

Al-Sindiyyana



Al-Sindiyyana - A Depopulated Palestinian Village in the Haifa Subdistrict

Al-Sindiyyana was a Palestinian village in the Haifa Subdistrict, situated in Bilad al-Rawha approximately 29 km south of Haifa, at an average elevation of about 125 meters above sea level.

The village was built on two small hills southeast of the foothills of Mount Carmel. The larger hill was roughly circular, while the smaller hill to its east was elongated along a northwest-southeast axis.

Al-Sindiyyana was depopulated during the Nakba and the occupation of Palestine in 1948. Irgun forces began an assault on several villages of Bilad al-Rawha on 12 May 1948. By 14 May, al-Sindiyyana had been occupied and the remaining Palestinian inhabitants had been expelled.

Item	Information
Subdistrict	Haifa
Region	Bilad al-Rawha
Distance from Haifa	Approximately 29 km south
Elevation	Approximately 125 m above sea level
Population, 1944/45	1,250
Total land area	15,172 dunums
Beginning of assault	12 May 1948
Completion of occupation and depopulation	12–14 May 1948
Military force	Irgun / IZL / Etzel
Military context	Irgun assault on the villages of Bilad al-Rawha following the Mishmar ha-'Emeq fighting
Israeli settlement on village land	Avi'el, established in 1949

Location and Geography of Al-Sindiyyana

Al-Sindiyyana stood on two small hills along the southeastern edge of the Mount Carmel foothills in the Palestinian region known as Bilad al-Rawha.

The larger hill was approximately circular, while the smaller hill immediately to the east was more elongated and oriented from northwest to southeast.

Secondary roads linked the village with neighboring communities and with a highway that connected with the main coastal road.

Neighboring Villages

Palestinian maps and local documentation place al-Sindiyaana among the following villages of Bilad al-Rawha:

- North and northeast: Sabbarin.
- East: Umm al-Shawf and Qannir.
- South: al-Marah.
- West: Burayka.

These are approximate geographical relationships and should not be treated as substitutes for detailed cadastral boundaries.

Name of Al-Sindiyaana

The name al-Sindiyaana derives from the Arabic word for an oak tree.

Local Palestinian documentation associates the name with the abundance of oak trees in the hills around the village.

Origins of the Modern Village

According to Walid Khalidi, the inhabitants who established the modern village came from the neighboring communities of Umm al-Fahm and 'Arraba and founded al-Sindiyaana more than two centuries before the Nakba.

This does not mean that the surrounding area lacked earlier settlement. A number of archaeological sites and khirbas around the village preserve evidence of much older occupation.

Al-Sindiyaana in the Nineteenth Century

In the late nineteenth century, al-Sindiyaana stood on elevated ground with a spring below the village.

One mid-nineteenth-century estimate placed the population at approximately 300

people cultivating around 22 faddans.

The village houses were constructed of stone in a hilly agricultural environment with relatively abundant water.

Population of Al-Sindiya

Several later Palestinian websites reproduce a figure of 276 inhabitants for 1922. The official Census of Palestine, however, records **576 inhabitants** in al-Sindiya in 1922, all Muslims.

The official 1931 census recorded 923 inhabitants. PalQuest notes that this figure includes Harrawi. The corresponding count of 217 occupied houses likewise refers to this combined statistical unit.

In the 1944/45 Village Statistics, al-Sindiya had a population of 1,250 Arabs.

Palestine Remembered later estimated the population at 1,450 in 1948 and the number of refugees and their descendants at 8,905 in 1998. These are retrospective estimates rather than official British Mandate census figures.

Year	Population	Nature of Figure / Notes
Mid-19th century	Approximately 300	Historical estimate
1922	576	Official census; all Muslims
1931	923	Official census; figure includes Harrawi
1944/45	1,250	Official British Mandate statistics
1948	1,450	Later estimate, not an official census
1998	8,905 refugees	Later estimate of refugees and their descendants

Number of Houses

Year	Houses	Nature of Figure
1931	217	Occupied-house count for the statistical unit including al-Sindiyyana and Harrawi

The principal sources used here do not provide a securely documented independent house count for al-Sindiyyana alone in 1931 or a reliable standalone estimate for 1948.

Education in Al-Sindiyyana

Al-Sindiyyana had an elementary school for boys. Khalidi records approximately 200 pupils in the school in 1942/43.

The Palestinian Villages Encyclopedia, drawing on Mustafa Murad al-Dabbagh, gives 1943 as the school's founding year and states that it had around 200 pupils and five teachers in the 1947/48 school year.

The secure core fact is therefore the existence of a boys' elementary school with approximately 200 pupils by the early 1940s; the 1943 founding date derives from the later local source based on al-Dabbagh.

Land Ownership in Al-Sindiyyana

The total land area of al-Sindiyyana in the 1944/45 Village Statistics was 15,172 dunums.

Palestine Remembered presents the simplified ownership categories as follows:

Ownership Category	Area in Dunums
Palestinian	9,706
Transferred to Zionists	864
Communal/Public	4,602
Total	15,172

The official Village Statistics use the original categories Arab, Jewish, and Public:

9,706 dunums were classified as Arab land, 864 as Jewish land, and 4,602 as public land.

Land Use in 1944/45

Use	Arab	Jewish	Public	Total
Cereals	7,313	864	0	8,177
Plantations and irrigable land	525	0	0	525
Built-up land	24	0	0	24
Non-cultivable land	1,844	0	4,602	6,446
Total	9,706	864	4,602	15,172

Cultivable land totaled 8,702 dunums, approximately 57 percent of the village area: 7,838 Arab dunums and 864 Jewish dunums.

Built-up and non-cultivable land totaled 6,470 dunums, of which 1,868 were Arab and 4,602 public.

Approximately 200 dunums were planted with olive trees. This was a crop-specific figure within the 525 dunums of plantations and irrigable land and should not be added separately to the total.

Economic Life

Agriculture and livestock raising formed the principal basis of life in al-Sindiyyana.

Cereals were among the main crops, together with vegetables—especially tomatoes—as well as olives and other orchard crops.

In 1944/45, 7,313 Arab dunums were devoted to cereals and 525 dunums to plantations and irrigable cultivation.

The village's numerous wells and springs supported both irrigated agriculture and animal husbandry.

Water and Springs

Al-Sindiya had numerous wells and springs that supplied water for both domestic consumption and irrigation.

Khalidi specifically records the abundance of village wells.

Later Palestinian local documentation preserves names including '**Ayn Abu Taha** northeast of the village and '**Ayn al-Mayta** and '**Ayn Isma'il** to the south, along with additional springs southeast of the village.

The village also overlooked Wadi al-Sindiya, part of the broader Wadi al-Zarqa drainage system.

Archaeological Sites and Khirbas

An archaeological site known simply as **al-Khirba** lay about two kilometers southwest of al-Sindiya. Khalidi records building foundations, pottery, and small tesserae or vessel fragments visible on its surface.

Farther away stood **Khirbat Rusaysa**, where mosaics, columns, and a rock-cut winepress suggest occupation during the Roman-Byzantine period.

Local Palestinian documentation identifies additional sites around the village, including Khirbat al-'Ajami, Khirbat al-Sitt Layla, Khirbat al-Khudayra, Khirbat Dufays, and Khirbat Tata.

The available evidence varies from site to site, so these remains should not all be assigned to a single historical period without independent archaeological study.

Local Religious Shrines

Later community documentation preserves the names of several shrines around the village, including Maqam al-'Ajami, Maqam al-Sitt Layla, Maqam al-Shaykh al-'Allam, and Maqam al-Dafayis.

Khalidi's principal village entry does not provide a detailed historical chronology for

these shrines, so they are presented as landmarks preserved in local memory and community documentation.

Military Context before the Occupation

Bilad al-Rawha experienced escalating military pressure during April and May 1948, particularly following the fighting around Mishmar ha-'Emeq and Haganah attacks against Palestinian villages in the area.

On 8 May, Haganah forces attacked Kafr Qari'. Soon afterward, Irgun units assumed the offensive against a number of other villages in Bilad al-Rawha.

Irgun forces operating from the Zikhron Ya'akov, Hadera, Binyamina, and Netanya areas gathered for an assault on villages including al-Sindiyyana.

Occupation and Depopulation in 1948

On **12 May 1948**, Irgun forces began attacking al-Sindiyyana, Sabbarin, Khubbayza, Umm al-Shawf, and other Palestinian villages in Bilad al-Rawha.

Some inhabitants had already begun leaving the area as military forces approached, but a significant number of al-Sindiyyana's residents remained in the village.

Historical accounts state that the mukhtar, members of his family, and approximately **300 civilians** stayed behind and raised a white flag, signaling surrender. They were nevertheless subsequently expelled.

PalQuest publishes a Haganah intelligence report dated 30 June 1948 that records al-Sindiyyana under **14 May**, stating that everyone had left, that the village had been "occupied by the Irgun," and that the displaced population went toward 'Ar'ara and Ya'bad.

The most precise chronology therefore distinguishes between the beginning of the assault on 12 May and the completion of occupation and depopulation over **12-14 May 1948**.

What Was the Military Operation Called?

Palestine Remembered variously associates al-Sindiyyana with “Coastal Clearing” or the Mishmar ha-'Emeq operations. Khalidi's village entry and PalQuest, however, do not establish one formal operation name specifically for the Irgun assault that captured al-Sindiyyana.

The battle of Mishmar ha-'Emeq preceded the village's occupation and reshaped the military balance in Bilad al-Rawha, but it is not itself a precise operation name for the 12–14 May assault on al-Sindiyyana.

This article therefore uses the more cautious formulation: **the Irgun assault on the villages of Bilad al-Rawha following the Mishmar ha-'Emeq fighting.**

Stage	Date	Details
Earlier fighting in Bilad al-Rawha	April – early May 1948	Haganah operations following the Mishmar ha-'Emeq fighting increased military pressure on Palestinian villages
Beginning of Irgun assault	12 May 1948	Attack on al-Sindiyyana, Sabbarin, Khubbayza, Umm al-Shawf, and other villages
Surrender of remaining civilians	12–14 May 1948	The mukhtar, his family, and about 300 residents remained and raised a white flag
Completion of depopulation	By 14 May 1948	Haganah intelligence report records the village as empty and occupied by the Irgun
Destinations of some displaced residents	May 1948	'Ar'ara and Ya'bad, according to the report published by PalQuest

Israeli Settlements on the Lands of Al-Sindiyyana

Avi'el: Established in 1949 on land belonging to al-Sindiyyana, southwest of the former village site.

Khalidi does not identify a Zionist settlement as having been established on al-

Sindiyana's lands before the Nakba.

Al-Sindiyana Today

According to Walid Khalidi's field description in *All That Remains*, the village site was fenced with barbed wire. Piles of stones and rubble from destroyed houses lay among thorns, cactus, and fig, olive, and palm trees.

The surrounding lands were being used for grazing.

This description derives from fieldwork conducted before the publication of *All That Remains* in 1992 and should not be treated as direct verification of conditions in 2026.

Palestine Remembered contains much later community documentation, including visits in 2021, an aerial visit in 2022, a field tour published on 17 August 2026, and August 2026 material documenting Khirbat Tata northwest of the former village center.

This later documentation is valuable evidence of continued access to and identification of parts of al-Sindiyana's historical landscape, including ruins, shrines, and former house locations. It does not, however, constitute a comprehensive independent archaeological or architectural survey of every surviving element in 2026.

Sources

- [PalQuest – Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question: al-Sindiyana](#)
- [PalQuest – Israeli Intelligence Report on the Depopulation of Palestine, 30 June 1948](#)
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- [Palestine Remembered – al-Sindiyana entry from All That Remains](#)
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- [Government of Palestine – Village Statistics 1945: Haifa Sub-District, Population and Land Ownership](#)
- [Palestinian Villages Encyclopedia – al-Sindiyana / Bilad al-Rawha](#)
- [Salman Abu Sitta – Register of Depopulated Localities in Palestine](#)