

**Reports on the Battle of Karameh. *Al-Ahram* (Cairo), 22 March 1968.
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Israeli Forces Cross the Jordan River in a Treacherous Military Operation

Yesterday at dawn three Israeli brigades, reinforced by 100 tanks and dozens of airplanes, crossed the bridges of the Jordan River to attack the Karameh area on three axes.

The Israeli attack targeted the village of Karameh, which Israel considers to be the headquarters of the leadership of the Palestinian resistance. Israeli statements spoke of extensive “killing” operations on the 30-kilometre wide front targeted by the attack.

Jordanian Forces had advance knowledge of the attack, and caused the enemy heavy losses in equipment and personnel. Detailed accounts of the battle, conveyed by news agencies and eyewitnesses who followed its development, included knife fights.

King Hussein called for an Arab Summit Conference to discuss the situation before it was too late. Abdel Nasser answered, “There is no alternative to a unified Arab stand that transforms Arab countries into a single front, and the Arab people into one army”.

Multiple exchanges ensued throughout the day yesterday between Cairo and Amman, along with telephone calls between Riyadh and [Jordanian Prime Minister] al-Talhuni.

The Egyptian Foreign Minister met with the ambassadors of all Arab and friendly nations in Cairo, and contacted our permanent representative at the United Nations Security Council. Secretary-General U Thant submitted a report to the Security Council during an emergency meeting, proving Israel was planning the attack.

Yesterday Israeli forces initiated the most dangerous military operation since the June war. The attack started at dawn, 5.30am, with three brigades – around 10,000 soldiers – supported by 100 tanks and two fighters squadrons,

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in addition to the airplanes that airdropped paratroopers as part of the operation.

The Israel forces crossed the permanent bridges on the Jordan River to the North of the Dead Sea. One brigade crossed each bridge.

Fighting continued from dawn until yesterday evening. The Jordanian forces, joined by groups of resistance fighters, rushed into battle as soon as clashes with the enemy forces began. Fierce confrontations erupted, including knife fights and hand-to-hand combat.

The enemy incurred heavy losses. Levi Eshkol, the Israeli Prime Minister, announced that Israeli forces suffered dozens of casualties. This meant that the actual number of dead and wounded was in the hundreds. Eshkol's statement to the Knesset, and other Israeli official statements, referred about "killing" operations conducted by the Israel forces in the area. "Killing" was the word that was used more than any other word in everything published by Israel yesterday.

There was dangerous Arab and international backlash to the attack. King Hussein sent a telegram to all Arab kings and presidents demanding a Summit Conference. President Abdel Nasser immediately responded, and Cairo was in contact with Amman all day yesterday. The Egyptian military command was in contact with the Jordanian command. There were repeated phone calls between Mahmoud Riyad, the Egyptian Foreign Minister, and Bahjat al-Talhuni, the Jordanian Prime Minister.

Cairo witnessed wide and varied activity. Most Arab countries called for an urgent Security Council meeting. President de Gaulle discussed the developments of the crisis with his Prime Minister.

Attacking the Karameh Area On Three Axes and With Paratroopers

The Israeli attack began at 5:30am yesterday, when large, mechanised Israeli forces crossed the ceasefire line – along the Jordan River – reaching the river's eastern bank.

Initially, the attack targeted the Karameh area five kilometres east of the Jordan River. Israel justified its attack by claiming that 1000 men in the area supported Arab resistance operations that caused great losses to Israeli forces and infrastructure these past weeks. Israel considered Karameh the headquarters of the Palestinian resistance.

In the Karameh area, a refugee camp sheltering 22,000 people was bombed several times. Jordan and Israel exchanged fire across the ceasefire line. All the refugees had to evacuate the camp in a mass exodus towards safer places on Jordan's East Bank. With the start of the Israeli attack, which was accompanied by multiple military statements from Jordan and Israel, fierce fighting erupted. The fighting intensified with artillery positions on the eastern and western banks of the river, as well as Israel airplanes that protected helicopters airdropping paratroopers, and operations to transport the dead and the wounded during the battle.

The Jordanian leadership's prior knowledge of the attack increased the intensity of the fighting, according to Israeli statements. Israel pushed a huge number of forces into the area, while Jordanian forces reinforced their position and engaged the attacking forces, causing them great losses that numbered approximately 200 casualties by 9.45am. The Israeli forces also lost 25 tanks and armored vehicles in the al-Shuna al-Janubia area, and three Mystère fighter aircraft.

The Battle as Described by Eyewitnesses on Both Sides of the Fighting

The people who saw the battle up close, and those who fought the battle, said Israeli forces paid a heavy price for crossing the ceasefire line. The number of personnel they lost in hand-to-hand combat was equal to the number killed by the Jordanian forces, supported by the resistance fighters who rushed to the area from multiple directions to confront the aggressors.

Eyewitnesses reported that hand-to-hand combat took place in Karameh itself, which was attacked by huge Israeli forces in order to kill those Israel describes as "supporting the resistance". It lost hundreds there. It also killed, according to the news agencies, hundreds more. At that time only 150 to 200 refugees were in the camp.

News agencies quoted eyewitnesses, stating that many of the Israeli tanks and armoured vehicles were left on the battlefield. Reuters reporter Collin Rod saw some of them close up, as did reporter John Lawton. An Associated Press reporter on the other side of the frontline described the Israeli forces that crossed the Jordan River as "Search and Destroy Columns". He was referring to their intention of killing a number of Arabs in Karameh Camp.

Emergency Security Council Meeting, U Thant Submits Report On the Aggression

United Nations/Levon Keshishian and agencies – The Security Council held an emergency meeting at 7.30pm today (Cairo time) following a Jordanian request to discuss the latest Israeli aggression against Jordan. The Council opened their meeting without knowing whether or not the fighting had stopped.

When the meeting began, U Thant, the United Nations Secretary-General, submitted a report about the Israeli aggression to the Security Council. He had received the report from the President of the General Assembly. The report confirmed that Israel had been planning the aggression against Jordan. First to speak was Mr. Mohammad al-Farra, head of the Jordanian delegation, who was followed by Israel's representative. Next, Mr. Mohammad Awad al-Quni of the United Arab Republic submitted a request to speak. The representatives of the United States, Britain, Algeria, Pakistan, France, the Soviet Union, Iraq and India also spoke.

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