The Battle of Khirbat al-Mahm 1948: When Beit Anan and Village Fighters Stopped the Push on Radar Hill

Khirbat al-Mahm is a site in the north-western countryside of Jerusalem, between the villages of Qatanna and Beit Anan, close to Radar Hill, which commands the Jerusalem road and overlooks the Ramallah road. On **17 July 1948**, during the ten days of fighting between the two truces, a Zionist company tried to infiltrate towards the radar position by way of this ruin. The people of Beit Anan confronted it, followed by fighters from the neighbouring villages under Fakhri Ismail, who surrounded it and stormed its positions, killing most of its men within hours while the rest fled. [1]

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At a glance

Item	Details
Date	17 July 1948
Place	Khirbat al-Mahm between Qatanna and Beit Anan, Jerusalem district, near the radar position

Item	Details
Arab forces	The people of Beit Anan, fighters from the neighbouring villages, and an infantry platoon of the Jordanian Arab Army with a mortar and machine guns
Commander	Fakhri Ismail
Enemy forces	A company of the Zionist militias
Enemy losses	Most of the company killed and the rest put to flight
Martyrs	One martyr and three wounded
Outcome	The attempt to infiltrate towards the radar position was defeated

[1]

The radar position before the battle

Radar Hill, near the village of Biddu, was one of the most fiercely contested positions in the Jerusalem countryside, because it overlooked the Jerusalem road and the Ramallah–Jerusalem road. At dawn on **26 May 1948** the Jordanian Arab Army seized the hill, expelling the Zionist garrison, and one of its companies took up position in the radar camp opposite the settlement of Ma’ale HaHamisha. The enemy kept trying to retake the hill every night, even during the truce. [1][2]

The rest of the battalion deployed in the surrounding villages to stop the militias threatening the Ramallah–Jerusalem and Ramallah–Latrun roads. At the start of the first truce the 5th Infantry Battalion, formed on 14 June 1948, took over these positions. [1][2]

The battle

When the first truce ended and fighting resumed on **9 July 1948**, the Zionist militias concentrated their attacks on Jordanian army positions at Latrun and Bab al-Wad. On the morning of **17 July** a Zionist company advanced towards the radar position; the people of Beit Anan intercepted it and killed two of its men. [1]

When the news reached Khirbat al-Mahm, fighters from the neighbouring villages under **Fakhri Ismail** rushed to confront the company. Clashes broke out, and Fakhri Ismail called on the Jordanian battalion for help; it sent an infantry platoon with a mortar and machine guns to support the fighters. [1]

The fighters surrounded the Zionist force in the ruin and stormed its positions, killing most of its men within hours, while the rest fled. One fighter was martyred in the battle and three were wounded. [1]

What the battle shows

The Battle of Khirbat al-Mahm was small in scale, but it shows a pattern repeated across the Jerusalem countryside in 1948: villagers were the first to stand in the way, local fighters took charge of the battle, and the Arab Army backed them with heavier weapons when they called for help. Thanks to this solidarity, the villages north-west of Jerusalem, among them Beit Anan, Qatanna and Biddu, remained outside the occupation's grip until 1967.

Between the accounts

Enemy losses: WAFA gives no specific number for the Zionist company's dead, saying only that most of its men were killed, in addition to two killed by the people of Beit Anan at the start. We found no other Arab source detailing the battle. [1]

Timeline

Date	Event
26 May 1948	The Jordanian Arab Army takes Radar Hill and occupies its camp [2]
14 June 1948	The 5th Infantry Battalion is formed and takes over the positions [2]
9 July 1948	Fighting resumes after the first truce [1]
17 July 1948	The people of Beit Anan intercept the Zionist company, killing two [1]

Date	Event
17 July 1948	Fakhri Ismail and village fighters surround the company at Khirbat al-Mahm and wipe out most of it [1]

Frequently asked questions about the Battle of Khirbat al-Mahm

Where is Khirbat al-Mahm?

In the north-western Jerusalem countryside, between the villages of Qatanna and Beit Anan, near the radar position. [1]

When was the Battle of Khirbat al-Mahm?

On 17 July 1948, during the ten days between the first and second truces. [1]

Who led the fighters in the battle?

Fakhri Ismail, supported by an infantry platoon of the Jordanian Arab Army. [1]

What was the outcome?

Most of the Zionist company was killed and the rest fled; one fighter was martyred and three wounded, and the attempt to infiltrate towards the radar failed. [1]

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Sources and references

1. WAFA – Palestinian National Information Centre, “Battles of the Nakba”: “The Battle of Khirbat al-Mahm” (in Arabic).
2. General Command of the Jordanian Armed Forces, “The 1948 War” (in

Arabic).