



## Educator's Guide

# 1972 Olympics: The Munich Massacre

This video tells the story of “Black September,” when eleven Israeli athletes were held hostage and murdered at the 1972 Munich Olympics. Only 27 years after the Holocaust, in which some of these athletes’ families were killed, Jewish blood was once again spilled on German soil. The video explains the terrorists’ actions, the botched German rescue attempt, the international reaction and Israel’s response. Together with the educator’s guide, the video will encourage students to consider a pretty scary question: Does terrorism work? If so, how should the world respond to this?

Video:

<https://unpacked.education/video/1972-olympics-the-munich-massacre-does-terrorism-work/>

## Further Reading

1. Francine Klagsbrun, *Lioness: Golda Meir and the Nation of Israel*, pp. 572-578
2. Yehuda Avner, *The Prime Ministers*, chapter 19
3. Video: PBS - Munich '72 and Beyond Documentary 2017,  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O\\_GqJnXH5f8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_GqJnXH5f8)
4. Sam Borden, “Long-Hidden Details Reveal Cruelty of 1972 Munich Attackers,”  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/02/sports/long-hidden-details-reveal-cruelty-of-1972-munich-attackers.html>
5. Israel State Archives, “The Munich Massacre, 1972,”  
<https://www.thoughtco.com/black-september-jordanian-plo-civil-war-2353168>
6. Pierre Tristam, “Black September: The Jordanian-PLO Civil War of 1970,”  
<https://www.thoughtco.com/black-september-jordanian-plo-civil-war-2353168>



## Review - Did the students understand the material?

1. After the Israeli hostages were taken, did the Olympics continue or not?
2. To what extent was the Israeli military included in saving the hostages?
3. This was the first time Germany hosted the Olympics since:
  - a. 1918
  - b. 1936 (correct answer)
  - c. 1950
  - d. 1967
4. What is the name of the terrorist group that engaged in the Munich massacre?
  - a. Hezbollah
  - b. ISIL
  - c. Hamas
  - d. Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) (correct answer)

## Discussion Questions

1. In a remarkable opportunity for Israel to simply be accepted as just “one of the nations,” Israel was singled out in the most visible way on the greatest world stage. Will the Jewish people ever be included as one of the nations, or are the Jews condemned to be a nation that dwells alone?
2. The Olympics provided an audience for terrorism and through it, the whole world learned about the Palestinian cause. The one surviving kidnapper, Jamal Al Gashey, argued why he did what he did in an interview, saying:

*“I’m proud of what I did in Munich because it helped the Palestinian cause enormously ... Before Munich the world had no idea about our struggle. But on that day the word Palestine was repeated all over the world.”*

In fact, two years after the massacre, Yasser Arafat, who endorsed the Munich operation, was received by the United Nations, shocking the world by saying:



*“Today I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom-fighter's gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand. I repeat: do not let the olive branch fall from my hand.”*

In the case of Munich, a terribly challenging question emerges: Does terrorism work?

## **Reflection Questions**

1. In your estimation, when values like sanctity of life, revenge, human dignity, security and peace collide, which values yield and which values take precedence?
2. Operation “Wrath of God,” in which Golda Meir approved the Mossad’s kidnapping and assassination of the perpetrators of the Munich Massacre, leads to the serious ethical questions of how to responsibly respond to a massacre of these proportions. Left-wing peace activist, Yossi Sarid, once said, “Terrorism is a dirty war and that is how it must be fought.” What’s your take?
3. Does the story of Munich and the Israelis who were killed for “the sin of being Israeli Jews” make you feel more or less connected to the Israeli story?