

# Al-Jib

## Introduction

Al-Jib is situated along two historic roads that once connected Jaffa and Jerusalem: Beit Ur Road (Lydda – Gimzo – Beit Ur – al-Jib – Beit Hanina) and south of it, Wadi Suleiman Road (Beit Hanina – al-Jib – Wadi Abu Zaarur – Biddu – al-Tira – Beit Liqya).<sup>1</sup> Al-Jib bore witness to fierce battles between the foreign colonizers, intent on the occupation of Jerusalem, and the local resistance fighters who sacrificed their blood and lives in defense of their homeland.



## Location and Area

Al-Jib is located 10 kilometers southwest of the occupied city of Jerusalem and is bordered by the following villages: Bir Nabala, al-Jdeirah, al-Nabi Samwil, Beit Ijza, and Biddu. The original

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<sup>1</sup> Khaled Odetallah, "Yafa- al-Quds: Tarikh Mujaz li Sikkat al-Isti'mar" (Jaffa- Jerusalem: A Brief History of the Colonial Railway"), *al-Bab*, October 17, 2018, <https://bit.ly/39WFStX>

area of the village is about 8,200 dunums.<sup>2</sup> The village sits at 710 meters above sea level<sup>3</sup> and is surrounded with plains.<sup>4</sup>

## Administrative Divisions

Following the signing of the Oslo Agreement between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Occupation authorities in 1993, 666 donums of al-Jib land fell under the Area B administrative classification and 8,228 donums fell under Area C.<sup>5</sup>

## Origin and History

Al-Jib's long history dates to the Canaanite era, as it is believed to be situated over the ancient Canaanite city of Gibeon (literally "the hill"). There are many landmarks in the town, most notably, al-Joura al-Kabira ("the large pit"), which resembles a massive well and can be accessed via a staircase of about 80 steps. It is located in an elevated area called al-Ras. The pit was discovered during an American archaeological excavation that began in 1956 and continued for four years.<sup>6</sup> It is possible that the village acquired its name because of this pit or massive well; in Arabic, *jib* denotes a well of abundant far-reaching water or a cave that contains water. It could also mean an elevated place or a mound.<sup>7</sup>

## Population

About 5,000 people live in al-Jib today,<sup>8</sup> and they belong to the following families: Abu Hammoud, Abu Dieh, al-Halayqa, Tyoun, Ayesh, Assaf, and Khattab.

## Social and Economic Context

Until recent times, al-Jib had been famous for pottery made from a special clay that exists naturally in the area. This artisanal pottery is no longer practiced today, though the pots made in al-Jib had once been popular in Jaffa, as they were used for storing oranges.<sup>9</sup>

Al-Jib is known for its four surrounding plains, where Armenian cucumber is cultivated and harvested between April and early August. The residents also cultivate grapes and a variety of vegetables and stone fruits. Agriculture in al-Jib, however, has been severely damaged due to many factors, chief among them: the isolation of substantial agricultural land outside the

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<sup>2</sup> Murad Mostafa al-Dabbagh, Biladuna Filastin (Palestine, Our Homeland), Palestine Remembered, [الجيب - القدس - فلسطين في الذاكرة - al-Jib](#)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> According to Ghasan Allan, mayor of al-Jib and president of al-Jib Council, in an interview conducted on April 9, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> This information was provided by al-Jib Village Council in a phone interview on February 26, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> See note 2.

<sup>7</sup> Naser al-Din Abu Khdeir, "Names of Palestinian Villages of Jerusalem: Linguistics and Semantic Study," Association of Arab Universities Journal for Arts, also published digitally on al-Wad, December 6, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> This information was provided by al-Jib Village Council in a phone interview conducted on February 26, 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

Annexation and Expansion Wall, urban expansion, and the difficulty of selling the agricultural produce in occupied Jerusalem.

## **Landmarks**

### **Archaeological Sites**

Excavations undertaken between 1956 and 1969 in an elevated area of the village known as al-Ras unearthed some ruins believed to be from the Canaanite era. Among them is al-Joura al-Kabira, which resembles a massive well and can be reached via a staircase of at least 80 steps. The function of al-Joura is believed to have been the collection of water for use during times of war and scarcity. Near al-Joura, there is a circular archaeological site containing rock-cut vessels and what is believed to have been a winepress. There is also an entrance to an underground tunnel in which a set of steps leads to Ein al-Balad spring.

### **Natural Springs**

There are five springs in al-Jib, most famously, Ein al-Balad, which was used for irrigation and for the community's water supply until the introduction of water infrastructure in the 1980s. Among al-Jib's other springs are Ein Abu Zaher, Ein al-Enaziyah, and Ein al-Qibliyah.

### **Shrines**

Al-Sheikh Hamed Shrine, green-domed and rectangular in shape, is located on the northern side of the old center. The exact date of its construction is unconfirmed, though it is believed to be a Mamluk structure or that it was restored during the Mamluk period like many other shrines in Palestine and the Levant. Though the religious rituals associated with it are no longer practiced, it still features in narratives told by the villagers about honoring the shrine, paying tribute to it, and the traditions of lighting lanterns at the site and of the women of the village draping it with ornate garments.

### **The Old Center**

Some features of the old center are still visible today, especially the over a century-old houses near al-Omari Mosque. In 2018, the old houses were restored by Riwaaq Center for Architectural Conservation.



## History of Resistance

During the successive Palestinian revolts, the people of al-Jib played a prominent role in mobilizing forces and fighting. A celebrated battalion of armed resistance fighters called Haras al-Jib (al-Jib Guard) emerged from there. One of the most significant battles fought by Haras al-Jib was al-Masyoun Battle.

The early signs of that battle erupted at dawn on March 4, 1948. A Zionist Haganah squad set up an ambush on al-Najayim Hill (part of al-Jib village land that today lies opposite the Occupation's Ofer military Base). Its target was a bus carrying Palestinian passengers on their way from Ramallah to al-Latrun. The Zionists fired at the bus but likely missed their target, as the bus driver accelerated when he sensed the ambush.<sup>10</sup>

After its failed attempt, the Zionist force withdrew towards Atarot colony, situated northeast of al-Jib and built on land belonging to Qalandia. As they withdrew, a dispute ensued as to the safest withdrawal route, and they split into two groups: the leader of the unit, with 15 others chose a long bypass route that circumvented Rafat; the other group, composed of only 3 members, decided to pass directly through Rafat.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Khalid Awadallah, "Mustawtanat 'Atarot': 100 'Aam min al-Sira' min 'Yinkel' ela "Rami Levi" ("Atarot" Colony: 100 Years of Fighting from 'Yinkel' to 'Rami Levy'), published on April 15, 2019 on ["مستوطنة "عطروت": 100 عام من الصراع من "ينكل" إلى "رامي ليفي"](#).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

After crossing Wadi al-Deir, north of Rafat, and as they ascended al-Masyoun hill (a Ramallah neighborhood today), the first group fell into an ambush set by Palestinian resistance fighters from al-Jib, Qalandia, Ramallah and al-Birah.<sup>12</sup>

The ensuing battle resulted in the death of all 16 Zionist combatants and the seizure of their weapons. As for the other three who refused to follow their leader's orders, they reached Atarot colony with news of their defeat, a defeat that heralded the fall of Atarot during the 1948 war, until its eventual reoccupation in 1967.<sup>13</sup>

### **Al-Jib and the Naksa**

In the 1967 War, a Jordanian artillery unit stationed in Wadi al-Askar west of the village<sup>14</sup> managed to launch some isolated strikes on Israeli positions before being targeted and destroyed by the latter. Al-Jib was subsequently occupied.

### **Colonization**

Al-Jib is blighted by the presence of three colonies on its land, for which a total of 2,360 dunums were seized. These colonies are: Giv'on (1978), which consumed 108 dunums; Giv'on HaHadasha (1980), 13 dunums; and Givaat Ze'ev (1982), 2,250 dunums.<sup>15</sup>

Route 436, a colonial bypass road, was established in the late-1970s, cutting across al-Jib and severing its links. Ofer military base, a compound that also includes a prison, military courts and interrogation centers, is located on al-Jib land as well. The military camp is associated with Zionist officer Zvi Ofer<sup>16</sup> and was constructed directly after the occupation of the village in 1967. Most of the camp is located on Rafat village land, but also includes dozens of dunums from al-Jib.

Al-Jib military checkpoint has stood on village land since 2005. Ever since its construction, two-way traffic through the checkpoint is limited to the following: residents of al-Khalaileh neighborhood in al-Jib, al-Jib residents who own land on the western side of the Annexation and Expansion Wall, and al-Nabi Samwil village residents, for whom the military checkpoint is the only way into Ramallah. Palestinians with permits to work in the Giv'at Ze'ev colony are also

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<sup>12</sup> For more see: Bilal Shalash, "Ma'rakat al-Masyun...Ramallah Tubid Ghuzatiha" ("Al-Masyun Battle: Ramallah Annihilates its Invaders"), <https://bit.ly/39PSOzA>

<sup>13</sup> Khalid Awadallah, "Mustawtanat 'Atrut': 100 'Aam min al-Sira' min 'Yinkel' ela "Rami Levi" ("Atarot" Colony: 100 Years of Fighting from "Yinkel" to "Rami Levy"), published on April 15, 2019 on <https://www.babelwad.com/ar/Atarot-Rami-Levi-100-Years-Of-Conflict>.

<sup>14</sup> According to an interview with Nizar Tawfiq Qasim (born 1958), conducted by Grassroots staff in al-Jdeirah on December 30, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> This information was acquired in a phone call with Al-Jib Village Council on February 26, 2021.

<sup>16</sup> Lieutenant General Zvi Ofer: a Zionist who led the operations to occupy Hebron and Bethlehem in the 1967 war. He became the first military governor of Hebron then military governor of Nablus. He was appointed in 1968 as leader of the Haruv Reconnaissance Unit and was killed in the battle of Wadi al-Qelt in December 1968.

permitted entry, and so are United Nations employees in official UN vehicles. As of 2015, Palestinians outside these categories heading from Jerusalem to Ramallah are permitted to pass through but are not allowed to traverse in the opposite direction.

### **The Annexation and Expansion Wall**

The Annexation and Expansion Wall (2004) stretches for over six kilometers over al-Jib land, isolating more than 4,600 donums outside the wall.<sup>17</sup> These are mostly agricultural lands that can only be accessed by their owners with permission from, and coordination with the Occupation army.

The Wall also isolated al-Khalaileh neighborhood, forcing it outside the center of the town so that the neighborhood now falls on the side of the Wall under direct Israeli control. The neighborhood is composed primarily of residential buildings that house about 700 Palestinians<sup>18</sup> without basic services such as healthcare and education. Most of the neighborhood residents are incomers to al-Jib village who carry Israeli identity cards. They usually face less problems in acquiring services, as they are able to travel to occupied Jerusalem and avail of them there.

However, the rest of al-Khalaileh neighborhood residents are from al-Jib families and are technically residents of the West Bank with Palestinian identity cards. Thus, like all residents of the West Bank, they endure restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation on their freedom of movement and travel. The Occupation restricts them to the roads that take them from their neighborhood to al-Jib military checkpoint, and from there, to the center of town. They are strictly forbidden from using any other roads. They are also prevented from reaching occupied Jerusalem even though they are not separated from it by borders or walls and reaching it from their neighborhood would only take 10 minutes.

This complex landscape can be described as a town bisected by a wall, with one of its neighborhoods isolated on one side and severed from the town center. The neighborhood residents' only way out is into the town itself, and only after enduring a regime of security procedures through a military checkpoint, which in this case is al-Jib military checkpoint.

As it stands, Palestinians of al-Khalaileh neighborhood must traverse al-Jib military checkpoint in order to acquire services, or to reach their relatives and markets. In other words, they must traverse an Israeli military checkpoint when moving within their own town.

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<sup>17</sup> This information was acquired in a phone call with Al-Jib Village Council on February 26, 2021

<sup>18</sup> According to an interview with Ghasan Allan, mayor of al-Jib and President of al-Jib Council, conducted on April 9, 2018.

This isolation forces many challenges upon the residents, including the daily ordeal endured by children passing through the checkpoint to reach their schools, as well as the difficulty of acquiring emergency health services.

## **Epilogue**

The Israeli occupation's colonial policies have transformed the northwest Jerusalem area villages, including al-Jib, into an isolated pocket, cut off from occupied Jerusalem, the city to which all these villages are historically and inexorably linked. The residents of the village have thus lost their geographic connection to the mother city where they had once sought medical and educational services and run their official, commercial and administrative errands. All connections were abruptly severed and reattached to another city: Ramallah.

Another repercussion of the colonial policies is that this artificial connection to Ramallah occurs through a narrow tunnel, above which Zionist colonists commute on their exclusive roads and highways from the heart of occupied Jerusalem to their colonies. Beneath these roads, Palestinians travel from the villages of northwest Jerusalem to Ramallah, following the complete severance of their connections and roads to the occupied city of Jerusalem. The poorly built tunnel is often blocked by Occupation forces, who regularly set up checkpoints at its entrance.