Nakba

Walid Khalidi and PalQuest do not list a separate Israeli settlement established over Salama after the Nakba. Instead, they state that the expansion of Tel Aviv gradually engulfed the village site and its lands.

Later Palestinian sources identify much of the former village area with the zone now known as Kfar Shalem within Tel Aviv's urban expansion.

Surviving Buildings and the Village Site

According to the field documentation relied upon by Walid Khalidi, a substantial number of buildings and landmarks from Salama remained.

These included several houses, four coffeehouses, the mosque, the shrine of Sayyiduna Salama, and the two village schools.

The village cemeteries also remained identifiable. One was abandoned and covered with wild vegetation, while another had been converted into a small park at the time of documentation.

The four coffeehouses were known by the names of their owners: Muhammad al-Hawtari, Abu 'Asba, Sha'ban al-Naji, and al-'Arbid.

Most surviving houses were made of concrete and consisted of one or two storeys. Some continued to be used after the Nakba, while others fell into disrepair.

Fig, cypress, palm, Christ's-thorn, and cactus plants grew throughout the site, while dense urban construction came to dominate most of the surrounding lands.

This description reflects the condition of the site during the field documentation relied upon by Walid Khalidi and should not necessarily be interpreted as a comprehensive survey updated to 2026.

Occupation and Depopulation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
Attacks on Salama Before Its Occupation	5 December 1947	Salama was surrounded by several Jewish settlements and came under repeated attacks and sniper fire beginning on 5 December 1947. A further assault on 19 December failed, while Palestinian historian Arif al-Arif records another attack on 28 December that the defenders of Salama succeeded in repelling.
The 18 January Attack	18 January 1948	PalQuest, through Walid Khalidi, who in this case relies on Benny Morris and military documentation, reports that the Third Battalion of the Alexandroni Brigade launched a major assault against northern Salama on 18 January 1948. The military orders transmitted through the Palestinian source indicate that the attack was intended to inflict casualties, blow up houses, and burn property.
The February and April Attacks	28 February 1948	Salama faced another major attack on 28 February 1948. Twenty Arab Liberation Army fighters joined the local defenders during the battle.
Operation Hametz	13 May 1948	Operation Hametz was a major Haganah offensive designed to occupy Palestinian villages east of Jaffa and on both sides of the railway, severing Jaffa from its Palestinian hinterland and facilitating the city's eventual fall. PalQuest dates the operation as a whole from 24 April to 13 May 1948, while its detailed narrative states that the coordinated offensive by the Alexandroni, Kiryati, and Giv'ati brigades was l...
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Sources

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- Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains*, entry on Salama.
- Arif al-Arif, writings on the Nakba and the battles around Jaffa and Salama.
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- Government of Palestine, Department of Statistics, *Village Statistics*, 1945.