

Kawkaba



Subdistrict: Gaza Subdistrict

Estimated population of Kawkaba in 1948: 789, commonly rounded to approximately 790

Occupation and depopulation: Displacement began around 13 May 1948; control of the village changed several times before its final Israeli occupation was announced on 20 October 1948

Military forces: Haganah forces were involved in the initial phase; Egyptian and Saudi forces later recaptured the village; its final Israeli occupation occurred during Operation Yoav

Israeli settlements established on Kawkaba's land before 1948: None

Israeli settlements established on Kawkaba's land after 1948: Kokhav Mikha'el

- Kawkaba was a Palestinian village in the Gaza Subdistrict, situated northeast of Gaza at an elevation of approximately 100 metres above sea level. The name Kawkab appears in an Ottoman record from 1596, while the site was known as Coquebel during the Crusader period. The alternative name “Kawkabat al-Dhahab” appears in some local accounts but could not be confirmed in the principal academic sources consulted.
- The village was located approximately 25 kilometres northeast of Gaza.

Boundaries of Kawkaba

Kawkaba was situated among the following Palestinian villages, towns, and localities:

- North: [Julis](#).
- Northwest: al-Majdal Asqalan.
- West: [al-Jiyya](#).
- Southwest: [Bayt Tima](#).
- South: [Hulayqat](#).
- Southeast: the lands inhabited by Palestinian Bedouin communities associated with the Beersheba region.
- East: [al-Faluja](#).
- Northeast: [Iraq Suwaydan](#).

Education in Kawkaba

Pupils from Kawkaba attended an elementary school shared with the neighbouring Palestinian villages of Bayt Tima and Hulayqat.

Architecture and Water Sources in Kawkaba

The village houses were constructed from adobe and cement. Its shops were concentrated in

the centre of the village, on the western side of the road. Two water sources were located on the eastern village lands: a spring and a well approximately 70 metres deep.

Economic Life in Kawkaba

The inhabitants of Kawkaba were Palestinian Muslims who depended primarily on rainfed agriculture. They cultivated grain as well as winter and summer vegetables. Towards the end of the British Mandate, they also grew fruit, including figs and grapes, throughout most of the village lands except in the western section.

In 1944–1945, 8,166 dunams under Palestinian ownership were devoted to cereal cultivation, while 166 dunams were classified as irrigated land or orchards. An additional 3 dunams of public land were used for cereals, bringing the total area devoted to cereal cultivation to 8,169 dunams.

Land Ownership in Kawkaba

Ownership category	Land area (dunams)*
Palestinian ownership	8,386
Jewish ownership	0
Public land	156
Total	8,542

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Land Use in Kawkaba in 1944–1945

Land-use category	Palestinian ownership (dunams)*	Public land (dunams)*	Total (dunams)*

Land-use category	Palestinian ownership (dunams)*	Public land (dunams)*	Total (dunams)*
Irrigated land and orchards	166	0	166
Cereal cultivation	8,166	3	8,169
Built-up area	40	0	40
Cultivable land	8,332	3	8,335
Uncultivated land	14	153	167

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Population Records for Kawkaba

Year	Population*
1596	Approximately 88
1922	439
1931	522
1945	680
1948	789
Estimated number of refugees in 1998	4,844

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

Number of Houses in Kawkaba

Year	Number of houses*
1931	121
1948	182

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

Archaeological Sites in Kawkaba

Kawkaba contained an archaeological site with a pool, cisterns, building foundations, columns, and broken column capitals. Khirbat Kamas, identified by some historical sources with the Crusader site of Camsa, was located north of the village and yielded archaeological artefacts.

Occupation and Depopulation of Kawkaba

The occupation and depopulation of Kawkaba did not occur on a single conclusively established date. Sources indicate that the village changed hands at least three times in 1948 and that its Palestinian inhabitants were displaced in stages.

Israeli historian Benny Morris states that villagers began fleeing westwards towards Gaza on 13 May 1948 following the destruction of the nearby Palestinian village of Burayr during Operation Barak. Some inhabitants evidently remained, however, since the *History of the Haganah* places the departure of the remaining villagers during Operation Yoav in October 1948. These accounts therefore do not support treating 13 May as the date of Kawkaba's final occupation.

Fighting had reached the vicinity earlier. The Palestinian newspaper *Filastin* reported that an armed Jewish convoy was attacked by Arab fighters on the road outside Kawkaba on 11 January 1948. The ensuing clash lasted approximately two hours, and one Arab fighter was reported killed.

An Egyptian account states that Israeli forces first occupied Kawkaba on 14 June 1948, during the first truce, and displaced the inhabitants who were still present. According to Egyptian official records cited by Muhammad Abd al-Mun'im, the Egyptian Second Infantry Battalion, assisted by a Saudi company, recaptured the village on 8 July as the first truce ended.

Kawkaba apparently remained under Arab military control until the end of the second truce on

18–19 October. On 20 October 1948, during Operation Yoav, the Israeli army announced that it had captured Kawkaba together with Bayt Tima and Hulayqat. The evidence therefore indicates several phases of displacement: an initial departure around 13 May, further displacement after the Israeli occupation of 14 June, and the probable removal or departure of the remaining inhabitants by the time of the final Israeli occupation in October.

Israeli Settlements Established on the Land of Kawkaba

In 1950, the Israeli settlement of Kokhav Mikha'el was established southeast of the former village site on land belonging to Kawkaba.

Kawkaba Today

The village site is overgrown with sycamore and Christ's-thorn trees. The former village road, collapsed walls, and rubble in a wooded section of the site remain visible. The surrounding land is cultivated by Israeli farmers.

Sources

- [Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question – Kawkaba.](#)
- [Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question – Operation Barak.](#)
- [Palestine Remembered – Kawkaba.](#)
- [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. 121–122.
- 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.*