Battle of Beaufort 1982: 72 Hours of Resistance and "None of Them Surrendered"

In the first days of June 1982, before the Israeli occupation's tanks reached Beirut, some thirty fighters of the Palestinian revolution stood on a mountain in south Lebanon, in an old Crusader castle called Beaufort, against more than 1,200 Golani Brigade troops backed by tanks and aircraft. They fought for about 72 hours, until the last of them fell, and not one of them surrendered. [1][2][3]

When the occupation's prime minister, Menachem Begin, visited the castle after it fell and asked whether any of the defenders had surrendered, the reply came: "None of them surrendered." This article is part of a series on the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the 1982 siege of Beirut, and tells the story of the battle in detail. [1][3]

Beaufort Castle after the battle fought by the revolution's fighters in its defence in June 1982. Source: Palestinian Museum Digital Archive, Palestine Red Crescent Society Collection.

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The battle at a glance

Item	Details
Dates	4–7 June 1982 (bombardment from 4 June, ground assault on the night of 6 June)
Place	Beaufort Castle (Qal’at al-Shaqif, Arnoun), near Nabatieh, south Lebanon
Defenders	Fatah’s Jarmaq Battalion (the Student Battalion): 27 to 35 fighters by different accounts, Palestinians, Lebanese and Yemenis
Commander inside the castle	Yaqoub Samour (Rateb)
Commander of the joint forces in the area	Moein al-Taher
Attackers	The Golani Brigade and its reconnaissance unit, more than 1,200 troops, with tank and air support
Duration	About 60 hours of fighting, then 12 hours in which the last two fighters held out
Fate	All the defenders were killed; none surrendered
Occupation losses include	The commander of the attacking force and several of his men killed; a warplane downed and its pilot captured

Sources: [1][2][3][4][5]

The castle: “the beast on the mountain”

Beaufort Castle stands about 700 metres above sea level over the Litani valley,

near the village of Arnoun in the Nabatieh district, looking out over Upper Galilee in occupied Palestine and over the Golan Heights; for centuries it was a military position fought over by invaders. [6][2]

After 1967 the Palestinian revolution turned it into a main military base and a forward observation post overlooking northern occupied Palestine, until it became an obsession for the occupation army; its media called it “the beast on the mountain,” and its military planners made “neutralising” it a precondition for any invasion. The occupation calls it Beaufort. [3][6]

The Student Battalion: from lecture halls to trenches

The story of Beaufort’s defenders goes back to 1973, when Palestinian and Lebanese university students in Beirut came together to protect the revolution and the Student Battalion was born within Fatah, led by Abu Hassan Qasim, Hamdi al-Tamimi and Marwan Kayali, with Munir Shafiq among its founders. It later became a military unit within the al-Asifa forces under the name Jarmaq Battalion, after Mount Jarmaq, Palestine’s highest peak. [4]

Its best-known leaders included Saad Jaradat, the battalion’s first commander, killed in Beirut in 1976; Moein al-Taher, commander of the Jarmaq Battalion; and Ali Abu Tawq, who rallied volunteers from the coastal camps. The battalion brought together Palestinians and Lebanese of every community, and according to Moein al-Taher 50 of its members were killed in the battles of 1982, none of them captured and none surrendering. [4][5]

Fortifying the castle

In 1981 occupation air strikes wrecked parts of the castle and its entrance, but the fighters did not abandon it. Over several months they dug trenches, bunkers and a tunnel some 150 metres long inside it; hundreds of Palestinian camp residents and Lebanese university students took part in the digging, engineering students

supervised the technical work, and Ali Abu Tawq drew up the defence plan. [2][1]

The fighter Muhammad al-Qarout, who fought with the revolution in the south, recalls fixing a long ladder himself so the fighters could climb up into the castle after its entrance was destroyed. [2]

The defenders

The castle was defended by a Jarmaq Battalion group under Yaqoub Samour (Rateb). Accounts of its size differ: Al Jazeera Documentary speaks of 33 fighters, Moein al-Taher's account of 34 fida'iyyin who held out to the end, and in another of his testimonies between 30 and 35, while the Israeli account gives 27. [4][5][2][3]

They were a mix of Palestinians, Lebanese and Yemenis, and their orders were to hold out to the death. Moein al-Taher, commander of the joint Lebanese–Palestinian forces in Nabatieh and Beaufort, was not inside the castle on the day of the battle. [2][4]

4–6 June: a mass of fire

The occupation began bombarding the castle on 4 June 1982, two days before the ground invasion, with aircraft, artillery and missiles, including cluster munitions. On 6 June, the day the invasion began, the air and artillery bombardment continued without pause. [3][4][2]

That morning the fighters shot down an occupation warplane and captured its pilot, according to Moein al-Taher. Al-Taher had left Beirut, where his wife had just given birth, and reached Nabatieh around midday to find the castle "a mass of fire." When he tried to reach it with another fighter to check on the defenders, a shell hit their car and he was wounded by shrapnel. [2]

The night of the assault: Golani on the narrow

road

On the night of 6 June the Golani Brigade’s reconnaissance unit was ordered up the narrow, winding mountain road to the castle. The occupation massed more than 1,200 troops for the assault, backed by tanks and aircraft; the brigade’s deputy commander at the time was Gabi Ashkenazi, later the occupation army’s chief of staff, who called taking the castle “a symbolic and sovereign goal.” [6][1][2]

The occupation had expected far weaker resistance. On arrival the force split into two wings; its commander was killed early in the fighting along with several of his men, and the occupation sent in reinforcements under another officer. The fighting raged at very close range inside the trenches and concrete fortifications, and the battle became one of the bloodiest operations in the occupation army’s history, “a victory at an unbearable price,” as the press later put it. [1][6]

72 hours: down to the last two fighters

The defenders held out for more than 60 hours of fighting in the trenches and tunnels. Then two fighters were left, and they fought on alone for another 12 hours, killing seven soldiers and wounding 17, until they were martyred on the morning of Monday 7 June 1982. [1][2]

Everyone inside the castle was killed. Moein al-Taher’s account says 30 of the 34 who held out to the end were martyred, while another of his testimonies says all those inside were killed. To this day no complete record of the martyrs’ names, numbers, nationalities and factions has been compiled. [5][2][3]

“None of them surrendered”

After the castle fell, War Minister Ariel Sharon visited it, and an occupation lieutenant told him: “Six of my comrades were killed right where you are standing.” Then Prime Minister Menachem Begin, who had no clear picture of what had happened, visited and asked on camera, “Did they have rifles?” A soldier answered, “Lots of rifles.” When he asked whether any of them had surrendered,

the reply came: “None of them surrendered.” [1][3]

According to the Al Jazeera Encyclopedia, Begin then grasped the scale of the “disaster” and left, and did not return to Lebanon for the rest of the war. Even the Israeli account described the defenders as skilled fighters who refused to surrender. [1][3]

After the battle: “the bloody road”

The castle did not become a symbol of victory for the occupation but of fear and losses. After it pulled back to the “border strip” in 1985, Beaufort became an isolated position, and the road to it became known on the Israeli side as “the bloody road” because of the attacks and roadside bombs aimed at its soldiers; over the years dozens of them were killed or wounded there, and it came to stand for the “Lebanese quagmire” in Israeli consciousness. [6][1]

In May 2000 the occupation withdrew from south Lebanon under the blows of the resistance, evacuating the castle in secret and then blowing it up with tons of explosives. On 31 May 2026 occupation forces returned to the castle after battles with the Lebanese resistance and raised their flag over it for the first time since 2000. [6][7][2][3]

Beaufort in memory

The fighter Muhammad al-Qarout, who today gathers documents on Fatah’s history, says the stand at Beaufort became a symbol of defiance and steadfastness in the revolution’s history. Moein al-Taher has sought to document the battle in a study that gathers the Palestinian account and engages with the Israeli one, as a contribution to “collecting the Palestinian memory of resistance,” and he recounted the battalion’s experience in Interview with Moein al-Taher, conducted by the novelist Elias Khoury and the journalist Michel Nofal. [2][8][5]

Al Jazeera Documentary produced a film, The Student Battalion, telling the unit’s story, while in Israeli memory the battle remained an “open green wound,” as a

documentary aired on an Israeli channel in 2013 called it. [4][3]

Differences between the accounts

The sources put the number of defenders at between 27 and 35, and the length of the stand at “more than 60 hours” or about 72 hours if the last two fighters’ final hours are added. They also differ on the occupation’s losses: Al Jazeera Documentary says the occupation acknowledged more than 40 dead, while other accounts refer to six Golani dead at a single spot and to seven killed and 17 wounded in the last hours alone; the occupation routinely understated its losses. [4][5][2][3][1]

Timeline

Date	Event
1973	The Student Battalion is founded in Beirut [4]
1981	Occupation air strikes wreck parts of the castle and its entrance; the fighters dig trenches and a tunnel [2]
4 June 1982	Air, artillery and missile bombardment of the castle begins [3]
Morning, 6 June	An occupation warplane downed and its pilot captured [2]
Night of 6 June	The Golani Brigade begins the ground assault [6]
6–7 June	More than 60 hours of fighting in the trenches [2]
Morning, 7 June	The last two fighters killed after 12 hours fighting alone [1]
After the castle fell	Sharon and Begin visit: “None of them surrendered” [3]
1985	The occupation pulls back to the “border strip”; the castle becomes an isolated post [6]
May 2000	The occupation withdraws from the south and blows up the castle [6]
31 May 2026	Occupation forces return to the castle [2]

Frequently asked questions about the 1982 Battle of Beaufort

When was the Battle of Beaufort?

Between 4 and 7 June 1982: the bombardment began on 4 June, the ground assault on the night of 6 June, and the last defenders were killed on the morning of 7 June. [3][6][1]

Where is Beaufort Castle?

Near the village of Arnoun in the Nabatieh district of south Lebanon, about 700 metres above the Litani valley. [6]

Who defended Beaufort?

A group from Fatah's Jarmaq Battalion (the Student Battalion) under Yaqoub Samour, made up of Palestinians, Lebanese and Yemenis. [4][5][2]

How many defended the castle?

Between 27 and 35 fighters, according to different accounts. [4][5][2][3]

How long did they hold out?

More than 60 hours, after which the last two fighters fought on for another 12, about 72 hours in all. [1][2]

What was the Student Battalion?

A unit founded by Palestinian and Lebanese university students in Beirut in 1973 within Fatah, later named the Jarmaq Battalion. [4]

What did Begin say when he visited?

He asked whether any of the defenders had surrendered and was told: "None of

them surrendered.” [1][3]

Read also on Palestinuna

- The 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon
- The Battle of Karameh
- The Dalal al-Mughrabi operation
- Battles archive

Sources and references

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