

Qastina



Subdistrict: Gaza Subdistrict

Estimated population of Qastina in 1948: 1,032, commonly rounded to approximately 1,030

Date of occupation and depopulation: Around 9 July 1948

Military unit: Givati Brigade

Israeli settlements established on Qastina's land before 1948: Kefar Warburg, established in 1939 on land traditionally belonging to Qastina

Israeli settlements established on Qastina's land after 1948: Arugot and Kefar Achim in 1949, Avigdor in 1950, and Qiryat Mal'akhi in 1951

Qastina

- Qastina was a Palestinian village located approximately 38 kilometres northeast of Gaza and about 3 kilometres from al-Masmiyya al-Kabira.
- In the late nineteenth century, Qastina extended along a northwest–southeast axis over generally flat land. Most of its buildings were constructed from adobe brick, and the village had a well and several gardens.
- The village stood on an elevated section of the coastal plain, which was otherwise largely flat. It was situated on the road linking al-Majdal with the Jerusalem–Yafa highway. The British military camp known as Beer Tuvia was approximately 3 kilometres southwest of the village.

Boundaries of Qastina

Qastina was situated among the following Palestinian villages:

- Northeast: [Yasur](#).
- East: [al-Batani al-Gharbi](#).
- Southeast: [al-Sawafir al-Shamaliyya](#).
- South: [al-Jaladiyya](#).
- Southwest: [Tall al-Turmus](#).
- Northwest: [al-Masmiyya al-Kabira](#).

Education in Qastina

Qastina had a mosque and an elementary school established in 1936. The school also served pupils from the neighbouring Palestinian village of Tall al-Turmus, southeast of Qastina. By the mid-1940s, 161 pupils were enrolled.

Population of Qastina

- The inhabitants of Qastina were Palestinian Muslims who obtained water for domestic use from the village wells.
- The village had 406 inhabitants in the 1922 British Mandate census. By 1931, its population had increased to 593, living in 147 houses.
- The official 1945 village statistics recorded 890 inhabitants, all Palestinian Muslims. Its population in 1948 has been estimated at 1,032.

Economic Life in Qastina

- An Ottoman tax register from 1596 records that the inhabitants paid taxes on wheat, barley, sesame, fruit, vineyards, goats, and beehives, reflecting the village's agricultural economy.
- Agriculture remained the foundation of Qastina's economy during the British Mandate, particularly cereal and citrus cultivation. Villagers also raised livestock and poultry and worked at the nearby British military camp.
- The lands of Qastina covered 12,019 dunams.
- In 1944–1945, citrus and bananas were cultivated on 235 dunams, all under Palestinian ownership. The villagers obtained water from wells, some of which were reportedly approximately 40 metres deep.
- The Palestinian built-up area of the village covered 37 dunams. An additional 66 built-up dunams were recorded under Jewish ownership within the wider statistical unit.

Land Ownership in Qastina

Ownership category	Land area (dunams)*
Palestinian ownership	8,438
Jewish ownership	3,135

Ownership category	Land area (dunams)*
Public land	446
Total	12,019

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Land Use in Qastina in 1944–1945

Land-use category	Palestinian ownership (dunams)*	Jewish ownership (dunams)*	Public land (dunams)*	Total (dunams)*
Citrus and banana cultivation	235	0	0	235
Irrigated land and orchards	770	0	0	770
Cereal cultivation	7,317	3,069	0	10,386
Built-up area	37	66	0	103
Cultivable land	8,322	3,069	0	11,391
Uncultivated land	79	0	446	525

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Population Records for Qastina

Year	Population*
1596	Approximately 385
1922	406
1931	593
1945	890
1948	1,032

Year	Population*
Estimated number of refugees in 1998	6,340

* The 1596 figure is an estimate derived from an Ottoman tax register. The figures for 1948 and 1998 are demographic estimates rather than contemporaneous census counts. Estimates vary between sources.

Number of Houses in Qastina

Year	Number of houses*
1931	147
1948	255

* The 1931 figure is an official census count, while the 1948 figure is an estimate.

Occupation and Depopulation of Qastina

- Qastina appeared in Plan Dalet as one of the Palestinian villages assigned for occupation by the Givati Brigade.
- On 29 June 1948, the Givati Brigade's 51st Battalion prepared an operational order concerning Qastina and the neighbouring villages of al-Masmiyya al-Kabira, al-Masmiyya al-Saghira, al-Tina, and Tall al-Turmus. According to Israeli historian Benny Morris, the order called for the destruction of the two al-Masmiyya villages and the burning of the others.
- Givati forces occupied Qastina around 9 July 1948, shortly after the end of the first truce, as the brigade advanced southwards into territory held by Egyptian forces. During the period between the first and second truces, from 8 to 18 July, the brigade occupied an area containing at least sixteen Palestinian villages and displaced their inhabitants.
- Operational orders issued by Givati commander Shim'on Avidan called for civilians to be expelled. A later Israeli military report stated that the inhabitants of the area began fleeing almost as soon as the operation commenced. The residents of

Qastina were probably displaced southwards towards Gaza rather than eastwards towards al-Khalil.

- Women and children from Qastina had previously sought temporary refuge in Tall al-Safi, but they returned because the village lacked sufficient water for the additional population. During the July assault, Qastina's inhabitants fled, and Israeli forces subsequently destroyed the village's houses.

Qastina Today

- The principal surviving traces of Qastina are the ruins and scattered debris of its houses. A dirt road that existed before the village's occupation continues to pass through the centre of the site, which is now covered with eucalyptus trees.
- A research team documenting the depopulated Palestinian villages found the site overgrown with bushes and grasses approximately two metres high. It also recorded dense growth of khubbayza, or mallow, a wild plant used in Palestinian rural cuisine. When a photographer returned later, this vegetation had been burned. The available source records the burning but does not identify who caused it or establish a motive.

Israeli Settlements Established on the Land of Qastina

- In 1939, Jewish immigrants from Germany and central and eastern Europe established Kefar Warburg on land traditionally belonging to Qastina, approximately 3 kilometres southwest of the village site.
 - In 1949, Arugot and Kefar Achim were established on Qastina's land.
 - Avigdor was established on village land in 1950.
- Qiryat Mal'akhi was established on village land in 1951. Its name refers both to the biblical Book of Malachi and to the Los Angeles Jewish community, whose support contributed to its establishment.

Sources

- [Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question – Qastina.](#)
- [Palestine Remembered – Qastina.](#)
- [Our Palestine – Qastina.](#)
- [Government of Palestine, Village Statistics, April 1945.](#)
- Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*, Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992, pp. 130–131.
- Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Government of Palestine, *Palestine: Report and General Abstracts of the Census of 1922.*
- Government of Palestine, *Census of Palestine, 1931: Population of Villages, Towns and Administrative Areas.*