The Battle of Ghor al-Safi 1948: When 29 Gendarmes Repelled a Militia Attack by the Dead Sea

Ghor al-Safi is an agricultural plain south-east of the Dead Sea, some eight kilometres from the settlement built by the Zionist potash company on the sea's southern shore. At dawn on **2 June 1948** the Zionist militias launched a treacherous attack on it after laying mines and cutting the telephone lines, and surrounded its gendarmerie post; its 29 defenders held out until help arrived and Jordanian aircraft appeared overhead, and the attackers withdrew, pursued to the very gates of their settlement. [1][2]

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At a glance

Item	Details
Date	Dawn, 2 June 1948
Place	Ghor al-Safi, south-east of the Dead Sea, near the potash company settlement
Defenders	29 gendarmes at the Ghor al-Safi post, a relief detachment of soldiers, and three Jordanian aircraft

Item	Details
Attackers	A Zionist force from the direction of the potash works
Enemy losses	About 40 hits
Martyrs	Two gendarmes killed and seven wounded, and five civilians killed, including two women
Outcome	The attackers withdrew and were pursued to the gates of the settlement

[1][2]

Ghor al-Safi and the potash works

On the southern shore of the Dead Sea, the Zionist potash company had built works and a settlement under the Mandate, some eight kilometres from Ghor al-Safi. When the war broke out the militias evacuated the company’s installations completely under an agreement with the British and Jordanian authorities – and soon afterwards they attacked the Ghor. [1]

The attack

Before attacking, the militias laid mines on the Ghor–Karak road and cut the telephone lines to prevent reinforcements from arriving. They struck at dawn on 2 June, overran a wide area of the Ghor, surrounded the Jordanian gendarmerie post and came close to taking it. [1][2]

The post’s defenders, 29 gendarmes, held out against the encirclement, and the people of the Ghor paid the price of the treachery: five civilians were killed, two of them women. [2]

Relief and pursuit

A detachment of soldiers arrived, repaired the telephone lines, called for reinforcements, cleared the road of mines and then opened fire on the attackers. When the news reached Amman, three Jordanian aircraft flew over the battlefield;

the defenders’ morale soared, and the attackers withdrew under heavy fire after some forty of them had been hit. [1][2]

The soldiers pursued the retreating force to the gates of the settlement. Two gendarmes were martyred and seven wounded. [1][2]

What the battle shows

The Battle of Ghor al-Safi shows that the ambitions of the Zionist project did not stop at the borders of Palestine, and that the militias did not hesitate to attack land east of the river itself. It also shows that the steadfastness of a small garrison, backed by timely reinforcements, was enough to repel an attack prepared with mines and severed communications.

Timeline

Date	Event
Before 2 June 1948	The potash installations evacuated by agreement with the British and Jordanian authorities [1]
Dawn, 2 June 1948	Mines laid, telephone lines cut, attack on Ghor al-Safi and encirclement of the gendarmerie post [1]
2 June 1948	Relief arrives, Jordanian aircraft overfly, the attackers withdraw [2]

Frequently asked questions about the Battle of Ghor al-Safi

Where is Ghor al-Safi?

South-east of the Dead Sea, some eight kilometres from the potash company settlement. [1]

When was the Battle of Ghor al-Safi?

At dawn on 2 June 1948. [1][2]

How many defended the post?

29 gendarmes, later joined by a relief detachment and three Jordanian aircraft. [2]

What were the losses?

About 40 attackers were hit; two gendarmes were martyred and seven wounded, and five civilians, including two women, were killed. [1][2]

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Sources and references

1. WAFA – Palestinian National Information Centre, “Battles of the Nakba”: “The Battle of Ghor al-Safi” (in Arabic).
2. Nayrouz News Agency, “On the centenary of Public Security: some of the sacrifices of its men on the soil of Palestine” (in Arabic).