

Hamama



Subdistrict: Gaza Subdistrict

Estimated Palestinian population of Hamama in 1948: Approximately 5,752; the wider statistical total was 5,812, including 60 Jewish residents associated with Nitzanim

Date of occupation and depopulation: Around 28 October 1948

Military unit: Yiftach Brigade

Israeli settlements established on Hamama's land before 1948: Nitzanim, established in 1943; its original site later became Nitzanim Youth Village

Israeli settlements established on Hamama's land after 1948: Nitzanim–Kefar ha-No'ar in 1949, Beyt Ezra in 1950, the relocated Nitzanim, and the Eshkolot farm during the 1950s

Information about Hamama

Hamama was located approximately 24 kilometres northeast of Gaza.

The village stood on flat land on the coastal plain, approximately 2 kilometres from the Mediterranean coast. Two long sand dunes bordered it to the east and west, while the coastal highway and railway ran a short distance to its east. Most of Hamama's inhabitants were Palestinian Muslims. The village had a mosque, two elementary schools, and a council that administered its local affairs. Its inhabitants cultivated numerous crops, including cereals, citrus fruit, and apricots.

Boundaries of Hamama

Hamama was situated among the following Palestinian villages and towns:

- North: [Isdud](#).
- West: the Mediterranean Sea.
- Southwest: [al-Jura](#).
- South: al-Majdal Asqalan.
- Southeast: [Bayt Tima](#).
- East: [Julis](#).
- Northeast: [Bayt Daras](#).

Architecture of Hamama

Hamama developed in a star-shaped pattern because its houses extended along the roads connecting the village centre with neighbouring Palestinian villages and towns. Its most pronounced urban expansion occurred towards the north and northwest. By the end of the British Mandate, the built-up area covered 167 dunams, while the village's total land area amounted to 41,366 dunams.

Hamama was built on the site of Tall Mishqafa, which has been identified with Peleia, a place

mentioned in an early fifth-century Byzantine source. Both Peleia and Hamama have been interpreted as meaning “dove.”

Education in Hamama

Before the establishment of formal schools, education in Hamama was provided through traditional kuttāb instruction and by men who had studied at al-Azhar or in similar religious schools. Children learned to recite and read the Qurʾān, acquired basic literacy, and studied elementary arithmetic, including addition, multiplication, and division. Families commonly compensated teachers with agricultural produce or small cash payments.

The boys’ elementary school opened in 1921. By 1946 it had developed into a complete seven-grade elementary school with 338 pupils. A girls’ elementary school opened in 1946 and enrolled 46 pupils. Local accounts state that nine teachers worked at the boys’ school, four of whose salaries were paid by the village, while two teachers worked at the girls’ school, with the village paying one salary. These accounts also report that the boys’ school had a library of approximately 400 books and that around 1,000 men in Hamama possessed some degree of literacy. The enrollment totals and school opening dates are corroborated by the principal academic source; the additional staffing, library, and literacy details derive from local historical accounts.

Economic Life in Hamama

Hamama was an important agricultural centre because of the size of its cultivated lands and its substantial population. Its grapes were well known, while its farmers also cultivated citrus fruit, figs, olives, apricots, almonds, sycamore fruit, watermelons, cantaloupes, vegetables, and cereals.

The local climate was well suited to citrus cultivation, and village accounts state that Hamama’s inhabitants owned more than twenty orange groves by 1948. Trees were also

planted to stabilise the soil and reduce the encroachment of sand. Extensive dunes extended north of the village between Wadi Abtah and Wadi Suqrir. Because of Hamama's proximity to the Mediterranean and the size of its population, fishing also provided employment for a significant number of inhabitants.

Land Ownership in Hamama

Ownership category	Land area (dunams)*
Palestinian ownership	26,855
Jewish ownership	1,693
Public land	12,818
Total	41,366

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Land Use in Hamama in 1944–1945

Land-use category	Palestinian ownership (dunams)*	Jewish ownership (dunams)*	Public land (dunams)*	Total (dunams)*
Citrus and banana cultivation	961	395	0	1,356
Irrigated land and orchards	4,325	134	0	4,459
Cereal cultivation	20,990	1,164	6,736	28,890
Built-up area	167	0	0	167
Cultivable land	26,276	1,693	6,736	34,705
Uncultivated land	412	0	6,082	6,494

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Population Records for Hamama

Year	Palestinian population*	Jewish population associated with Nitzanim*	Combined statistical total*
1596	Approximately 462	—	Approximately 462
1922	2,731	—	2,731
1931	3,405	—	3,405
1945	5,010	60	5,070
1948	Approximately 5,752	60	5,812
Estimated number of Palestinian refugees in 1998	35,689	Not applicable	Not applicable

* The 1596 figure is an estimate derived from an Ottoman tax record. The 1945 combined total includes 60 Jewish residents associated with Nitzanim. The figures for 1948 and the number of refugees in 1998 are demographic estimates rather than contemporaneous census counts. Estimates vary between sources.

Number of Houses in Hamama

Year	Number of houses*
1931	865
1948	1,476

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

Occupation and Depopulation of Hamama

Hamama was subjected to several armed attacks beginning in January 1948. According to reports published by the Palestinian newspaper *Filastin*, Jewish settlers from nearby Nitzanim

attacked Palestinian workers in fields between Hamama and Isdud on 22 January, wounding fifteen workers, two of them seriously. Two days later, another attack killed one villager and wounded another. On 17 February, gunfire directed at villagers waiting for a bus on the Hamama–Isdud road wounded two people.

Israeli historian Benny Morris places Hamama's occupation in the third stage of Operation Yoav, around 28 October 1948. By then, the village was sheltering a large number of Palestinian refugees displaced by earlier Israeli military operations. Isdud, approximately 5 kilometres north of Hamama, had been subjected to aerial and naval attacks at the beginning of Operation Yoav and fell during the operation's third stage.

Most of Hamama's remaining population fled southwards with retreating Egyptian columns before Israeli forces entered the village. When the Yiftach Brigade entered Hamama, its intelligence report described the village as being full of refugees from Isdud and other localities. According to Morris, the Palestinian residents and refugees who remained either fled south after the occupation or were encouraged or ordered by Israeli troops to leave. The available accounts therefore indicate a combination of flight under military pressure and direct expulsions.

Sources differ on the precise date: the principal account used by PalQuest places the occupation around 28 October, while Palestine Remembered lists 4 November. The earlier date is more consistent with the documented third stage of Operation Yoav, but the variation should be acknowledged.

Several Israeli settlements were established on Hamama's land. Nitzanim was founded northeast of the village in 1943, although it was not close to the village site. Nitzanim–Kefar ha-No'ar was established in 1949. Beyt Ezra was built on village land in 1950, while a farm known as Eshkolot was established there during the 1950s.

Hamama Today

No identifiable traces of the village houses or principal landmarks remain. Wild vegetation, including tall grasses, weeds, bushes, and cactus plants, covers the site. According to Walid

Khalidi's survey, the surrounding land was unused at the time of documentation.

Sources

- [Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question – Hamama.](#)
 - [Palestine Remembered – Hamama.](#)
 - [Our Palestine – Hamama.](#)
 - [Palmach Archive – Operation Yoav.](#)
- [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. 97–98.
- 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.*