

The 1946 Explosion of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem: A Personal Story

By [Lina Gress](#)

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July 22, 2021 marks 75 years of the explosion with unparalleled magnitude at the hands of the Zionist terrorist group “Irgun” Zvi Leumi headed by Menachem Begin that brought down the South Wing seven-storeyed floors of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, that housed the Secretariat of the British Mandate over Palestine as well as its military headquarters, killing immediately 93 innocent persons, in addition to scores of wounded and missing people.

The inflicted tragedy was the result of long-range planning and deceitful thinking. It was then labelled as “one of the world’s single most lethal terrorist incidents of the 20th Century”.



Why am I evoking this slaughter?! Because with the strategy of demolishing the building, the tragic story of my family begins. This is how the Zionists planned the explosion.

On July 22, the Irgun disguised in the Arab villagers' clothes, who daily delivered milk to the hotel in large metal containers entered the hotel at the precise hour of 11:30 am. But instead, milk was replaced by 350 KG of explosives which were immediately positioned near each supporting column in the basement café right under the Secretariat.

To divert attention, a small bomb blew up at 12:30 pm across the street in front of the hotel. Then the sirens went off causing chaos in the street and the whole area.

Hearing the sirens, we waited for my father to arrive home or call informing us of his whereabouts as was customary whenever there was a siren in such turbulent times. But at exactly 12:37 pm came the deafening extremely loud frightening sound of the explosion that shook all surrounding buildings, sending us jumping up about 30 cm off the ground, as our house was not far away from the hotel.

Among the dead was my father Jules Gress, senior assistant treasurer, who happened to be at the Secretariat, only to attend a 45-minute meeting. That meeting violently shattered our family and changed the course of our lives, leaving me and my three younger brothers behind.



That day started for us as no different from any other, except that my father was not feeling well but he was determined to attend to his duties. How little did I know that he was later to

go to the King David Hotel to meet his death.

However, the full impact of such atrocities was felt throughout our lives until this present day 75 years later. Not only was my father killed, but we were evicted from our house in Talbieh in 1948. Thus, marking the start of Al-Nakba.

As reflection of our tragedy, it is sad and painful to see that the King David Hotel, where my father was killed in 1946, has become a sumptuous hotel for Israel to receive dignitaries and various people from all over the world.

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