

Qaqun



Subdistrict: Tulkarm

Estimated population of Qaqun in 1948: approximately 2,285

Date of occupation and depopulation: 5 June 1948, following an attack that began during the night of 4–5 June

Military operation: The operation to capture Qaqun, sometimes classified as part of the coastal-clearing operations

Military unit: Primarily the Third Battalion of the Alexandroni Brigade

Israeli settlement established on land traditionally belonging to Qaqun before 1948: ha-

Ma‘pil, established in 1945

Israeli settlements established on Qaqun’s lands after 1948: Gan Yoshiyya, Ometz, ‘Olesh, Channi’el, and Yikkon

Other facilities established at or near the village site after 1948: Qaqun Fortress Park and an Israeli fodder–processing factory northeast of the site

Reported area of Qaqun’s lands incorporated on the Israeli–controlled side of the 1949

Armistice Line: 40,611 dunams. This figure appears in some local compilations but could not be independently confirmed in the principal British Mandate statistical tables; it should therefore be treated as a cartographic estimate rather than a definitive figure.

Overview of Qaqun

Qaqun was a depopulated Palestinian village in the Tulkarm Subdistrict, located approximately 6 kilometres northwest of the city of Tulkarm.

The village stood on a hill overlooking the fertile Qaqun Plain. Tulkarm lay to its southeast. The Tulkarm–Haifa railway passed approximately half a kilometre east of the village, while secondary roads connected Qaqun with Tulkarm and neighbouring Palestinian villages.

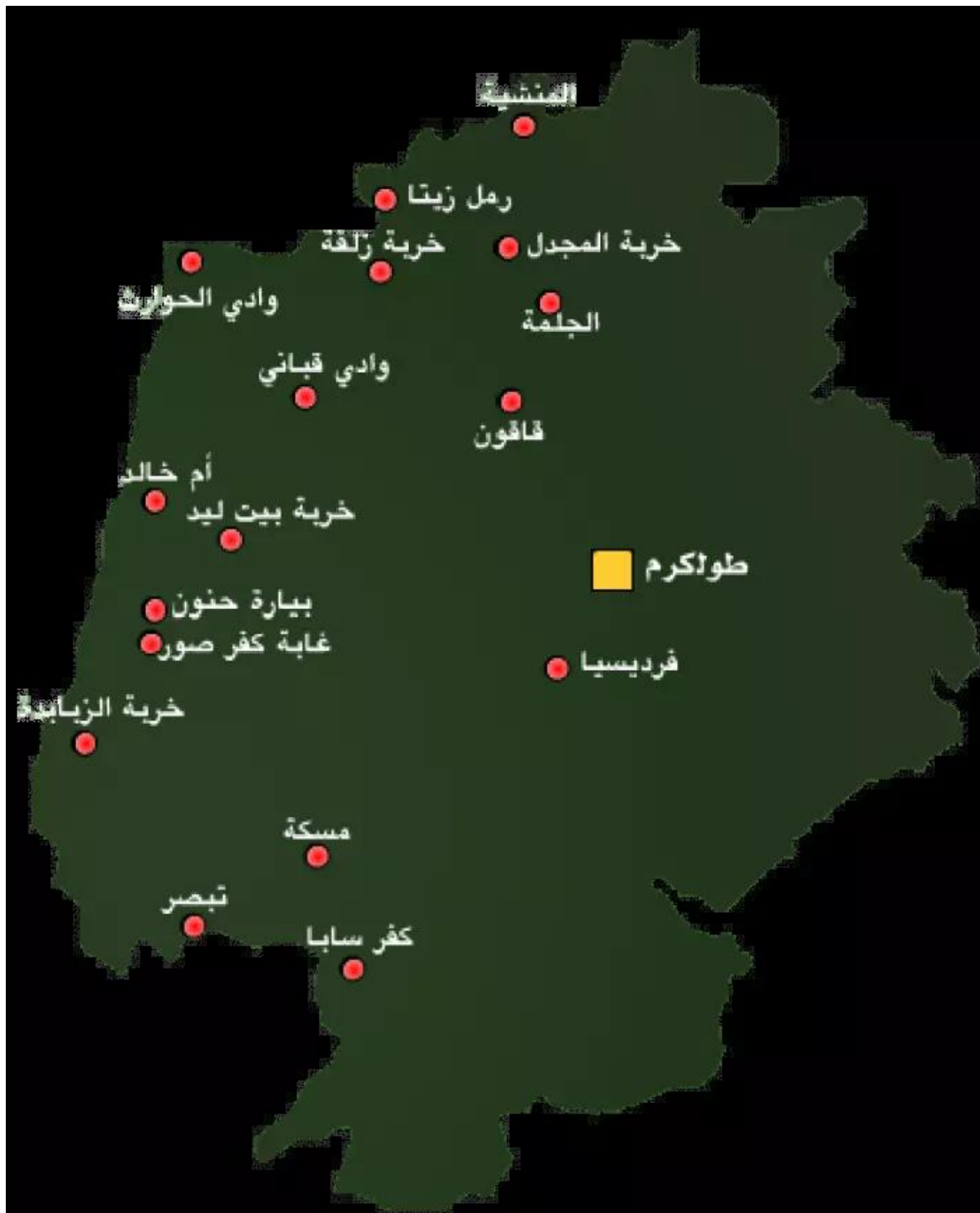
Qaqun’s inhabitants were Muslims. They worshipped in a mosque near the central market and obtained drinking water from village wells. The village had an elementary school for boys. Agriculture formed the basis of its economy, with watermelons, vegetables such as cucumbers, olives, citrus fruit, and cereals among its principal crops.

The remains of a Crusader and Mamluk fortress, a Mamluk mosque, and architectural fragments from other historical structures were visible in the village.

Boundaries of Qaqun

Qaqun lay among the following Palestinian villages and localities:

- North: [Khirbat al-Manshiyya](#).
 - West: Wadi Qabbani.
- Southwest: [Umm Khalid](#).
 - South: Tulkarm.
 - Southeast: Shuweika.
- East: Dayr al-Ghusun.
 - Northeast: [Zayta](#).



The Depopulated Palestinian Village of Qaqun

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Economic Life in Qaqun

The inhabitants depended principally on agriculture. Their crops included watermelons, vegetables—particularly cucumbers—olives, citrus fruit, bananas, and cereals. In 1944/45, 713 dunams under Palestinian ownership were devoted to citrus and bananas, 34,376 dunams to cereal cultivation, and 210 dunams were irrigated or used for orchards. Of the latter area, approximately 80 dunams were planted with olive trees.

Land Ownership in Qaqun, 1944/45

Ownership category	Area in dunams
Palestinian ownership	35,611
Jewish ownership	4,642
Public land	1,514
Total	41,767

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Land Use in Qaqun, 1944/45

Land-use category	Palestinian ownership (dunams)	Jewish ownership (dunams)	Public land (dunams)	Total (dunams)
Citrus and banana cultivation	713	1,576	0	2,289
Irrigated land and orchards	210	33	0	243
Olive groves*	80	0	0	80

Land-use category	Palestinian ownership (dunams)	Jewish ownership (dunams)	Public land (dunams)	Total (dunams)
Cereal cultivation	34,376	3,032	401	37,809
Built-up area	137	0	7	144
Cultivable land	35,299	4,641	401	40,341
Uncultivated land, excluding the built-up area	175	1	1,106	1,282

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres. The 80 dunams of olive groves formed part of the irrigated land and orchards category and should not be added separately when calculating the total cultivable area.

Population of Qaqun

Year	Population	Notes
1596	Approximately 127	Derived from an Ottoman register recording 19 households and four bachelors
1922	1,629	British Mandate census; predominantly Muslim, with 29 Christian males recorded
1931	1,367	All recorded as Muslims
1945	1,970	Official British Mandate village statistics
1948	Approximately 2,285	Later demographic estimate, sometimes rounded to 2,290
Estimated registered refugee population, 1998	14,034	Later estimate including descendants

* The 1948 and 1998 figures are demographic estimates rather than contemporary official censuses.

Number of Houses in Qaqun

Year	Number of houses	Statistical status
1931	260	Census figure
1948	Approximately 434	Later estimate

Historical and Archaeological Remains in Qaqun

Qaqun was an important historical site. During the Crusader period, its fortress was recorded under such names as Quaquo, Chaco, and Caco. In 1267, the Mamluk sultan Baybars captured Qaqun, ordered the fortress rebuilt, and had its church renovated and converted into a mosque.

Under Mamluk rule, Qaqun developed into a commercial centre and postal station on the Gaza–Damascus road. It contained a market and a *khan* that served merchants, travellers, and their animals. The remains of the Crusader and Mamluk fortress, the Mamluk mosque, and architectural fragments from other buildings survived into the twentieth century.

Education in Qaqun

An elementary school for boys was established in Qaqun during the British Mandate. Its building survived the village's destruction and was subsequently used as a school by Israelis.

Occupation and Depopulation of Qaqun

Qaqun was initially subjected to a hit-and-run raid by the Irgun on 6 March 1948, according to *The History of the Haganah*. The Palestinian newspaper *Filastin*, however, dated the attack to the morning of 7 March. Citing a Palestinian militia communiqué, the newspaper reported that the attackers failed to enter the village and threw grenades that wounded two women.

By early May, Qaqun was one of the last Palestinian coastal villages remaining in the area

north of Jaffa. On 9 May, Haganah intelligence officers met to determine the fate of Qaqun and several other villages on the coastal plain. According to records examined by Israeli historian Benny Morris, they agreed that the villages should be expelled or subdued. The plan was not carried out immediately, and Qaqun remained outside Israeli control until the following month.

The principal Israeli assault began during the night of 4–5 June 1948 and was conducted mainly by the Third Battalion of the Alexandroni Brigade. The two-pronged attack opened with intensive mortar and artillery fire. Iraqi army units positioned along the village's northern approaches resisted the advance.

By daybreak, Iraqi soldiers still held a substantial part of their fortified positions. Israeli historical accounts state that a renewed daylight assault ultimately decided the battle. Contemporary reporting described the Iraqi defenders as occupying three lines of trenches outside the village and recorded several hours of intense fighting, including close combat.

The official Israeli account claimed that an entire Iraqi battalion of approximately 450 men was destroyed and initially reported 12 Israeli soldiers killed. These claims should not be treated as definitive. Other historical assessments indicate that only several dozen Iraqi soldiers and a small number of local Palestinian defenders may have been present. Later accounts also place Alexandroni Brigade losses at 16 soldiers. Estimates therefore vary considerably between sources.

Both sides were reported to have employed aircraft during the fighting, and armed clashes around Qaqun continued for several days. Although 5 June is the date most commonly given for the village's occupation, some sources use 6 June to reflect the continuation or completion of the battle.

Most of the village's residents left during or immediately before the assault, particularly after the artillery bombardment. Nevertheless, PalQuest reports that some inhabitants remained in Qaqun until at least July 1949. The village's depopulation should therefore be understood as a process rather than as an event completed entirely on one day.

Israeli Settlements and Facilities on Qaqun's Lands

- Ha-Ma'pil was established in 1945 on land traditionally belonging to Qaqun, approximately 3 kilometres northwest of the village.
- Gan Yoshiyya was established on village land in 1949, approximately 1 kilometre south of the village site.
- Ometz was established on village land in 1949, approximately 1 kilometre north of the site.
- 'Olesh was established on village land in 1949, approximately 4 kilometres southwest of the site.
- Channi'el was established on village land in 1950.
- Yikkon was established during the early 1950s as a transit camp for Jewish immigrants and was later converted into a regional school.
- Burgeta was established in 1949 approximately 5 kilometres southwest of Qaqun, but it was not built on the village's registered lands.
- The fortress and surrounding ruins have subsequently been incorporated into plans for an archaeological and recreational park commonly known as Qaqun Fortress Park.

Qaqun Today

The fortress on the hilltop, a well that belonged to the Abu Hantash family, and the village school building are among the principal surviving structures. Stone rubble and the remains of destroyed houses surround the fortress. The school building continued to be used as a school by Israelis.

Cactus plants and an old mulberry tree grow south of the hill. Orchards cover much of the surrounding land, where cotton, pistachios, and vegetables have also been cultivated. An Israeli fodder-processing factory stands northeast of the former village site.

Sources

- [PalQuest, “Qaqun”](#).
- [Palestine Remembered, “Qaqun—Tulkarm”](#).
- [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*.
 - Government of Palestine, *Village Statistics, April 1945*.
 - Walid Khalidi, ed., *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992).