Al-Sha’af Massacre 2004: Missiles on a Field in East Gaza

At about midnight on 6–7 September 2004, Israeli occupation helicopters and tanks struck the Sheikh Ahmed Yassin stadium in the al-Sha’af area of al-Tuffah, east of Gaza City, with at least five missiles and artillery shells that hit the young men gathered there directly. Fourteen young men aged 18 to 26 were killed, and dozens were wounded. [1] [2]

The occupation army admitted responsibility for the strike, saying it was a “response” to an attack in Beersheba a week earlier. [1] The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights condemned the “retaliatory actions” of the occupation forces and called on the international community to intervene immediately to stop them. [1]

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The al-Sha’af massacre at a glance

Item	Details
Date	At about midnight on 6–7 September 2004 (early Tuesday) [1]
Place	The Sheikh Ahmed Yassin stadium, al-Sha’af area, al-Tuffah neighborhood, east Gaza City [1]

Item	Details
Perpetrator	Israeli helicopter gunships and tanks [1]
Weapon	At least five missiles and shells that hit the young men directly [1] [2]
Killed	14 young men, aged 18 to 26 [1] [2]
Wounded	At least 12 according to PCHR, and at least 30 according to the UN [1] [2]

The massacre: midnight, 7 September 2004

According to PCHR's preliminary investigation, Israeli helicopter gunships and tanks attacked the field, used by Hamas as a training centre, at about midnight, and several missiles and shells hit the young men directly. [1] Other reports described the site as a Hamas community centre complex near Shuja'iyya, and said the helicopters fired at least five missiles. [2] The circulated account says tanks shelled the neighborhood at the same time, and clashes broke out between occupation forces and resistance fighters.

The killed

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights documented the names of the fourteen killed, the youngest of them eighteen: [1]

Name	Age
Eihab Mohammed al-Deeb	23
Ussama Awni Hajaliya	26
Sa'id Yasser Ouda	25
Mo'tassem Fu'ad al-Zarbatli	23
Ghassan Obaid	23
Mohammed Omar Jindiya	21
Aaref Qassem Jindiya	20

Name	Age
Ahmed Khairi Eskafi	25
Adham Karim Quraiqe’	22
Bilal Fayez Quraiqe’	22
Mohammed Abdullah Qanou’	18
Ezzat Ahmed al-Wadiya	19
Fares Sa’di al-Sirsawi	22
Ayman Khazzaa’ Farahat	18

Among the dead were two members of the Jindiya family and two of the Quraiqe’ family. At least 12 were wounded, five of them critically, [1] while other reports spoke of at least 30 wounded. [2]

Retaliation as policy

The occupation army did not hide that the strike was an act of retaliation; it explicitly linked it to the Beersheba attack. [1] The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights saw it as a grave escalation, condemned “retaliatory actions by Israeli troops” in the occupied territories, and reminded the states party to the Fourth Geneva Convention of their duty to “ensure respect” for the Convention and protect Palestinian civilians. [1]

Reactions

Some fifty thousand Palestinians attended the funerals in Gaza City, and a general strike spread through the Strip’s cities and camps. Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei told the Cabinet: “No crime goes unpunished.” [2]

Read about the Zionist massacres against the Palestinian people.

Conclusion

At midnight on a single September night in 2004, occupation helicopters and tanks struck a field in east Gaza, killing 14 young men at once, the youngest eighteen, and admitted doing so as retaliation. The al-Sha’af massacre remains a testament to the policy of extrajudicial killing and retaliatory punishment the occupation pursued in Gaza.

Frequently asked questions about the al-Sha’af massacre

When did the al-Sha’af massacre take place?

It took place at about midnight on 6–7 September 2004, in the early hours of Tuesday, 7 September.

Where did the al-Sha’af massacre take place?

At the Sheikh Ahmed Yassin stadium in the al-Sha’af area of al-Tuffah, east of Gaza City, next to Shuja’iyya.

How many people were killed in the al-Sha’af massacre?

Fourteen young men aged 18 to 26 were killed, and dozens were wounded.

How did the occupation justify the strike?

It said the strike was a response to an attack in Beersheba a week earlier, making it, by its own admission, an act of retaliation.

Are al-Saaf and al-Sha’af the same place?

Yes; according to PCHR the correct name of the area is “al-Sha’af,” while “al-Saaf” appears in some texts.

Sources and references

1. “14 Palestinians Killed and 12 Others Injured in Gaza City by IOF,” Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, Ref. 127/2004, 7 September 2004.
2. “Chronological Review of Events Relating to the Question of Palestine: September 2004,” Division for Palestinian Rights, United Nations.