

the book of
RETURNS



The notion of “return” has defined the diasporic and extraterritorial nature of Palestinian politics and cultural life since the Nakba in 1947-8. Often articulated in the “suspended politics” of political theology it has gradually been blurred in the futile limbo of negotiations.

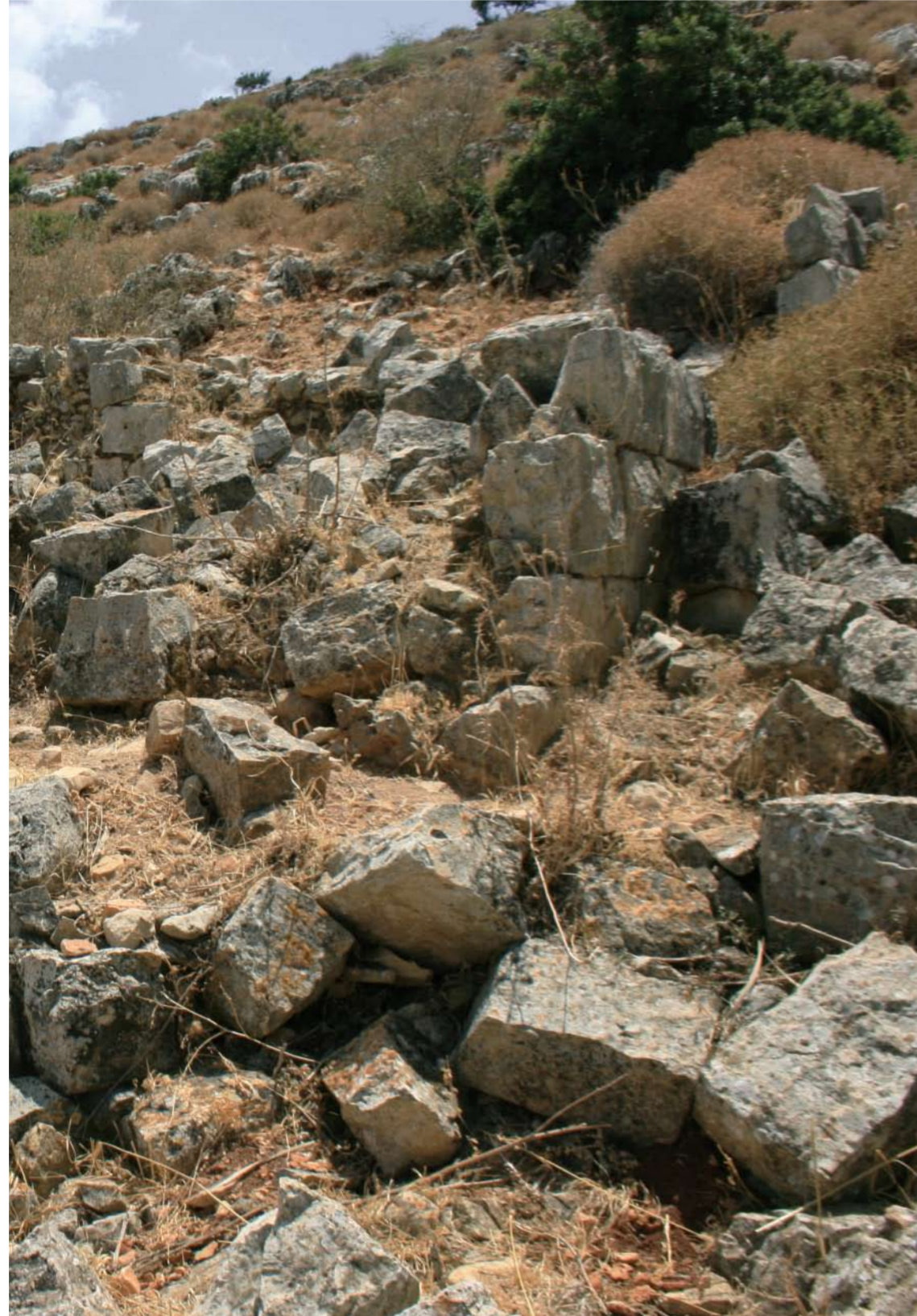
Return is a political act that is both practiced at present and projecting an image into an uncertain future.

A varied set of practices that we would like to call “present returns” thus ground an ideal in present day material realities.

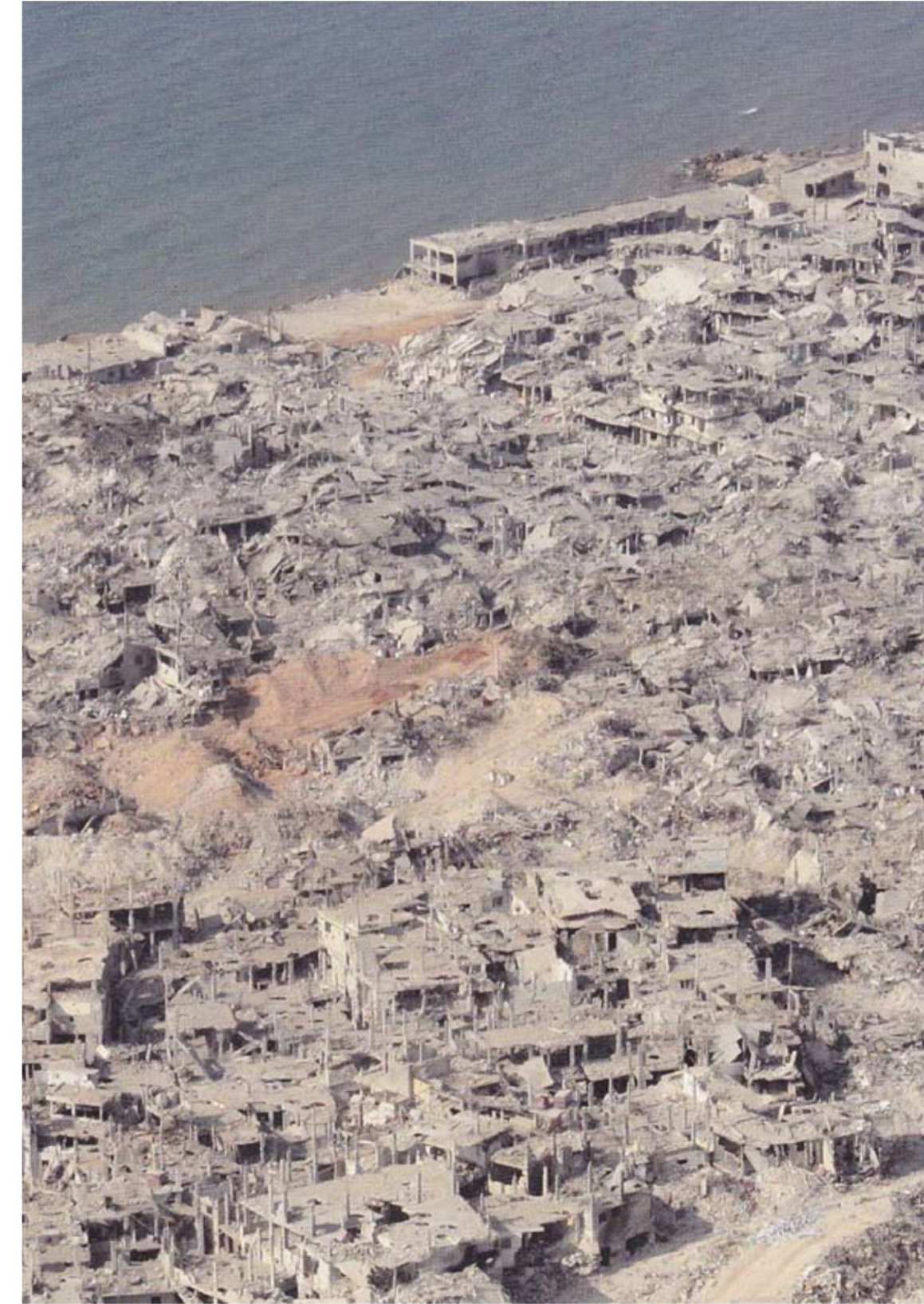
These practices necessitate the adoption of a stereoscopic vision that navigates the complex terrain between two places – the extraterritorial space of refuge and the destroyed site of origins.

Both the demolished villages and the refugee camps are extraterritorial spaces, not fully integrated into the territories that surround them. The former is defined as “absentee property” and the latter as a “United Nations run area”, a sphere of action carved out of state sovereignty.

Refugee life is suspended between these two sites, always double.



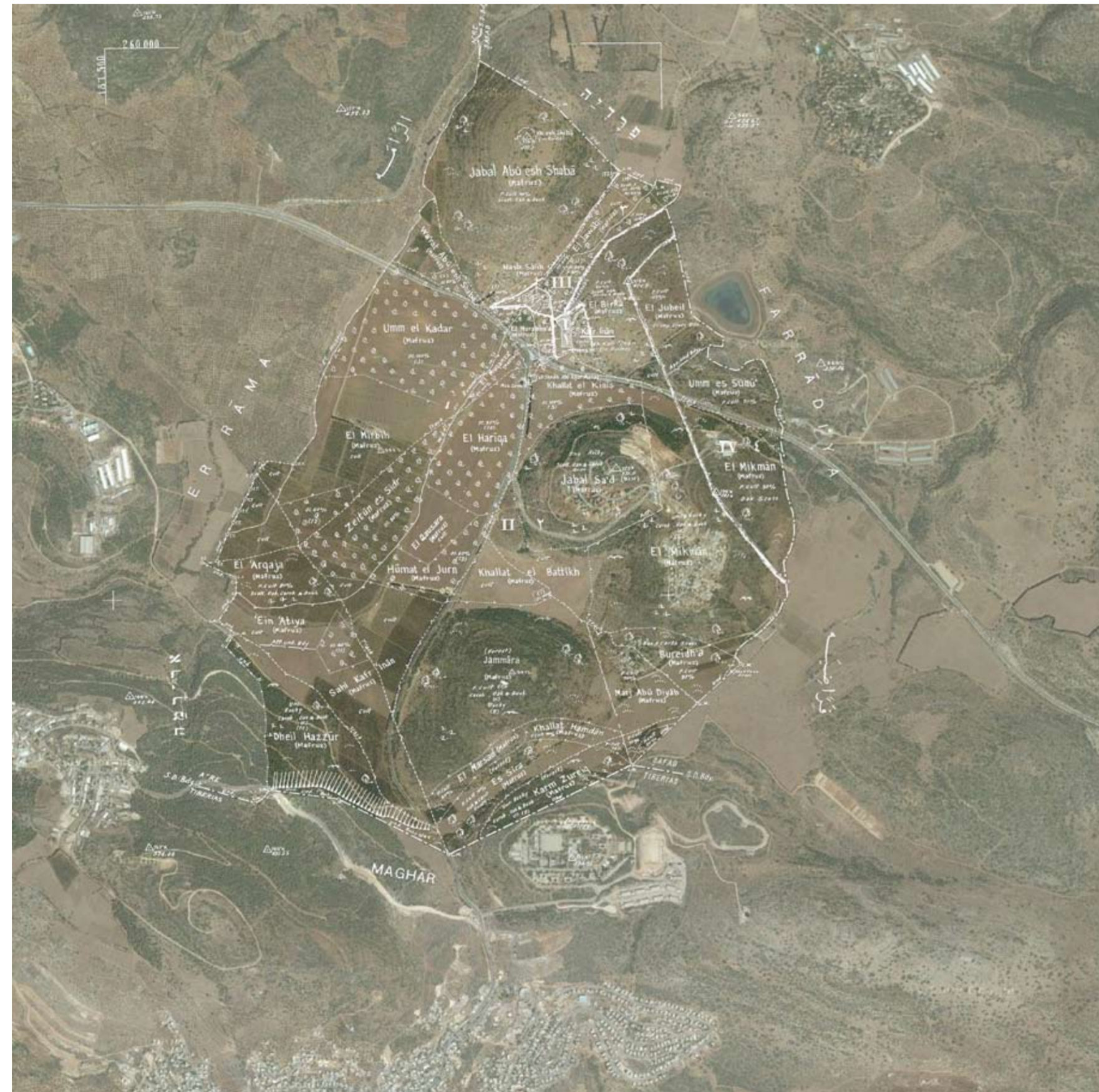
Kafr Inan, Palestine, destroyed 1948



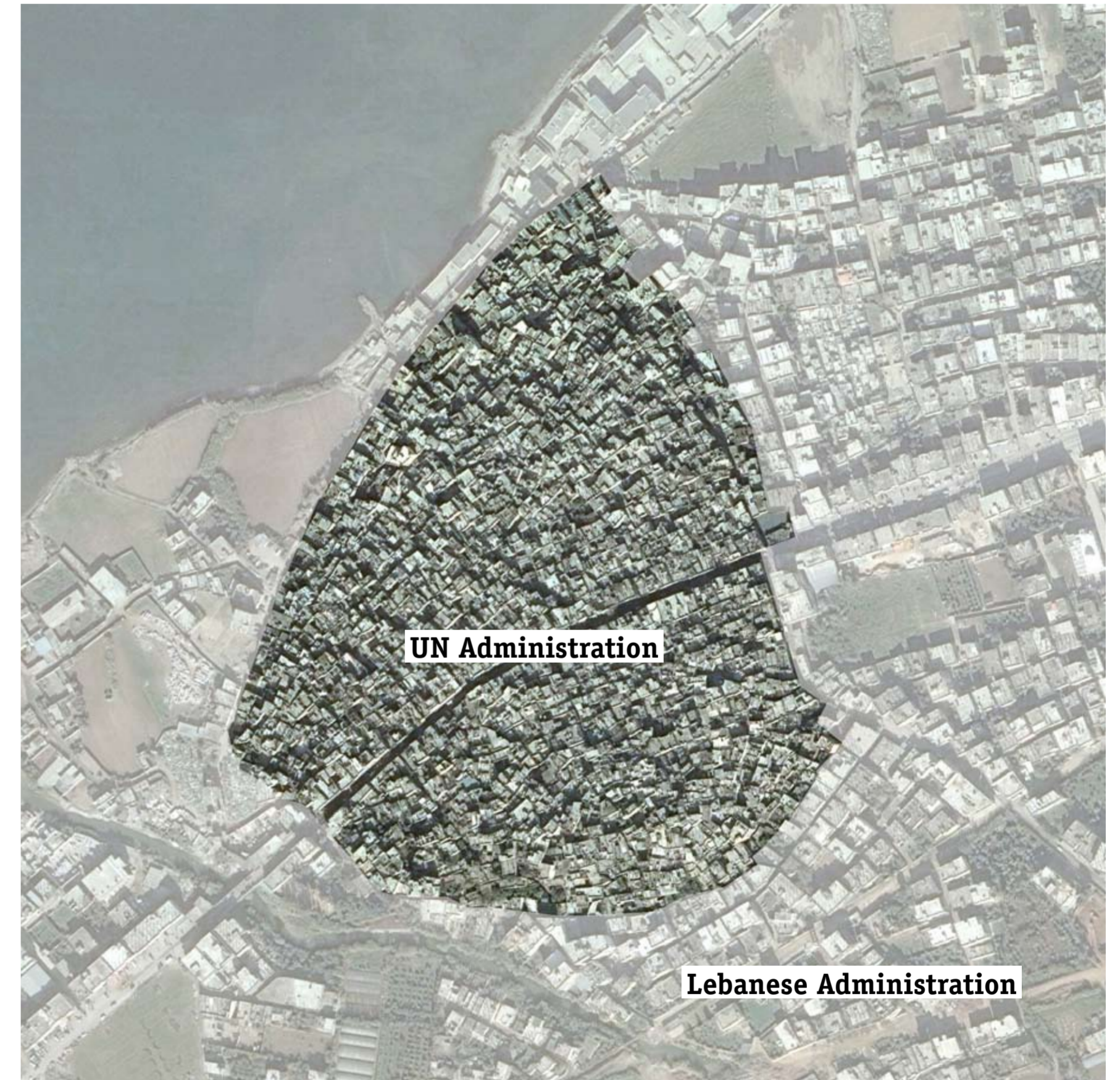
Naher El-Bared, Lebanon, destroyed 2006

The destroyed village and the destroyed camp are two moments in a history of continuous destruction.

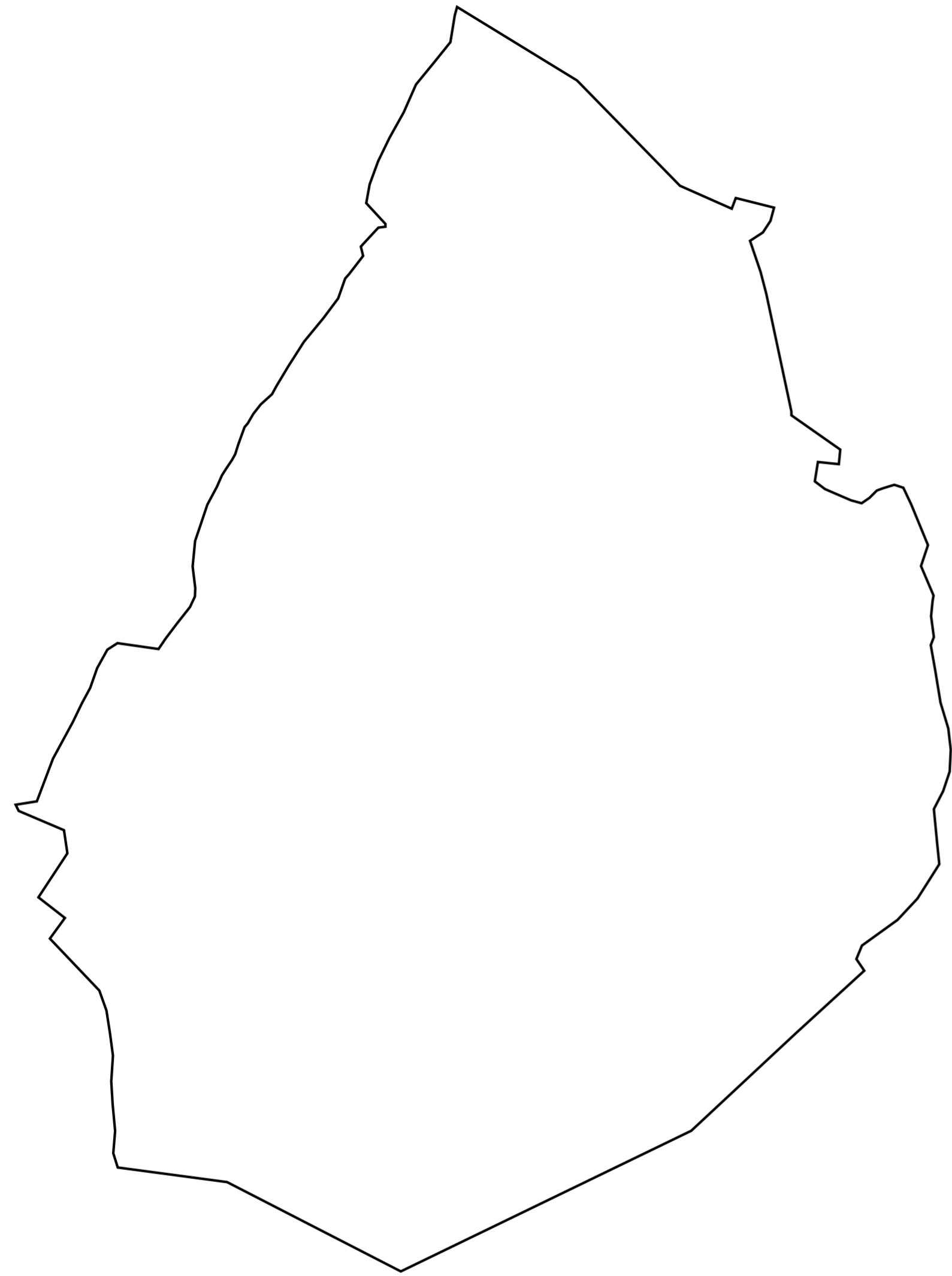
But the destruction of the refugee camp does not simply mirror the destruction of the village - to destroy a camp is to destroy the already destroyed.



Kafr`Inan, absentee property

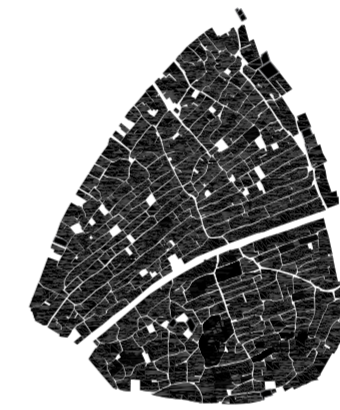


Naher El-Bared, United Nations run area



1000 ft
500 m

Area of the village: 580 ha
Palestinian Inhabitants: 0 inh
Density: 0 inh/ha

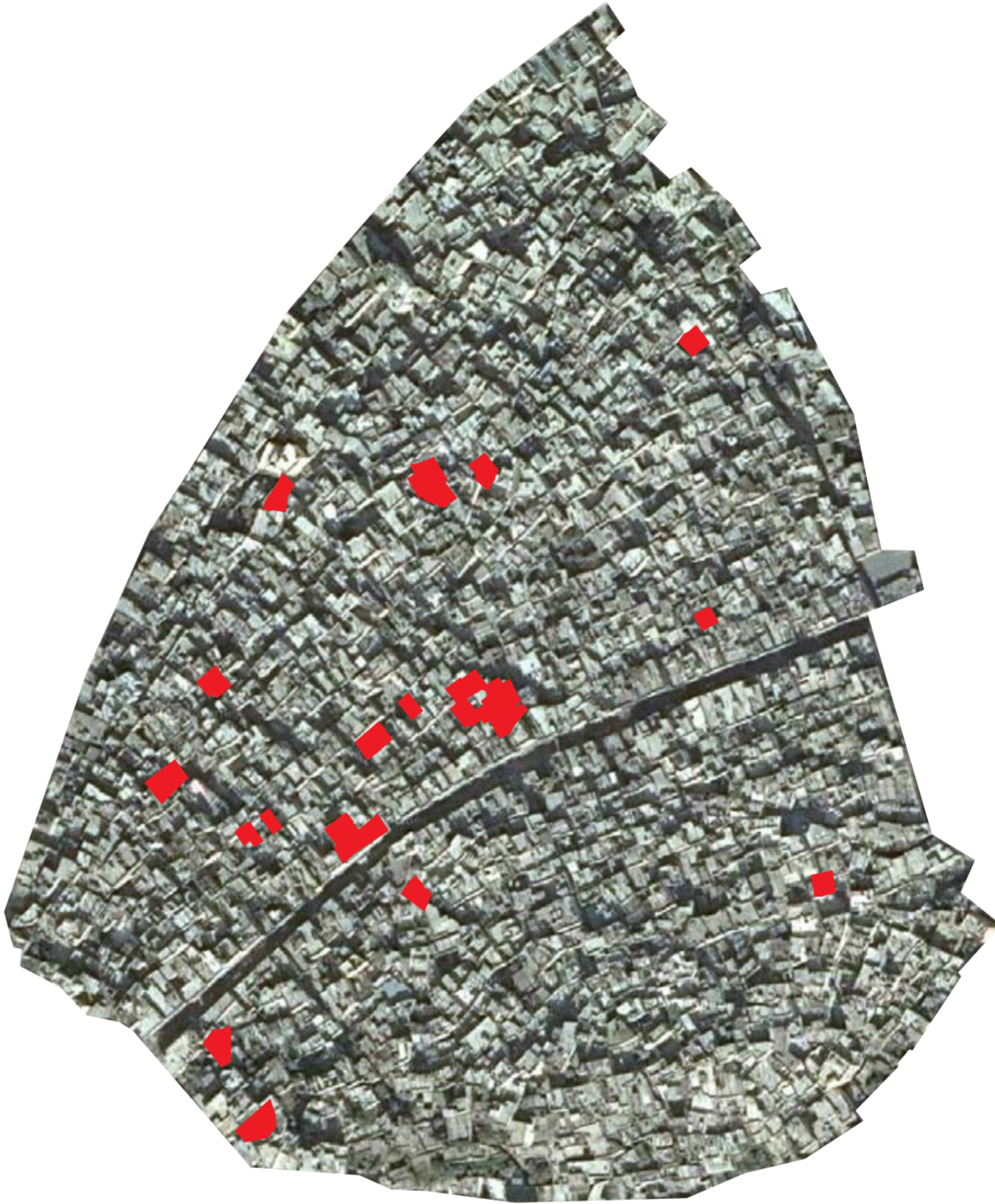


1000 ft
500 m

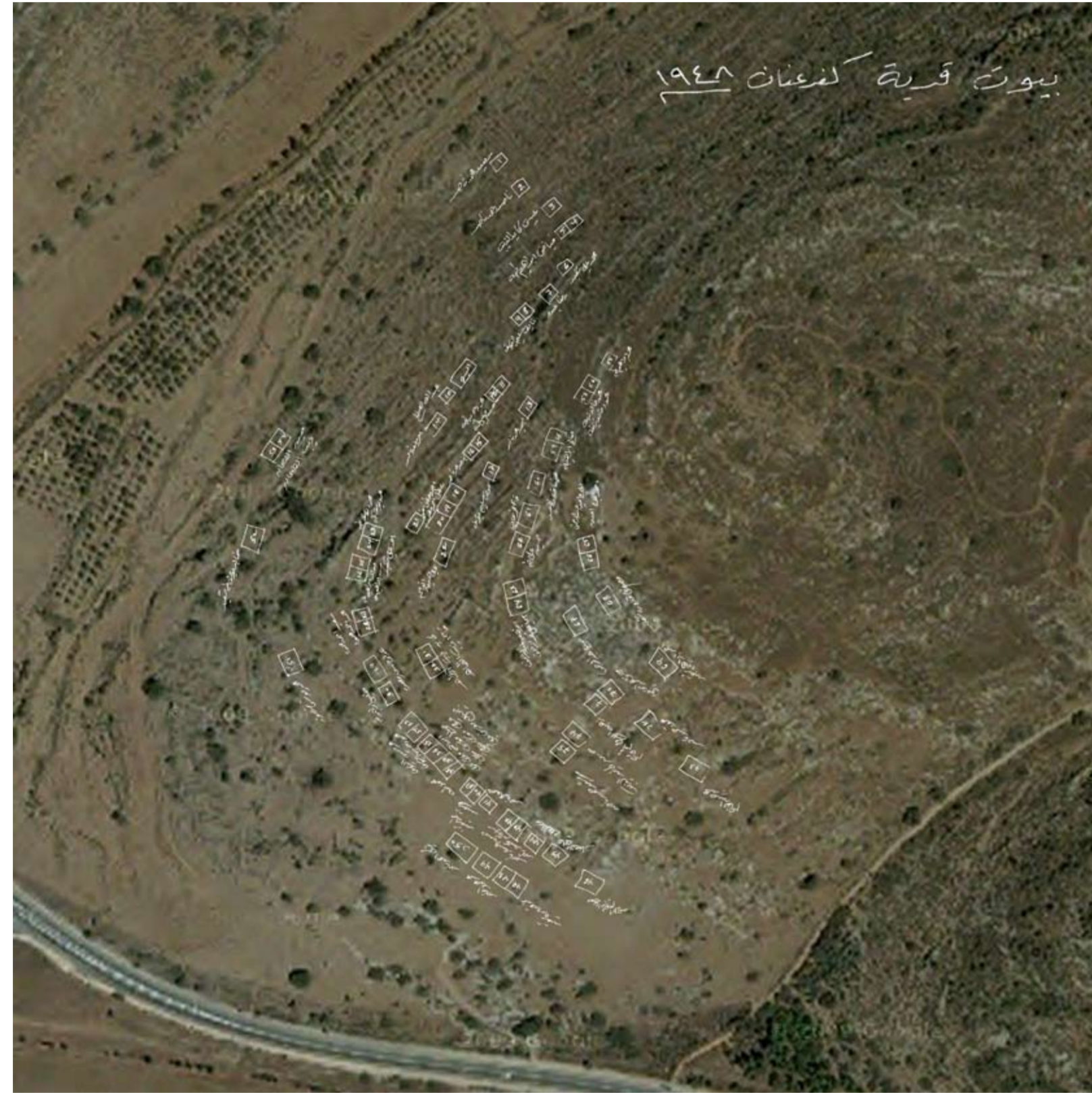
Area of the camp: 19 ha
Inhabitants: 22.000 inh
Density: 1160 inh/ha



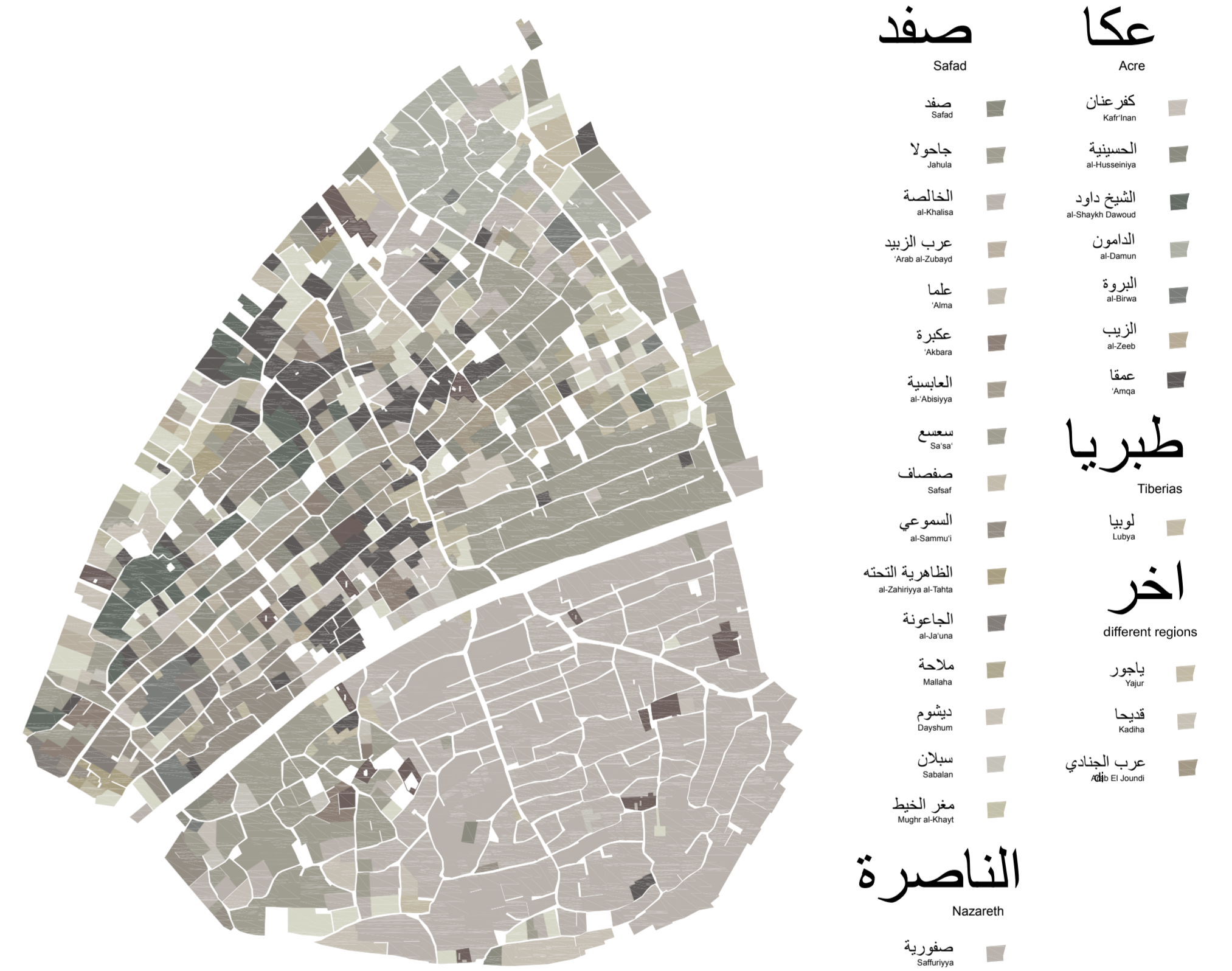
Built-up areas until 1949 and village owned fields.



Houses of refugee families from Kafr'Inan in Naher El-Bared Camp.



Reconstruction of landownership and houses in Kafr'Inan by Hassan Ahmad Mansour.



Clusters of houses organised according to place of origins in pre-1948 Palestine.

Extract from a conversation between Amal, Abu Khalil and Salma, Deheishe camp, August 11th, 2007

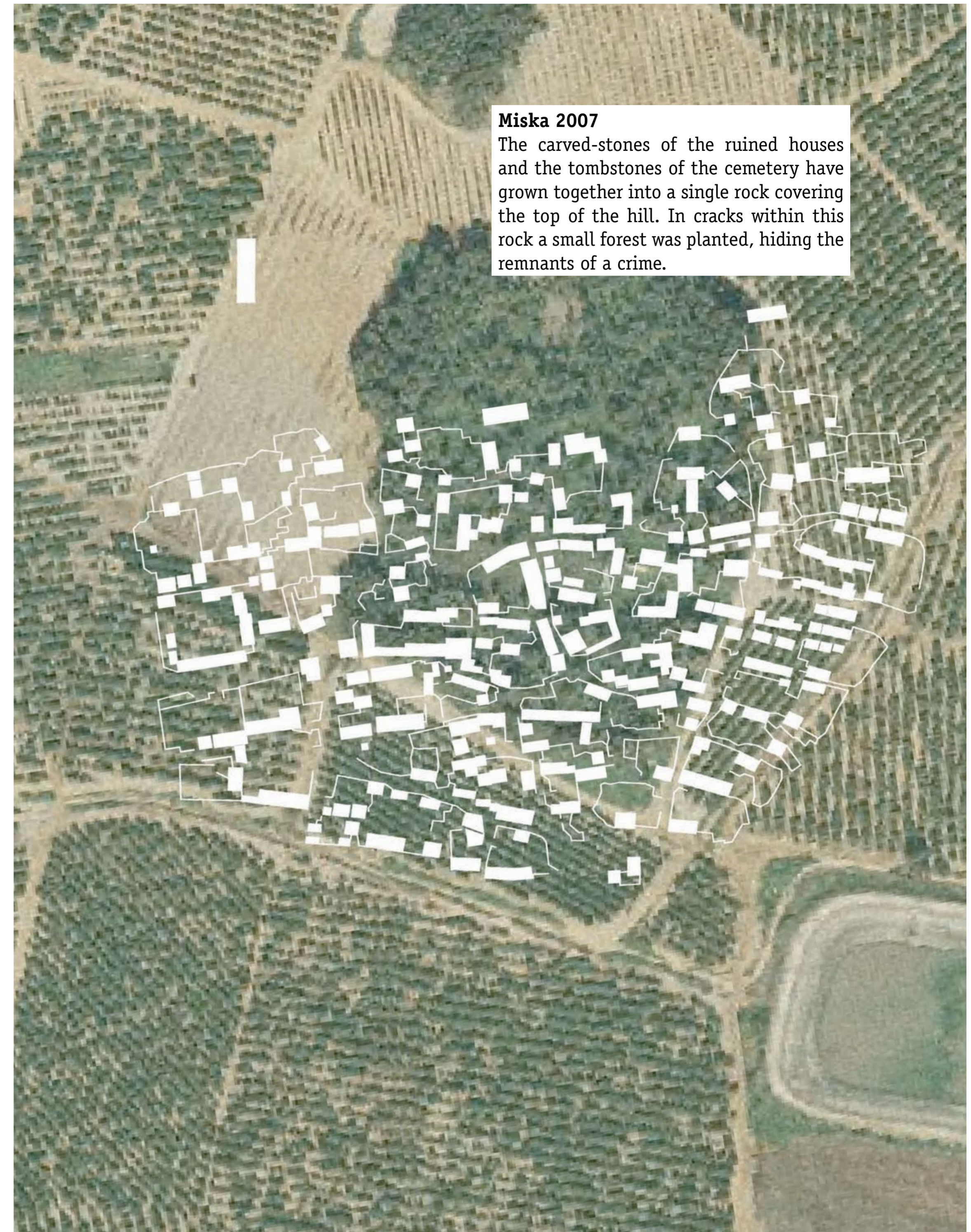
Amal: Abu Khalil when will we return back home to our villages in the 48?

Abu Khalil: we are still looking for enough buses to take you home.

Amal: we have already the Ibdah' bus of return! The bus that Ibdah centre bought for Deheishe camp refugees in order to be ready when it is time to go back home.

Salma: but I don't really want to leave Deheishe! To whom shall we leave the camp? Is there no way to have both, our village "our right" and the camp "our life"?

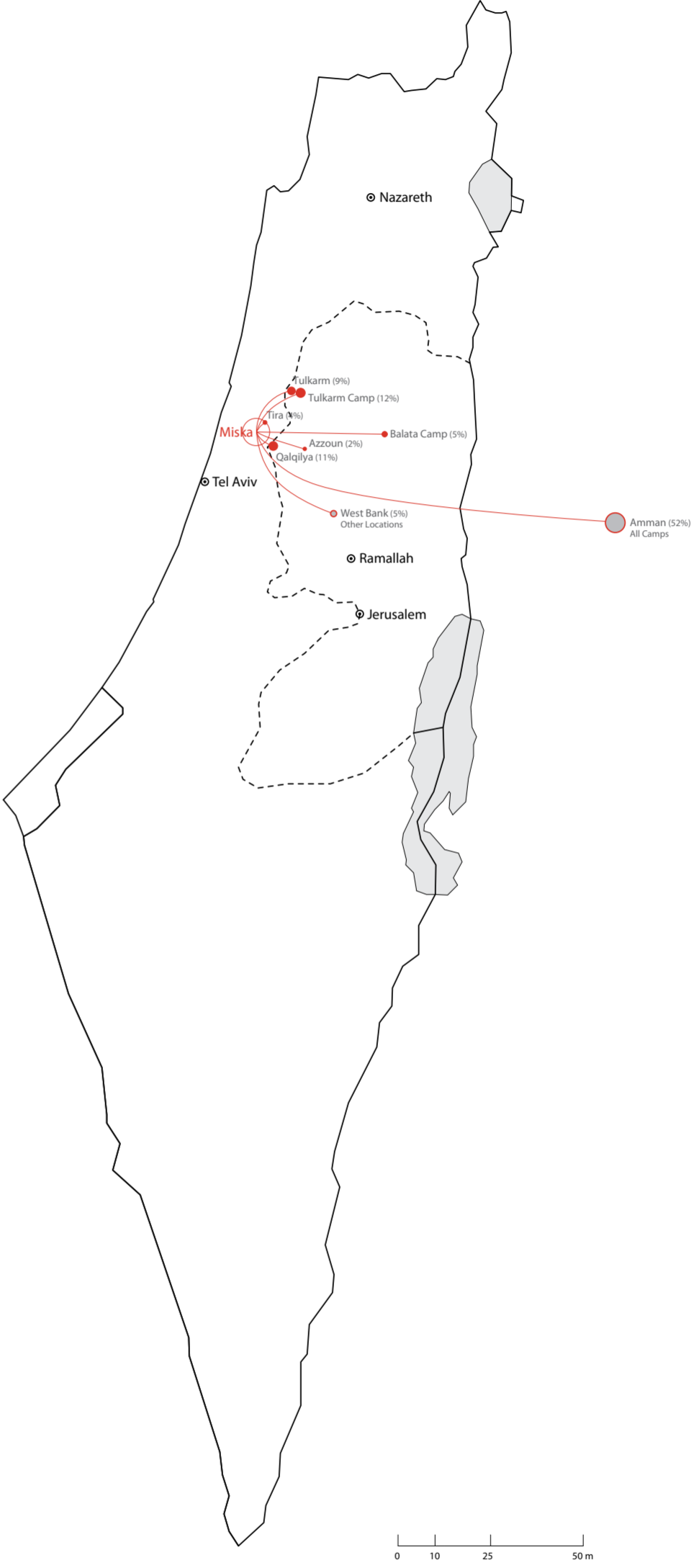
Abu Khalil: maybe we need a bus of the return able also to get the camp back and not only the refugees!



Miska 2007
The carved-stones of the ruined houses and the tombstones of the cemetery have grown together into a single rock covering the top of the hill. In cracks within this rock a small forest was planted, hiding the remnants of a crime.

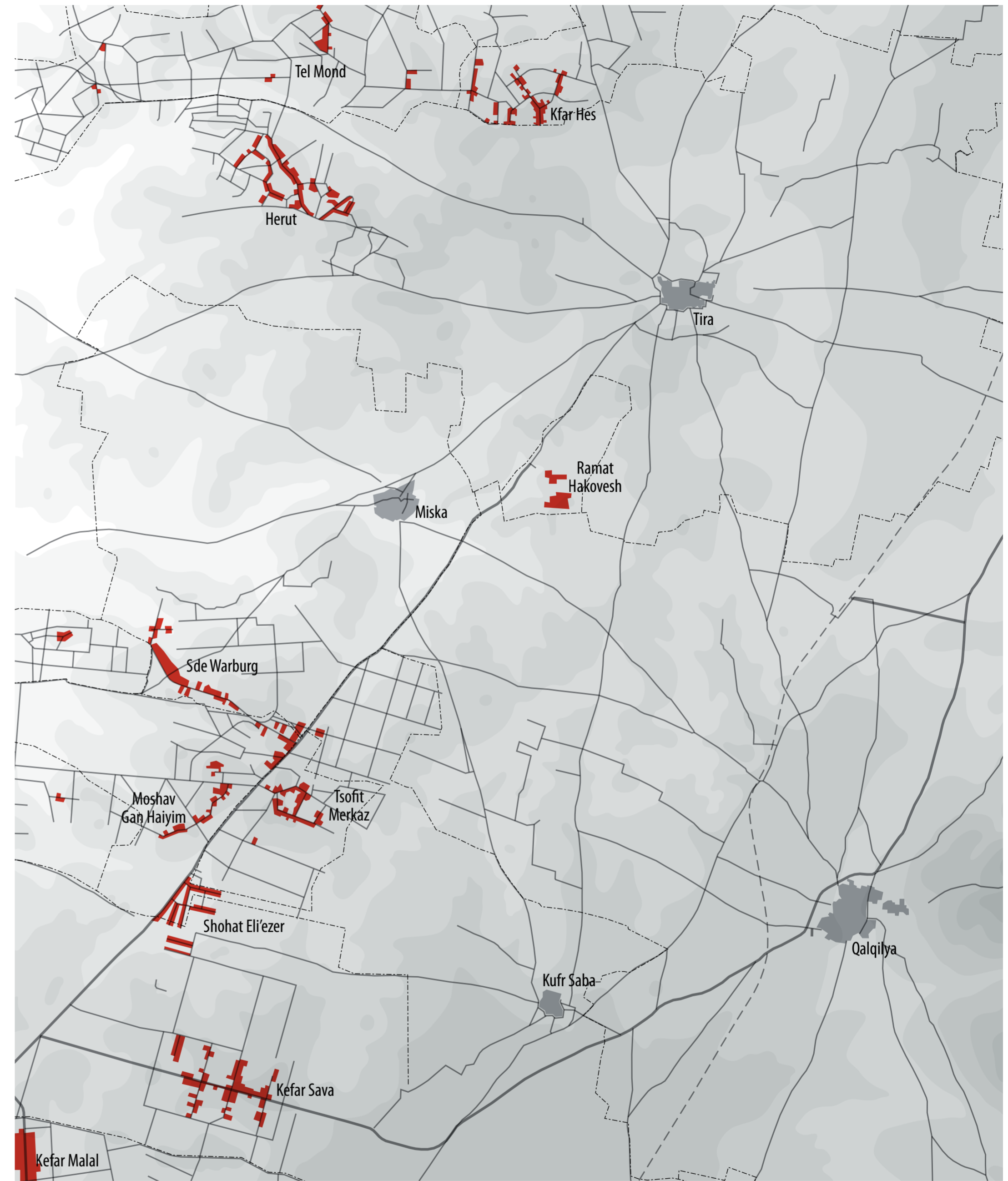
Miska

The village of Miska was destroyed and its inhabitants forcibly removed on April 1948, a month before the foundation of the state of Israel. Four hundred of the village's inhabitants and decedents live in the Palestinian town of Tirah, some in the refugee camp of Tulkarem in the West Bank and others are scattered in several refugee camps in Jordan.



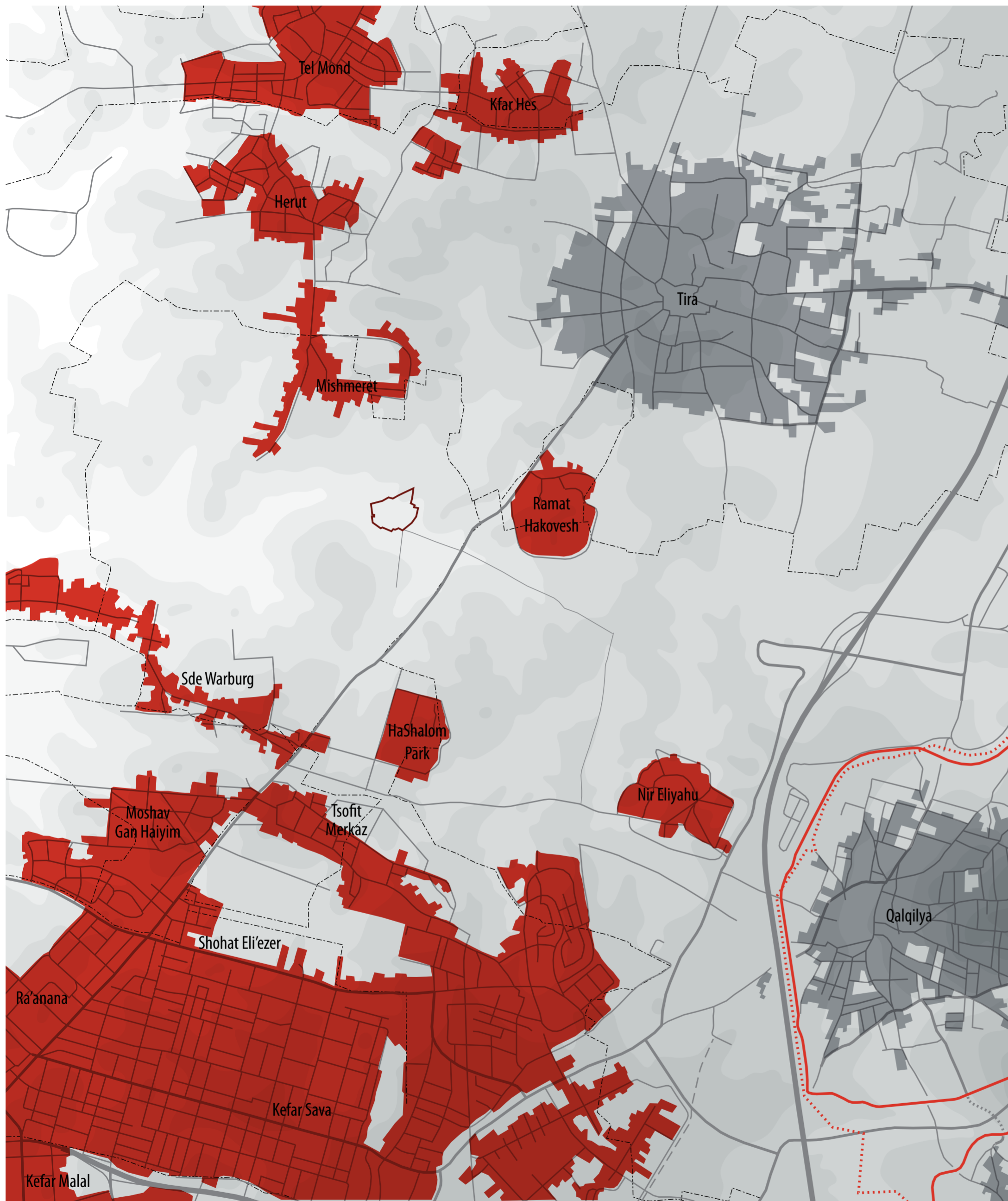


1930 Built-Up Area
 Miska is surrounded by the village's agricultural land. The small Palestinian town of Tirah is to the northeast; the village of Kufr Saba to the south, just west of large town of Qalqilya. Moshav settlements of Kefar Malal and Kefar Sava develop to south of Miska.

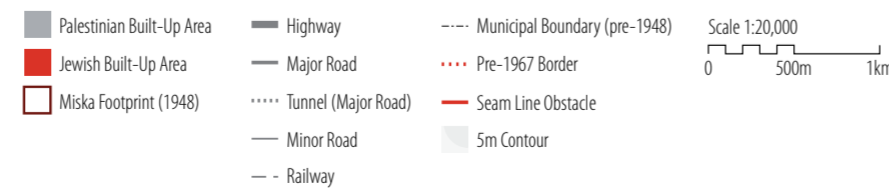


1944 Built-Up Area
 A number of moshav and kibbutz-type settlements appear around Miska. Moshav Sde Warburg develops within the municipal boundary of Miske, whilst Kibbutz Ramat-Hakovesh develops to the east.



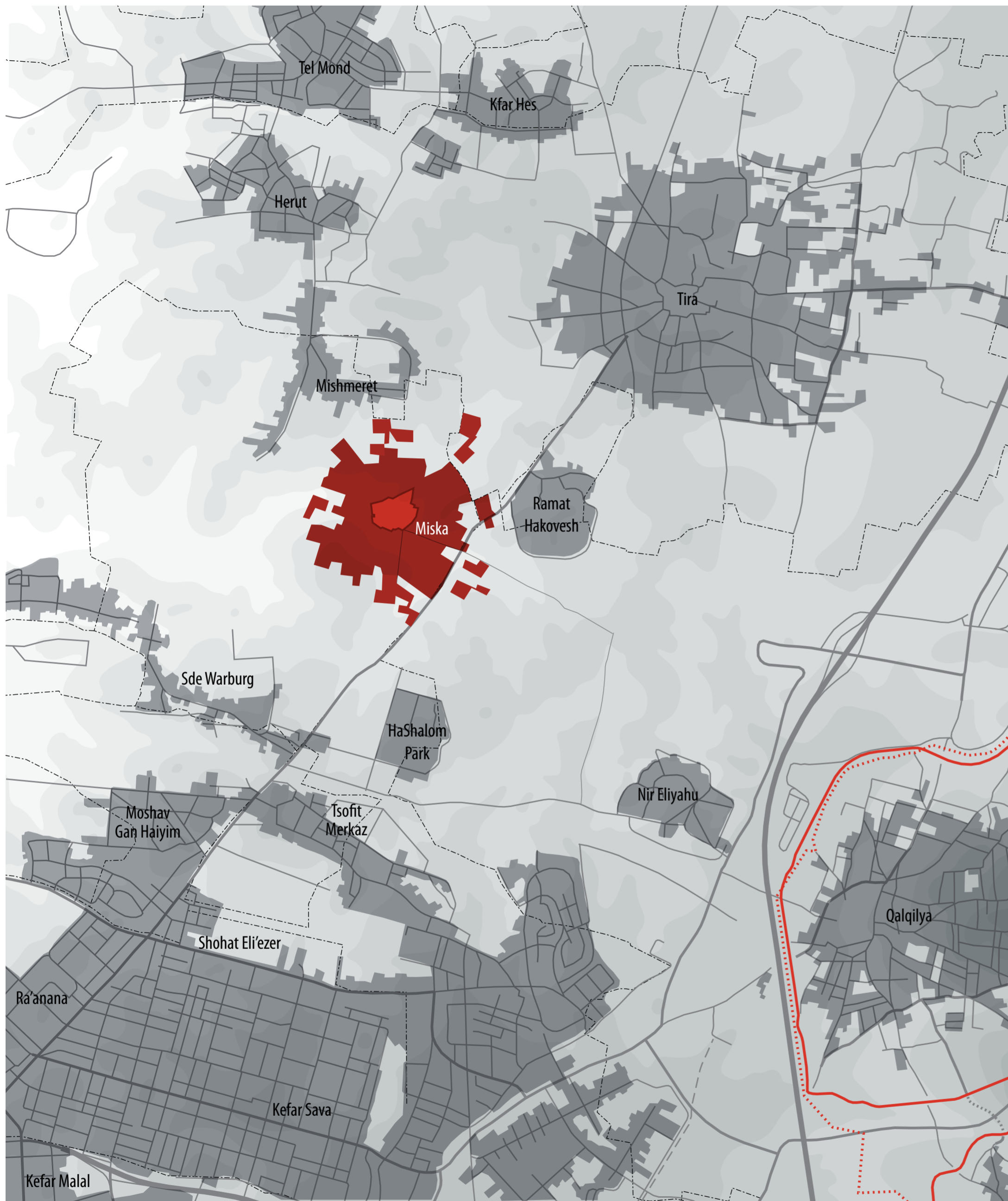


2009 Built-Up Area
 Miska erased by the settlement's farmland. The remnants of Kufr Saba erased by urban sprawl of Kefar Sava. Development pattern of Tira very similar to that of Qalqilya.



Land Ownership 2009
 Extent of land legally purchased by Jewish individuals and organisations (excludes land expropriated by the Israeli state and the Jewish National Fund after 1948). Arab-owned land within the village boundary of Miske also highlighted.





Reconstructed Growth

A scenario for the possible growth of Miska that might have occurred was the village to remain in place (based on the increase in the actual Miska refugee population and development patterns of Tirah and Qalqilya). This is an indication that the reconstruction of the original village could not accommodate the demands of even a relatively modest proportion of refugees, and that although expulsion has been from the rural, a return would always be to the urban.



Future Urbanization

Rather than developed or reconstructed, the footprint of the destroyed village of Miska will remain protected as a void, a common, around which urbanization will take form.





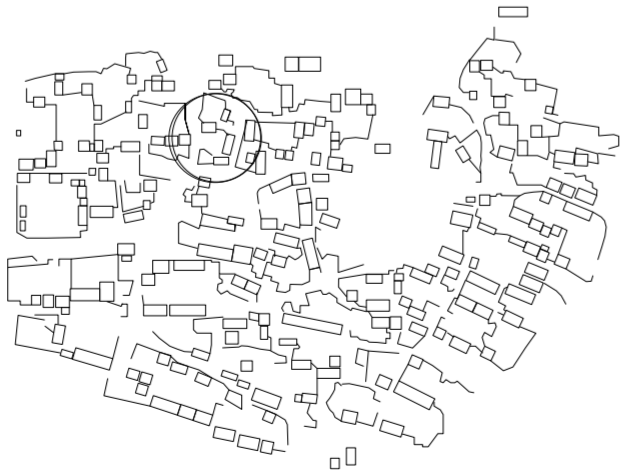
Return has thus a simultaneous material effect in both the sites of origin (Palestine) and sites of displacement. The result might be a reciprocal extraterritoriality that connects these two sites. Both kept apart, both transferred to common use.

It is between these two sites of reciprocal extraterritoriality that the proposal floats.

We take a circular probe from both camp and village.



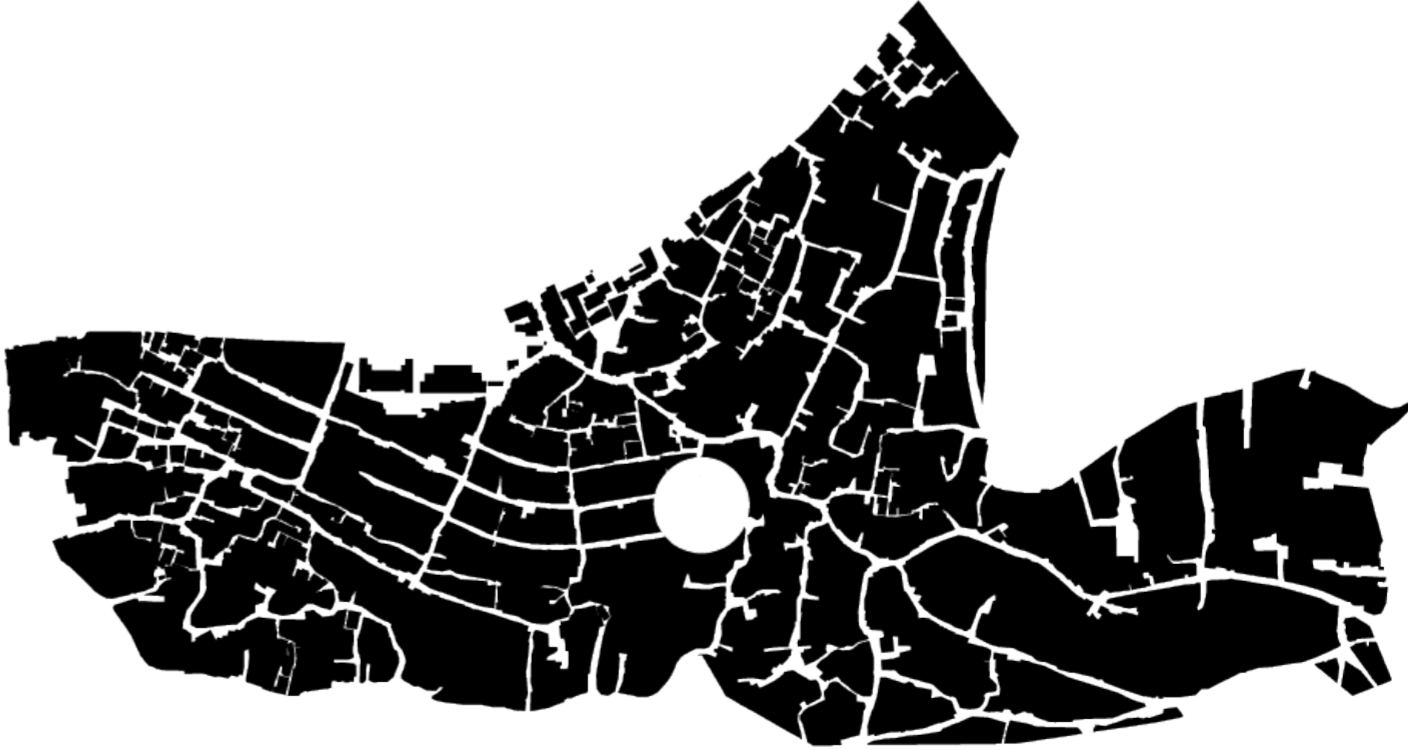
MISKA



These are explored as possible physical interventions.



DEHEISHE CAMP



The Feneiq Cultural Centre

Naji Odeh, Director of Al Feneiq

...we need to think about a model for the return... Al Feneiq is a Novel that we have created, it represents a collective cultural process able to innovate, change and reverse itself. Indeed the first Feneiq was created in Deheishe, but we succeeded also to create another center in Aroab camp... a Feneiq could be created also in Deir Aban, my village of origin...

I know that finally a Feneiq in my village would be even stronger than the Feneiq in Deheishe camp... I will leave Deheishe Camp to the city of Bethlehem. I know I will miss Deheishe, I will return back to walk in its alleys in the summer nights... Bethlehem will remain the place where I will gather my forces and my people to prepare a new bases and a new life for the Return.

I'm sure we will be able to reproduce a model through the collective work that will not only prepare the environment for the return, but that will influence the whole Arab world...

*Deheishe camp 24.08.2009
Al Feneiq Centre*

**Extract from Lieven de Cauter
Palestinian diary**

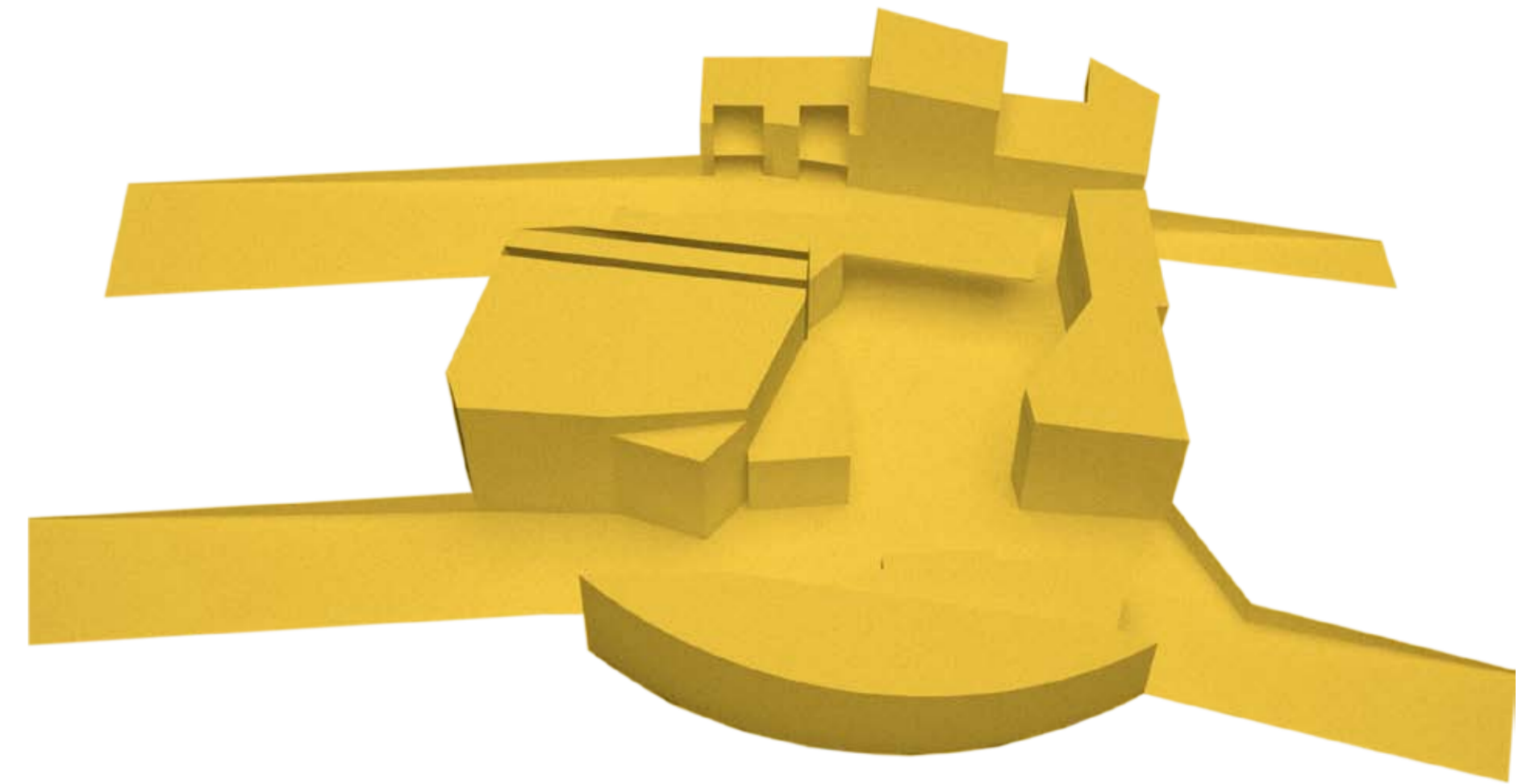
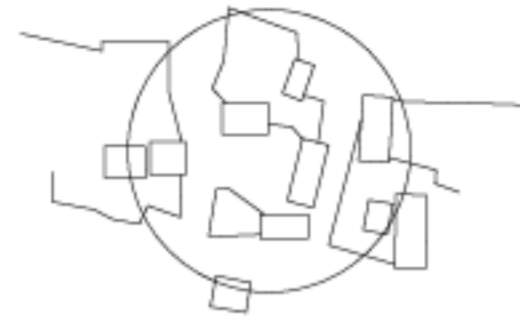
...I insisted that I definitely wanted to see Al Feneiq (the Phoenix), a cultural centre built by the camp residents. We drove around the camp and came to the hill overlooking the slope of the camp and the surrounding landscape. When we parked our car a crowd was flocking around a big building.

Sandi explained that the Palestinian authority wanted to make a prison here on the top of the camp, but the residents had resisted it and had finally squatted the ground to make their cultural centre.



Then she insisted we gather to make a tour with the director of Al Feneiq, Naji, a slim, kind man with a weathered face and big black moustache. He showed us the whole place with the humble pride of a master of the house. Besides a big hall for all sort of events on the ground floor, it had several levels, and one more to come.

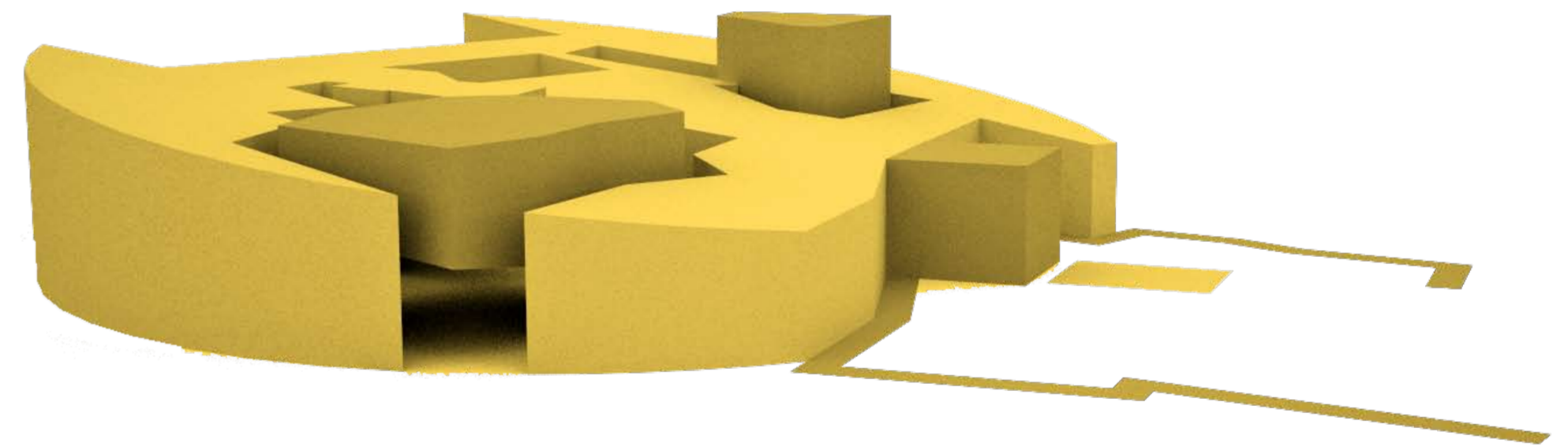


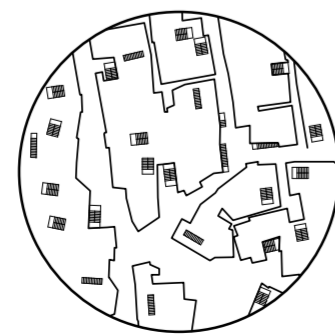
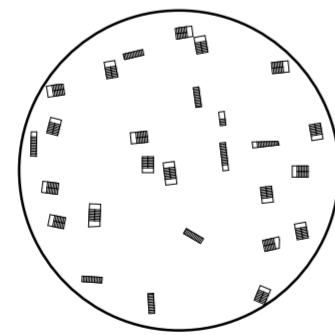
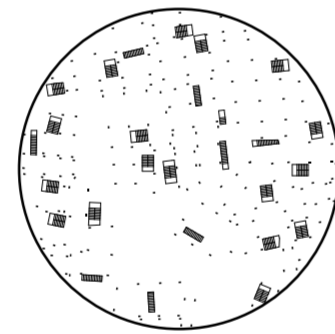
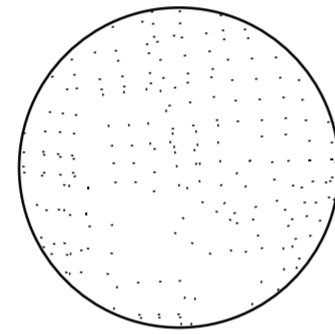
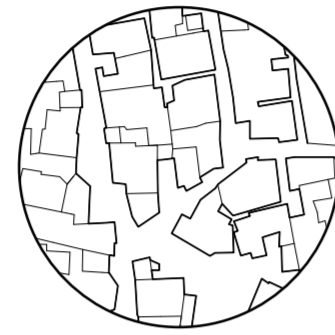


It had a fitness room with real parquet floor (just laid as we came, they were still polishing it), a theatre hall, a ballet room, class rooms for after school lessons, offices, an exhibition hall and even rooms for visitors. Next to the building there was a closed garden, for a little money you could enter it (one shekel for youngster, two shekel for adults). We didn't, but from the roof, it really looked like a closed garden, an artificial Eden, a claustrum for quiet recollection and meditation. Great idea, for it was not a park you just cross, it was something special: a real paradise garden in the anthropological sense.

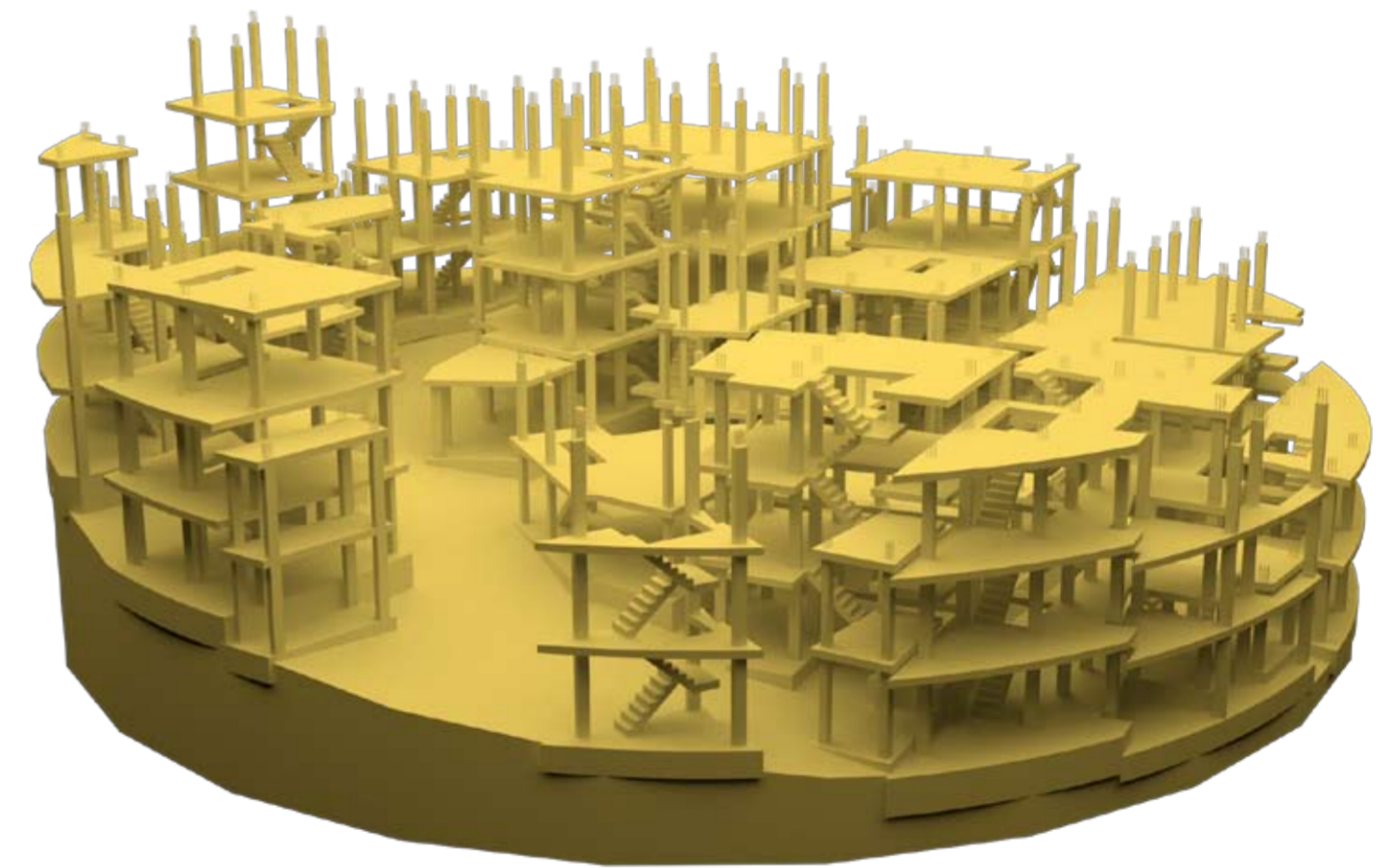


The roof was one big terrace giving a panoramic vista on the whole of Bethlehem territory. Naji insisted that the roof was an important place too: you could explain to visitors the whole situation, or give receptions and gatherings, or just enjoy the view. On the roof I asked Naji the big overall questions: why all this, what was at stake for him in this project?



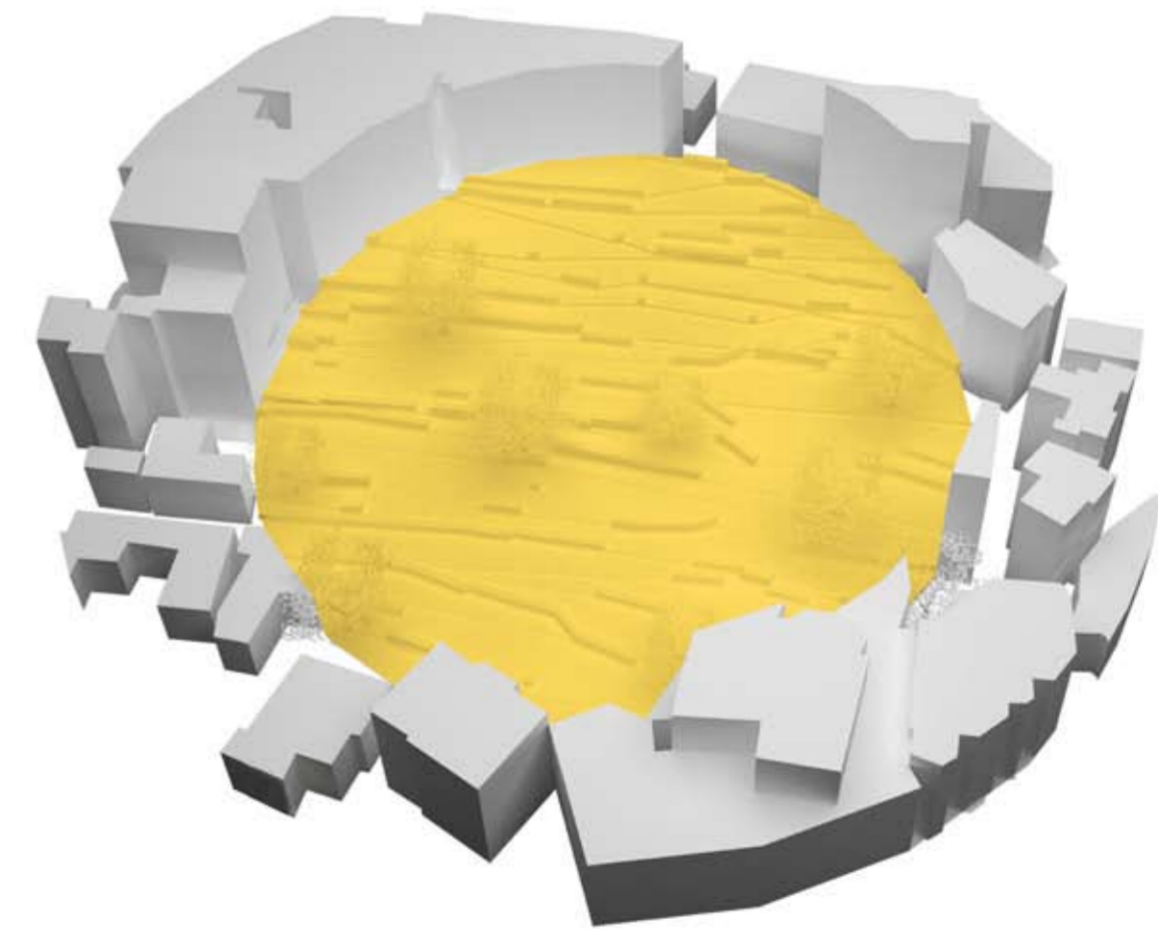


'we had to do something, we had to give hope to the next generation, many of us were in prison for several years, I was in prison, but we have to give hope to the young. It is our centre, it is our work, stone by stone this centre was build by camp residents. We make groups for 20 days and then another group of workers comes. So we supply work. And pride. Everybody wants to help. Everybody is proud of this. It gives hope to the youngsters and it gives them an education, culture and leisure.'





By this time I could hug the man, but I didn't. I was really impressed by this centre and by their power - and I think also his power - to create this out of nothing. Never before had I seen the power of heterotopia so clearly... I said it was very political but in an indirect way.



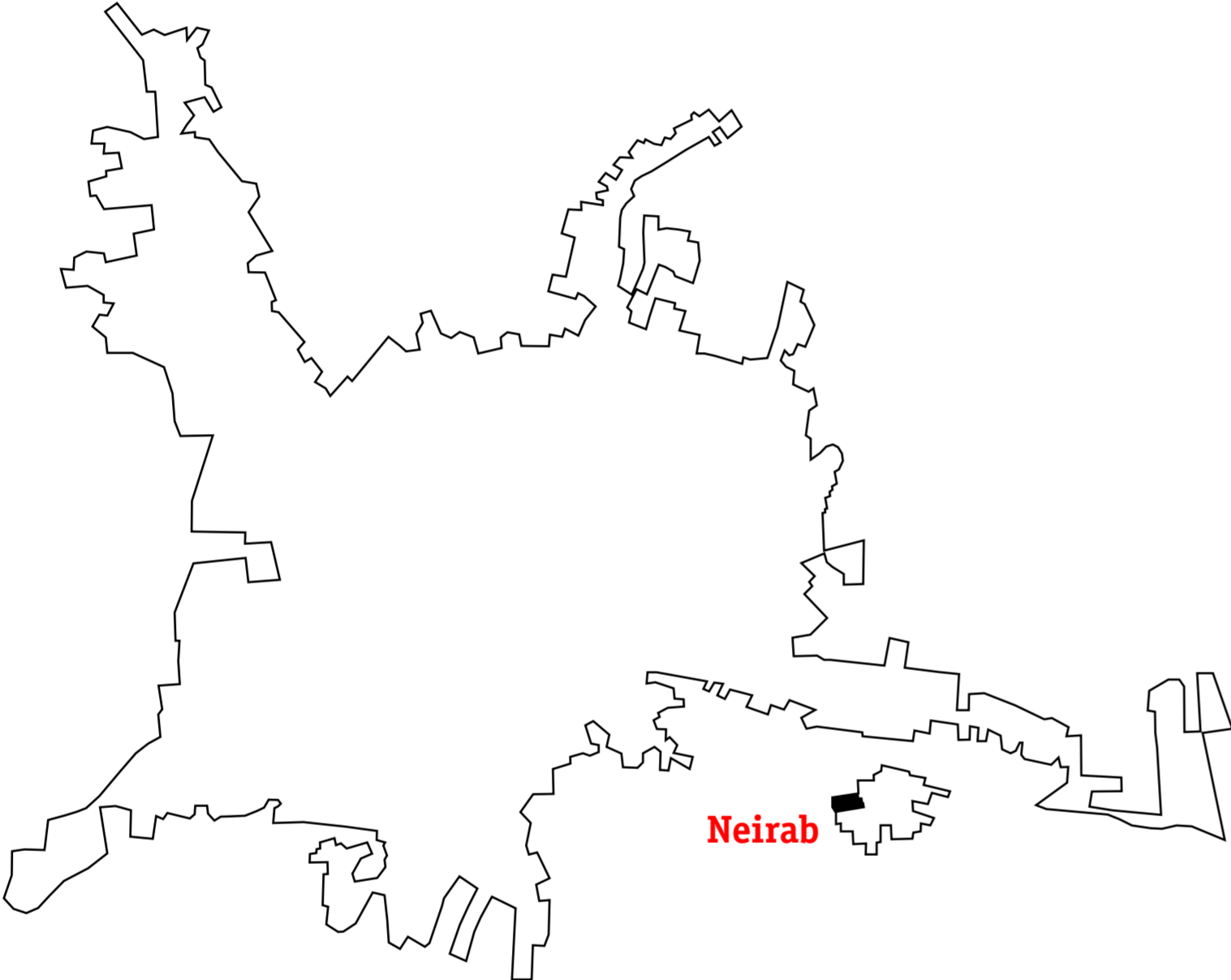


Naji was pleased and said yes: 'This is political work, but in another way.' I congratulated him on this project. 'But does it not preclude the idea of return by making something for people to settle for, to really settle I mean?' Here he looked at me and was firm: 'For me that does not change anything. If I could go back, I would go back immediately, on my own. If I have no place to stay, I would sleep under a tree, no problem. My wife and my children could join me, or stay here, but I would go.'

Exploring forms of return of Palestinian refugees means also exploring ways in which the figure of the refugee and its associated spatial regime of dislocation both reshape the political space of the present and force us to image a new political space yet to come.

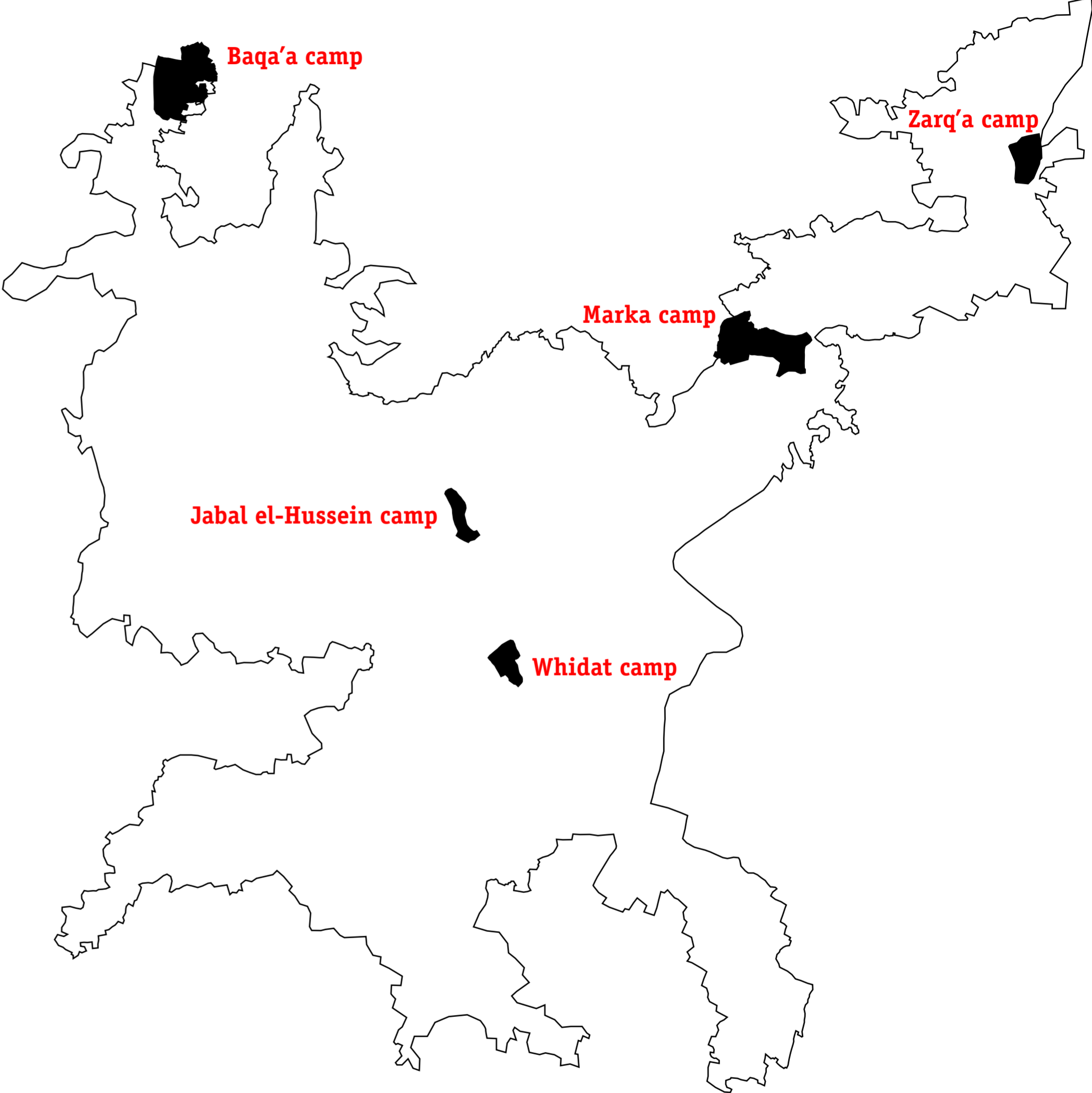
It is in this space between the sites of dislocation and that of destruction that a future extraterritorial polity could take shape.

ALEPPO



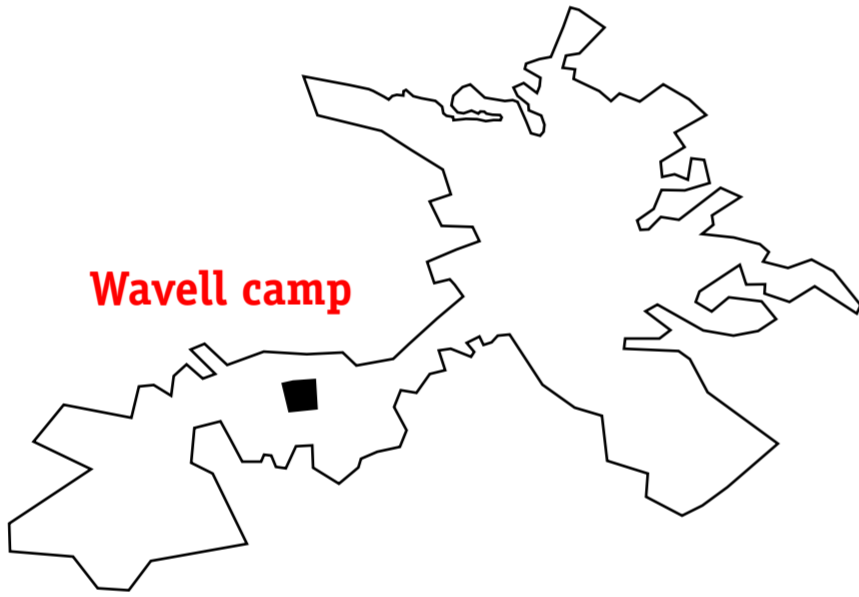
4000 ft |
2000 m

AMMAN

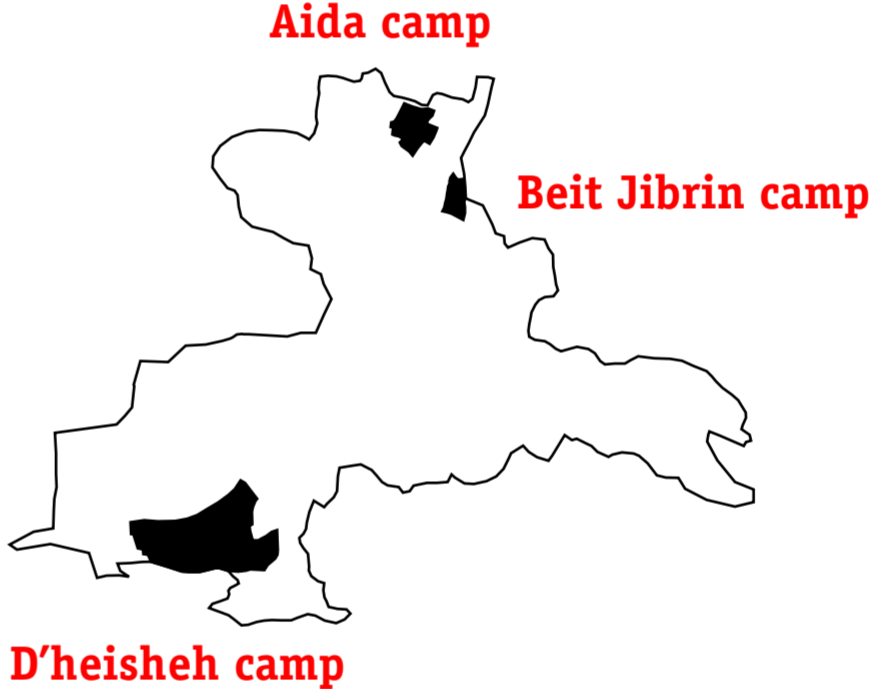


4000 ft |
2000 m

BAALBEK



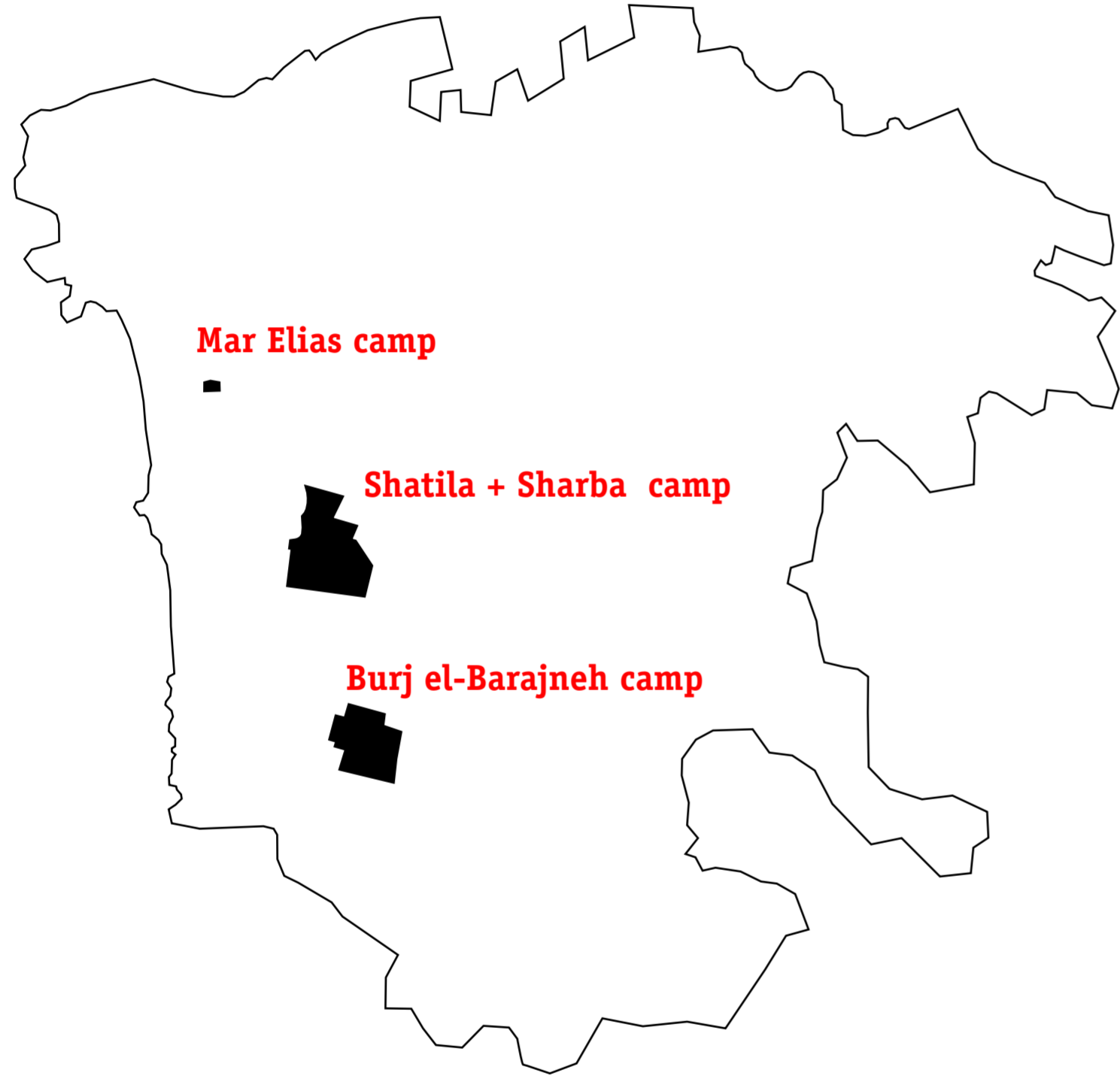
BETHLEHEM



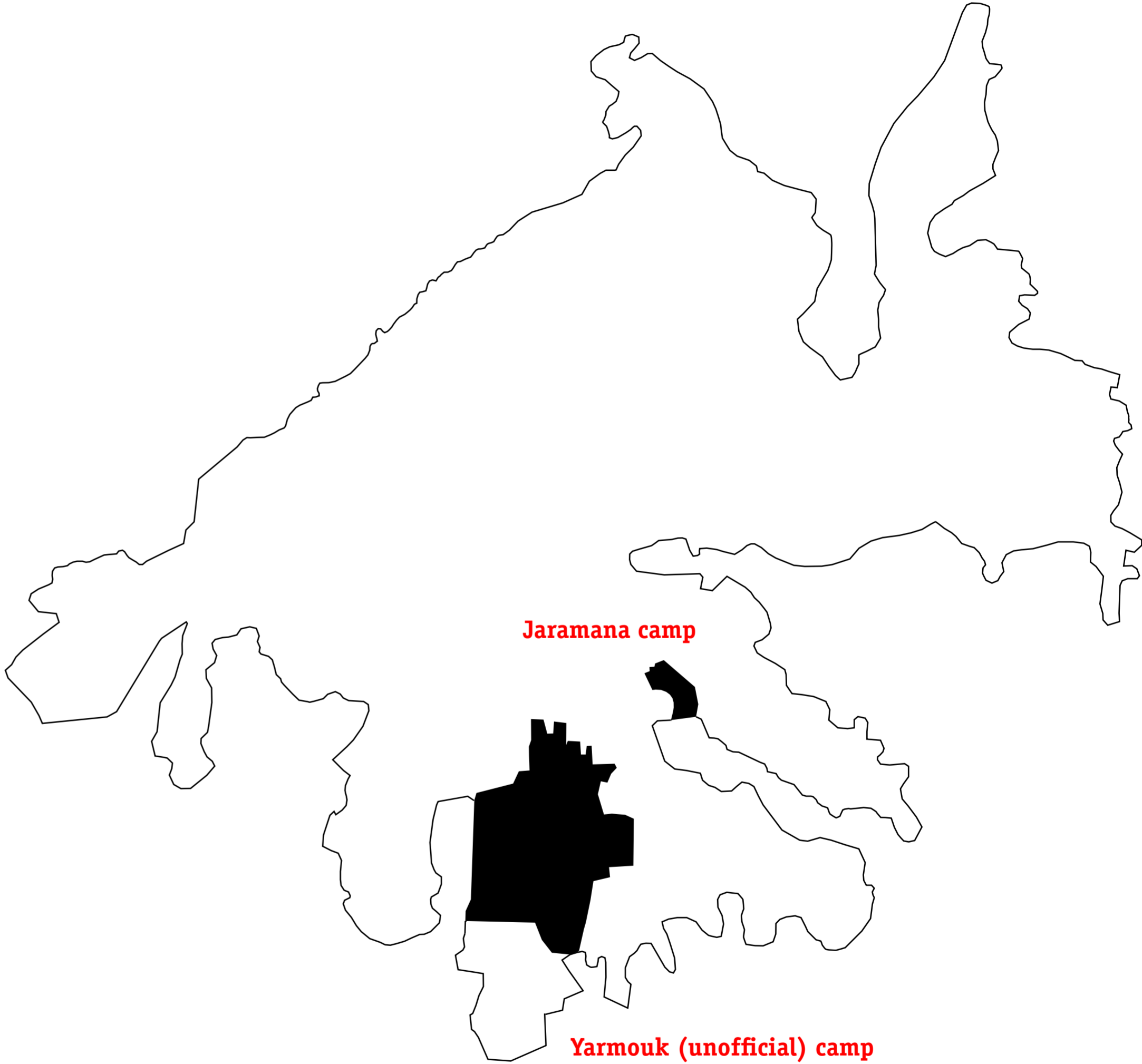
2000 ft
1000 m

2000 ft
1000 m

BEIRUT



DAMASCUS



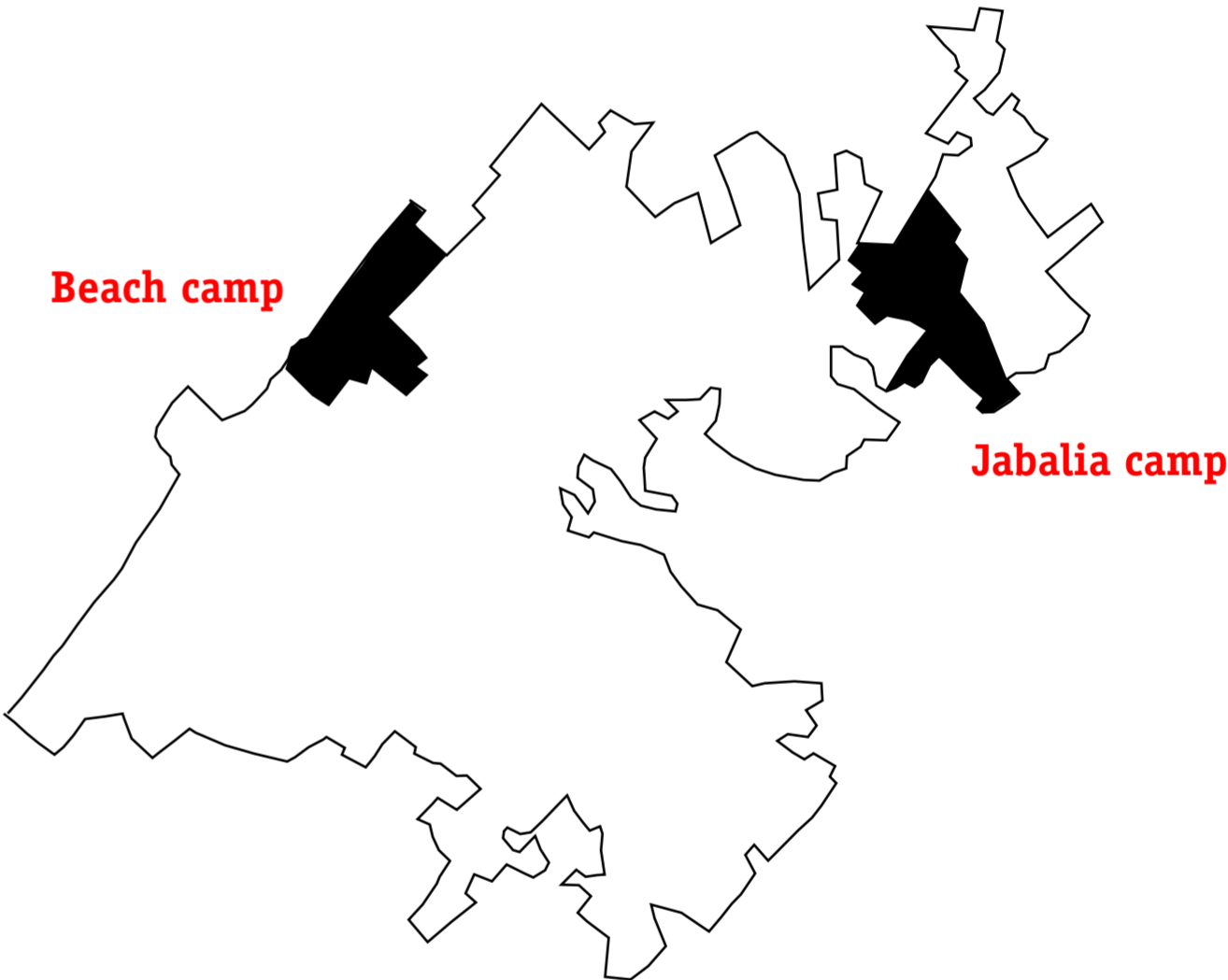
2000 ft
1000 m

2000 ft
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DERAA



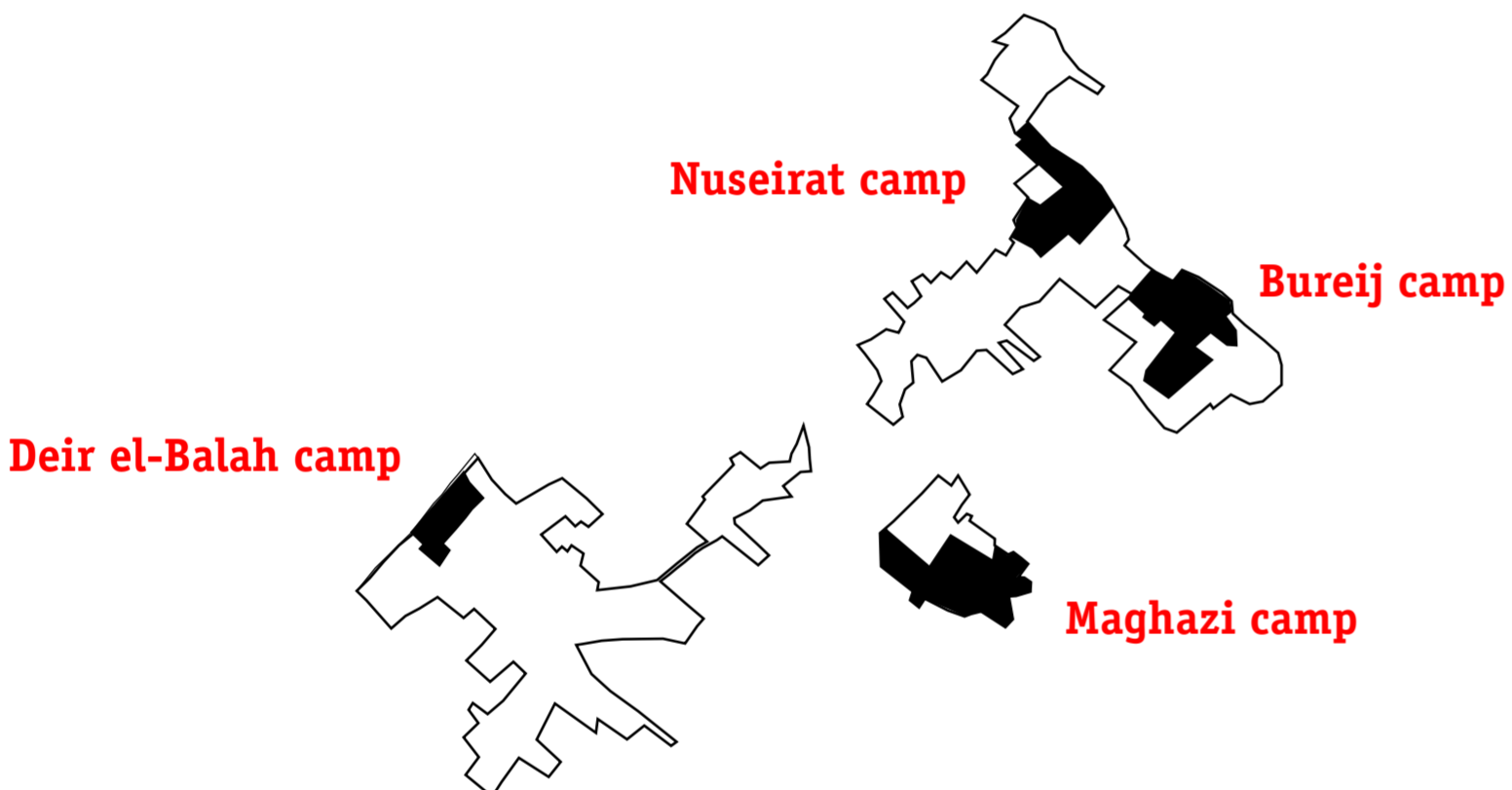
GAZA CITY



2000 ft
1000 m

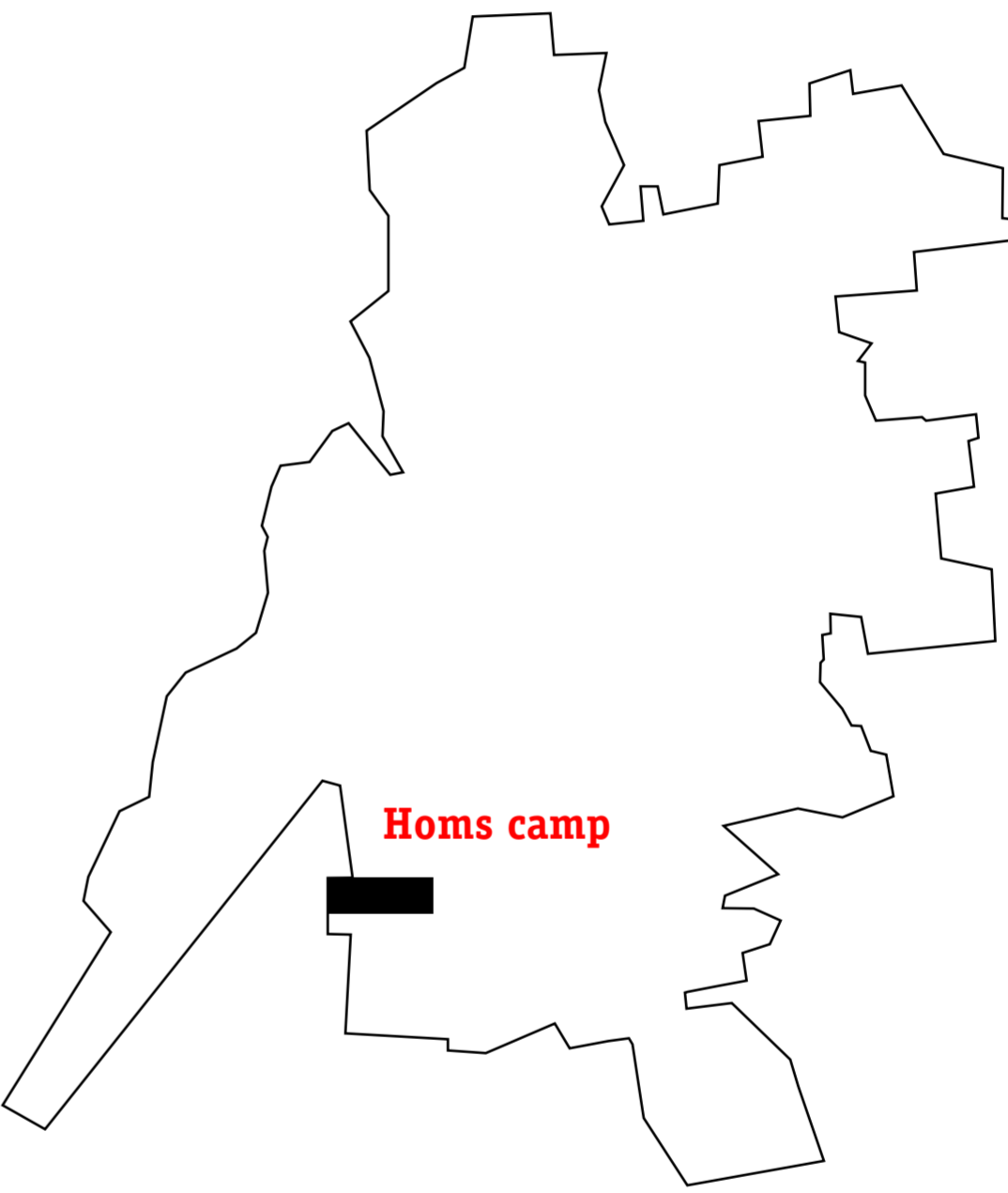
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GAZA STRIP



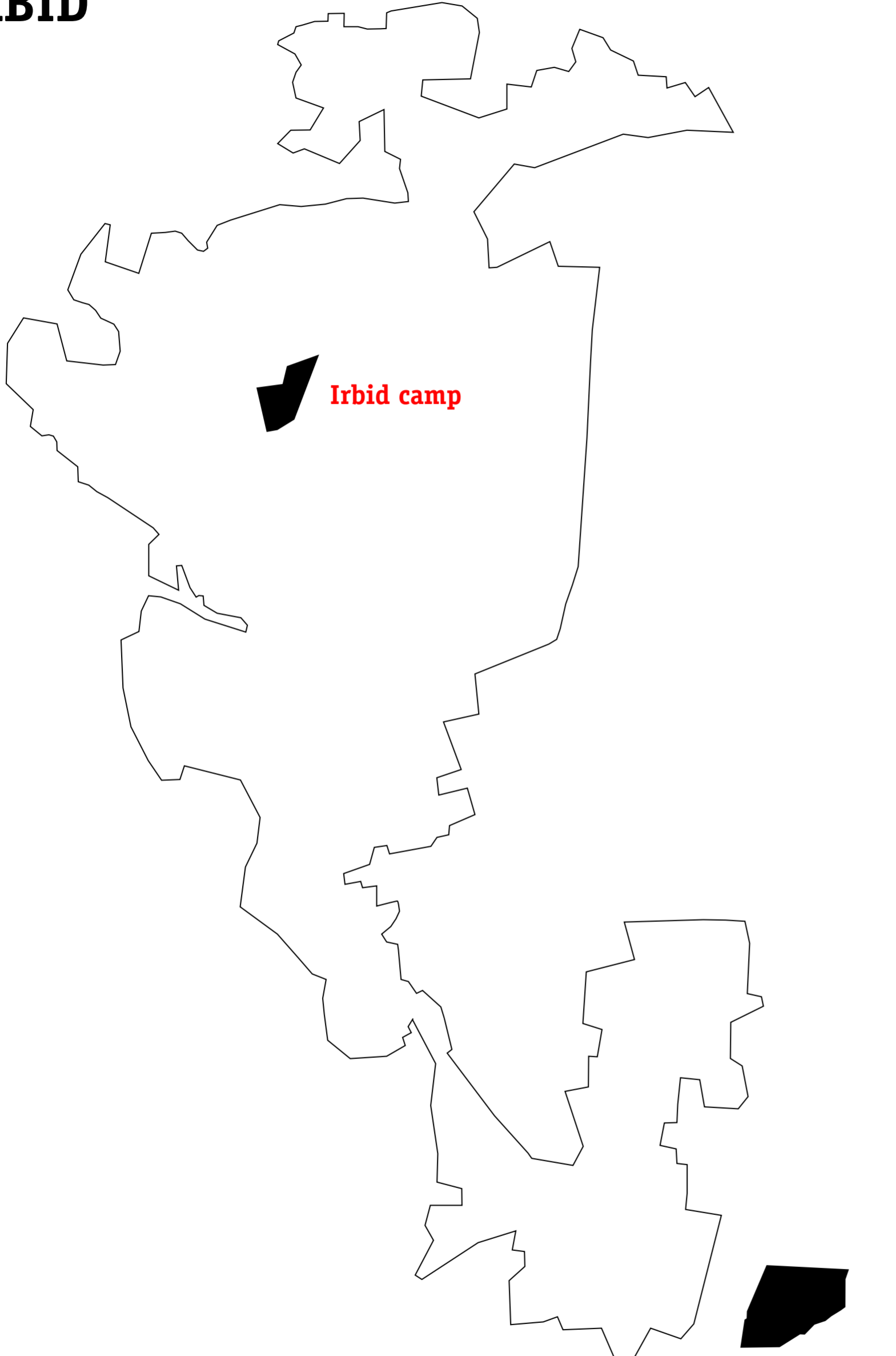
2000 ft
1000 m

HOMS



2000 ft
1000 m

IRBID

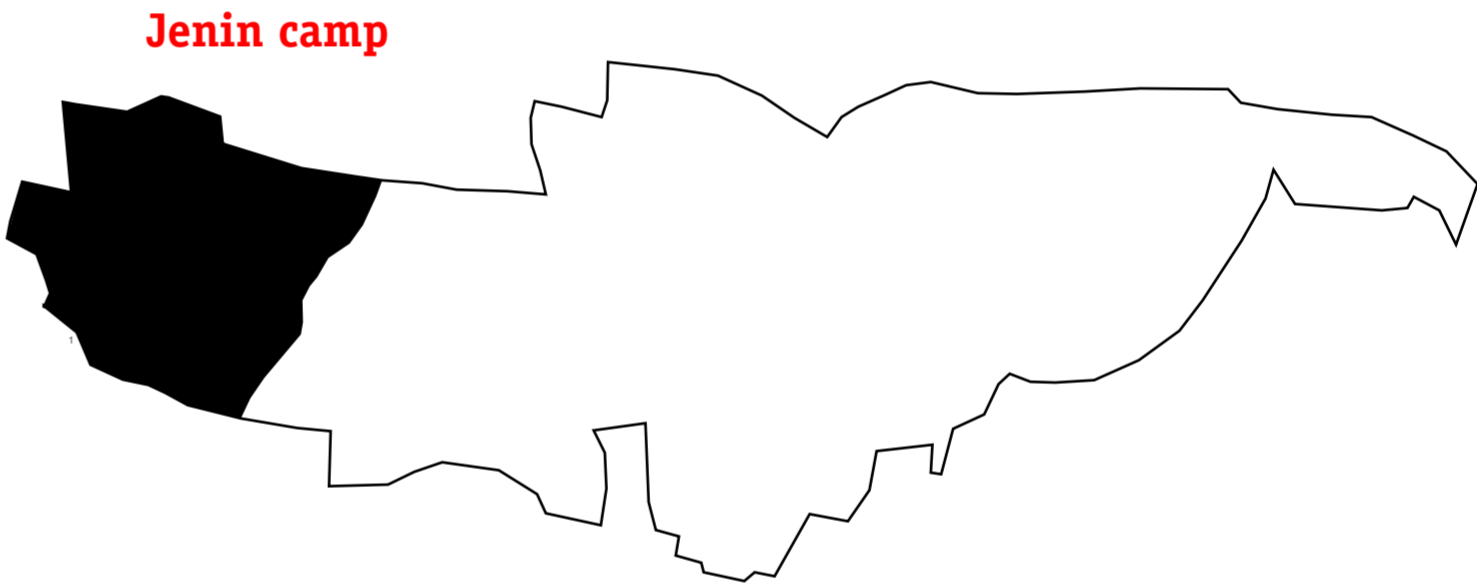


Irbid camp

Hosn camp

2000 ft
1000 m

JENIN

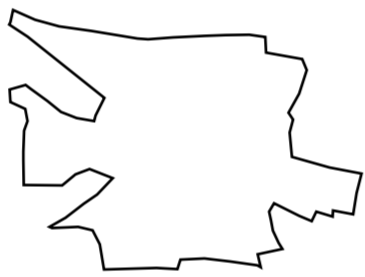


Jenin camp

2000 ft
1000 m

JERICHO

Jabr camp



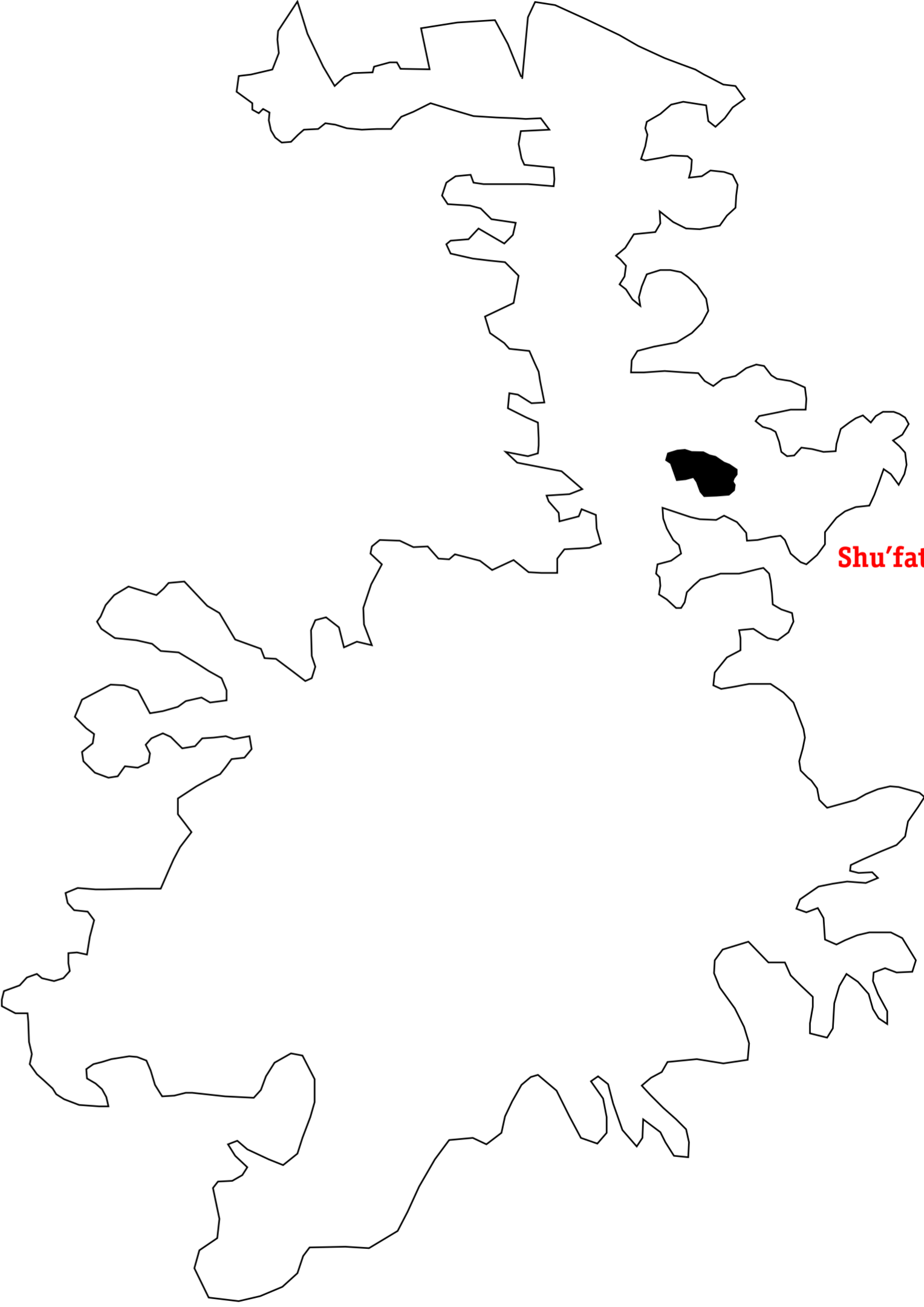
Ein el Sultan camp



2000 ft
1000 m

JERUSALEM

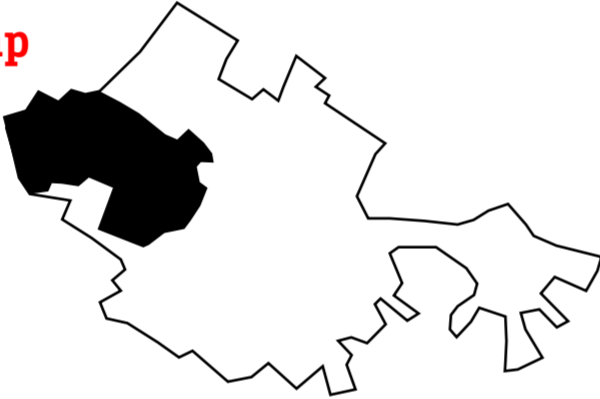
Shu'fat camp



2000 ft
1000 m

KHAN YOUNIS

Khan Younis camp



2000 ft
1000 m

NABLUS

Ein Beit al-ma camp

Balata camp

Askar camp



2000 ft
1000 m

RAFAH



RAMALLAH



2000 ft
1000 m

2000 ft
1000 m

RETURNS

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