Sidon Massacre 1982: 80 Bodies Under a Building Shelled by Israel

During the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982, the occupation army bombarded the city of Sidon and the Ein el-Hilweh camp. On 16 June the bodies of 80 civilians were recovered from under a Sidon building destroyed by the shelling, while the number of the city's residents killed reached about 400. [1]

The victims were Lebanese and Palestinians, people of Sidon and refugees of Ein el-Hilweh, the largest Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. The massacre is one of the Zionist massacres against the Palestinian people.

Contents

1. The Sidon massacre at a glance
2. Sidon under siege
3. 80 bodies under the rubble
4. The war of numbers
5. The mass pits
6. Frequently asked questions
7. Sources and references

The Sidon massacre at a glance

Item	Details
Date	June 1982, during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon; the recovery of the bodies was reported on 16 June [1] [2]
Place	The city of Sidon and the Ein el-Hilweh camp in south Lebanon [1] [3]

Item	Details
Perpetrator	The Israeli occupation army, by artillery and air bombardment [1] [3]
Massacre	80 bodies pulled from under a Sidon building shelled by the occupation [1]
Dead in Sidon	About 400 residents according to reports; 400 in a few blocks of Sidon and Ein el-Hilweh according to an eyewitness surgeon [1] [3]
Ein el-Hilweh	At least 1,500 civilians according to the same surgeon [3]
Burial	The occupation buried many bodies in mass pits with lime [1] [3]

Sidon under siege

On 6 June 1982 the Israeli occupation began its invasion of Lebanon, and its forces laid siege to Sidon. [2] On 9 June fighting was still raging in the city’s streets as the occupation sent two more armoured columns and an infantry unit to take control, and the Red Cross said 1,200 residents urgently needed medical care. [4]

On 15 June the occupation crushed the last resistance in Ein el-Hilweh; reports said about 300,000 residents and displaced people had fled Sidon and that its streets were full of bodies. [5]

80 bodies under the rubble

On 16 June 1982 it was reported that 80 bodies had been recovered from under a Sidon building shelled by the occupation army, and that about 400 of the city’s residents had been killed. [1]

In Ein el-Hilweh one witness saw 50 bodies buried under the rubble of a single building, and after the attack the stench of decomposing corpses hung over the camp. [3]

The war of numbers

Canadian surgeon Chris Giannou, who treated the wounded in the area, testified that some 400 people were killed in just a few blocks of Sidon and Ein el-Hilweh, and estimated that at least 1,500 civilians were killed in Ein el-Hilweh. [3]

Source	Toll
Palestine Chronology (16 June)	80 bodies under a single building, and about 400 Sidon residents [1]
Surgeon Chris Giannou	400 in a few blocks of Sidon and Ein el-Hilweh; at least 1,500 civilians in Ein el-Hilweh [3]
Occupation government (23 June)	250, “some of them terrorists,” then 400, later reduced to 265 [3]
Oxfam (27 July)	Called the Israeli figure “ridiculously low” and said the exact number of dead in Sidon and Tyre “will probably never be known” [3]

The occupation manipulated the figures, cutting them again and again; it barred journalists from Ein el-Hilweh, closed Palestinian medical facilities and arrested doctors who had treated the wounded, making an accurate count impossible. [3]

The mass pits

The occupation’s military administrator in Sidon announced that the army planned to bury the bodies in pits where they lay. [1] Its forces buried many of the dead in mass pits with lime on “health” grounds, while observers believed the burials served to conceal the true toll. Western journalists who reached Sidon found scores of unburied bodies and several mass graves. [3]

In a letter to the United Nations on 16 June, the PLO described what had happened as the total demolition of 14 Palestinian refugee camps and of the cities of Tyre, Sidon and Nabatieh. [6] Two years later, in May 1984, the occupation returned to Ein el-Hilweh with a new massacre. Read: the Ein el-Hilweh massacre of 1984.

Conclusion

Israeli shelling buried eighty civilians under a single building in Sidon and killed hundreds in the city and thousands in Ein el-Hilweh; the occupation then buried many of the victims in mass pits with lime and cut their numbers again and again. The true toll of Sidon remains unknown to this day.

Frequently asked questions about the Sidon massacre of 1982

When did the Sidon massacre take place?

During the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982; the recovery of the victims was reported on 16 June.

How many people were killed in the Sidon massacre?

80 bodies were recovered from a single building; about 400 Sidon residents were killed, and at least 1,500 civilians in Ein el-Hilweh according to a witness.

Who were the victims?

Lebanese and Palestinian civilians, residents of Sidon and refugees of the Ein el-Hilweh camp.

What did the occupation do with the bodies?

It buried many of them in mass pits with lime; observers believe this was done to conceal the toll.

How is Sidon connected to the Ein el-Hilweh camp?

Ein el-Hilweh, the largest Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon, lies near Sidon and was bombarded along with the city in June 1982.

Sources and references

Arabic-language sources are listed with translated titles.

1. “Wednesday, June 16, 1982,” Palestine Chronology, Institute for Palestine Studies.
2. “The 1982 Israeli Invasion: The War That Drove the PLO Out of Lebanon,” Al Jazeera Encyclopedia, 12 July 2024.
3. “The War of Numbers,” Middle East Report (MERIP), September 1982.
4. “Wednesday, June 9, 1982,” Palestine Chronology, Institute for Palestine Studies.
5. “Tuesday, June 15, 1982,” Palestine Chronology, Institute for Palestine Studies.
6. Letter from the Chairman of the Arab Group to the UN Secretary-General, enclosing a letter from Yasser Arafat, document A/37/295 – S/15226, 16 June 1982.