

Abu Zurayq



Subdistrict: Haifa

Estimated population of Abu Zurayq in 1948: 638

Date of occupation and depopulation: 12 April 1948

Military context: Battle of Mishmar al-Emek

Occupying force: Palmach units of the Haganah

Israeli settlements established on village land before 1948: None

Israeli settlements established on the village's built-up site after 1948: None

Abu Zurayq was located approximately 24 kilometres southeast of Haifa.

Abu Zurayq was a depopulated Palestinian village in the Haifa Subdistrict. It stood at an average elevation of approximately 100 metres in the northeastern foothills of the Carmel region, overlooking Marj Ibn Amir. In 1945, the village had a population of 550 and a total land area of 6,493 dunams.

The village lay along the northern foothills of an area known as Bilad al-Rawha, meaning “the fragrant country.” Some of its houses were built on a small hill beside the Haifa–Jenin road.

The name probably referred to the Abu Zurayq Bedouin community that settled in the area.

The village’s inhabitants were Muslims.

Abu Zurayq had a mosque and an elementary school for boys. Its water came from several sources, including Wadi Abu Zurayq, a nearby spring, and a well.

Architecture of Abu Zurayq

The houses of Abu Zurayq were relatively dispersed rather than closely clustered. They were constructed of stone combined with either mud or cement. Their roofs were made of concrete or, in some cases, of mud, straw, and timber.

Boundaries of Abu Zurayq

Abu Zurayq was bordered by the following Palestinian villages and localities:

- North: [Qira wa Qamun](#).
- South: [Abu Shusha](#).
- West: [Al-Rihaniyya](#).
- Northwest: [Umm al-Zinat](#).

Population of Abu Zurayq

Abu Zurayq had 550 inhabitants in the official 1945 village statistics. Its population in 1948 has been estimated at 638, all of whom were Palestinian Muslims.

Education in Abu Zurayq

The village had one elementary school for boys, teaching through the third primary grade. Some pupils from the neighbouring village of Abu Shusha also attended this school.

Economic Life in Abu Zurayq

The village economy was based on agriculture and animal husbandry. Cereals were the principal crops, although vegetables were also cultivated in irrigated plots. In 1942/43, olive groves covered approximately 100 dunams. The villagers also tended other fruit trees, including one dunam planted with orange trees. In 1944/45, 4,092 dunams were allocated to cereal cultivation, while 282 dunams were irrigated or used for orchards.

Abu Zurayq was known for its water sources. Local accounts identify several springs, including Ayn al-Jurba, Uyun al-Barak, Uyun al-Baqar, and Ayn al-Janb. The village also had Bir Abu Zurayq, traditionally described as an ancient well. The spellings and precise locations of some of these locally recorded names vary between sources.

Land Ownership in Abu Zurayq

Ownership category	Land area (dunams)*
Palestinian ownership	4,401
Jewish ownership	0
Public land	2,092

Ownership category	Land area (dunams)*
Total	6,493

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Land Use in Abu Zurayq, 1944/45

Land-use category	Palestinian ownership (dunams)*	Public land (dunams)*	Total (dunams)*
Citrus and bananas	1	0	1
Irrigated land and orchards	282	0	282
Olive groves	100	0	100
Cereal cultivation	4,092	0	4,092
Cultivable land	4,375	0	4,375
Uncultivated land	26	2,092	2,118

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

The 100 dunams of olive groves were recorded for 1942/43 and formed part of the broader orchard and cultivated-land categories; they should not be added separately when calculating the village's total land area.

Population of Abu Zurayq by Year

Year	Population
1945	550
1948	638 (estimated)
Estimated number of refugees in 1998	3,918

The figures for 1948 and 1998 are later demographic estimates rather than contemporary census counts.

Archaeological Sites in and around Abu Zurayq

Several archaeological ruins lay near the village, including Khirbat Farri and Khirbat Frayr, where foundations, caves, burial places, and piles of ancient stones were recorded. Tall Abu Zurayq, located east of the village, contained architectural remains, caves, and a decorated stone associated with a burial site.

The archaeological mound beside the village dated primarily to the Bronze and Iron Ages, although material from the early Islamic period was also found there. A rich sequence of Palaeolithic stone tools was discovered on the terraced ground above the mound and below the village. The remains of an isolated Roman-period farmhouse were also recorded northwest of Ayn Abu Zurayq.

Occupation and Depopulation of Abu Zurayq

Palmach units of the Haganah gained control of Abu Zurayq on 12 April 1948, in the course of the fighting around Mishmar al-Emek. The village had reportedly been seized briefly three days earlier before changing hands. Because some sources give 12 April and others describe the final occupation as occurring during the night of 12–13 April, the date should not be presented without acknowledging this slight variation.

According to the account synthesized by Walid Khalidi, the attacking force detained fifteen adult men and approximately 200 women and children. Israeli historian Benny Morris reports that the women and children were expelled towards Jenin, while the available account does not establish the fate of the fifteen detained men.

The Palestinian newspaper *Filastin* reported that, on the morning after the village was occupied, a Haganah unit encountered villagers lying in the fields and opened fire after surrounding them. According to the newspaper, two women and four children were killed, and approximately thirty people were taken captive. The report added that an Arab counterattack subsequently freed the captives and enabled them to reach safety in Jenin. These casualty details derive from the contemporary Palestinian press and should be attributed accordingly.

Some houses were demolished on the night of the occupation, and the destruction of the village was reportedly completed by 15 April. *Filastin* stated that thirty houses were blown up during the assault and that five of them were still occupied. British authorities were later reported as confirming that Haganah engineers had demolished the buildings remaining in the village.

Israeli Settlements near Abu Zurayq

- No Israeli settlement was established on Abu Zurayq's registered village land or directly over its former built-up site. HaZore'a, established in 1936, lies close to the site on its northern side but was not built on the village's land.

Abu Zurayq Today

- The village site is now overgrown with cactus plants and fig and olive trees. The level land surrounding the site is used for agriculture, while the uneven land in the neighbouring hills is used as pasture.

Sources

- [PalQuest: Abu Zurayq](#).
- [Palestine Remembered: Abu Zurayq, Haifa](#).
- [Institute for Palestine Studies: Walid Khalidi's *All That Remains*](#).
- Government of Palestine, Department of Statistics, *Village Statistics, April 1945*.
 - Walid Khalidi, ed., *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*, Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992, pp. 143–144.
- Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 241–243.