1968 Prisoner Exchange: The First Palestinian Deal After the El Al Hijacking to Algeria

On 23 July 1968 the first exchange between the Palestinians and the occupation took place, after fighters of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine hijacked an El Al plane flying from Rome to occupied Palestine and forced it to land in Algeria. It ended with the release of 37 Palestinian prisoners according to Al Jazeera Net, through the mediation of the Red Cross. [1][2]

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The deal at a glance

Item	Details
Date	23 July 1968
Carried out by	The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
Operation	Hijacking of an El Al plane from Rome, forced to land in Algeria
Passengers	More than 100 according to Al Jazeera Net
Freed	37 Palestinian prisoners with high sentences, some arrested before 1967
Mediator	The Red Cross

[1][2]

The operation and the deal

WAFA described the deal as the first Palestinian prisoner exchange with the occupation, and the operation as the first hijacking of an Israeli plane. The perpetrators forced the plane to land in Algeria with about a hundred passengers on board. The passengers were released in return for the freeing of Palestinian prisoners, through the mediation of the Red Cross. [2][1]

According to Al Jazeera Net the 37 prisoners had high sentences, and some had been arrested before the 1967 war. [1]

Timeline

Date	Event
23 July 1968	The El Al hijacking to Algeria and the release of 37 prisoners [1]

Frequently asked questions about the 1968 exchange

When was the first Palestinian exchange?

On 23 July 1968. [2]

Who carried it out?

Fighters of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. [1][2]

How many prisoners were freed?

37 prisoners with high sentences according to Al Jazeera Net. [1]

Who mediated?

The Red Cross. [1][2]

Sources and references

1. Al Jazeera Net, “Exchange deals between Israel and the Arabs”, 12 October 2011 (in Arabic).
2. WAFA Info, “Prisoners who wrested their freedom from the occupation’s prisons” (in Arabic).