

The Massacre That Never Was  
The Myth of Deir Yassin  
and the Creation of the Palestinian Refugee Problem

**ASMEA**  
ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY  
OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA





Eliezer Tauber

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and the Creation of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*

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## *Abbreviations*

ACICR	Archives du Comité International de la Croix-Rouge
AIR	Air Ministry
BUPA	Birzeit University Palestine Archive
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CO	Colonial Office
CZA	Central Zionist Archives
FBIS	Foreign Broadcast Information Service
FO	Foreign Office
HA	Haganah Archives
HQ	Headquarters
IDFA	Israel Defense Forces Archives
ISA	Israel State Archives
IWM	Imperial War Museum
JA	Jabotinsky Archives
LC	Larry Collins Papers
MEC	Middle East Centre
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
PACE	Palestinian Association for Cultural Exchange
RAF	Royal Air Force
RG	Record Group
RH	Rhodes House
UNISPAL	United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine
WO	War Office
YTA	Yad Tabenkin Archives





## *Introduction*

On 9 April 1948, forces of the Etzel and Lehi Jewish underground military organizations attacked the Arab village of Deir Yassin west of Jerusalem. The nature of this attack became one of the most controversial issues in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Most of accounts of what transpired that day were biased, representing, variously, the attackers' viewpoint, the Jewish mainstream Haganah viewpoint or the Arab viewpoint. There was virtually no agreement about anything relating to the affair, with the different narratives presenting, not only differing perspectives, but also entirely different stories. The focus of the debate was whether the assailants committed a massacre in the village, as claimed by the Arabs, the Haganah and some foreign writers, or whether it was a legitimate battle, as claimed by Etzel and Lehi, albeit one that resulted in the unfortunate but inevitable death of many civilians.

The Deir Yassin affair deserved serious and in depth research, not only because this incident and its ramifications were unique enough to merit it, but also because the story is too complicated to be discussed in just a few pages of a book on the 1948 Israeli War of Independence. The purpose of this book is to discover what really happened in Deir Yassin. The primary methodology I have adopted in this book is to integrate the testimonies of both Etzel and Lehi's

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combatants, on the one hand, and the Arab survivors, on the other hand, into one combined narrative of the events, in order to yield the true and complete story. Where relevant, I have supplemented these accounts with those of others who witnessed, or claimed to have witnessed the events. Some previous attempts to describe events that day have ignored or disqualified the testimonies of one or more of the sides involved, either Jews or Arabs, and in doing so made it impossible to develop an accurate account. Yet, when the testimonies of all parties were heeded, the accounts of the Jewish attackers and the Arab survivors proved to be surprisingly similar, at times almost identical. Although this might defy expectations, it actually should not be so surprising, since both parties were there when it happened.

The Palestinians faced a fundamental dilemma when forming their narrative of the 1948 war. On the one hand, when a people narrates its historical past it may wish to underline heroics and determination. On the other hand, the results of the 1948 war compelled the Palestinians to rely on external sympathy, making it necessary for them to emphasize their tragedies in order to arouse compassion. In the particular case of Deir Yassin, it created a conflict of interests. The villagers wanted to emphasize their determined resistance and that, rather than going like lambs to the slaughter, they fought “to the last bullet.” This, however, was contrary to the general Palestinian interest in presenting the village as an innocent and defenseless victim of inhumanity. These political considerations, however, are of no concern of the historian, whose task is to write history “*wie es eigentlich gewesen*” – “as it really happened” to cite Ranke’s words, without trying to force the facts to accommodate any of the parties involved.

In order to produce a complete and reliable narrative of the affair it was necessary to answer scores of formerly unasked questions; some seemed trivial, but actually proved to be crucial. There were no shortcuts, and in this particular case, seeing the forest was dependent on first discerning all the trees. It became clear that in order to decipher what had happened in Deir Yassin and avoid empty phrases regarding the “plausibility” or “impossibility” of a massacre, the only option was to ascertain the exact circumstances of death of

each of the individuals killed. “I do not think the investigator will be able to reach his research goals,” declared a skeptical reader on behalf of the Israel Science Foundation who examined the research proposal of this book. However, the wealth of survivor testimonies available made it possible.

Many details relating to the Deir Yassin story remain controversial. In several places in this book, especially when quantitative issues were concerned, I put forward all the views available, but always end with a clear-cut decision as to which of them is the correct one, with an explanation why that is the one that should be accepted. Each of the text paragraphs relies on a large number of sources, accumulated in the reference at the end of each paragraph. Actually, each of the sentences usually relied on many sources. The order of the sources within the notes is usually in accordance with the order of the sentences they refer to within the paragraph. At times, Jewish sources were put first and then the Arab ones, or the other way around, as relevant to the text. The sources of this book mainly encompass archival records, typewritten transcripts of interviews, many memoirs, the contemporary press, secondary literature, and internet sources including video clips (in the latter type, I indicated the exact second when the relevant segment begins).

Quite a few books written by people directly involved in the affair were published recently. Mordechai Gichon (Gicherman) was a Haganah intelligence officer in Jerusalem in 1948. In 2010, as a retired archeology professor of Tel Aviv University, he published his memoirs in a private edition (a copy he donated to his former place of employment was used for this book). Da’ud Ahmad As’ad Radwan, a survivor of Deir Yassin living in the United States, published his memoirs in 2010 in English, and two years later, in Arabic. Shimon Moneta, a Haganah spy inside Lehi, published his memoirs in 2011. Yehoshua Matza, former Knesset member and minister, and in 1948 a Lehi combatant in Deir Yassin, published his memoirs in 2014. The family of Col. (res.) Meir Pa’il (Pilavsky), whose controversial role will be discussed in detail, also published his memoirs in 2014, based on his personal records. Finally, 65 years after he had written them, in 2014 the family of Husayn Fakhri al-Khalidi, the secretary of the

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Arab Higher Committee, published his memoirs in Amman. All of these memoirs were used in the present research.

Many Etzel and Haganah members changed their surname later in life. Etzel men usually adopted their code name in the underground as their new surname. For example, Mordechai Kaufman changed his surname to Raanan, his code name in Etzel. Haganah men usually used a phonetically similar Hebrew name to replace their former non-Hebrew surname. For example, Meir Pilavsky changed his surname to Pa'il while Mordechai Gicherman changed his surname to Gichon. For the text, I used the surnames they were called by during the events of 1948. However, if, when interviewed many years later, they already used their new surnames, these ones were used for the notes when indicating the interviews and later testimonies.

For Arabic and Hebrew I used the ordinary professional transliterations used by academics, but without diacritics or indications of long vowels, except for a single open quotation mark for *ayn* and a single close quotation mark for *hamza*. Widely known place names, however, were spelled as they have come to be accepted and not in accordance with their exact transliteration (for example, Deir Yassin, not Dayr Yasin). Authors' names were spelled (where available) the way they themselves rendered them in English, but titles of publications were always spelled in exact transliteration.

Professor Benny Morris provided me with copies of the documents on Deir Yassin available in the IDF archives, which he had photocopied when the documents were open (see "The Historiography" in chapter 11), thus enabling me to "legally" see and use these "forbidden" documents. Professor Yehuda Lapidot, formerly deputy commander of Etzel's force in Deir Yassin, was always ready to help and answer my many bothersome questions. Many others helped me on various occasions, answering questions or providing sources, and they were noted in the respective notes. The Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa (ASMEA) awarded me three research grants and significantly contributed toward the publication of this book. It was in its seventh annual conference in

*Introduction*

October 2014 in Washington, DC, that I first presented the results of my research. My sincere thanks are extended to them all. I also wish to thank my literary agent Andrew Stuart of the Stuart Agency, my publisher Matthew Miller and his team at The Toby Press, as well as the book's editor, David Olesker, who did excellent work. Special thanks go to my wife, Rachel, whose art has always been a source of inspiration for me.

Eliezer Tauber



## *Chapter 1*

# Why Deir Yassin?

### **THE VILLAGE**

Deir Yassin was an Arab village west of Jerusalem. It stood about 700 meters south-west of the Jewish suburb Givat Shaul, and about one kilometer west and north-west of the Jewish suburbs of Montefiore (nowadays Kiryat Moshe), Beit ha-Kerem and Yefe Nof. Further south was the Jewish suburb of Bayit ve-Gan. Located on the eastern slopes of a hill that rose 800 meters above sea level, it was separated from the Jewish suburbs by a valley planted with fig, almond and olive trees. A narrow road at the north of the valley led from Deir Yassin to Givat Shaul and it was the only direct link between the village and Jerusalem. The closest Arab village to Deir Yassin was 'Ayn Karm, about two kilometers south-west of it. There were other Arab villages in the vicinity, Lifta, northeast of it and Qalunya and Qastal to the north-west, but they were farther away and lacked a direct connection. From its position, the village overlooked the main Jerusalem-Tel Aviv road, lying less than two kilometers north of the village.

Officially, Deir Yassin extended over a large area of 2,857 *dunams* (decares), yet about one third of it was cultivated lands and

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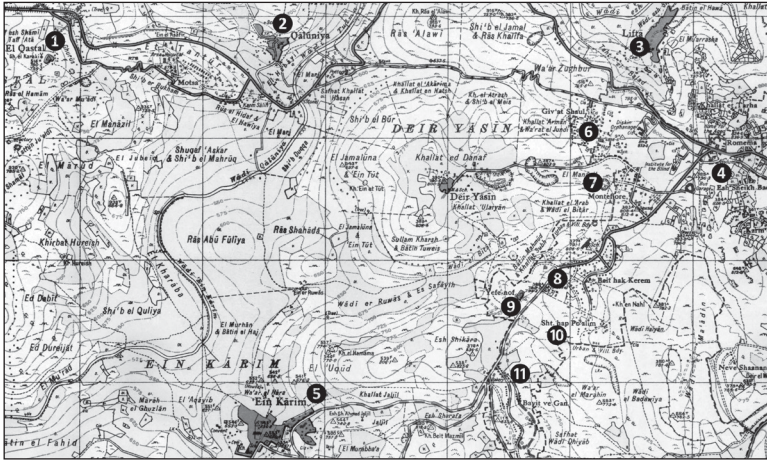


Fig. 1 Arab villages and Jewish neighborhoods around Deir Yassin: 1. Qastal, 2. Qalunya, 3. Lifta, 4. Sheikh Badr, 5. Ayn Karm, 6. Givat Shaul, 7. Montefiore, 8. Beit ha-Kerem, 9. Yefe Nof, 10. Ha-Poalim, 11. Bayit ve-Gan

only 12 *dunams* were built up. There were 144 houses in Deir Yassin in 1948, most of them made of stone, with some of the newer houses constructed from concrete. Most of the houses were located in blocks with narrow alleys between them. The blocks and the individual houses were scattered over a large area, with stretches of empty space between them. According to official figures of the British authorities, 2,701 *dunams* out of the 2,857 belonged to Muslim Arabs. The surprising figure, however, is, that 153 *dunams* belonged to Jews, most of them cultivated lands. It seems that, while these lands were formally part of Deir Yassin, in practice they belonged to the neighboring suburb of Givat Shaul.<sup>1</sup>

How many people lived there? The number is controversial. The number of 400 is quoted by a number of sources including the commander of the Etzel force that attacked Deir Yassin, the representative of the Red Cross who visited the village two days after the attack, and an Arab survivor who was 9 years old in 1948.<sup>2</sup> Others, both Jews (the Haganah) and Arabs (the secretary of the Arab Higher Committee), put it at 500 or 600. Other Arab survivors, some of them babies at the time, raised the estimate to 650, 670 or even 700. A spokesman on behalf of Etzel also stated this last number in a press





Fig. 2 Deir Yassin – general view from the east (picture taken in 1949)

conference after the attack.<sup>3</sup> The Palestinian researcher, Salman Abu-Sitta, calculated the number to be exactly 708. He based his number on a 1944 British census, according to which the number of inhabitants in Deir Yassin was 610. Applying the 3.8 percent Muslim annual natural growth rate for the years 1944 to 1948 yielded that figure.<sup>4</sup> Most sources, be they Arab (including adult survivors), Jewish or Western, put the number at 750, or 800 at most.<sup>5</sup> There are a few researchers that increased it to 1,000, while two Jewish researchers further raised it to 1,200, contending that number to include refugees from other Arab villages and neighborhoods. There is no solid evidence that such refugees arrived in Deir Yassin in early 1948.<sup>6</sup>

It seems, however, that the higher estimates are the correct ones. On 20 April 1948, the social affairs committee of the Jerusalem National Committee (*al-Lajna al-Qawmiyya*) requested the Arab Higher Committee to provide it with financial resources to support 730 survivors from Deir Yassin. Taking into account that the number of dead was about one hundred (see below), than the overall population of Deir Yassin certainly exceeded 800. Furthermore, in a booklet about Deir Yassin, the two Palestinian researchers, Sharif Kana'na and Nihad Zaytawi, cited genealogical trees of all the families of

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Deir Yassin. Altogether, these trees included 498 names and in most cases covered five to six generations of the respective families. While it is clear that not all of these people lived in the village at the same time, there is evidence that the last three to four generations lived in April 1948 (people from these generations appear amongst those killed during the attack). Deducting the names of the first two generations yielded 469 names. On the other hand, the trees included only males, and in most cases did not include the small children of 1948. In other words, in order to compensate for the missing women and children in these trees one must double the number, if not more, to achieve the correct figure of inhabitants in Deir Yassin in early 1948. It seems, therefore that the number of inhabitants in Deir Yassin prior to the attack was about 1,000.<sup>7</sup>

The Deir Yassin population was divided into three main *hamulas* (clans, enlarged families) and several additional families. The *hamulas* were Shahada (comprising the families Sammur, Zaydan, Hamdan and Khalil), 'Aql (comprising the families Radwan, Zahrán, 'Atiyya and 'Ata Allah-Farhan) and Hamida (comprising mainly the families 'Alya, Salah, Salih and Qasim). Additional families were Jabir, 'Id, Muslih and Jundi.<sup>8</sup>

Until the early 1920s, Deir Yassin's villagers depended on agriculture, growing grains, grapes, olives, plums, almonds, dates and figs. Some of the produce was sold to the inhabitants of the Jewish neighborhoods. The economic basis of the village started to change in the wake of increased Jewish immigration and the need for stones for extensive construction projects in Jerusalem. Many of the villagers shifted to working in the stone industry as the village lands were rich in high quality limestone (*hajar yasini*). In 1927, the first quarry was dug and a stone crusher was brought in to expedite the work. By the second half of the 1940s, there were already seven quarries, three north of the road to Givat Shaul and four south of it, with four crushers belonging to the Radwan, Sammur and Jundi families. At that point, most of villagers worked in the stone industry, either as stonemasons and processors or as truck drivers transporting the product. Only fifteen percent of the villagers remained in agriculture. Other villagers worked in the British army and police

facilities, some were self-employed, and a few dozen worked in the Jewish neighborhoods.<sup>9</sup>

The stone industry made Deir Yassin a prosperous village. It had two mosques, one called the Sheikh Yassin mosque, after whom the village was named, and the other one was named after Mahmud Salah, a wealthy notable who had died several years before. There were two primary schools in the village, one for boys established in 1940 and one for girls established in 1943. The village boasted three shops and a bakery. The latter was owned by the mukhtar, the village headman, but operated by a baker from Hebron and his son. There were five wells in the village, but no regular water supply from Jerusalem or electricity. There were, however, two phones in the village, one in the house of Muhammad Zaydan, near the village center, and the other near the crusher of the Radwan family, very close to Givat Shaul. A bus belonging to a company from Lifta would arrive at the village from Jerusalem three times a day. There was no physician in Deir Yassin.<sup>10</sup>

#### **DEIR YASSIN AND ITS JEWISH NEIGHBORS**

Relations between Deir Yassin and its Jewish neighbors dated back to 1906, when villagers from Deir Yassin and Lifta sold the lands of the future Givat Shaul to a group of Jewish settlers. In the years that followed, villagers from Deir Yassin worked in construction works in the new neighborhood but were also involved in thefts and burglaries. Although protection money paid to the mukhtar brought some tranquility, the economic depression on the eve of World War I, saw the thefts resume. In March 1914, some of the villagers planned a raid on Givat Shaul. Villagers armed with guns and cold steel attacked the neighborhood, robbing and injuring. One of the first homes attacked belonged to Yosef Tzvi Goldschmidt, who would father Yehoshua, who would grow to be the Etzel's operations officer in 1948. Yosef Tzvi was lightly injured but managed to halt the attackers until his neighbors came to his help. Turkish forces were summoned and they opened fire on the attackers. The Arabs ran back to Deir Yassin, but one of them was caught. A note from the leader of the attack was

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found on him with instructions. Consequently, the soldiers arrested many villagers and searched Deir Yassin, finding weapons and goods stolen from the army. The Turkish commanding officer warned the villagers that, unless they handed over their leader, he would destroy the village. The leader was surrendered, court-martialed and executed by firing squad. During World War I, the villagers collected arms left by the Turkish army and the Germans and hid them underground. When the war was over they sold some of them to 'Ayn Karm and Lifta.<sup>11</sup>

On the Jewish festival of Simchat Torah 1927, Arabs from Deir Yassin again attacked Givat Shaul, resulting in six Jews "officially" injured and others who refused medical treatment due to the sanctity of the day. A committee representing the Jews of Givat Shaul asked their municipal representatives to demand that the government punish the rioters and station police between Givat Shaul and the village. A compensation for those injured was later arranged, paid by the village in order to avoid trial. Less than two years later, on 23 August 1929, in the framework of countrywide attacks against the Jews, villagers from Lifta, Deir Yassin and 'Ayn Karm attacked the nearby Jewish neighborhoods of Romema, Givat Shaul, Montefiore, Beit ha-Kerem, Yefe Nof and Bayit ve-Gan. The Arabs of Deir Yassin played a key role in this violence, attacking the central suburbs of Givat Shaul, Montefiore and Beit ha-Kerem. An attempt was also made to block the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv road. The Jewish self-defense organization, the Haganah, repulsed the attackers. Two defenders and one Jewish policeman were killed. The attack on Givat Shaul renewed at dawn and this time a police armored car arrived and machine-gunned Deir Yassin. The fire from the village stopped, but not before a British officer had been killed.<sup>12</sup>

Relations improved during the economic boom of the early 1930s, to the point that the Sammurs took a Jewish partner for their quarry. The partnership lasted three years, during which the Jewish partner brought machinery from Britain and hired a Jewish engineer. However, when the Arab revolt of 1936–1939 broke out all the economic ties were cut. Most of the villagers supported the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husayni, and his Palestinian Arab Party. Tension escalated into skirmishes and the British authorities arrested



Fig. 3 The Jewish western suburbs: 1. Givat Shaul, 2. Montefiore, 3. Beit ha-Kerem, 4. Yefe Nof, 5. Ha-Poalim, 6. Bayit ve-Gan

several villagers. Rebels from the village would attack the Jewish neighborhoods and kill Jews, leading to British raids and searches, the confiscation of arms and the imprisonment of villagers. Finally, the British set up a temporary checkpoint in the village, staffed by 10 to 15 soldiers, and would intermittently declare a curfew. They issued a list of people ordered to report daily to prove their presence in the village, anyone failing to do so would be punished. The villagers were undeterred and continued to use the nearby hills for attacks on British patrols and vehicles. Rebels from Deir Yassin also



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derailed a supply train arriving from the coastal plain to Jerusalem. British planes appeared and the rebels took refuge among the trees. Some villagers joined the band of irregulars commanded by Ahmad Mahmud Abu Sha‘ban from Lifta.<sup>13</sup>

The Jews, for their part, would retaliate by ravaging Arab plantations close to the Jewish neighborhoods. Combatants on behalf of the Haganah and the smaller Jewish underground organization, Etzel, defended the Jewish neighborhoods from Arab raids, including Givat Shaul. Members of the Jewish underground organizations who would drive on the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv road encountered ambushes laid by villagers from Deir Yassin. In August 1937, an attempt for a *sulha* (reconciliation) was made between Givat Shaul and Deir Yassin. Exchanges of fire nevertheless continued until the outbreak of World War II. During the war, the hostilities died out, and following it, the economic ties with the Jews resumed, especially with regard to the quarries. Calm reigned until late 1947.<sup>14</sup>

The adoption of the Palestine partition resolution by the United Nations General Assembly, on 29 November 1947, escalated the situation in the whole of Palestine, particularly in Jerusalem. Jews and Arabs were locked in a civil war. The road from Jerusalem to Deir Yassin via Givat Shaul became unsafe. Villagers who wanted to reach Jerusalem had to take a long walk through ‘Ayn Karm and Maliha further south. An emergency committee (*lajnat tawari*) was formed, composed of seven elders representing the village families, to organize the defense of Deir Yassin. They resolved to set up patrols, to fortify the village and to purchase arms. An important additional decision was made: not to take any aggressive steps against the neighboring Jewish suburbs because of the delicate position of the village. Notwithstanding this policy, some of the younger villagers joined the Palestinian military organization, the Army of Sacred Jihad (*Jaysh al-Jihad al-Muqaddas*), led by ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni. In late December and early January, on several occasions, there was fire from Deir Yassin aimed at Givat Shaul, which only stopped when the police arrived. The Jews classified Deir Yassin one of the hostile villages endangering the road from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv.<sup>15</sup>



Fig. 4 Trenches dug by the Turks during World War I on the hill north of Deir Yassin, overlooking the Jerusalem–Tel Aviv road

Haganah started to distribute leaflets near the village calling on the villagers to remain on friendly terms with the Jews and to forbid foreign elements from entering the village. The villagers were promised protection if they complied with this. A Haganah messenger infiltrated into the village with such leaflets, was brought to the mukhtar, and then returned safely to Givat Shaul by the mukhtar's son. When the mukhtar, Muhammad Isma'il Sammur, visited Jerusalem, he was offered the opportunity to sign a non-belligerency agreement with the Jews. Although he hesitated to sign a formal peace agreement with Givat Shaul, by late December, he had promised his interlocutors to notify Givat Shaul when foreigners visited the village. From that point the Haganah considered him an "informer," though evidently he was not, divulging to the Jews only what he felt suited the interests of his village. On 11 January 1948, a small band of irregulars tried to enter Deir Yassin and settle in the bakery, with the intention to use it as a base for attacking the Jewish neighborhoods. The

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villagers denied them entry, and in the ensuing exchange of fire one of the villagers was killed (not the mukhtar's son, as some claimed). Givat Shaul was asked to call the police. The irregulars were ousted and at that point, the notables of Deir Yassin were ready to sign an agreement with their Jewish neighbors.<sup>16</sup>

On 20 January 1948, the two sides signed a "good neighborly relations" agreement. The mukhtar and some of the village notables represented the Arabs, while the Jews were represented by Peri Friedman, the "mukhtar" of Givat Shaul, Nahum Bushmi, a police officer on behalf of the Jewish Agency, and Akiva Azulay, the Haganah regional second-in-command. Yitzhak Navon, head of the Arab department of the Haganah's intelligence in Jerusalem, as well as the district command, sanctioned the agreement. The accord comprised five articles. In the first article, the villagers pledged to inform the Jews about the presence of any irregulars whom they would not be able to drive away by themselves. During daylight, they would hang certain articles of laundry at a certain place to announce that they had such information. Flashlight signals would be used during the nights. Then the two sides would convene, after an exchange of passwords. The second article dealt with passwords for people from Givat Shaul patrolling near Deir Yassin. The third article discussed traffic from Deir Yassin through Givat Shaul. Such traffic was only allowed from 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. and from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. The number of vehicles was limited and their registration numbers had to be delivered to Givat Shaul in advance. Although the Jews had the right to search the cars, they were responsible for their safety while in Givat Shaul. The fourth article prohibited Arabs from entering Givat Shaul on their own. Finally, the fifth article established the need to negotiate the fate of several of the quarries close to Givat Shaul. The Arabs had to set a price for handing them over to the Jews until the end of the hostilities. The agreement did not include mutual defense from attacks, as some have claimed.<sup>17</sup>

Besides the signatories, the people of Deir Yassin, Givat Shaul and the Haganah, who knew about this agreement? "The entire city knew," said Yitzhak Levy, the commander of the Haganah's intelligence in Jerusalem. "It must have been that Etzel also knew about



it.” Etzel member Yoel Kimhi insisted in an interview that he knew nothing about it and doubted whether his commander knew. Lehi definitely knew. Yehoshua Zettler, the commander of Lehi in Jerusalem, reported on the agreement in March, indicating that “so far” it had been maintained. His report was almost verbatim cited in *Ha-Ma’as*, Lehi’s organ. News about the agreement also reached the Arab Higher Committee, the supreme political authority of the Palestinian Arabs, and Muhammad Isma‘il Sammur was summoned to Jerusalem to supply explanations. He told the Committee that the villagers were living in peace with the Jews. He later informed his Haganah liaison that the Committee was satisfied by his words, but the Haganah learned from other sources that the agreement had, in fact, been subject to sharp criticism by the Committee. The Committee’s secretary, Husayn Fakhri al-Khalidi, would recall this after the attack, when he was to indicate that Deir Yassin was the only Arab village that had not sought the protection of the Arab Higher Committee.<sup>18</sup>

A brother of the mukhtar was also dissatisfied with the agreement and at times would shoot at Givat Shaul, following which the mukhtar would apologize, while Akiva Azulay would “run from house to house” to prevent reciprocation and the collapse of the agreement. It became evident that the villagers did not have much faith in the pact. Parallel to the continuation of the negotiations with Givat Shaul, whether through a Jewish liaison or by phone (which the Haganah tapped), the villagers continued to promote defensive measures. Already by late December 1947, Arabs had been seen training north of the quarries. Again, during the first months of 1948, Arabs were repeatedly spotted training in shooting, first aid and field exercises in various locations in and around the village. On several occasions Haganah observers noted the instructor was wearing the uniform of the Arab Legion (actually he served in the Transjordan Frontier Force – see below). The vicinity of the village cemetery became a training ground for the use of hand grenades.<sup>19</sup>

In late January, a large group of the Army of Sacred Jihad, some say 400 men, headed by ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni himself, arrived in Deir Yassin. They were looking for volunteers to join them, but

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found none. When asked about the relationship between the village and the Jews, the mukhtar answered that they were living in peace. Husayni, nevertheless, promised to help the village when needed (he would die the day before the attack on the village). Husayni was given to understand that the presence of his men in the village was undesirable and they left. A fortnight later, another band of irregulars arrived in Deir Yassin with the intention of attacking Givat Shaul. The villagers objected and the band retaliated by slaughtering the village sheep. An attempt by Husayni to use Deir Yassin as a base for attacking Givat Shaul and Yefe Nof was rebuffed by the village notables between late February and early March. In the third week of March, a delegation from the Arab Higher Committee arrived in the village, asking it to host Iraqi and Syrian volunteers of the Rescue Army (*Jaysh al-Inqadh*), who in turn would defend the village. The delegation left empty-handed.<sup>20</sup>



Fig. 5 Standing in the middle, with two bandoliers crossed on his chest, 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni, commander of the Army of Sacred Jihad; to his right his second-in-command, Kamil 'Arikat (photo taken by a Jewish spy)