Zeitoun Massacre 2004: Eight Killed, Including Three Children

At dawn on Wednesday, 28 January 2004, Israeli occupation tanks and bulldozers pushed about two kilometers into the Zeitoun neighborhood south of Gaza City, took up positions in its center, and fired live ammunition and shells at residents' homes for seven straight hours. Eight Palestinians were killed, including three children, and four others were wounded, among them an ambulance driver. [1] [2]

The massacre took place while Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei was holding talks with US envoys John Wolf and David Satterfield to rescue the peace process, [3] and was followed two weeks later by the Shuja'iyya massacre in the east of the city.

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The Zeitoun massacre at a glance

Item	Details
Date	Wednesday, 28 January 2004, from about 4:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. [1]
Place	The Zeitoun neighborhood, south of Gaza City [1] [2]

Item	Details
Perpetrator	Israeli occupation forces, with at least five tanks and three bulldozers, coming from al-Shuhada junction near the Netzarim settlement [1] [2]
Depth	About two kilometers into the neighborhood [1]
Killed	8, including three children [1] [2] [3]
Wounded	4, including an ambulance driver [1]

The massacre: seven hours in Zeitoun

At about 4:30 a.m. occupation forces entered from al-Shuhada junction near the Netzarim settlement and advanced about two kilometers into Zeitoun, with at least five tanks and three bulldozers. [1] [2] According to eyewitnesses, the soldiers took up positions in the center of the neighborhood, fired live ammunition and artillery shells, clashed with Palestinian resistance fighters confronting the incursion, and caused widespread damage to residents' property. The forces withdrew at about 11:30 a.m. [1]

The circulated account says occupation forces also destroyed a Palestinian National Security post and burned stretches of farmland in the neighborhood.

The killed

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights documented the names of the eight killed, saying four were civilians, including three children, and four were resistance fighters: [1]

Name	Age
Sameh Kamel Toutah	17
Akram Abdul Karim Abu Ajami	17
Sami Mohammed Badawi	16
Ahmed Mohammed Ali Abu Rikab	22

Name	Age
Eyad Mahmoud al-Ra’ei	38
Marwan Mahmoud Basal	39
Mousa Suleiman Dalloul	30
Othman Mahmoud Jundiya	22

Four other civilians were wounded, including an ambulance driver. [1]

A massacre on the day of the envoys

The massacre came in the days when Washington was sending its envoys, John Wolf and David Satterfield, to meet Ahmed Qurei in Ramallah in search of a way to rescue the peace process. [3] The occupation’s message on the ground in Gaza was entirely different from the language of calm in Ramallah, as it would be again in the following weeks in Shuja’iyya and Nuseirat.

Read about the Zionist massacres against the Palestinian people.

Conclusion

In seven hours on the morning of 28 January 2004, occupation tanks fired bullets and shells at the homes of Zeitoun, killing eight Palestinians, including three children, and wounding four, among them an ambulance driver, in the very days when US envoys were talking about peace. The massacre remains one link in a chain of bloody incursions into Gaza’s neighborhoods in early 2004.

Frequently asked questions about the 2004 Zeitoun massacre

When did the Zeitoun massacre take place?

It took place on the morning of Wednesday, 28 January 2004, with the incursion lasting from about 4:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

How many people were killed in the Zeitoun massacre?

Eight Palestinians were killed, including three children, and four were wounded, including an ambulance driver, according to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights.

Who were the children killed in Zeitoun?

Sameh Kamel Toutah (17), Akram Abdul Karim Abu Ajami (17) and Sami Mohammed Badawi (16).

What was happening politically on the day of the massacre?

Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei was holding talks with US envoys John Wolf and David Satterfield to rescue the peace process.

Is this the same Zeitoun massacre that took place in 2003?

No; Zeitoun witnessed another massacre on 26 January 2003, and this is a separate massacre that took place a year later.

Sources and references

Arabic-language sources are listed with translated titles.

1. “Weekly Report on Israeli Human Rights Violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories,” Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, 29 January 2004.
2. “Weekly Briefing Notes: OPT, 28 January–10 February 2004,” UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).
3. “Diary of 2004,” Centre for Arab Unity Studies.