

Abil al-Qamh



Abil al-Qamh was a Palestinian village in the Safad Subdistrict. On the eve of the Nakba, its population was estimated at approximately 380. The village was depopulated in 1948, and most of its built environment was subsequently destroyed.

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Safed
Distance from district center	32 km North East of Safad
Average Elevation	350 m above sea level
Population in 1931	229
Number of Houses in 1931	58

Item	Information
Population in 1944/1945	330
Estimated Population in 1948	About 383 – a later demographic estimate, not an official census
Total Land Area in 1945	4,615 dunams
Attack and Depopulation	The available sources document no direct attack on the village; it was emptied of its inhabitants on 10 May 1948 during Operation Yiftach, according to an Israeli intelligence report issued in late June 1948.
Final Israeli Control	May 1948, during Operation Yiftach; the available sources give no date for the entry of Zionist forces into the village other than the date it was emptied, 10 May 1948.
Military Operation	Operation Yiftach
Military Unit	The Palmach's First Battalion – the main force assigned to occupy eastern Galilee under Operation Yiftach
Cause of Depopulation	Fear of a Zionist attack on the village
Settlements Documented on Village Lands	Yuval, established in 1952 on village lands

- The village stood in a hilly area north of the Hula Plain, approximately one kilometre from the Lebanese border. It remained administratively part of Lebanon until the boundary settlement of 1923, when it was incorporated into British Mandatory Palestine.
- Abil al-Qamh was situated near a stream and surrounded by cultivated land. A church stood within the village.
- Its population included both Muslims and Christians. Agriculture formed the foundation of the local economy, and the fertile wheat fields surrounding the village benefited from abundant water resources.

Architecture and Built Environment

The village had a broadly triangular layout, with its narrow end pointing south. Its built-up area expanded southward along the hill on which it stood. In the late nineteenth century, Abil al-Qamh contained approximately 45 dwellings. By 1931, the number had risen to 58. These houses were constructed from stone and cement, stone and mud, or reinforced concrete. In 1945, the village's built-up area covered 13 dunams, while the number of houses was recorded as 97 by 1948.

Population of Abil al-Qamh

- According to the 1931 Census of Palestine, Abil al-Qamh had 229 inhabitants: 122 Muslims and 107 Christians living in 58 houses.
- Official 1945 village statistics recorded a population of 330—230 Muslims, predominantly Shi'a, and 100 Arab Christians—and a total land area of 4,615 dunams.

Economic Life in Abil al-Qamh

The village had no formal public services. Its economy depended primarily on agriculture and livestock raising, with cereal cultivation forming the principal agricultural activity. Fruit-tree cultivation was limited: during the 1942–1943 season, only six dunams were planted with olive trees. In 1944–1945, 2,537 dunams of Palestinian-owned land were allocated to cereal production.

Land Ownership in Abil al-Qamh

Ownership category	Area (dunams)*
Palestinian ownership	3,116
Jewish ownership	1,327
Public land	172
Total	4,615

Land Use in Abil al-Qamh

Land-use category	Palestinian-owned land (dunams)*	Jewish-owned land (dunams)*
Irrigated land and orchards	299	3
Olive groves	6	0
Cereal cultivation	2,537	1,320
Built-up area	13	0
Total cultivable land	2,836	1,323
Uncultivated land	439	4

* One dunam equals approximately 1,000 square metres.

Population Figures for Abil al-Qamh

Year	Population*
1596	143
1931	229
1945	330
1948	383
Estimated number of refugees in 1998	2,351

Houses in Abil al-Qamh

Year	Number of houses
1931	58
1948	97

Archaeological Heritage

Abil al-Qamh occupied an archaeologically significant site associated with Tell Abil el-Qameh, also known as Tel Abel Beth Maacah. Archaeological remains recorded

in and around the area include a settlement mound, rock-cut tombs, flint tools, pottery, wall foundations, scattered building stones, and stone cairns between Abil al-Qamh and Tell al-Qadi.

Two additional archaeological localities lay near the village. Khirbat Niha, southwest of Abil al-Qamh, contained wall foundations, scattered stones, and pottery fragments. The name *Niha* is of Syriac origin and is generally associated with the meanings “calm,” “rest,” or “repose”; several places in Lebanon and Syria bear the same name. Tell al-Qita'at al-Sitt, south of the village, contained the remains of enclosures.

The Occupation and Depopulation of Abil al-Qamh

Operation Yiftach was launched by Palmach forces between mid-April and late May 1948 with the objective of securing eastern Galilee before the end of the British Mandate. Abil al-Qamh was occupied and depopulated on 10 May 1948 as the operation advanced through the Safad region. The wider campaign resulted in the depopulation of Palestinian communities across eastern Galilee, and many villages were subsequently destroyed.

Occupation and Depopulation Chronology

Stage	Date	Details
Beginning of the military operation	15 April 1948	The Palmach launched Operation Yiftach to take control of eastern Galilee before the end of the British Mandate on 15 May 1948; the Palmach's First Battalion spearheaded the operation.
Depopulation of the village	10 May 1948	The village was emptied of its inhabitants on this date, according to an Israeli intelligence report issued in late June 1948. The available sources give no separate date for the entry of Zionist forces into the village.
Settlement on village lands	1952	Israel established the settlement of Yuval on the lands of Abil al-Qamh, about 1.5 kilometres from the village site.

Israeli Settlement on the Lands of Abil al-Qamh

The Israeli settlement of Yuval was established in 1952 on land belonging to Abil al-Qamh, approximately 1.5 kilometres from the former village site.

Abil al-Qamh Today

Grass and wild vegetation now cover much of the village site. A grove of trees stands in its northeastern corner, while stones from the destroyed houses remain scattered across the area. The surrounding land is used primarily as pasture for livestock.