The Al-Rahwa Massacre of 1956: Martyrs on the Road Between Hebron and Beersheba

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The Al-Rahwa massacre is a painful chapter in Palestine’s history. Israeli occupation forces targeted a police post near Al-Dhahiriya, and Palestinian and Jordanian martyrs fell during the attack. Local accounts and the names of the martyrs continue to bear witness to the assault and destruction suffered by the area.

Al-Rahwa and Its Location

Al-Rahwa lies near Al-Dhahiriya, south of Hebron, on the road connecting Hebron with Beersheba. It contained a police post under Jordanian administration overlooking routes near the armistice line. Police personnel were stationed there, and local accounts describe Palestinian guards and volunteers from Al-Dhahiriya taking part in its defense. [1] [2]

The Date of the Massacre: A Necessary Correction

Published sources differ on the date of the massacre. Some Palestinian accounts give December 11, 1956, while an article by researcher Bakr Khazer Al-Majali dates the attack to September 12, 1956. The Israeli military archive confirms that the operation took place on the night of September 11–12, 1956. This article therefore considers the September date more likely, while acknowledging the discrepancy

between sources. [1] [2] [3]

The Attack on the Police Post and the Destruction of the School

An Israeli occupation army force attacked the Al-Rahwa police post, clashing with its defenders before blowing it up. The Israeli military archive confirms that paratrooper units participated in the operation, named “Yehonatan,” and demolished the police building. [3]

The Palestinian Villages Encyclopedia states that the assault also targeted a school run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), which served children from Al-Ramadin near Al-Rahwa. The school was also blown up. [4]

According to an account published by researcher Bakr Khazer Al-Majali, the attacking force cut the telephone line and used it to request reinforcements, then set an ambush for the forces approaching the area. [2]

The Martyrs and Local Memory

Palestinians and Jordanians were martyred in the attack. Among the names documented in Al-Majali’s article are the post commander, Sergeant Majid Issa Al-Majali; police officer Muhammad Ali Hassan Abu Arheila from Ramallah; and police officer Hussein Salem Hussein Al-Balous from Al-Husn. Local Palestinian accounts also name martyrs from Al-Dhahiriya, including Abdul Aziz Younis Rabbaa, Farid Ali Al-Shalmeh, and Khalil Salem Mazal. [2] [1]

Names of the Al-Rahwa Massacre Martyrs and

the Missing

No.	Name	Rank or Role	Town or Country	Notes
1	Majid Issa Al-Majali	Officer, police post commander	Al-Karak, Jordan	Martyr
2	Suleiman Al-Sukkar Al-Adwan	Officer	Al-Balqa, Jordan	Martyr
3	Hussein Salem Al-Balas	Officer	Al-Husn, Jordan	Martyr
4	Zaid Dakhil Allah Saleh Al-Qadi	Sergeant	Hejaz, Saudi Arabia	Martyr
5	Abbas Ayyadah Quwaifil Al-Sani	Private First Class	Iraq	Martyr
6	Awwad Talib Suleiman Al-Mashaqbeh	Soldier	Iraq	Martyr
7	Mahmoud Ahmad Ali Al-Jabour	Not specified	Jerusalem, Palestine	Martyr
8	Rateb Abdullah Al-Hulaiqawi	National Guard volunteer	Al-Dhahiriya, Palestine	Martyr
9	Ahmad Khalil Saleh Al-Najjar Al-Jabareen	National Guard volunteer	Not specified	Martyr
10	Khalil Salem Ibrahim Mazal Al-Jabareen	Guard volunteer	Not specified	Martyr
11	Mahmoud Suleiman Muhammad Abdul Dayem Al-Qaisiya	Guard volunteer	Not specified	Martyr
12	Farid Ali Salim Al-Shalmi Al-Samamara	Guard volunteer	Not specified	Martyr

No.	Name	Rank or Role	Town or Country	Notes
13	Ahmad Mahmoud Al-Mashni Al-Shalmi Al-Samamara	National Guard volunteer	Al-Dhahiriya, Palestine	Martyred in the ambush at Al-Abd bend.
14	Abdul Aziz Younis Muhammad Rabbaa	Guard volunteer	Al-Dhahiriya, Palestine	Martyr
15	Abdullah Suleiman Muhammad Abu Dabbour Al-Tall	National Guard volunteer	Al-Dhahiriya, Palestine	Martyr
16	Ahmad Mahmoud Abu Hamdan Al-Qaisiya	National Guard volunteer	Al-Dhahiriya, Palestine	Martyr
17	Saleh Abdul Qader Musa Al-Qaisiya	National Guard volunteer	Not specified	Missing; according to the provided list, his remains have not been found.
18	Fatima Al-Sheikh Yousef Al-Battat	Provided bread and water to the volunteers	Al-Dhahiriya, Palestine	Identified in the list as Al-Dhahiriya’s first female martyr. She provided bread and water alongside Khadra Abu Dabbour.

Sources

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4. Palestinian Villages Encyclopedia: The Al-Rahwa Massacre
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6. Palestineuna: The Al-Rahwa Massacre