Shefa-Amr Massacre 2005: Settler Soldier Kills 4 on a Bus

On 4 August 2005 the AWOL soldier and settler Eden Natan-Zada, in uniform and carrying the rifle the occupation army had issued him, opened fire on the passengers of a bus inside the town of Shefa-Amr in the Galilee. Four Palestinian citizens of Israel were killed: the bus driver Michel Bahouth, the passenger Nader Hayek, and the sisters Hazar and Dina Turki; others were wounded. [1] [2]

Eight years later an Israeli court convicted six young men of Shefa-Amr of killing the killer, while the victims were denied recognition as “terror victims.” [3] [1] It is one of the Zionist massacres against the Palestinian people.

Contents

1. The Shefa-Amr massacre at a glance
2. The killer: an AWOL soldier from Tapuah
3. The massacre: gunfire on the bus
4. The victims
5. When the victims are put on trial
6. Frequently asked questions
7. Sources and references

The Shefa-Amr massacre at a glance

Item	Details
Date	Thursday, 4 August 2005 [1] [2]
Place	A passenger bus inside the town of Shefa-Amr in the Galilee [1] [2]

Item	Details
Perpetrator	AWOL soldier Eden Natan-Zada (19), resident of the Tapuah settlement [1] [2]
Weapon	An army-issued M-16 rifle [1]
Killed	4: Michel Bahouth, Nader Hayek, and the sisters Hazar and Dina Turki [1] [2]
Wounded	Between 12 and dozens, depending on the source [1] [2] [3]
Aftermath	The victims denied “terror victim” status, and six Shefa-Amr youths convicted in 2013 [1] [3]

The killer: an AWOL soldier from Tapuah

Eden Natan-Zada was a 19-year-old soldier of the occupation army who deserted his unit rather than take part in the evacuation of Gaza Strip settlements in 2005. He had moved to the Tapuah settlement in the West Bank, where he fell in with followers of the banned racist Kach movement. [1] [2]

According to MERIP, Natan-Zada was on a Shin Bet alert list and had made at least one reconnaissance trip on the same bus before the attack. Despite his desertion, he kept his military rifle. [1]

The massacre: gunfire on the bus

Natan-Zada boarded an Egged bus at Haifa’s Hamifratz station and sat at the back. When the bus entered Shefa-Amr, a town of Muslims, Christians and Druze, he opened fire on the passengers. [1] He shot the bus driver in the head. [3]

The university student Badia Shaaban confronted the killer and grabbed his rifle, burning her fingers but stopping the shooting. [3] Passengers and a security guard overpowered him; police then arrived and handcuffed him, but a crowd of angry residents broke through and killed him. [1]

The occupation’s prime minister, Ariel Sharon, called it “a sinful act by a bloodthirsty terrorist,” and a police spokesman said it “seems like Jewish terror

against Arabs.” [2]

The victims

Name	Age	Role
Michel Bahouth	56	Bus driver
Nader Hayek	55	Passenger
Hazar Turki	23	Passenger, Dina’s sister
Dina Turki	21	Passenger, Hazar’s sister

On 5 August 2005 thousands marched in the funeral of the Turki sisters, and Hayek and Bahouth were buried the same day. [2] The number of wounded ranges from 12 according to MERIP to at least 22 according to Al Jazeera English. [1] [2]

When the victims are put on trial

At first it was announced that the victims and their families would be recognized as “terror victims.” But a ministerial committee later decided this was impossible, since the killer was a soldier and could not be considered a “member of a hostile organization” under the law. [1]

The authorities, meanwhile, pursued the people of Shefa-Amr. On 28 November 2013 the Haifa District Court convicted six young men of the town of killing Natan-Zada and sentenced them to actual prison terms of 11 to 24 months. [3]

Shefa-Amr closed its shops in protest and hundreds demonstrated outside the court, where police arrested nine. Mayor Amin Anabtawi said Israel “prosecutes the innocent and respects only the strong,” and MK Jamal Zahalka said prosecuting the victims tells Palestinians in Israel that “their blood is worthless.” [3]

The massacre continued a pattern of targeting Palestinian citizens of Israel that peaked in the October 2000 Uprising.

Conclusion

Michel Bahouth, Nader Hayek and the sisters Hazar and Dina Turki boarded an ordinary bus on a summer day and were killed by a settler soldier with an occupation army weapon. Years later they were still not recognized as terror victims, while young men from their town were convicted. The Shefa-Amr massacre stands as a testament to discrimination that spares no Palestinian.

Frequently asked questions about the Shefa-Amr massacre

When did the Shefa-Amr massacre take place?

On Thursday, 4 August 2005, on a passenger bus in the town of Shefa-Amr in the Galilee.

Who carried out the Shefa-Amr massacre?

The AWOL soldier Eden Natan-Zada (19), a resident of the Tapuah settlement linked to followers of the Kach movement.

Who were the victims of the Shefa-Amr massacre?

The bus driver Michel Bahouth (56), Nader Hayek (55), and the sisters Hazar (23) and Dina (21) Turki.

Were the victims recognized as terror victims?

No. A ministerial committee decided it was impossible because the killer was a soldier.

What happened to the people of Shefa-Amr after the massacre?

In 2013 the Haifa District Court convicted six young men of the town of killing the

killer and sentenced them to 11 to 24 months in prison.

Sources and references

Arabic-language sources are listed with translated titles.

1. Jonathan Cook, “Crime and Punishment on Israel’s Demographic Frontier,” Middle East Report (MERIP), no. 237, 31 December 2005.
2. “Victims of Israeli Soldier Laid to Rest,” Al Jazeera English, 5 August 2005.
3. “Anger at the Conviction of the Killers of the Shefa-Amr Butcher,” Al Jazeera Net, 28 November 2013.