

= Al @-@ Birwa =

Al @-@ Birwa (Arabic : ?????? , also spelled al @-@ Birweh) was a Palestinian Arab village , located 10 @.@ 5 kilometers (6 @.@ 5 mi) east of Acre (Akka) . In 1945 , it had population of 1 @.@ 460 , of whom the majority were Muslims and a significant minority , Christians . Its total land area consisted of 13 @.@ 542 dunams (13 @.@ 5 square kilometers) . The village was depopulated during the 1948 Arab @-@ Israeli War .

Al @-@ Birwa was mentioned in the mid @-@ 11th century CE by the Persian geographer Nasir Khusraw and was known to the Crusaders as " Broet " . The village came under Mamluk rule in the late 13th century , and in the early 16th century , it was conquered by the Ottomans , who ruled it for four centuries . Travelers ' reports from the late 19th century documented that al @-@ Birwa had a mosque , a church , and an elementary school for boys (a girls ' school was built in 1942) .

During British Mandate rule in Palestine , al @-@ Birwa was home to local power brokers , who mediated disputes in neighboring villages . Al @-@ Birwa became a center of rebel operations during the 1936 ? 1939 revolt against British rule . By the 1940s , many of the village 's agrarian inhabitants lost their lands due to debt , and shifted to labor jobs in nearby cities , such as Haifa . However , the majority of the residents ? men and women ? continued to engage in farming , selling their olives , grains and other crops in the markets of Acre . Al @-@ Birwa was captured by the Israelis in early June 1948 , after which its local militia recaptured the village . Al @-@ Birwa was then permanently occupied by the Israelis in late June . Afterward , its inhabitants , including future Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish , fled to nearby villages or Lebanon . The Jewish communities of Yas 'ur and Ahihud were established on al @-@ Birwa 's lands in 1949 and 1950 , respectively .

= = History = =

= = = Middle Ages = = =

Al @-@ Birwa was mentioned in 1047 CE , during Fatimid rule , when it was visited by the Persian geographer , Nasir Khusraw . He describes it as lying " between Acre and Damun " , and reports having visited what he described as the tombs of Simeon and Esau there . The Crusaders wrested control of Palestine from the Fatimids in 1099 . They referred to al @-@ Birwa as " Broet " . In 1253 , John Aleman , the Crusader lord of Caesarea , sold al @-@ Birwa , along with several other villages , to the Knights Hospitaller . Al @-@ Birwa was mentioned as part of the Acre @-@ based Crusaders ' domain in the 1283 hudna (truce agreement) with the Mamluks under Sultan al @-@ Mansur Qalawun . In the late 13th century , the Mamluks defeated and conquered the last Crusader outposts along Palestine 's northern coastline .

= = = Ottoman era = = =

Al @-@ Birwa came under Ottoman rule in 1517 , along with all of Palestine . In 1596 , al @-@ Birwa was a small village in the Akka Nahiya (Subdistrict of Acre) , part of the Safad Sanjak (District of Safed) . The village paid taxes on wheat , barley , fruit , beehives , and goats . According to Ottoman tax registers , al @-@ Birwa had 121 residents in 1596 . A map from Napoleon 's invasion of 1799 by French cartographer Pierre Jacotin depicted al @-@ Birwa as " Beroweh " , though its location on the map was misplaced .

In the late 19th century , al @-@ Birwa grew to be a large village , with a well in its southern area . To the north lay " beautiful olive @-@ groves and fruitful wheatfields , " as they were described by one Western traveller to the region in the mid @-@ 19th century . American biblical scholar Edward Robinson visited al @-@ Birwa in 1852 and noted that it was one of 18 villages in Palestine with an operating Christian (Eastern Orthodox) church . By 1859 , British Consul Edward T. Rogers recorded that al @-@ Birwa had approximately 900 inhabitants . The French explorer , Victor Guérin , who visited in 1875 , described the Christians of Birwa as Greek Orthodox , and noted that they

had a " fairly new " church . In 1888 , the Ottomans built an elementary school for boys .

= = = British Mandate period = = =

In 1917 , during World War I , British forces drove out the Ottomans from Palestine and in 1920 , the British Mandate of Palestine was established . In the 1922 British census , al @-@ Birwa had a population of 807 , consisting of 735 Muslims and 72 Christians . The Christians were mostly Orthodox with five Anglicans . By the 1931 census , the population had increased to 996 , of which 884 were Muslims and 92 were Christians , living in a total of 224 houses . Cement roofs became widely used in al @-@ Birwa in the 1930s , during a time of significant expansion in the village .

A number of al @-@ Birwa 's inhabitants participated in the 1936 ? 1939 Arab revolt against British rule and mass Jewish immigration in Palestine . A commander of the revolt for the Nazareth @-@ Tiberias region , Sheikh Yihya Hawash , was from al @-@ Birwa . He was arrested by the British and sentenced to life imprisonment . The British also executed eight residents of al @-@ Birwa who had participated in the revolt . Other rebel commanders and participants in the revolt from al @-@ Birwa included Asad Atallah , Mahmoud al @-@ Joudi , Saleh Mahmoud Me 'ari @-@ Abu Sa 'ud , Abd al @-@ Hamid Daher Me 'ari , Muhammad al @-@ Hajj Ali , Yusef Taha , Fadil Eid , Yousif Mai and Abbas al @-@ Shattawi . A number of women from al @-@ Birwa participated in the revolt by transporting arms , water and food to rebels positioned among the hills in the vicinity . Elderly refugees from al @-@ Birwa interviewed in 2003 ? 2004 recalled that during the revolt , local rebels set off a mine that hit a British military jeep on a road adjacent to al @-@ Birwa in August 1937 , prompting the British to launch punitive measures against the village . In particular , the British authorities gathered men from al @-@ Birwa and forced them to cut cactus plants near Acre and then placed the men on top of the cactuses .

In 1945 , al @-@ Birwa 's population was 1 @, @ 460 , of which 130 were Christians . Prominent families and landowners in the village included the Saad , Darwish , Abdullah , Kayyal , Sakkas , al @-@ Wakid , al @-@ Joudi , Najm , al @-@ Dabdoub , Khalid , Akawi , Hissian , Hawash and al @-@ Sheikha families . Socio @-@ economic status in the village was largely determined by land ownership . About 140 residents of the village were tenant farmers who worked for the major landowning Moughrabi , al @-@ Zayyat and Adlabi families . According to intelligence gathered by the Haganah (a Jewish paramilitary organization in Palestine) , the traditional , local power brokers of the central Galilee were residents of al @-@ Birwa , who " resolved all conflicts in the nearby villages " . Haganah intelligence also reported that al @-@ Birwa 's inhabitants were " long @-@ lived , the majority reaching an age of over 100 years " .

By the 1940s , al @-@ Birwa had three olive oil presses , a mosque , a church , and approximately 300 houses . In addition to the Ottoman @-@ era boys ' school , an elementary school for girls was established in 1943 . By this time , many of the inhabitants lost all or part of their lands due to debts , and concurrently , men and women from al @-@ Birwa increasingly worked in public projects , such as road construction and the Haifa oil refinery , or in British military installations , to compensate for lost income . However , the main source of income remained agriculture , and the village 's principal crops were olives , wheat , barley , corn , sesame , and watermelons . In 1944 / 45 , residents of the village owned a total of 600 cattle , 3 @, @ 000 goats and 1 @, @ 000 chickens . Women , particularly young women from smaller landowning families , participated alongside the men of their family in working the land , while many women from landless families drew income as seasonal workers on other village residents ' lands . There were general , gender @-@ based divisions of labor , with women collecting well water , raising livestock , curdling milk , transporting goods to markets in Acre and collecting herbs ; men typically plowed and sowed seeds , and both men and women picked olives and harvested crops .

= = = 1948 War = = =

Israeli forces from the Carmeli Brigade first captured al @-@ Birwa and positions overlooking it on 11 June 1948 as part of Operation Ben @-@ Ami , a day before the first truce of the 1948 Arab

@-@ Israeli War . During the fighting , 45 elderly residents hid in the church with the priest . The defenders of the village surrendered after losing men and running out of ammunition . The residents took refuge in nearby villages for thirteen days . Nevertheless , clashes continued during the truce . According to local militiamen from al @-@ Birwa , 96 men from the village armed with rifles , and an equal amount of men armed with non @-@ firearms and unarmed women assembled near the front lines of the Arab Liberation Army (ALA) . The rifle @-@ armed force charged first across the front lines , followed by the men armed with axes , shovels , and sticks , and then the women who carried water to assist the wounded . Al @-@ Birwa 's ad @-@ hoc militia took the small force of Haganah soldiers (who became part of the Israel Defense Forces on 26 May) by surprise and forced them back a kilometer west of al @-@ Birwa . Afterward , al @-@ Birwa 's residents harvested their crops . They remained in the village until 24 June , when ALA commanders suggested that they join their families in the nearby villages . The militiamen claimed that the ALA stood by during the clashes because they did not receive orders from their superiors .

The Israelis announced that they had battled ALA units in the area , inflicting 100 casualties on 25 June . The New York Times reported that there was fighting in the village for two days and that United Nations (UN) observers were there investigating truce violations . It added that " a small Israeli garrison held al @-@ Birwa prior to the [first] truce " , but it fell to ALA troops based in Nazareth who launched a surprise attack . Some residents camped in the outskirts of the village and occasionally managed to enter and gather personal belongings . After the end of the first truce in mid @-@ July , al @-@ Birwa was captured by Israel during Operation Dekel . The ALA fought the Israelis to recapture al @-@ Birwa , but by 18 July , the village was firmly behind Israeli lines .

= = = Aftermath = = =

On 20 August 1948 , the Jewish National Fund called for building a settlement on some of al @-@ Birwa 's lands , and on 6 January 1949 , Yas 'ur , a kibbutz , was established there . In 1950 , the moshav of Ahihud was inaugurated on the village 's western lands . According to Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi , one of al @-@ Birwa 's schools , two shrines for local sages , and three houses remained standing as of 1982 . One of the shrines was domed and built of stone . Most of the structures stood amid cacti , weeds , olive and fig groves , and mulberry trees . Most of al @-@ Birwa 's inhabitants fled to nearby Arab towns and villages , including Tamra , Kabul , Jadeidi @-@ Makr , Kafr Yasif , and other localities . Some fled to Lebanon , and ended up in the Shatila refugee camp , in the outskirts of Beirut , where Palestinian historian Nafez Nazzal interviewed them in 1973 . Among the refugees of al @-@ Birwa was Mahmoud Darwish , who was born in the village in 1941 and lived part of his childhood there .

In 1950 , Tawfik Toubi , an Arab member of the Knesset , raised the issue of the internally displaced refugees of al @-@ Birwa in the Knesset , demanding that they be allowed to return to their homes . Prime Minister David Ben @-@ Gurion replied in the negative , stating , " The questioner presented the facts inaccurately . Birwa is an abandoned village which was destroyed in the fighting . Its inhabitants cooperated with Kaukji 's gangs . The Israel Defense Forces and the government did not treat them as they deserved , but permitted them to remain in villages near Birwa , and to become residents of Israel . The government of Israel treats them as it does the other residents of Israel and those lacking means of subsistence . A special body was established to deal with these refugees , to resettle and rehabilitate them , not necessarily in their former villages , and the resettlement of the refugees in Nazareth has already begun . " In December 1951 , the village site was declared a closed military zone .

= = Geography = =

Al @-@ Birwa stood on a rocky hill overlooking the Acre plain , with an average elevation of 60 meters above sea level . It was situated at the intersection of two highways ? one led to Acre and the other towards Haifa . Located 10 @.@ 5 kilometers east of Acre , the other nearest localities to al @-@ Birwa included al @-@ Damun (depopulated in 1948) to the south , and the Arab towns of

Jadeida to the northwest , Julis to the north , Sha 'ab to the east , and Majd al @-@ Kurum to the northeast .

Al @-@ Birwa 's total land area consisted of 13 @,@ 542 dunams (13 @.@ 42 hectares) , of which 59 dunams were built @-@ up areas. of which 130 were Christians . Cultivable land accounted for 77 % of the total land area . Orchards were planted on 1 @,@ 548 dunams of which 1 @,@ 500 were used for olive groves , while 8 @,@ 457 were allotted to grains . The residents of the town sold 536 dunams to Jews , and most of the rest was Arab @-@ owned .

= = = Archaeology = = =

In October 2002 , a salvage excavation was conducted at the site on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority . Finds include a large building , numerous potsherds from the Late Roman period , a bronze coin from the first or second century CE , remains of an ancient olive press , glass vessels such as a wine goblet and bottles dated to the Late Byzantine and Umayyad periods (seventh and first half of eighth centuries CE) and an underground water reservoir . A few potsherds from the Crusader and Mamluk periods were also found .