Shuja'iyya Massacre 2003: Dawn Raid Kills 13, Three Children

Before dawn on Thursday, 1 May 2003, occupation forces stormed the Shuja’iyya neighbourhood east of Gaza City with dozens of vehicles and bulldozers under helicopter gunship cover, killing 13 Palestinians, among them two-year-old Ameer Ayyad and two 13-year-old boys, wounding about 40, and blocking ambulances from the wounded. [1] [2]

The raid lasted more than 14 hours, and the massacre is one of the Zionist massacres against the Palestinian people during the Al-Aqsa Intifada.

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The 2003 Shuja’iyya massacre at a glance

Item	Details
Date	Thursday, 1 May 2003, from about 1:45 a.m. to 4:20 p.m. [1] [3]
Place	The Shuja’iyya neighbourhood east of Gaza City, especially the al-Mansoura area [3] [1]
Forces	Dozens of heavy military vehicles and bulldozers, covered by helicopter gunships [3] [1]

Item	Details
Killed	13, among them two-year-old Ameer Ayyad and two boys aged 13 [1] [2]
Wounded	About 40, 5 of them seriously [1] [3]
Demolitions	Two homes destroyed, including the Abu Hain family home, and dozens damaged [1] [2]

The raid

At about 1:45 a.m. dozens of heavy military vehicles, including bulldozers, advanced about 500 metres into Shuja’iyya, supported by helicopter gunships. [3] The raid continued until about 4:20 p.m. [1]

The Abu Hain house

Occupation forces surrounded the homes of the Abu Hain family in the al-Mansoura area, claiming wanted men were hiding there, [3] and the family said soldiers used its members as human shields. [3]

Soldiers threw hand grenades at the house and then fired artillery shells at it; the roof collapsed on the brothers Yousef and Mahmoud Abu Hain, and their brother Ayman was found shot dead near the house. The three-storey, 180-square-metre house, home to 4 people, was destroyed. [1] Seven family members were detained, among them a woman and her five-year-old daughter. [1]

The civilian victims

More than half of the dead were civilians, three of them children. These are the civilian victims as documented by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights: [1] [3]

Name	Age
Ameer Ahmed Ayyad	2
Mohammed Nasser al-Dahdouh	13

Name	Age
Ahmed Ramadan al-Tatar	13
Nasser Nemer Helles	36
Baker Subhi Muhaisen (disabled)	40
Mohammed Kamal Abu Zarina	30
Shehda al-Gharabli (heart attack after ambulances were blocked)	67

Three resistance fighters were also killed, in addition to the three Abu Hain brothers. [1]

Ambulances blocked

Occupation forces obstructed ambulances and medical teams from reaching the wounded. Elderly Shehda al-Gharabli, 67, suffered a heart attack; his family could not get him to hospital, and he died. [1] [3]

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights expressed deep concern at “this latest in a series of large-scale Israeli military attacks,” saying that the silence of the international community “only serves to encourage Israel.” [3] Eleven years later the occupation returned to the same neighbourhood with a far larger massacre. Read: the Shuja’iyya massacre of 2014.

Conclusion

In a single day the occupation killed 13 Palestinians in Shuja’iyya, among them a two-year-old, two 13-year-olds and a disabled man; it destroyed homes and blocked ambulances until an elderly man died of a heart attack. The massacre was one of a series of raids that turned Gaza’s neighbourhoods into killing grounds during the Al-Aqsa Intifada.

Frequently asked questions about the 2003 Shuja’iyya massacre

When did the 2003 Shuja’iyya massacre take place?

On Thursday, 1 May 2003.

How many people were killed in the 2003 Shuja’iyya massacre?

13, among them 3 children, with about 40 wounded.

Who was the youngest victim?

Two-year-old Ameer Ahmed Ayyad.

What happened to the Abu Hain family home?

The occupation attacked it with hand grenades and artillery shells; it collapsed on the brothers Yousef and Mahmoud, and their brother Ayman was shot dead nearby.

Is it the same as the 2014 Shuja’iyya massacre?

No. This one took place on 1 May 2003; the major Shuja’iyya massacre took place on 20 July 2014.

Sources and references

1. Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, Weekly Report on Israeli Human Rights Violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, 1–7 May 2003, via ReliefWeb.
2. “Thursday, May 1, 2003,” Palestine Chronology, Institute for Palestine Studies.
3. Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, press release 56/2003, 1 May 2003.