Abu Kabir Massacre 1948: Haganah Razes Jaffa Homes, Kills the Fleeing

On 31 March 1948 Zionist Haganah forces launched an armed attack on the Abu Kabir neighbourhood of Jaffa, destroying its homes and shooting dead the residents who fled them for their lives. [1] [2] [3]

The attack was one link in a Zionist campaign against Jaffa's neighbourhoods and outskirts that ended weeks later with the occupation of the city and the expulsion of its people. It is one of the Zionist massacres against the Palestinian people.

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The Abu Kabir massacre at a glance

Item	Details
Date	31 March 1948 [1] [3] [4] [2]
Place	The Abu Kabir neighbourhood, on the edge of Jaffa on the road to Ramla [5]
Perpetrator	Zionist Haganah forces [1] [3] [2]
What happened	An armed attack that destroyed homes and killed residents fleeing them for their lives [1] [2]

Item	Details
Killed	Unknown [3]
Outcome	The neighbourhood’s people were displaced and its orange groves later bulldozed [5]

Abu Kabir: a neighbourhood of orange groves

Abu Kabir is a Palestinian neighbourhood adjoining Jaffa on the road to Ramla, set on a hill about 25 metres above sea level. Historian Yousef Asfour traces its origins to Egyptian farmers and families who settled there after the campaign of Ibrahim Pasha. [5]

Its fertile land was full of orange groves that sent “Jaffa oranges” to Mediterranean markets from the late nineteenth century until 1948. [5] The neighbourhood had known Zionist violence two decades before the Nakba: in the Buraq uprising of 1929, armed Jewish men stormed it and killed its imam, Sheikh Abdel Ghani Awn, and his family; only his son survived. [5]

March 1948: the attacks on Abu Kabir

After the partition resolution, Abu Kabir, lying between Jaffa and the Zionist settlements, became a repeated target. In March 1948, after the major attack on Jaffa, the Zionist gangs launched a stronger assault on Abu Kabir; Arab defenders repelled it, but it was repeated on 22 and 23 March. [6] Those battles are covered in the Battle of Jaffa.

The massacre: 31 March 1948

On 31 March 1948 Haganah units attacked the neighbourhood with weapons and destroyed its homes, and when residents ran out of them for their lives, they opened fire and killed them. [1] [2] The Al Jazeera Net list records the massacre on the same date, attributes it to the Haganah, and gives the toll as “unknown.” [3] The available Arab sources give neither the number nor the names of the victims.

[4] [3]

Months earlier Jaffa had suffered the Jaffa Saraya massacre, and less than a month after the Abu Kabir massacre the final assault on the city began, ending with its occupation in May 1948.

What remains of Abu Kabir

Abu Kabir's people were displaced in the Nakba; the occupation gave the neighbourhood a Hebrew name and the Tel Aviv municipality absorbed it. In 1972 bulldozers backed by police cleared what remained of its orange groves, and the whole neighbourhood was emptied so that apartment blocks could be built for new Jewish immigrants. [5]

Today "only a prison and a morgue" remain of Palestinian Abu Kabir: the Abu Kabir detention centre and the forensic institute, along with a few houses taken over by settlers or managed by the Amidar company as "absentee property." [5]

Conclusion

The Haganah destroyed the homes of Abu Kabir and killed its people as they fled, and decades later the occupation erased the neighbourhood itself, leaving only a prison and a morgue. The massacre was a step on the road to the occupation of Jaffa, the "Bride of Palestine," and the expulsion of its people. Read also: Jaffa before the Nakba.

Frequently asked questions about the Abu Kabir massacre

When did the Abu Kabir massacre take place?

It took place on 31 March 1948.

Who carried out the Abu Kabir massacre?

It was carried out by Zionist Haganah forces.

How many people were killed in the Abu Kabir massacre?

The available Arab sources give no specific number; they describe the killing of residents fleeing their homes.

Where is Abu Kabir?

On the edge of Jaffa, on the road to Ramla.

What remains of Abu Kabir today?

The Abu Kabir prison, the forensic institute and a few houses, after the orange groves were bulldozed and the neighbourhood emptied in 1972.

Sources and references

Arabic-language sources are listed with translated titles.

1. “Israeli Massacres,” Palestinian National Information Centre (WAFA).
2. “For Those Who Forgot: The Massacres in the City of Jaffa in 1948,” Yaffa 48.
3. “Israeli Massacres Against the Palestinian People,” Al Jazeera Net, 3 October 2004.
4. Hana al-Kahlout, “The Assassination of a Homeland: 37 Israeli Massacres in the Year of the Nakba,” Arabi21, 15 May 2014.
5. Rami Sayegh, “The Palestinian Neighbourhood of Abu Kabir, a Witness to the Theft of History,” Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, 15 October 2016.
6. “The Battle of Jaffa,” Palestinina encyclopedia.