# Massacre of Jerusalem

**At sunset on 22 April 1953, gunfire broke out along the armistice line inside the city of Jerusalem, over a length of about four kilometers, and lasted two hours, until UN observers arranged a cease-fire. On the Arab side of the city, 10 Palestinian civilians were killed and 10 others wounded, while 6 were wounded on the Israeli side.** [1] [2] [3]

Palestinian lists know this incident as “the Jerusalem massacre,” one of the first massacres in the divided city after the Nakba. Only limited information about it is available, and this article gathers it.

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## The Jerusalem massacre of 1953 at a glance

| Item | Details |
|---|---|
| Date | 22 April 1953, at sunset [1] [3] |
| Place | Along the armistice line inside the city of Jerusalem, over a length of about 4 kilometers [3] |

| Item | Details |
|---|---|
| Duration | Two hours, until a cease-fire arranged by UN observers took effect [3] |
| Killed | 10 Palestinian civilians [1] [2] [3] |
| Wounded | 10 on the Arab side, and 6 on the Israeli side [3] |
| Perpetrator | “The enemy army” according to the Al Jazeera Net list, and Israeli snipers in West Jerusalem according to Wikipedia [2] [4] |



Damascus Gate after the Nakba. From the Jerusalem page gallery on Palestinina.

## Divided Jerusalem

After the Nakba, Jerusalem was divided by the armistice line drawn by the 1949 Jordanian-Israeli Armistice Agreement. The Old City and the eastern Arab neighborhoods came under Jordanian rule, while Israel controlled West Jerusalem, whose Arab inhabitants had been driven out. [3] The line ran between houses and streets, leaving the residents of nearby neighborhoods within range of fire.



A view of Sheikh Jarrah shortly after the Nakba. From the Jerusalem page gallery on Palestinina.

## The massacre: sunset, 22 April 1953

At sunset on 22 April 1953 firing broke out inside Jerusalem along the armistice line, over a length of about four kilometers. It lasted a full two hours, until a cease-fire arranged by UN observers took effect. [3]

The Al Jazeera Net list attributes the massacre to “the enemy army,” [2] and the Wikipedia page on the events of 1953 states that Israeli army snipers in West Jerusalem opened fire across the armistice line. [4]

## The toll

| Source | Killed | Wounded |
|---|---|---|
| Palestinian National Information Center (WAFA) | 10 Palestinian civilians | – [1] |
| Al Jazeera Net list | 10 | – [2] |
| UN documents (as cited by Wikipedia) | 10 on the Jordanian side | 10 on the Jordanian side, and 6 Israelis [3] |
| “1953 in Israel” (Wikipedia) | 6 | – [4] |

The “Jordanian side” in UN documents was East Jerusalem, then under Jordanian rule, and its victims were its Palestinian inhabitants.

## The UN: who fired the first shot?

After investigating, the UNTSO chief of staff, General Riley, reported to the Security Council on the cease-fire violation, stating that “it appeared impossible to determine who fired the first shot.” [3]

But the toll itself tells what the report left unresolved: ten killed and ten wounded on the Arab side, against six wounded and no dead on the Israeli side. [3]

## A year of massacres: 1953

The Jerusalem massacre was not the only one of 1953. Four months later, on 28 August, “Unit 101” under Ariel Sharon attacked Bureij camp in the Gaza Strip, killing at least 20 refugees, and less than two months after that the same unit carried out the Qibya massacre on 14–15 October, killing 67–69 Palestinians. [1] [2] [5]

Read about Jerusalem and the Zionist massacres against the Palestinian people.

## Conclusion

In two hours of an April evening in 1953, ten people of East Jerusalem were killed

by fire across a line dividing their city. The UN did not determine who fired the first shot, but the victims were almost all on one side. The massacre, little as has been written about it, remains a witness to the lives of Jerusalem's people on the edge of the armistice line between 1948 and 1967.

## Frequently asked questions about the Jerusalem massacre of 1953

### When did the Jerusalem massacre of 1953 take place?

It took place at sunset on 22 April 1953, and the firing lasted two hours.

### How many people were killed in the Jerusalem massacre of 1953?

Ten Palestinian civilians were killed and 10 others wounded on the Arab side of the city, while 6 Israelis were wounded.

### Where did the Jerusalem massacre of 1953 take place?

It took place along the armistice line inside the divided city of Jerusalem, over a length of about four kilometers.

### What did the UN say about the Jerusalem massacre of 1953?

General Riley's report to the Security Council stated that it appeared impossible to determine who fired the first shot, while UN observers arranged the cease-fire.

## Sources and references

Arabic-language sources are listed with translated titles.


1. "Israeli Massacres," Palestinian National Information Center (WAFA).
2. "Israeli Massacres against the Palestinian People," Al Jazeera Net, 3 October 2004.

3. “1949 Armistice Agreements,” English Wikipedia (for comparison, citing UN documents).
4. “1953 in Israel,” English Wikipedia (for comparison).
5. “Attacks on Qibya village and Bureij camp: UNTSO report and Security Council debate,” United Nations, 1953.