

Dayr Sunayd



Subdistrict: Gaza

Estimated population of Dayr Sunayd in 1948: Approximately 847–850

Date of occupation and depopulation: Late October or early November 1948; the exact date has not been established

Military operation and forces: Operation Yoav; the Giv'ati Brigade is the principal unit associated with the village's bombardment and occupation in the consulted sources

Israeli settlements established on the village's land before 1948: None

Israeli settlements established on the village's built-up area or lands after 1948: None

- Dayr Sunayd was a Palestinian village located 12 km northeast of Gaza. Its location was strategically significant because it had a station on the Rafah–Haifa coastal railway between Gaza and al–Majdal. Paved and local roads connected it with neighbouring Palestinian villages, including Hiribya, Dimra, Simsim, and Najd. The village stood approximately 50 metres above sea level, between Wadi al–Abd to the north and Wadi al–Hasi to the south.
- Dayr Sunayd was located 12 km northeast of Gaza.
- The village stood on Palestine’s southern coastal plain, not far from the Mediterranean coast, between Wadi al–Abd to the north and Wadi al–Hasi to the south.
- The village had a station on the coastal railway, giving it convenient access to Gaza in the south and al–Majdal in the north.

Boundaries of Dayr Sunayd

Dayr Sunayd was situated among the following Palestinian villages and localities:

- North and northwest: [Hiribya](#).
- West: The Mediterranean Sea.
- Southwest: Bayt Lahiya.
- South: [Bayt Hanun](#).
- Southeast: Dimra.
- East: [Simsim](#).
- Northeast: [Bayt Jirja](#).

Architectural Structure of Dayr Sunayd

In the late nineteenth century, Dayr Sunayd was described as a medium–sized, rectangular village divided into four quarters by two roads intersecting at right angles. Its houses were built primarily of adobe brick, and the village contained wells, gardens, a pond, and a mosque at its centre. By the end of the British Mandate, construction had expanded westward toward the

coastal highway.

Economic Life in Dayr Sunayd

Agriculture formed the mainstay of the village economy. Cereal fields were concentrated south of Dayr Sunayd, while fruit and vegetable cultivation was concentrated to the northeast and northwest. In 1944/45, 158 dunams were devoted to citrus and banana cultivation, 512 dunams consisted of irrigated land and orchards, and 4,863 dunams were used for cereal cultivation when Palestinian-, Jewish-, and publicly owned land are counted together.

The inhabitants also engaged in commerce. The village obtained water from eight wells drilled to depths ranging from approximately 14 to 30 metres.

Land Ownership in Dayr Sunayd

Ownership category	Land area (dunams)*
Palestinian ownership	5,089
Jewish ownership	483
Public land	509
Total	6,081

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Land Use in Dayr Sunayd in 1944/45

Land-use category	Palestinian ownership (dunams)*	Jewish ownership (dunams)*	Public land (dunams)*	Total (dunams)*
Citrus and banana cultivation	158	0	0	158

Land-use category	Palestinian ownership (dunams)*	Jewish ownership (dunams)*	Public land (dunams)*	Total (dunams)*
Irrigated land and orchards	512	0	0	512
Cereal cultivation	4,361	483	19	4,863
Built-up area	13	0	0	13
Total cultivable land	5,031	483	19	5,533
Uncultivated land	45	0	490	535

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Population of Dayr Sunayd

Year	Population*
1596	Approximately 66
1922	356
1931	475
1945	730
1948	Approximately 847–850
Estimated number of Palestinian refugees descended from the village population in 1998	5,200

* The 1948 and 1998 figures are later demographic estimates rather than contemporaneous census counts. The documented population in the 1945 British Mandate statistics was 730. Estimates vary slightly between sources for 1948.

Number of Houses in Dayr Sunayd

Year	Number of houses
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Year	Number of houses
1931	103
1948	Approximately 183

* The 1931 figure comes from the British Mandate census. The number given for 1948 is a later estimate rather than a contemporaneous census count.

Education in Dayr Sunayd

A school was opened in Dayr Sunayd in 1945. It initially enrolled 63 pupils and had one teacher whose salary was paid by the village community. Dayr Sunayd also contained several small shops and a mosque.

Inhabitants of Dayr Sunayd

The British Mandate census of 1922 recorded 356 inhabitants in Dayr Sunayd. The population increased to 475 in 1931, when 103 houses were recorded. The 1945 village statistics estimated the population at 730. Later demographic estimates place the village's 1948 population at approximately 847–850 people and the number of houses at around 183. Since no complete census was conducted in the village in 1948, these latter figures should be understood as estimates.

Occupation and Depopulation of Dayr Sunayd

The precise date on which Israeli forces occupied Dayr Sunayd cannot be established with certainty. The village was probably captured during the final days of October or the first days of November 1948, in the course of Israel's occupation of Palestine during the Nakba.

Dayr Sunayd was subjected to aerial bombardment at the beginning of Operation Yoav on 15–16 October 1948. Contemporary reporting cited in the historical literature indicates that it

was heavily bombarded again on 21 October. During the final phase of the operation, Israeli forces advanced southward along the coastal road after the withdrawal of Egyptian forces.

They subsequently occupied al-Majdal, north of Dayr Sunayd, on 4 November.

The Giv'ati Brigade is the principal Israeli formation identified in village-specific sources.

Although the Negev and Yiftach brigades also participated in the wider Operation Yoav campaign, the sources consulted do not establish that all three units directly occupied Dayr Sunayd. It would therefore be inaccurate to present their joint participation in the village's final occupation as a confirmed fact.

The area had already witnessed fighting shortly after 15 May 1948, when Egyptian and Zionist forces fought for control of Dayr Sunayd and the nearby settlement of Yad Mordekhay. Egyptian forces prevailed in the May engagement after sustaining significant casualties. The Egyptian Ninth Battalion, with which Abd al-Hakim Amir served, participated in this fighting.

Israeli Settlements in the Vicinity of Dayr Sunayd

No Israeli settlement was established on the registered lands of Dayr Sunayd, either before or after 1948. Yad Mordekhay was established in 1943 immediately north of the village's lands but not on them.

Some accounts refer to a fortified Jewish position or settlement near Dayr Sunayd that Egyptian forces entered in May 1948. The available academic sources identify the fighting as connected with the nearby settlement of Yad Mordekhay; they do not document a separate Jewish settlement named "Dayr Sunayd" on the Palestinian village's land.

The claim that a settlement called "Ezer" or "Izer" was established on the outskirts of Dayr Sunayd could not be corroborated in the principal sources consulted and has therefore not been presented as a verified fact.

Dayr Sunayd Today

The principal surviving features documented at the village site are a railway bridge, unused sections of railway track, and three buildings belonging to the former railway station. The stone bridge crosses a wadi over four broad, rounded arches. The station buildings have been left unused and were recorded in a deteriorating condition.

Cactuses, eucalyptus trees, boxthorn, and other thorny vegetation grow at the site, while the surrounding lands are cultivated.

Sources

- [Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: “Dayr Sunayd”](#), Institute for Palestine Studies.
 - [Palestine Remembered: “Dayr Sunayd, Gaza”](#).
- [Walid Khalidi, ed., *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*](#), Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992.
 - [Bibliographic record for Walid Khalidi’s *All That Remains*](#), Google Books.
 - [Government of Palestine, *Village Statistics, April 1945*](#).
 - [Our Palestine: “The Depopulated Village of Dayr Sunayd”](#).