1970 Exchange: Leila Khaled Freed After the El Al Hijacking and London Landing

On 6 September 1970 Leila Khaled and her partner Patrick Arguello hijacked an El Al plane that made an emergency landing in London; Arguello was killed and Khaled was arrested. On 30 September 1970 she was released in an exchange involving Britain, Germany and Switzerland, and taken to Cairo where she was freed with the other prisoners on 1 October 1970. [1]

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The deal at a glance

Item	Details
Date of the hijacking	6 September 1970
Party	The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
Place of landing	London
Khaled released	30 September 1970
The exchange	Palestinian prisoners for German and Swiss hostages
Final release	Cairo, 1 October 1970

[1]

The hijacking and arrest

According to Al Jazeera Net the first plane was hijacked in August 1969 on a flight from Rome to Athens and then Tel Aviv, landed in Damascus and led to a prisoner exchange. On 6 September 1970 the second El Al plane was hijacked, an operation that failed after the death of Khaled's partner, Patrick Arguello, and the plane made an emergency landing in London. Khaled was taken to Ealing police station in London, where she refused questioning for a full week. [1]

The release and the exchange

British authorities released Khaled on 30 September 1970, and her first stop was North Holt air base. The release came within an exchange with Germany and Switzerland: she was taken to Munich and Zurich and joined the Palestinian prisoners freed in return for German and Swiss hostages. She was freed in Cairo with the other prisoners on 1 October 1970. [1]

Timeline

Date	Event
August 1969	The first plane hijacked and landed in Damascus [1]
6 September 1970	El Al plane hijacked and landed in London; Khaled arrested [1]
30 September 1970	Khaled released [1]
1 October 1970	She is freed in Cairo with the other prisoners [1]

Frequently asked questions about the 1970 exchange and the release of Leila Khaled

When was Leila Khaled released?

On 30 September 1970 from Britain, then in Cairo on 1 October 1970. [1]

Where did the plane land?

It made an emergency landing in London. [1]

Who took part with her?

Patrick Arguello, who was killed in the operation. [1]

Sources and references

1. Al Jazeera Net (Encyclopedia), “Leila Khaled: the plane hijacker who terrified the occupation”, 18 November 2023 (in Arabic).
2. Alwatan Voice, “Prisoner exchange operations with the occupation from 1948 to 2011”, for Palestinian Prisoners’ Day (in Arabic; the link is to the site’s home page).