Salam Building Massacre, Jerusalem 1948: A Stolen Army Truck Bomb



On 20 February 1948, less than three months before the Nakba, the Zionist “Stern” Gang stole a British army vehicle, filled it with explosives, and placed it in front of the Salam Building in the city of Jerusalem. When it exploded, 14 Palestinians were killed and 26 others wounded. [1] [2]

The Salam Building massacre was one of a series of attacks by Zionist gangs on Palestinians in the months following the partition resolution, aimed at spreading terror and driving them to leave their towns and villages. [2]

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The Salam Building massacre at a glance

Item	Details
Date	20 February 1948 [1] [2]
Place	The Salam Building, north-east Jerusalem [1] [2]
Perpetrator	The Zionist “Stern” Gang (Lehi) [1] [2]
Method	A stolen British army vehicle, filled with explosives and placed in front of the building [1] [2]
Killed	14 Palestinians [1] [2]
Wounded	26 [1] [2]



The Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem, 1938. From the Jerusalem page gallery on Palestinina.

The Stern Gang

Avraham Stern founded the “Stern” Gang, known in Hebrew as “Lehi” (Lohamei Herut Israel, “Fighters for the Freedom of Israel”), in 1940, after splitting from the Irgun. [2]

Together with the Irgun, the gang carried out the worst massacre of 1948, the Deir Yassin massacre of 9 April 1948, in which between 250 and 300 Palestinians were killed, with the participation of Yitzhak Shamir, who later became prime minister of the occupation. The gang was merged into the occupation army in May 1948, and its Jerusalem wing coordinated the assassination of UN mediator Count Bernadotte the same year. [2]

The massacre: 20 February 1948

On 20 February 1948 members of the Stern Gang stole a British army vehicle, filled it with explosives, and placed it in front of the Salam Building in north-east Jerusalem. [1] [2]

The vehicle exploded in front of the building, killing fourteen Palestinians and wounding twenty-six others. [1] [2]



A view of the Musrara neighborhood from Damascus Gate, mid-1930s. From the Jerusalem page gallery on Palestinina.

In the context of the massacres of 1948

The Salam Building massacre came just six days after the attack on the village of Sa'sa' near Safad on 14 February 1948, in which some sixty Palestinians were killed, most of them women and children. [2]

Sources link these attacks to the campaign of massacres waged by the Zionist gangs after UN Resolution 181 on the partition of Palestine of 29 November 1947, aimed at terrorizing Palestinians and driving them out, before the entry of the Arab armies on 15 May 1948. [2] In Jerusalem itself, it was followed less than two months later by the Deir Yassin massacre on the city's western outskirts.



Scenes from the battle of Katamon in Jerusalem during the Nakba war, 1948. From the Jerusalem page gallery on Palestinina.

Read about Jerusalem and the Zionist massacres against the Palestinian people.

Conclusion

With a stolen army vehicle and a load of explosives, the Stern Gang killed fourteen Palestinians in front of the Salam Building in Jerusalem, less than three months before the Nakba. The massacre was a link in a long chain of bombings and massacres that prepared the ground for the expulsion of the people of Jerusalem and Palestine, culminating weeks later in Deir Yassin.

Frequently asked questions about the Salam

Building massacre

When did the Salam Building massacre in Jerusalem take place?

It took place on 20 February 1948, less than three months before the Nakba.

Who carried out the Salam Building massacre?

It was carried out by the Zionist “Stern” Gang (Lehi), founded by Avraham Stern in 1940.

How many people were killed in the Salam Building massacre?

Fourteen Palestinians were killed and 26 others wounded.

How was the massacre carried out?

The gang stole a British army vehicle, filled it with explosives, placed it in front of the Salam Building, and detonated it.

Sources and references

Arabic-language sources are listed with translated titles.

1. “Israeli Massacres,” Palestinian National Information Center (WAFA).
2. Mahmoud Munir, “The Salam Building Massacre in Jerusalem: On the Eve of the Nakba,” Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, 20 February 2024.