Gaza Artery Massacre 2003: Apache Missiles on Salah al-Din Street

On the evening of Wednesday, 11 June 2003, two Israeli Apache helicopters fired four missiles at a civilian car on Salah al-Din Street in the Shuja'iyya neighborhood east of Gaza City, the busiest street in the Strip, described as its artery. The missiles targeted two members of the Qassam Brigades, but killed with them six civilians who were passing in the street, among them two women, and wounded about 35 others, including 14 children. [1]

"Were it not for divine providence, a massacre with hundreds of victims would have happened here," an eyewitness summed up. The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights described the attack as the worst assassination of that week, saying the use of helicopters and missiles against a moving car in a crowded area showed "flagrant disregard for the lives of Palestinian civilians." [1]

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The Gaza artery massacre at a glance

Item	Details
Date	Wednesday evening, 11 June 2003, at about 6 p.m. [1] [2]
Place	Salah al-Din Street, Shuja’iyya, east of Gaza City, near the market [1] [3]
Perpetrator	Two Israeli Apache combat helicopters [1] [2]
Weapon	Four air-to-surface missiles fired at a moving civilian car [1]
Declared target	The assassination of Tito Masoud and Suhail Abu Nahel of the Qassam Brigades [1] [2]
Killed	8: the two Qassam members and six civilian passers-by, including two women [1]
Wounded	About 35 civilians, including 14 children [1]

The massacre: four missiles on a crowded street

At about 6 p.m., a car carrying Tito Masoud and Suhail Abu Nahel was traveling along Salah al-Din Street in Shuja’iyya, near the public market, when two Israeli combat helicopters fired four missiles at it, destroying it completely. [1] [3] The two men were killed instantly, [2] and missile shrapnel flew into the passers-by and shops on the crowded street, killing six civilians, wounding dozens, and damaging nearby homes and facilities. [1]

The killed and the wounded

Name	Age	Notes
Yasser Hassan Khalil Humaid	35	Civilian passer-by
Khalil Hassan Khalil Humaid	33	Civilian passer-by, Yasser’s brother
Azzam Husni al-Je’el	40	Civilian passer-by
Rateb Mahfouz al-Je’el	55	Civilian passer-by

Name	Age	Notes
Majeda Mahmoud Mohammed Dalloul	20	Civilian passer-by
Samia Mahmoud Mohammed Dalloul	55	Civilian passer-by
Tito Mahmoud Masoud	36	Qassam Brigades, Jabalia camp
Suhail No’man Abu Nahel	30	Qassam Brigades, al-Shati camp

The civilians killed included two brothers of the Humaid family and two women of the Dalloul family. About 35 civilians were wounded, including 14 children. [1] Tito Masoud, born in 1967 in Jabalia camp to a family driven out of Deir Sneid in 1948, was a Qassam Brigades commander. [2]

Why Salah al-Din Street?

Palestinians affirm that the occupation deliberately struck the car on this crowded street to cause the greatest number of casualties. The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights holds that the attack was intended to cause maximum civilian casualties as retaliation, linking it to orders by Sharon and his defence minister Shaul Mofaz to escalate “qualitative acts” against Palestinian activists. [1]

It was not the only strike that day: late the same night helicopters struck two cars in the Sabra neighborhood, and the next day they struck a car in Sheikh Radwan, killing a Qassam member, his wife, their two children and three passers-by. [3] [4]

Reactions

Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas called for a halt to all attacks and immediate steps to implement the “Road Map.” [4] The UN Secretary-General said that the Israeli attacks in Gaza that day “only contribute to a renewed cycle of violence.” [4] The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights called for an international investigation and the prosecution of those responsible for war crimes. [1]

Read about the Zionist massacres against the Palestinian people.

Conclusion

On the evening of 11 June 2003, the occupation fired four missiles at a car on Gaza’s busiest street, killing six civilians on their way, among them two women and two brothers, and wounding 35, including 14 children. The Gaza artery massacre remains a testament to an assassination policy that did not hesitate to turn crowded streets into killing grounds.

Frequently asked questions about the Gaza artery massacre

When did the Gaza artery massacre take place?

It took place on Wednesday evening, 11 June 2003, at about 6 p.m., on Salah al-Din Street in Gaza’s Shuja’iyya neighborhood.

Why is it called the Gaza artery massacre?

Because it took place on Salah al-Din Street, the busiest street in the Gaza Strip, described as its artery.

How many people were killed in the Gaza artery massacre?

Eight were killed: the Qassam members Tito Masoud and Suhail Abu Nahel, and six civilian passers-by, including two women; about 35 were wounded, including 14 children.

What weapon was used in the massacre?

Four air-to-surface missiles fired by two Israeli Apache combat helicopters at a moving car.

Did the occupation deliberately cause civilian casualties?

Palestinians affirm so, and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights holds that

striking a car on a crowded street with helicopters was intended to cause the greatest number of casualties.

Sources and references

Arabic-language sources are listed with translated titles.

1. “Weekly Report on Israeli Human Rights Violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories,” Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, 12 June 2003.
2. “Tito Masoud: Engineer of the Qassam Brigades’ Guided Charges,” Al Jazeera Net, 20 February 2024.
3. “IOF Continue Killing Civilians and Tighten their Siege on the OPT,” Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, June 2003.
4. “Chronological Review of Events Relating to the Question of Palestine: June 2003,” Division for Palestinian Rights, United Nations.