Umm al-Shawf Massacre 1948: Seven Young Men Executed by the Irgun

In May 1948, after the occupation of the village of Umm al-Shawf in the Haifa district, a force of the Zionist “Etzel” (Irgun) organization searched a group of refugees and found a pistol and a rifle. When the owner could not be identified, its members picked seven young men at random and executed them. [1] [2]

The Umm al-Shawf massacre was a mass execution of unarmed civilians without trial or evidence, as punishment for two weapons whose owner was unknown. In the same days, the village’s entire population was driven out. [1]

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The Umm al-Shawf massacre at a glance

Item	Details
Date	12–14 May 1948, when the village was occupied [1]
Place	The village of Umm al-Shawf, Bilad al-Rawha, Haifa district, 29.5 km south of Haifa [1] [3]
Perpetrator	A force of the “Etzel” (Irgun) organization [1] [2]

Item	Details
Pretext	Finding a pistol and a rifle with a group of refugees [1] [2]
Killed	Seven young men chosen at random and executed [1] [2]
Fate of the village	Its people were driven toward Rummana and Umm al-Fahm, and the settlement of “Giv’at Nili” was built on its land in 1953 [1] [3]

The depopulated village of Umm al-Shawf, Haifa district. From the Umm al-Shawf page gallery on Palestinina.

Umm al-Shawf

Umm al-Shawf was a Palestinian village of the Haifa district, on the southern slope of Wadi al-Marah in Bilad al-Rawha, about 29.5 kilometers south of Haifa, at an elevation of about 125 meters. [1] [3] It had 480 inhabitants in 1945, [2] [3] and its lands covered 7,426 dunums, mostly planted with cereals. [3]

The massacre: seven young men executed

Between 12 and 14 May 1948, Irgun forces attacked and occupied Umm al-Shawf. [1] After the occupation, an Irgun force searched a group of refugees or detainees and found a pistol and a rifle. When the owner could not be identified, seven young men were separated from the group and killed. [1] [2] WAFA says the seven were chosen “at random.” [2]

Salman Abu Sitta’s *Atlas of Palestine* records the incident under 12 May 1948 as the execution of seven prisoners after a “summary trial” by the Irgun. Accounts differ over the identity and origin of the group from which the seven were chosen, so it cannot be stated with certainty that all were residents of Umm al-Shawf. [1]

Ruins of the depopulated village of Umm al-Shawf. From the Umm al-Shawf page gallery on Palestinina.

The expulsion and erasure of the village

The entire population of Umm al-Shawf was driven out in May 1948, heading toward Rummana and Umm al-Fahm. [1] Nothing remains of the village but scattered piles of stone from its houses and the shrine of Shaykh Abd Allah, which still stands. The settlement of “Giv’at Nili” was built in 1953 on village lands south of the site. [3]

Read about the Zionist massacres against the Palestinian people.

Conclusion

In Umm al-Shawf, finding a pistol and a rifle whose owner was unknown was enough to execute seven young men chosen at random, without trial or evidence. Then the village’s entire population was driven out, its houses erased, and a settlement built on its land. The Umm al-Shawf massacre remains a testament to the collective punishment and summary executions that accompanied the occupation of the villages of Bilad al-Rawha in 1948.

Frequently asked questions about the Umm al-Shawf massacre

When did the Umm al-Shawf massacre take place?

It took place when the village was occupied, between 12 and 14 May 1948; Salman Abu Sitta’s Atlas records it under 12 May 1948.

Who carried out the Umm al-Shawf massacre?

It was carried out by a force of the Zionist “Etzel” (Irgun) organization.

How many people were killed in the Umm al-Shawf massacre?

Seven young men chosen at random from a group of refugees were executed.

What pretext did the perpetrators use?

Finding a pistol and a rifle with the group of refugees, without knowing who owned them.

Where is Umm al-Shawf?

In Bilad al-Rawha, Haifa district, about 29.5 kilometers south of Haifa.

Sources and references

Arabic-language sources are listed with translated titles.

1. “The Depopulated Village of Umm al-Shawf / District of Haifa,” Palestinina.
2. “Israeli Massacres,” Palestinian National Information Center (WAFA).
3. “Umm al-Shawf,” Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question, Institute for Palestine Studies.