Deir Yassin

The operational plan to occupy Deir Yassin stated that the participation force would be a company composed of two ETZEL platoons and one LEHI platoon. On April 9, 1948, at 02:00 hrs, the forces set out on their mission. During the briefing before they left, it was decided to forego the element of surprise, in order to assure the wellbeing of non-combatants, by using loudspeakers to call women, children and old people to vacate the area. The battle did not open as planned. The Arabs noticed the movement of the attackers before zero hour and opened fire, while the armored car with the loudspeaker did not reach the entrance to the village because the LEHI unit in the vehicle encountered an Arab barricade about half a kilometer away from the village. The vehicle overturned and the calls to the villagers of Deir Yassin were swallowed up in the gunfire.

From this moment on the fighters were forced to advance in the face of increasing resistance by the Arabs. The intelligence they had was not extensive and precise enough, and the estimates of the strength of the resistance was incorrect. Almost every one of the village houses served as a fighting position, and taking control of the place entailed house-to-house fighting, using hand-grenades and sub-machine guns. There were many casualties among attackers and defenders alike.

At day break, the force encountered strong resistance around the Mukhtar's house on the hill. Here there were more casualties and the lack of ammunition made removing the wounded very difficult. At this stage a request was sent to the Hagana commander in Jerusalem, who supplied bullets and also fire cover to assist in rescuing the wounded.

In the Deir Yassin battle, 5 of our fighters fell while the number of Arab casualties is under dispute. According to the version which prevailed for many years, about 250 Arabs were killed there. This amazing number created panic among the Arab population and had an indirect effect on its flight from the country during the 1948 war. Recent research sheds doubt on the number of people killed, and one version states that the Arab dead totalled about 110.

Beyond the dispute over the number of casualties, it is universally agreed that the Deir Yassin operation was a key point in the history of the War of Independence.