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Muhammad Abu Tubaykh | The Fedayee Who Fired the First Assassination Bullet



The fedayee **Muhammad Abdul Ghani Abu Tubaykh** fired the first assassination bullet of the Palestinian revolution. Born in early 1914, he fired three shots on 24 November 1929 at the British occupation's Attorney General, Norman Bentwich, wounding him, and became the hero of Ibrahim Tuqan's poem "The Fedayee." [1][2]

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Early life and work in the Attorney General's office

Muhammad Abdul Ghani Abu Tubaykh Sabana was born in the village of Qabatiya in the Jenin district in early 1914. [1]

Muhammad worked as an office attendant for the British occupation authorities' Attorney General, "Norman Bentwich," known for his intense hatred of Palestinians and his unjust rulings against them, and for his tireless efforts to seize Palestinians' property and land in service of the Zionist project. His decisions angered Palestinians and sparked mass demonstrations, leading to the outbreak of the Buraq revolt. [1][2]

The British occupation authorities went on ignoring the Palestinians' demands and responded by tightening the guard around the Attorney General, "Bentwich."

The operation

Muhammad Abu Tubaykh decided that he would play a part. On 24 November 1929 he set out carrying his pistol and a number of bullets, waited for Norman in front of his office, and when he stood before him, addressed him, saying:

> You are the enemy of the Arabs, and you must be killed.

He fired three bullets, which wounded him. [2]

Trial and prison

Occupation forces arrested the young Muhammad Abu Tubaykh, and he appeared before the court. The prosecution lawyer tried to claim he was mentally disturbed in order to lighten his sentence, but he stood before the judge and said:

> “I carried out this act out of patriotic motive; I believe that Bentwich is an enemy of my nation and my religion.”

The British occupation sentenced the fedayee to ten years in prison, in early 1931. While in prison he tried to kill one of the guards and was given three additional years. [1]

The impact of the operation

This was the first fedayee operation to target a high-ranking figure of the British occupation authorities, and it put heavy pressure on them, pushing them to force “Bentwich” to resign.

Akram Zu’aytar described the operation, saying:

If strikes, protests, conferences and agreements cannot move that Zionist from his post, then what moved him but a bullet like Muhammad Abu Tubaykh’s.

After prison

Abdul Ghani Abu Tubaykh was released in 1943 and moved to Mosul in Iraq, where he worked in trade and took part in the al-Shawwaf movement, in which he was martyred in 1956. [1]

The poem “The Fedayee”

The poet Ibrahim Tuqan celebrated the operation and dedicated to its hero his poem “The Fedayee,” which he first published without his name for fear of arrest; it was later set to music and sung, and in 2005 opened the title sequence of the series “Al-Taghriba al-Filastiniyya.” [2]

لا تَسلْ عن سلامتِهْ

روحه فوق راحتِهْ

بدَّلَتْهُ همومُهُ

كفناً من وسادتِهْ

يَرقبُ الساعةَ التي

بعدَها هولُ ساعتِهْ

شاغلٌ فكرَ مَنْ يراهُ

بإطراقِ هامتِهْ

بيْنَ جنبيْهِ خافقٌ

يتلظَّى بغايتهْ

من رأى فَحْمةَ الدُّجى

أُضْرِمَتْ من شرارتِهْ

حَمَّلَتْهُ جهنَّمْ

طَرفَاً من رسالتِه

هو بالباب واقفُ

والرَّدى منه خائفُ

فاهدئي يا عواصفُ

خجلاً من جرأتِهْ

***

صامتٌ لوْ تكلَّما

لَفَظَ النَّارَ والدِّما

قُلْ لمن عاب صمتَهُ

خُلِقَ الحزمُ أبكما

وأخو الحزم لم تزل

يدُهُ تسْبِقُ الفما

لا تلوموه قد رأى

منْهجَ الحقِّ مُظلما

وبلاداً أحبَّها

ركنُها قد تهدَّما

وخصوماً ببغْيِهِمْ

ضجَّت الأَرضُ والسما

مرَّ حينٌ فكاد يق

تُلهُ اليأْسُ إنَّما

***

هو بالباب واقفُ

والرَّدى منه خائفُ

فاهدئي يا عواصفُ

خجلاً مِن جرأتِهْ

Sources and references

1. Palestinian National Information Center (WAFA), “The pioneers: Abdul Ghani Abu Tubaykh” (in Arabic).
2. Khalid Abdullah al-Khamees, “The first Palestinian fedayee,” Al-Jazirah (Saudi Arabia), 31 December 2023 (in Arabic).