Battle of the Kfar Etzion Convoy (Dheisheh), 1948 | The Ambush



In late March 1948 the Zionist gangs readied a huge convoy to supply the colony of **Kfar Etzion** near Hebron. The fighters of the Holy Jihad Army under **Kamel Arikat** ambushed it between Burak Sulayman and Dheisheh near Bethlehem and besieged it at the “Nabi Daniel” building. [1][2]

The battle ended with British forces stepping in and the convoy handing its weapons to the fighters. [1]

Contents

1. At a glance
2. The context
3. The ambush

4. British intervention and the surrender
5. Spoils and losses
6. Timeline
7. Frequently asked questions about the Kfar Etzion convoy battle (Dheisheh)

At a glance

Item	Details
Date	27–30 March 1948 (sources differ on the days of the fighting)
Place	The road between Burak Sulayman and Dheisheh near Bethlehem, and the “Nabi Daniel” building
Sides	Holy Jihad fighters under Kamel Arikat, and a convoy guarded by the Haganah and the British army
The convoy	100 trucks, 19 armoured vehicles, a bulldozer and five buses, per WAFA
Outcome	The convoy hands over its weapons through British mediation; spoils for the fighters

[1]

The context

Kfar Etzion belonged to a cluster of colonies built on land of Hebron and Bethlehem south of Jerusalem, and its supply line ran along the main Jerusalem–Hebron road. Supply convoys therefore became a direct target for the fighters in March and April 1948, in the battle for the roads before the British withdrawal.

Note on sourcing: the Arabic sources reviewed describe the battle briefly; the background here is general and is not attributed to a specific source.

The ambush

According to WAFA a large convoy passed from the coast to Jerusalem on the evening of 27 March 1948, guarded by the Haganah and the British army, and

reached Kfar Etzion on 28 March. On its way back the fighters under Kamel Arikat, deputy army commander, ambushed it between Burak Sulayman and Dheisheh. Yusuf al-Rishmawi was killed after disabling the lead armoured vehicle with a grenade. [1]

The fighting raged after the Zionists infiltrated the “Nabi Daniel” building and dug in there. [1][2]

British intervention and the surrender

According to WAFA the British first refused to intervene and sent Arif al-Arif and Isa al-Bandak to persuade the fighters to let the trapped convoy leave. A British force under Colonel Harper turned back after the fighters’ mines exploded on its route. Harper then negotiated with Arikat after the Mufti, by radio, set the condition that the Zionists hand over all their weapons, with the Red Cross moving them to Jerusalem. [1]

The account adds that on 30 March Arikat refused to let them leave before surrendering and insisted on surrender. [1]

Spoils and losses

Item	Per WAFA	Circulating account
Fighters martyred	3	12
Zionist dead	15 dead and dozens wounded	The true number is unknown
Captured / rescued	16 captured, handed to the British and the Red Cross	The British rescued 159, many of them wounded
Spoils	3 armoured vehicles, 8 tow trucks, 30 trucks and a bus	3 armoured vehicles, 8 armoured buses, 30 trucks and 170 weapons

[1]

Timeline

Date	Event
27 March 1948	The large convoy passes from the coast to Jerusalem in the evening [1]
28 March 1948	The convoy reaches Kfar Etzion [1]
27–29 March 1948	Arikat’s ambush between Burak Sulayman and Dheisheh, and the stand at “Nabi Daniel” (dating varies) [2]
30 March 1948	The fighters demand surrender; Arikat refuses an evacuation [1]
Afterwards	Harper’s mediation, handover of weapons, prisoners moved by the Red Cross [1]

Frequently asked questions about the Kfar Etzion convoy battle (Dheisheh)

Where did the battle take place?

On the road between Burak Sulayman and Dheisheh near Bethlehem, and around the “Nabi Daniel” building. [1]

Who led the fighters?

Kamel Arikat, deputy army commander according to WAFA. [1]

How big was the convoy?

100 trucks, 19 armoured vehicles, a bulldozer and five buses according to WAFA, while the popular text says 58 armoured vehicles. [1]

How did it end?

Through British mediation the Zionists handed over their weapons and the Red Cross moved them to Jerusalem. [1]

How many fighters were martyred?

WAFA says 3; the circulating account says 12. [1]

Sources and references

1. Palestinian National Information Center (WAFA), “Battles and revolts in Palestine”, the Battle of Dheisheh (in Arabic).
2. “Battles of the Nakba: a list of battles, dates and places”, Dheisheh entry (in Arabic).