Deir Ayyub Massacre 1954: Two Yalu Children Executed

On the morning of 2 November 1954, three children from the village of Yalu, aged between eight and twelve, went out to gather firewood near the depopulated village of Deir Ayyub. A patrol of Israeli occupation soldiers surprised them, shot a girl who fled, and marched the other two children into a nearby valley, where they executed them by gunfire, then withdrew behind the armistice line. [1] [2]

There was no fighting and there were no fighters there: only children, firewood, and an armistice line a few hundred meters away. The boy was killed instantly, and the girl died the next morning in hospital, making the crime one of the Zionist massacres against the Palestinian people in the armistice years, when occupation soldiers fired on any Palestinian who approached the line, even a child. [3] [1]

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The Deir Ayyub massacre at a glance

Item	Details
Date	2 November 1954, at about 10 a.m. [3] [2]
Place	Near the depopulated village of Deir Ayyub, about 400 meters from the armistice line [1] [2]
Victims	Three children from the village of Yalu, aged between 8 and 12 [1] [2]
Perpetrator	A patrol of Israeli occupation soldiers [1] [4]
Toll	A boy and a girl killed, and a third girl wounded [1] [2]
Method	The two children were marched into a valley and shot, then the soldiers withdrew behind the armistice line [1] [2]

Deir Ayyub and Yalu

Deir Ayyub is a Palestinian village of the Ramla district, on slopes overlooking the Ramla–Jerusalem road, about 17.5 kilometers from Ramla. Control of it changed hands several times in May and June 1948, and its people were driven out in the Nakba. [5]

After the 1949 Armistice Agreement, the armistice line ran near Deir Ayyub, while the neighboring village of Yalu, in the Latrun area, remained east of the line. [1] [6] The people of the border villages went out to what remained of their land near the line to graze their flocks and gather firewood, exposed to the bullets of occupation patrols.

The massacre: the morning of 2 November 1954

At about ten o’clock on the morning of 2 November 1954, three children from Yalu went out to gather firewood. When they reached a point near Deir Ayyub, about 400 meters from the armistice line, several occupation soldiers surprised them. [1] [2]

One of the girls ran away; the soldiers fired at her and hit her in the thigh, but she kept running until she reached the village and told her family. [1] [2] When the villagers came out, they saw about a dozen soldiers marching the other two children toward the valley, then stopping them and shooting them, before withdrawing back behind the armistice line. [1] [2]

The boy was killed instantly; the girl was taken to hospital, where she died the next morning. [1] [2]

The child victims

Neither WAFA nor Fateh names the children. According to an account published on the ZMAP site, the two killed were Ali Muhammad Alayan (12) and his sister Fakhriyya (10), while the girl who survived was their cousin Khadija Ali Abd al-Fattah (8), who warned them of the soldiers before running away. [4]

The same account says the children's father followed their tracks, found Ali already dead, and found Fakhriyya still alive; she told what had happened before dying in hospital. [4]

The accounts: what do the sources say?

Source	Date	Account
Palestinian National Information Center (WAFA)	2 November 1954	Soldiers attacked Deir Ayyub and killed two children, left to bleed to death [3]
Fateh News	2 November 1954	Three children from Yalu; a boy and a girl killed, and a girl wounded [1]
Palestine Remembered	2 November 1954	"Yalu massacre": the same account in detail [2]
ZMAP	2 November 1950	Children from Deir Ayyub, with names, without citing a source [4]

The accounts agree on the day and month and on the course of the crime, but

differ on the year and the children's village. This article adopts 1954, the date agreed on by most Palestinian sources, and Yalu as the village, since Deir Ayyub had been depopulated since 1948. [3] [1] [2] [5]

Yalu after the massacre

Yalu's tragedy did not end with the killing of its children. In June 1967, when Israel occupied the Latrun area, the occupation army razed the villages of Yalu, Imwas and Beit Nuba to the ground, although they had offered no resistance, and forcibly transferred their inhabitants, who numbered up to ten thousand and remain displaced in the West Bank, Jordan and beyond. The Jewish National Fund of Canada then established a recreational park for Israelis on the land of the destroyed villages. [6]

Conclusion

In the Deir Ayyub massacre, occupation soldiers did not face fighters, but three children gathering firewood. They wounded a girl as she fled, marched a boy and a girl into the valley and executed them, then returned behind the armistice line. Thirteen years later Yalu itself was wiped off the map and its people driven out. The crime remains a testament that Israeli bullets on the armistice lines made no distinction between a fighter and a child.

Frequently asked questions about the Deir Ayyub massacre

When did the Deir Ayyub massacre take place?

It took place on the morning of 2 November 1954, at about 10 a.m.

Who were the victims of the Deir Ayyub massacre?

Three children from the village of Yalu, aged between 8 and 12; a boy and a girl were killed, and a third girl was wounded.

How were the children killed in Deir Ayyub?

Occupation soldiers marched the two children into a nearby valley and shot them, after wounding a third girl who tried to flee.

How is the Deir Ayyub massacre related to the Yalu massacre?

They are two names for the same crime: the children were from the village of Yalu, and the crime took place near the village of Deir Ayyub.

Where is Deir Ayyub?

Deir Ayyub is a depopulated village of the Ramla district, overlooking the Ramla–Jerusalem road, near the Latrun area.

Sources and references

Arabic-language sources are listed with translated titles.

1. “Deir Ayyub Massacre,” Fateh News, November 2021.
2. “Zionist Massacres between 1947 and 1996,” Palestine Remembered.
3. “Israeli Massacres,” Palestinian National Information Center (WAFA).
4. “Zionist Massacres against the Palestinian People: Chapter Two,” ZMAP.
5. “Dayr Ayyub,” Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question, Institute for Palestine Studies.
6. “Where Villages Stood: Israel’s Continuing Violations of International Law in Occupied Latroun, 1967–2007,” Al-Haq, 29 March 2008.