Qalunya Massacre 1948: Palmach Blows Up a Village near Jerusalem

On 11–12 April 1948, Palmach forces attacked the village of Qalunya west of Jerusalem, on the Jerusalem–Jaffa road, as part of Operation "Nachshon," and spent two days blowing up its homes one by one, until the whole village was left ablaze. A journalist accompanying the attacking force counted fourteen dead, adding: "but there were more." [1] [2]

The Qalunya massacre came just two days after the Deir Yassin massacre, a few kilometers away, as part of an operation aimed at permanently clearing the area along the Jerusalem road of Arab villages. [3]

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The Qalunya massacre at a glance

Item	Details
Date	11–12 April 1948, with demolitions lasting two days [1] [2]
Place	The village of Qalunya, on the Jerusalem–Jaffa road, about 6 km west of Jerusalem [1] [2]

Item	Details
Perpetrator	Palmach units in Operation “Nachshon” [1] [3]
Method	Shelling and indiscriminate fire, then the systematic demolition of homes and burning of the village [1] [2]
Killed	At least 14 counted by Harry Levin, “but there were more” [1] [2]
Destruction	About twenty houses blown up, and the entire village left ablaze [1] [3]

Qalunya

Qalunya was a Palestinian village of the Jerusalem district, built on a mountain slope on the main road between Jerusalem and Jaffa, about 6 kilometers from Jerusalem, at an elevation of about 650 meters. [1] In 1931 it had 632 inhabitants in 156 stone houses, with a mosque and a primary school. In 1945, 846 dunums of its land were devoted to cereals, 1,022 dunums to irrigated farming and orchards, and 200 dunums to olives. [2] [1]

Operation “Nachshon”: clearing the Jerusalem road

Operation “Nachshon” began on 3 April 1948, within “Plan Dalet,” to seize the villages along the Tel Aviv–Jerusalem road, with some 1,500 Palmach and Haganah fighters. The Arab villages on the axis were treated as “enemy bases,” and the operation has been described as a watershed “characterized by an intention and effort to clear a whole area, permanently, of Arab villages.” The Deir Yassin massacre of 9 April took place within its framework. [3]

The massacre: “like an erupting volcano”

On 11 April 1948 Palmach units attacked Qalunya and spent two days systematically demolishing its homes. [1] Haganah forces “blew up a score of houses and left the entire village ablaze.” [1] [3]

The British Jewish journalist Harry Levin accompanied the Palmach force into the village and described the scene: “Suddenly an explosion that seemed to rip open the hillside; shrieks of terror.” [1] The village looked, as WAFA quotes him, “like an erupting volcano” of artillery and indiscriminate fire. Levin said he counted fourteen dead, “but there were more.” [2] [1]

The erasure of the village

Accounts differ on how the village was emptied of its people: some say they fled after a Palmach attack on 2–3 April, some link their flight to the Deir Yassin massacre, and another says those remaining were ordered out before the destruction. [1] [3]

The settlement of “Mevaseret Yerushalayim” was built on Qalunya’s land in 1956, later merging into “Mevaseret Zion.” All that remains of the village are a few houses with arched doors and windows near the cemetery, one of them occupied by a Jewish family, piles of rubble, and agricultural terraces still planted with almond, fig and olive trees. [1]

Read about the Zionist massacres against the Palestinian people.

Conclusion

Two days after Deir Yassin, and a few kilometers from it, the Palmach spent two days blowing up Qalunya, left it ablaze, and killed at least fourteen of its people. The Qalunya massacre remains a testament that Operation “Nachshon” was not merely the opening of the Jerusalem road, but the deliberate clearing of the area’s villages of their people.

Frequently asked questions about the Qalunya massacre

When did the Qalunya massacre take place?

It took place on 11–12 April 1948, two days after the Deir Yassin massacre, with demolitions lasting two days.

Who carried out the Qalunya massacre?

It was carried out by Palmach units as part of Operation “Nachshon.”

How many people were killed in the Qalunya massacre?

Journalist Harry Levin, who accompanied the attacking force, counted fourteen dead and said there were more.

Where is Qalunya?

On the main road between Jerusalem and Jaffa, about 6 kilometers west of Jerusalem.

What was built on Qalunya’s land?

The settlement of “Mevaseret Yerushalayim” was built there in 1956, later becoming part of “Mevaseret Zion.”

Sources and references

Arabic-language sources are listed with translated titles.

1. “Qalunya,” Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question, Institute for Palestine Studies.
2. “Israeli Massacres,” Palestinian National Information Center (WAFA).
3. “Operation Nachshon,” Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question, Institute for Palestine Studies.