

Najd



- **Subdistrict:** Gaza
- **Estimated population of Najd in 1948:** approximately 719 Palestinians
 - **Date of occupation and depopulation:** 13 May 1948
- **Military unit:** The Palmach's Negev Brigade, operating in coordination with the Giv'ati Brigade's southward advance
 - **Israeli settlements established on Najd's lands before 1948:** None
 - **Israeli settlements established on Najd's lands after 1948:** Sderot and Or HaNer

The Depopulated Palestinian Village of Najd, Gaza Subdistrict

- Najd was a Palestinian village situated approximately 14 kilometres northeast of Gaza. It lay southwest of Burayr and east of Bayt Hanun. Secondary roads linked it to neighbouring villages and to the principal coastal–plain highway leading to Gaza, the administrative centre of the subdistrict. Simsim, located approximately two kilometres northeast of Najd, was among its nearest Palestinian villages.
- The village stood on elevated, level ground in the southern coastal plain, at approximately fifty metres above sea level, and overlooked the surrounding agricultural land. Its Arabic name, Najd, refers to elevated ground.
- The village's population was entirely Muslim. During the British Mandate, its built-up area expanded towards the northwest as the population increased.
- Several archaeological remains in and around the village indicate earlier settlement in the area. Khirbat Najd, situated south of the village, contained rough stone foundations, vaulted structures, and cisterns.



The depopulated Palestinian village of Najd

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Population of Najd

Ottoman tax records indicate that Najd had an estimated population of 215 in 1596. The British census of 1922 recorded 305 residents, while the 1931 census counted 422 residents living in eighty-two occupied houses. All were Muslims.

British Mandate statistics estimated the population at 620 in 1945. Based on subsequent demographic projections, the village's population immediately before its depopulation in 1948 has been estimated at approximately 719. A further retrospective projection estimated that the refugees from Najd and their descendants numbered approximately 4,417 in 1998. The 1948 and 1998 figures are demographic estimates rather than contemporaneous census counts.

Year	Recorded or estimated population	Nature of figure
1596	Approximately 215	Historical estimate derived from Ottoman tax records.
1922	305	British Mandate census.
1931	422	British Mandate census.
1945	620	British Mandate village statistics.
1948	Approximately 719	Retrospective demographic estimate, commonly rounded to 720.
1998	Approximately 4,417 refugees and descendants	Retrospective demographic projection, not a census count.

Land Area of Najd

The village's total cadastral area amounted to 13,576 dunams. Local geographical records report that approximately 264 dunams consisted of roads and wadis. Najd's lands extended between those of Simsim, Huj, Burayr, Dimra, and Bayt Hanun.

Land Ownership in Najd, 1944/45

Ownership category	Area (dunams)*
Palestinian ownership	12,669
Jewish ownership	495
Public land	412
Total	13,576

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Economic and Educational Life in Najd

- Most of Najd's residents depended on agriculture and animal husbandry. Grain fields and fruit trees surrounded the village on nearly every side.
- Fruit cultivation was concentrated north and northeast of the village, where wells provided irrigation water, and in the beds of the wadis crossing its lands. Citrus fruits, cereals, and other fruit-bearing trees were among the principal crops.
 - The available sources document animal husbandry but do not specifically establish poultry raising as a major branch of the village economy.
- Najd did not have its own school. The village's children attended the elementary school in nearby Simsim, approximately two kilometres to the northeast.

Land Use in Najd, 1944/45

Land-use category	Palestinian-owned land (dunams)*	Jewish-owned land (dunams)*	Public land (dunams)*	Total (dunams)*
Citrus and banana cultivation	10	0	0	10

Land-use category	Palestinian-owned land (dunams)*	Jewish-owned land (dunams)*	Public land (dunams)*	Total (dunams)*
Irrigated land and orchards	511	0	0	511
Cereal cultivation	11,917	427	0	12,344
Built-up area	26	0	0	26
Total cultivable land	12,438	427	0	12,865
Uncultivated land	205	68	412	685
Total cadastral area	12,669	495	412	13,576

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

The Palestinian cereal figure is given as 11,917 dunams in Sami Hadawi's tabulation. Some later summaries give 11,916 dunams; the one-dunam difference is most likely a transcription or rounding discrepancy.

Number of Houses in Najd

Year	Number of houses	Nature of figure
1931	82	Occupied houses recorded in the British Mandate census.
1948	Approximately 139	Retrospective estimate; no contemporaneous 1948 housing census has been identified.

Occupation and Depopulation of Najd

Najd's Palestinian residents were expelled on 13 May 1948, shortly before the end of the

British Mandate and during the Nakba. Palestinian historical compilations identify the Palmach's Negev Brigade as the formation responsible for the village's occupation and depopulation. The brigade was conducting a series of smaller advances towards the north and east in coordination with the Giv'ati Brigade's southward advance during the first half of May.

Some Palestinian compilations associate Najd's occupation with Operation Barak. The available accounts nevertheless indicate that the forces directly responsible belonged to the Negev Brigade rather than the Giv'ati Brigade. Giv'ati's role is more accurately described as part of the coordinated regional advance.

The consulted sources give 13 May 1948 as the occupation date, although some secondary references place the expulsion across 12–13 May. The most consistently cited Palestinian village record uses 13 May.

Israeli Settlements Established on Najd's Lands

Two Israeli settlements were subsequently established on land belonging to Najd. Sderot was founded in 1951 south of the former village site. Or HaNer was established in 1957 northeast of the site and closer to the former built-up area.

Neither settlement was established before the village's occupation and depopulation in 1948.

Najd Today

The village site has been fenced and is overgrown with cactus, Christ's-thorn, and sycamore trees. Crumbled walls belonging to unidentified village buildings remain visible, although their original functions are difficult to determine. An irrigation channel also survives at the site. The surrounding village lands are now cultivated by Israeli farmers.

Sources

- [Institute for Palestine Studies: Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains*.](#)
 - [Palestine Remembered: Najd, Gaza Subdistrict.](#)
- [Sami Hadawi, *Village Statistics of 1945: A Classification of Land and Area Ownership in Palestine*.](#)
 - [Sabil Library: digitised record of *Village Statistics 1945*.](#)
- [Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains*, Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992.](#)