

Umm al-Shawf



Subdistrict: Haifa

Estimated population of Umm al-Shawf in 1948: 557

Documented population in 1945: 480

Occupation and depopulation: 12–14 May 1948

Military context: Coastal Clearing operations

Occupying force: Accounts indicate the involvement of Irgun units, possibly alongside Haganah forces

Israeli settlements established on village land before 1948: None

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

Israeli settlements established on village land after 1948: Givat Nili

Umm al-Shawf was located approximately 29.5 kilometres south of Haifa, at an average elevation of about 125 metres above sea level.

The village stood on the gently sloping southern section of Wadi al-Marah in Bilad al-Rawha, the region whose Arabic name means “the fragrant country.” It faced north and was connected by secondary roads to the coastal highway, the Haifa–Jenin road, and neighbouring Palestinian villages.

In the late nineteenth century, Umm al-Shawf was a small village extending from southeast to northwest. Its population was estimated at approximately 150, all of whom were Muslims. Two springs north of the village supplied its inhabitants with water.

The houses were constructed of stone combined with either mud or cement.

The village contained a mosque and a shrine dedicated to a local religious figure known as Shaykh Abd Allah.

Boundaries of Umm al-Shawf

Umm al-Shawf was surrounded by the following Palestinian villages and localities:

- Northwest: [Sabbarin](#).
- West: [Al-Sindiya](#).
 - South: Kafr Qari.
- Southeast: [Qannir](#).
- East: [Khubbayza](#).
- Northeast: [Daliyat al-Rawha](#).

Economic Life in Umm al-Shawf

Agriculture and animal husbandry, including poultry raising, formed the principal sources of livelihood in Umm al-Shawf. Cereals and olives were its most important agricultural products.

In 1944/45, 6,175 dunams under Palestinian ownership and two dunams of public land were allocated to cereal cultivation. A further 107 dunams were irrigated or used for orchards. Olive trees occupied 32 dunams within the broader cultivated-land categories.

Land Ownership in Umm al-Shawf

Ownership category	Land area (dunams)*
Palestinian ownership	6,320
Jewish ownership	0
Public land	1,106
Total	7,426

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Land Use in Umm al-Shawf, 1944/45

Land-use category	Palestinian ownership (dunams)*	Public land (dunams)*	Total (dunams)*
Irrigated land and orchards	107	0	107
Olive groves	32	0	32
Cereal cultivation	6,175	2	6,177
Built-up area	31	0	31
Cultivable land	6,282	2	6,284
Uncultivated land	7	1,104	1,111

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

The 32 dunams of olive groves were recorded as a crop-specific figure within the broader cultivated-land categories and should not be added separately when calculating the village's total area.

Population of Umm al-Shawf

Year	Population
Late nineteenth century	Approximately 150
1922	252
1931	325
1945	480
1948	557 (estimated)
Estimated number of refugees in 1998	3,419

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

Number of Houses in Umm al-Shawf

Year	Number of houses
1931	73
1948	125 (estimated)

The 1948 figure is a later estimate rather than an official housing census.

Occupation and Depopulation of Umm al-Shawf

Umm al-Shawf was occupied and depopulated between 12 and 14 May 1948 during military operations conducted to clear Palestinian villages from the coastal area and the approaches to the Haifa–Jenin road. The available accounts are not fully consistent regarding the attacking

formation. They indicate the involvement of Irgun units, possibly operating alongside Haganah forces. Irgun should therefore not be presented as the only conclusively documented force.

According to the account cited by Israeli historian Benny Morris, armed units searched Palestinian refugees in the area after the occupation of Umm al-Shawf and nearby Sabbarin. A pistol and a rifle were reportedly found, but no one identified their owners. The commanding officer then ordered the execution of seven young Palestinian men. This incident is documented through Morris's use of archival material, but the surviving account does not provide a complete independent identification of all the victims.

The military assault and the violence accompanying it led to the complete displacement of Umm al-Shawf's Palestinian inhabitants. The village buildings were subsequently destroyed, apart from the shrine of Shaykh Abd Allah and scattered structural remains.

Israeli Settlement on the Land of Umm al-Shawf

Givat Nili was established in 1953 on land belonging to Umm al-Shawf, south of the former village site. It was not constructed directly over the village's original built-up area.

Umm al-Shawf Today

Piles of stone rubble from the village houses are scattered across the site, which is overgrown with cactus plants, thorns, and shrubs. The shrine of Shaykh Abd Allah remains standing and is the principal surviving structure associated with the village.

Sources

- [PalQuest: Umm al-Shawf.](#)
- [Palestine Remembered: Umm al-Shawf.](#)
- [Institute for Palestine Studies: Walid Khalidi's *All That Remains*.](#)

- Government of Palestine, *Report and General Abstracts of the Census of 1922*.
- Government of Palestine, *Census of Palestine, 1931: Population of Villages, Towns and Administrative Areas*.
- 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. 199–200.
- Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 243–244 and 297.