

Jaffa Gate Massacre 1948: An Irgun Bomb at Jerusalem's Gate

On 7 January 1948 members of the Zionist Irgun threw a bomb at Palestinians at Bab al-Khalil (Jaffa Gate), the western entrance to the Old City of Jerusalem, killing 17 to 18 Palestinians and wounding 41. [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#) [\[3\]](#)

It was the third massacre to strike Jerusalem in under two weeks, after [the Bab al-Amud massacre](#) and [the Semiramis Hotel massacre](#), and it is one of [the Zionist massacres against the Palestinian people](#).

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The Jaffa Gate massacre at a glance

Item	Details
Date	7 January 1948 [2] [1]
Place	Bab al-Khalil (Jaffa Gate), the western entrance to Jerusalem's Old City [2] [1]
Perpetrator	The Zionist Irgun [2] [3]
Method	A bomb thrown at Palestinians at the gate [1] [3]
Killed	17 according to the UN, 18 according to Arab sources [1] [2] [3]

Item	Details
Wounded	41 [3]

The massacre: 7 January 1948

Bab al-Khalil, or Jaffa Gate, is one of the gates in the wall of Jerusalem's Old City and its main entrance from the west, a passage Palestinians crossed every day. On 7 January 1948 Irgun gunmen threw a bomb at the people passing through the gate. [\[2\]](#) [\[3\]](#)

Seventeen Arabs were killed according to the UN document, three of them “while trying to escape.” [\[1\]](#) Arab sources give 18 killed and 41 wounded. [\[2\]](#) [\[3\]](#)

A week of bombs in Jerusalem and Jaffa

The Jaffa Gate massacre came at the height of a wave of Zionist bombings of Palestinian civilians in Jerusalem and Jaffa after the partition resolution: [\[2\]](#)

Date	Place	Perpetrator	Killed
29 December 1947	Damascus Gate, Jerusalem	Irgun	11-14 [1]
4 January 1948	The Saraya, Jaffa	Stern Gang	15 [2]
5 January 1948	Semiramis Hotel, Jerusalem	Haganah	26 [4]
7 January 1948	Jaffa Gate, Jerusalem	Irgun	17-18 [1] [2]

On the night of 5 January, just two days earlier, the Haganah blew up the Semiramis Hotel in Jerusalem, killing 26 civilians. [\[4\]](#) The day before that, [the Jaffa Saraya massacre](#) had taken place. The aim of these attacks was to terrorise Palestinians in the cities and drive them to leave.

The toll and the accounts

Source	Date	Toll
UN document A/9801	7 January 1948	17 Arabs killed, 3 of them while trying to escape [1]
Al Jazeera Net list	7 January 1948	18 killed [2]
Arabi21	5 January 1948	18 killed, 41 wounded [3]

Conclusion

At one of the gates of Jerusalem's ancient city, the Irgun threw its bomb at passers-by, killing 17 to 18 Palestinians and wounding dozens. In under two weeks the Zionist gangs struck Damascus Gate, the Semiramis Hotel and Jaffa Gate, in an organised campaign of terror that preceded the occupation of the western part of the city and the expulsion of its people.

Frequently asked questions about the Jaffa Gate massacre

When did the Jaffa Gate massacre take place?

On 7 January 1948; some sources give 5 January.

Who carried out the Jaffa Gate massacre?

The Zionist Irgun.

How many people were killed in the Jaffa Gate massacre?

17 according to the UN and 18 according to Arab sources, with 41 wounded.

What is the difference between Bab al-Khalil and Jaffa Gate?

They are two names for the same gate, the western entrance to Jerusalem's Old

City.

What other massacres struck Jerusalem at that time?

The Bab al-Amud massacre (29 December 1947) and the Semiramis Hotel massacre (5 January 1948).

Sources and references

Arabic-language sources are listed with translated titles.

1. [United Nations General Assembly, document A/9801, annex “Zionist/Israeli acts of terrorism 1939–1974,” 1974.](#)
2. [“Israeli Massacres Against the Palestinian People,” Al Jazeera Net, 3 October 2004.](#)
3. [Hana al-Kahlout, “The Assassination of a Homeland: 37 Israeli Massacres in the Year of the Nakba,” Arabi21, 15 May 2014.](#)
4. [“The Semiramis Hotel Bombing Massacre in Jerusalem, 1948,” Al Jazeera Encyclopedia, 7 October 2024.](#)