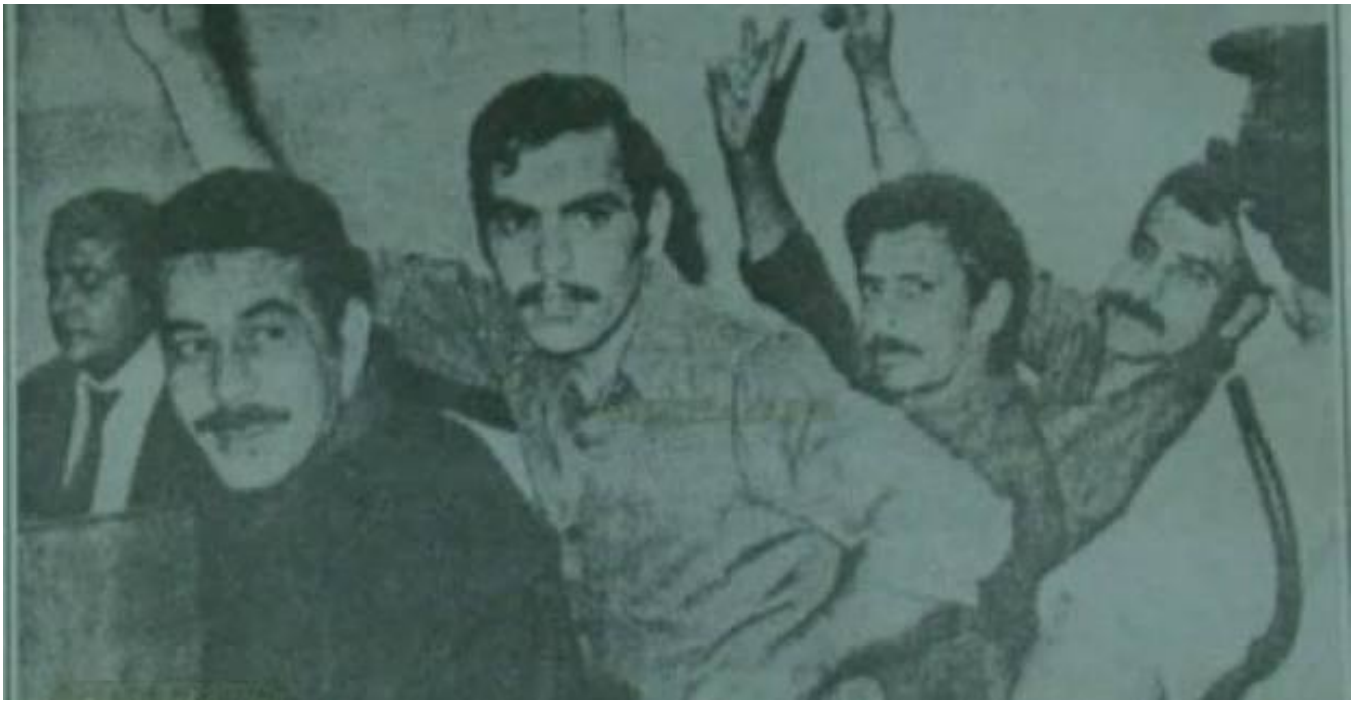
The al-Dabboya Operation 1980: Fatah's Ambush in the Heart of Hebron's Old City



On the evening of Friday **2 May 1980**, at about 7:30, **Fatah** fedayeen set an ambush near the **al-Dabboya** building in the heart of Hebron’s Old City, close to the Ibrahimi Mosque – a building seized by settlers from Kiryat Arba, who called it “Beit Hadassah.” From the rooftops they fired and threw grenades at settlers returning from the mosque through a narrow alley; six were killed and some twenty wounded. [1][2]

Al-Dabboya struck at the settler enclaves the occupation had planted in the heart of Hebron. Israel responded with a curfew lasting weeks and the deportation to southern Lebanon of Hebron mayor Fahd al-Qawasmi, Halhul mayor Mohammed Milhem and the sharia judge Sheikh Rajab Bayoud al-Tamimi. [1]

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At a glance

Item	Details
Date	Evening of Friday 2 May 1980, about 7:30
Place	Around the al-Dabboya building (“Beit Hadassah”) near the Ibrahimi Mosque, Hebron Old City
Carried out by	Fatah
Fighters	Adnan Jaber, Yasser Zayadat, Tayseer Abu Sneineh and Mohammed al-Shoubaki
Method	An ambush with automatic weapons and grenades from the rooftops
Toll	6 settlers killed and about 16–20 wounded
Israeli response	A curfew of about three weeks, the deportation of al-Qawasmi, Milhem and al-Tamimi, and the demolition of a house in Harat Jaber
Fate of the fighters	Arrested in September 1980 and sentenced to life on 17 November 1980

[1][2]

Settlement in the heart of Hebron

After the 1967 occupation Israel built the Kiryat Arba settlement on the edge of Hebron, and settlers then began pushing into the heart of the city. They seized the al-Dabboya building near the Ibrahimi Mosque, and every Friday evening armed

settlers marched from Kiryat Arba through the area around the mosque to support the families installed in the building – a march the people of Hebron saw as a daily challenge to their city. [1]

The fighters

The sources name four of the fighters, all from the Hebron governorate and the northern West Bank: [1][2]

Name	Nom de guerre	Home town	Role
Adnan Jaber Mahmoud	Adnan	Tayasir, born 1948	Commander of the operation; trained in the USSR
Yasser Hussein Zayadat	Aziz	Bani Na’im	Says he was the operation’s real leader
Tayseer Mahmoud Abu Sneineh	Maher	Hebron	Chose the al-Dabboya building as the target and found the hideout
Mohammed Abd al-Rahman al-Shoubaki	Mujahid	Idhna	Supplied the weapons

The fighters say they were trained directly by Khalil al-Wazir, “Abu Jihad.” [2]

The operation

At about 7:30 on Friday evening the fighters took up positions on the rooftops overlooking a narrow alley used by the settlers returning from the mosque. They opened fire and threw grenades from behind them; the settlers’ guards returned fire at once, and a clash followed with the forces that came to their aid. [2][1]

The operation killed six settlers and wounded between 16 and 20, according to the indictment and al-Diyar’s account. Occupation forces then besieged a house in Harat Jaber and demolished it. [1][2]

Collective punishment

The occupation imposed a curfew of about three weeks on Hebron and deported by air to southern Lebanon three of the area's leaders: Hebron mayor **Fahd al-Qawasmi**, Halhul mayor **Mohammed Milhem** and the sharia judge **Sheikh Rajab Bayoud al-Tamimi**. Six other Palestinians were arrested on charges of sheltering and transporting the fighters. [1][2]

These three were elected leaders and a man of religion with no connection to the operation; their deportation became punishment of an entire city for rejecting the settlements.

Arrest and trial

In September 1980 four of the fighters were arrested; Adnan Jaber and Yasser Zayadat were caught on the bank of the Jordan River when a flare exposed their hiding place as they tried to cross. The four were tried before a military court in Nablus on charges including killing six Israelis and wounding sixteen, firing rockets at Kiryat Arba and planting mines. [1][2]

On **17 November 1980** they were sentenced to life imprisonment. [1]

Between the accounts

Death toll: a fedayeen statement in 1980 spoke of 13 killed and about 30 wounded, including the Hebron military governor, while the trial indictment gives 6 killed and 16 wounded, and al-Diyar 6 killed and 20 wounded. [1][2]

Who the dead were: Palestinian sources describe them as armed settlers marching from Kiryat Arba in support of the settler enclave, while the occupation describes them as worshippers and religious seminary students. [1][2]

Command of the operation: some accounts present Adnan Jaber as the commander, while Yasser Zayadat says he was its real leader. [1]

Number of fighters: al-Diyar names five, adding Omar al-Hroub, while the other sources speak of four. [2][1]

Timeline

Date	Event
After 1967	Kiryat Arba built; the al-Dabboya building seized [1]
Evening, 2 May 1980	The al-Dabboya ambush [2]
May 1980	Curfew; al-Qawasmi, Milhem and al-Tamimi deported [1]
September 1980	The fighters arrested [2]
17 November 1980	Life sentences handed down [1]

Frequently asked questions about the al-Dabboya operation

What was the al-Dabboya operation?

An ambush by Fatah fedayeen near the al-Dabboya building in Hebron’s Old City on the evening of 2 May 1980, targeting settlers from Kiryat Arba. [1][2]

What is the al-Dabboya building?

A building near the Ibrahimi Mosque seized by Kiryat Arba settlers, who called it “Beit Hadassah.” [1][2]

Who carried it out?

Adnan Jaber, Yasser Zayadat, Tayseer Abu Sneineh and Mohammed al-Shoubaki of Fatah. [1]

How did the occupation respond?

With a curfew of about three weeks and the deportation of Fahd al-Qawasmi,

Mohammed Milhem and Sheikh Rajab al-Tamimi to Lebanon. [1]

What happened to the fighters?

They were arrested in September 1980 and sentenced to life on 17 November 1980. [1][2]

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Sources and references

1. Fatah Information and Culture Commission – Lebanon, “One of Fatah’s most important battles: 34 years since the al-Dabboya operation in Hebron,” 3 May 2014, including Yasser Zayadat’s account (in Arabic).
2. Hemmat Mostafa, “On this day: the al-Dabboya operation in Hebron,” al-Diyar, 2 May 2020 (in Arabic).