Ramla Massacre 1948: The Surrender Ruse, Killings and Expulsion

After Zionist forces occupied the city of Ramla in July 1948, their officers offered its people a choice between leaving the city and mass imprisonment. It was a ruse, during which they killed many of the city's people and dumped their bodies on the main road between Ramla and Lydda, then expelled the rest, until only 25 families remained in Ramla. [1] [2]

The massacre took place in the same days as the Dahmash mosque massacre and the death march in neighbouring Lydda, and it is one of the Zionist massacres against the Palestinian people.

Contents

1. The Ramla massacre at a glance
2. Ramla before the fall
3. 11 July 1948: the surrender document
4. The massacre: the ruse of exile or prison
5. "Go to Abdullah": the expulsion
6. Correcting the date
7. Frequently asked questions
8. Sources and references

The Ramla massacre at a glance

Item	Details
Date	July 1948, after the city was occupied in Operation Dani [2] [3]

Item	Details
Place	The city of Ramla and the Ramla–Lydda road [1]
Perpetrator	Zionist forces [1] [2]
What happened	Residents offered a choice between leaving and mass imprisonment, many killed and their bodies dumped on the Ramla–Lydda road, the rest expelled at gunpoint [1] [2]
Killed	“Many”; the available sources give no specific number [1]
Who remained	25 families according to WAFA; about 1,000 Palestinians in Lydda and Ramla combined [1] [4]

Ramla before the fall

Ramla, the capital of Palestine in the Umayyad era, was a city with an Arab majority until 1948. [5] In spring 1948 the city faced repeated Zionist attacks, including the Ramla market massacre; in April, blasts shook its outskirts when the headquarters of commander Hassan Salameh was targeted. [2]

Before the city fell, many families sent their children to Ramallah, believing their absence would not last long. [2]

11 July 1948: the surrender document

In July 1948 Zionist forces launched Operation Dani against Lydda and Ramla. [3] On the evening of 11 July the Arab forces defending Ramla abandoned their positions, and Sheikh Mustafa al-Khairi, the former mayor, sent his son Husam with the notables of the city’s families to the nearby kibbutz of Na’an to sign the surrender document. [2]

The document stated that Arab residents could leave “if they want to,” meaning they were also free to stay in their homes. [2] What followed honoured none of it.

The massacre: the ruse of exile or prison

Zionist officers offered the people of Ramla a choice between leaving the city and mass imprisonment. The choice was a ruse, during which they killed many of the city's people and dumped the victims' bodies on the main road between Ramla and Lydda. [1]

The available sources give no specific number of victims in Ramla. [1] [6] In neighbouring Lydda, more than 400 Palestinians were killed inside the city in the same days, between 80 and 176 of them in the Dahmash mosque. [3]

"Go to Abdullah": the expulsion

When Yigal Allon, the operation's commander, asked David Ben-Gurion what to do with the people of Lydda and Ramla, Ben-Gurion replied: "Expel them." [3]

On 12 July soldiers began pounding on doors with their rifle butts and shouting through bullhorns: "Yallah Abdullah! Go to Abdullah, go to Ramallah!" The people of Ramla and Lydda were expelled at gunpoint. [2] Tens of thousands walked a gruelling road towards Ramallah, in what became known as the "death march." [3]

After the massacre only 25 families remained in Ramla, according to WAFA, [1] and only about 1,000 Palestinians remained in the two cities combined, after tens of thousands of their residents were expelled. [4] Ramla today is a city with a Jewish majority. [5]

Correcting the date

The WAFA list dates this massacre to 1 June 1948, and the Al Jazeera Net list to "June 1948." [1] [6] But Ramla was not occupied until 11–12 July 1948, [2] [3] and Zionist officers could not have offered its people a choice between leaving and prison before entering it. This article therefore adopts July 1948 as the date of the massacre.

Conclusion

Ramla’s notables signed a surrender document guaranteeing their people the right to stay. Their reward was a ruse in which many were killed and their bodies thrown onto the Lydda road, followed by the expulsion of the rest at gunpoint. In a few days, the Umayyad capital of Palestine was emptied of its people. Read about the history of the two cities in Lydda and Ramla before the Nakba.

Frequently asked questions about the Ramla massacre

When did the Ramla massacre take place?

In July 1948, after the city was occupied on 11–12 July. Some lists wrongly date it to 1 June 1948.

What happened in the Ramla massacre?

Zionist officers offered residents a choice between leaving and mass imprisonment, killed many of them and dumped their bodies on the Ramla–Lydda road, then expelled the rest.

How many of Ramla’s people remained after the massacre?

25 families according to WAFA, and about 1,000 Palestinians in Lydda and Ramla combined.

Did the occupation honour Ramla’s surrender document?

No. The document allowed residents to stay, but soldiers expelled them at gunpoint from 12 July.

How is it related to the Lydda massacre?

Both took place in the same days during Operation Dani, and the people of the two

cities were expelled together in the “death march.”

Sources and references

Arabic-language sources are listed with translated titles.

1. “Israeli Massacres,” Palestinian National Information Centre (WAFA).
2. Sandy Tolan, “The Fall of an Arab Town in 1948,” Al Jazeera English, 19 July 2008.
3. “Lydda, 9–13 July 1948,” Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question, Institute for Palestine Studies.
4. “‘Mixed Cities’ in Israel: The Product of Plunder, Looting and the Expulsion of Palestine’s Coastal Cities,” Al-Quds Al-Arabi, 6 June 2021.
5. Encyclopedia, “Ramla,” Al Jazeera Net, 2014.
6. “Israeli Massacres Against the Palestinian People,” Al Jazeera Net, 3 October 2004.