Sa’sa’ Massacre 1948: Homes Blown Up Despite White Flags



On the night of 14–15 February 1948, a force from the Palmach’s Third Battalion, part of the Haganah, attacked the village of Sa’sa’ in the Upper Galilee and blew up its homes over their occupants, although the villagers had raised white flags. Dozens of Sa’sa’’s people were killed, most of them women and children. [1] [2] [3]

The massacre came less than two months after the al-Khisas massacre in the same Galilee, part of a series of Palmach raids on Arab villages before the Nakba. Eight months later occupation forces returned to Sa’sa’, occupied it and committed acts of mass murder there. [3]

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The Sa’sa’ massacre at a glance

Item	Details
Date	The night of 14–15 February 1948 [1] [3]
Place	The village of Sa’sa’, Safad district, Upper Galilee [3]
Perpetrator	A force from the Palmach’s Third Battalion, part of the Haganah [1] [3]
Method	Blowing up homes over their occupants, although villagers had raised white flags [1] [2]
Houses blown up	20 according to WAFA, and 10 wholly or partially according to the Haganah’s estimate [1] [3]
Killed	About 60, mostly women and children, according to WAFA; 11, including 5 children, according to the New York Times [1] [3]

Sa’sa’

Sa’sa’ was a Palestinian village of the Safad district, built on a rocky hill in the heart of the Upper Galilee mountains, at an elevation of about 875 meters and about 12 kilometers from Safad. It had about 1,130 inhabitants in 1945, and its lands covered 14,796 dunums. [3]

The massacre: the night of 14–15 February 1948

On the night of 14–15 February 1948, a force from the Palmach's Third Battalion raided Sa'sa'. [1] [3] Although the villagers had raised white flags, the attackers blew up homes over their owners: twenty houses according to WAFA, [1] [2] and ten houses wholly or partially destroyed according to the Haganah's own estimate. [3]

The toll: what do the sources say?

Source	Killed
Palestinian National Information Center (WAFA) and Arabi21	About 60, mostly women and children [1] [2]
New York Times (via the Interactive Encyclopedia)	11, including 5 small children, and 3 wounded [3]
Haganah estimate (via the Interactive Encyclopedia)	"Tens" [3]

Notably, the Haganah's own estimate spoke of "tens" killed, far more than the Western press reported at the time. [3]

Sa'sa' in October 1948

The February massacre was not the last Sa'sa' would witness. On 30 October 1948, during Operation "Hiram," the Seventh Brigade occupied the village, where, according to the sources, "acts of mass murder" took place, although detailed accounts are not available. [3]

The people of Sa'sa' were driven out, and the settlements of "Sasa" (1949) and "Mattat" (1979) were built on the village site. Some of the old olive trees still stand, along with some walls and houses of the village. [3]

Read about the Zionist massacres against the Palestinian people.

Conclusion

The people of Sa’sa’ raised white flags, and their homes were blown up over their heads, killing dozens of them, mostly women and children. Eight months later the occupation returned to the village and committed acts of mass murder there, then drove out its people and built a settlement on its ruins. The Sa’sa’ massacre remains a testament that white flags did not protect Palestinian villages from massacre.

Frequently asked questions about the Sa’sa’ massacre

When did the Sa’sa’ massacre take place?

It took place on the night of 14–15 February 1948, and further acts of mass murder occurred when the village was occupied on 30 October 1948.

Where is Sa’sa’?

In the Safad district, on a rocky hill in the heart of the Upper Galilee mountains, about 12 kilometers from Safad.

How many people were killed in the Sa’sa’ massacre?

About 60, mostly women and children, according to WAFA; 11, including 5 children, according to the New York Times; and “tens” according to the Haganah’s own estimate.

Who carried out the Sa’sa’ massacre?

It was carried out by a force from the Palmach’s Third Battalion, the Haganah’s strike force.

What was built on Sa’sa’’s land?

The settlements of “Sasa” (1949) and “Mattat” (1979) were built on the village site.

Sources and references

Arabic-language sources are listed with translated titles.

1. “Israeli Massacres,” Palestinian National Information Center (WAFA).
2. “Assassination of a Homeland: 37 Israeli Massacres in the Year of the Nakba,” Arabi21.
3. “Sa’sa’,” Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question, Institute for Palestine Studies.