The Battle of Qaqun 1948: 17 Hours of Palestinian and Iraqi Resistance North of Tulkarm



Qaqun was an Arab village north-west of Tulkarm, on the edge of the coastal plain, whose people fought several battles against the Zionist militias in the first half of 1948 and won them. On **4–5 June 1948** a large Zionist force advanced on it with armour, artillery and aircraft; the village's men, together with an Iraqi platoon, fought it for some 17 hours without pause until the village fell after dozens of them had been martyred – one of the brightest pages of shared Palestinian and Iraqi sacrifice. [1][2]

Contents

1. At a glance
2. Qaqun before June
3. The attack
4. Resistance to the last man
5. The Iraqi martyrs of Qaqun
6. Between the accounts
7. Timeline
8. Frequently asked questions about the Battle of Qaqun

At a glance

Item	Details
Date	Evening of 4 June – 6 June 1948
Place	Qaqun, north-west of Tulkarm
Defenders	The men of Qaqun and an Iraqi platoon of the 15th Brigade under First Lieutenant Muhammad Yaqoub
Attackers	About 1,500 Zionist fighters with armour, heavy artillery and four aircraft
Duration	About 17 hours of continuous fighting
Martyrs	40 villagers and 17 of the Iraqi detachment according to WAFA; the register of Iraqi martyrs records 46 names at Qaqun
Outcome	The village fell and its people were expelled; an Iraqi attempt to retake it failed

[1][2][3]

Qaqun before June

Qaqun’s clashes began early: on **21 March 1948** a group of the village’s fighters opened fire on the nearby settlement of Hama’apil. In the following months its people fought several battles against the militias and came out victorious, losing only three martyrs and some wounded. [2][1]

After the Iraqi army returned from the battle of Gesher and settled in Tulkarm, its artillery began shelling the nearby settlements, and an Iraqi platoon was stationed in the village itself, in a house the villagers called “the Iraqis’ house,” under First Lieutenant Muhammad Yaqoub. [1][2]

The attack

The Zionist militias decided to extend their control in the area, chose Qaqun as their target and assigned one of their brigades to take it. On the afternoon of **4 June 1948** the shelling began, killing ten villagers and wounding ten more. Umm Yousef, grandmother of the researcher Ahmad Damiri, recalls that a shell fell on a gathering of villagers after the afternoon prayer, and a second shell then struck the same crowd, killing everyone there. [1][2]

The women and children fled to the orange groves east of the village and the men prepared to fight. On the morning of **5 June** the attackers, about 1,500 fighters, advanced under cover of the railway embankment, backed by armour, heavy artillery and four aircraft, striking from the east, the weakest point of the village’s defences. [1][2]

Resistance to the last man

As soon as the attackers crossed the railway embankment they met fierce resistance. The men of Qaqun and the Iraqi platoon fought for some 17 hours without pause against an enemy outnumbering them roughly twelve to one, killing 26 of them according to Damiri’s account. [1][2]

The attackers reached the edges of the village and some units moved to relieve it, but could not turn back the assault; the village fell after 40 of its men and 17 of the Iraqi detachment had been martyred, according to WAFA, while Damiri’s account says the Iraqi platoon and the village fighters were all killed. The village was fully lost on 6 June. [1][2]

The Iraqi army then tried to retake the village, but the attempt failed and it

resorted to shelling it. The villagers left for Bir al-Sikka, and many of them later settled in Shweika near Tulkarm. [1][2]

The Iraqi martyrs of Qaqun

The register of Iraqi martyrs published by the Palestinian National Information Centre records 46 Iraqi soldiers and volunteers martyred at Qaqun, most of them on 5 June 1948, from the 1st Battalion of the 15th Brigade, the 1st Battalion of the 4th Brigade and the 1st Mechanised Battalion. Among them were the platoon commander, **Lieutenant Muhammad Yaqoub**; **First Lieutenant Mahmoud Asaad al-Douri** of the mechanised battalion; Corporal Muhammad Hassan Allawi; Lance Corporals Ahmad Muhammad Karim, Hussein Musa, Dakhil Darb and Abdullah Abd al-Wahid; Privates Hammoudi Nafel, Kadhim Sultan, Mandil Gharkan and Musa Khanju; and the volunteers Husni Hamid, Sharif Jaber and Yasir Hussein. [3]

Between the accounts

Iraqi martyrs: WAFA's "Battles of the Nakba" gives 17 martyrs from the Iraqi detachment, while the register of Iraqi martyrs on the same site records 46 names at Qaqun; the difference may reflect those killed in the attempt to retake the village or in the days that followed. [1][3]

Size of the Iraqi platoon: between 33 and 43 soldiers according to Damiri. [2]

Date of the fall: WAFA says the village fell on 5 June; Damiri says it was finally lost on 6 June. [1][2]

Timeline

Date	Event
21 March 1948	Qaqun fighters fire on the settlement of Hama'apil [2]
First half of 1948	Qaqun's people win several battles, losing three martyrs [1]

Date	Event
Afternoon, 4 June 1948	Shelling of the village; ten villagers killed [1]
5 June 1948	The main assault and 17 hours of fighting [2]
6 June 1948	The village is fully lost [2]
After 6 June 1948	A failed Iraqi attempt to retake the village [1]

Frequently asked questions about the Battle of Qaqun

Where is Qaqun?

North-west of Tulkarm, on the edge of the coastal plain. [1]

When did Qaqun fall?

On 5–6 June 1948, after some 17 hours of continuous fighting. [1][2]

Who defended Qaqun?

The village’s men and an Iraqi platoon under First Lieutenant Muhammad Yaqoub, stationed in “the Iraqis’ house.” [2]

How many were martyred at Qaqun?

40 villagers and 17 of the Iraqi detachment according to WAFA, besides ten civilians killed in the shelling; the Iraqi martyrs’ register records 46 names. [1][3]

Where did the people of Qaqun go?

They left for Bir al-Sikka, and many later settled in Shweika near Tulkarm. [2]

Read also on Palestinuna

- Depopulated villages

- Battles archive

Sources and references

1. WAFA – Palestinian National Information Centre, “Battles of the Nakba”: “The Battle of Qaqun” (in Arabic).
2. Ahmad Damiri, “How like the Nakba the war on Gaza is!,” Palestinian Villages Encyclopedia, 16 November 2023 (in Arabic).
3. WAFA – Palestinian National Information Centre, “Iraqi martyrs who fell in the Palestine war of 1948” (in Arabic).