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Ayyubids vs. Crusaders

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Co-Under Secretary General: Muhammed E. Karasu

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Letter from Secretary General

Dear friends,

Welcome to ISTRTEMUN'25.

I won't fill this letter with big, formal words—because at the end of the day, what matters to me is that you feel supported, seen, and heard throughout this conference.

As your Secretary-General, I'm not just someone who opens and closes sessions. I'm someone you can come to when things get confusing, stressful, or even just a little too much. I'll be around—not just with my title, but with my heart and my time.

I truly hope this conference gives you something special. A moment of growth, a new friend, a good debate—whatever it is, may it stay with you after all of this is over.

I'll be just around the corner. You don't have to ask twice.

With all sincerity,

Hacı Ömer Gündoğdu

Secretary-General of ISTRTEMUN'25

LETTERS FROM USG's

Dear delegates,

I want to welcome you all. I am really pleased to be in this special conference, special committee with special people. Actually I know that no one will read these lines but still I am happy to write these letters to you.

In our committee we will be together for three days İnşallah. We plan everything for you to have quality time. We will make quality crises, we will make heated debates and we will have fun. We do our best to provide you with these opportunities.

I cannot wait to see our committee and I hope you are also excited. I can suggest to you this: 'Don't be shy, try to do your best and have fun'.

Yusuf Korkulu

~~~~~  
Selamün Aleyküm beyler,

I am Muhammed Emin Karasu and I am one of your USG's on this special, wonderful, amazing, speechless committee. I am from Kastamonu and I am studying at Akif İnan Ahi. I am very happy to have made this committee with my brother Yusuf Korkulu. We will make good crises in these three days İnşallah. Also we will have fun of course. See you guys.

Muhammed Emin Karasu

## **INTRODUCTION OF THE COMMITTEE**

This war, which took place in Jerusalem, which is considered sacred by all religions, important to people from all walks of life and the focus of all states, is of great importance in world history. Christians will struggle to protect and continue to govern Jerusalem, which they have held for decades. Muslims will embark on a Jerusalem expedition to conquer the holy lands, which are their first qibla.

The conflict between the Ayyubids and the Kingdom of Jerusalem began with the Battle of Montgisard on November 25, 1077, and the winner of this battle was Baldwin IV. After this battle, the Ayyubids, who lost power, did not organize a significant expedition against the Crusaders for 10 years. Saladin organized an expedition to the area around Tiberias in 1187. Guy of Lusignan mobilized his army to stop this expedition. The Muslims were the winners of the battle that took place in the Battle of Hattin. Later, Saladin captured the coastal fortresses one by one, taking the weak Jerusalem from Balian of Ibelin, ending decades of Christian rule.

As delegates on this committee, you will reshape the fate of Jerusalem.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The capture of Jerusalem in 1187 was the culmination of decades of complex relationships between the Crusader states established in the Levant and the surrounding Muslim powers. Following the First Crusade in 1099, the Kingdom of Jerusalem and other Latin principalities had carved out niches in the Holy Land, often through brutal conquests and sustained by a network of fortifications and Frankish colonists. Nevertheless, these Crusader states remained encircled by their Muslim neighbors, who gradually began to organize themselves and push back against the Latin presence. The Zangid dynasty, particularly under Imad al-Din Zangi and his son Nur al-Din, played a significant role in this resurgence, consolidating important Muslim holdings in Syria and inflicting heavy defeats on the Crusaders, most notably the loss of Edessa in 1144. Under Nur al-Din, a powerful Muslim faction in northern Syria was united, which increasingly threatened the Crusader states in an ominous way.

It was within this context of Muslim resurgence that the most powerful of all the Muslim leaders who came to prominence emerged: Saladin. Dispatched to Egypt by Nur al-Din to act on behalf of the Fatimid caliph, Saladin's rise began there, eventually overthrowing their rule and establishing the Ayyubid dynasty in 1171, pledging allegiance to the Abbasid Caliphate. Upon Nur al-Din's death in 1174, Saladin navigated the complex Syrian political landscape, expanding his control over various Muslim principalities through diplomacy and force. By the mid-1180s, he had forged a powerful and unified Muslim force stretching from Egypt to Syria, encircling the Crusader states and disrupting their traditional alignments and supply lines.

The immediate cause of the 1187 campaign was the aggressive and provocative behavior of Reynald of Châtillon, the lord of Kerak and Montreal. Reynald regularly violated truces between Muslims and Crusaders, attacked Muslim caravans, and even threatened the holy city of Mecca. These audacious acts enraged Saladin and provided him with the pretext he needed to launch a major offensive against the Kingdom of Jerusalem. The breaking of the truce and the capture of a massive Muslim caravan in early 1187 was the final straw, prompting Saladin to mobilize his army with the explicit aim of confronting the Crusader presence head-on.

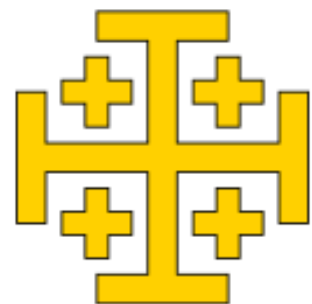
The culmination of these short-term triggers and long-term processes came at the Battle of Hattin in July 1187. The Crusader forces, led by King Guy of Lusignan, marched out to relieve the siege of Tiberias, which had been deliberately laid by Saladin. Weakened, dehydrated, and outmaneuvered by Saladin's forces, the Crusader army was annihilated. The battle resulted in heavy Frankish casualties, including the capture of King Guy and the execution of Reynald of Châtillon. This catastrophic defeat left the road to Jerusalem open for Saladin.

Saladin advanced rapidly south after Hattin, easily capturing the major coastal cities and inland fortresses as the Crusader kingdom's morale and capacity to fight were severely diminished. Jerusalem, now largely undefended and filled with refugees, prepared for a siege. Saladin's army arrived at the holy city in September 1187. After a spirited but relatively brief siege, the city surrendered to Saladin's forces on October 2, 1187. Saladin's entry into the city was relatively bloodless compared to the First Crusaders' capture of Jerusalem in 1099. He allowed most of the Christian inhabitants to be ransomed and leave, showing a somewhat more humane side that earned him respect even from his rivals. The defeat of Jerusalem sent shockwaves throughout Europe, ultimately leading to the organization of the Third Crusade to reclaim the holy city.

## **STATES OF THE WAR**

### **1. Kingdom of Jerusalem**

The Kingdom of Jerusalem, founded by the Crusaders, emerged with the conquest of Jerusalem in 1099. This kingdom was established to maintain its presence in the eastern lands of Christian Europe. The Kingdom of Jerusalem was the most powerful Christian state in the region, especially until it was defeated by Saladin in the Battle of Hattin in 1187. The eyes of the European states were on Jerusalem and therefore on the Kingdom of Jerusalem. It was in a very important position for the Christian world of the period.



The kingdom covered a large part of today's Israel and Palestine. While the ruling class consisted of Catholic knights and nobles from Western Europe, the majority of the population

consisted of local Christians, Muslims and Jews. This situation led to the emergence of a complex social and religious structure within the kingdom.

The main purpose of the Kingdom of Jerusalem throughout its existence was to defend its lands against its Muslim neighbors and to receive constant reinforcement and support from Western Europe. However, over time, factors such as internal strife among the Crusaders, the unification of local Muslim powers and the decrease in expected support from the West led to the weakening of the kingdom. In particular, the rise of the Zengid and then the Ayyubids posed a major threat to the Crusaders. The Muslim armies led by Saladin inflicted a heavy defeat on the army of the Kingdom of Jerusalem at the Battle of Hattin in 1187, and after this victory, Jerusalem was easily captured.



## 2. Ayyubid State

The Muslim Ayyubid State, founded by Saladin in the 12th century, quickly spread over a wide area from Egypt to Syria, from Yemen to Northern Iraq. The rise of the Ayyubids can also be seen as a result of the need for the Muslim principalities in the region to unite against the Crusaders. With the experience he gained in the service of the Zengis, Saladin seized power in Egypt and then began to gather other Muslim forces in Syria under his own banner. These unification efforts enabled the Crusaders to become the greatest force threatening their presence in the region.



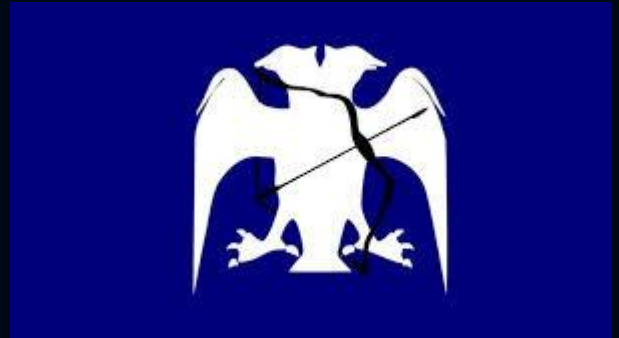
One of the most important successes of the Ayyubid State was the Battle of Hattin in 1187. In this battle, Saladin inflicted a heavy defeat on the Crusader army, and shortly thereafter laid siege to Jerusalem and took the city back from the Crusaders. Although this event led to the Third Crusade, Jerusalem remained in Muslim hands. The Ayyubids were not only distinguished by their military successes, but also by their just approach to governance and their support for cultural activities. The madrasahs, hospitals and other public buildings they built contributed to a significant cultural and scientific revival in the Islamic world of the period.





### 3. Zengid State

The Zengid State was a Turkmen principality founded in Mosul by Imadeddin Zengi in the first half of the 12th century. Despite its short life, it gained an important place in the Islamic world with its effective struggle against the Crusaders. Zengi's recapture of Urfa from the Crusaders in 1144 was a great source of morale as it was the first major victory against the Crusaders and inspired subsequent resistance movements. Although this event led to the start of the Second Crusade in Europe, Zengi and his successors managed to significantly halt the Crusader advance on the Syrian front.



Although Imadeddin Zengi's state was divided among his sons after his death in 1146, the struggle against the Crusaders continued resolutely during the reign of Nureddin Mahmud Zengi, who ruled the Aleppo principality. Nureddin Zengi strengthened Muslim dominance in the region by recapturing many castles and cities from the Crusaders. The alliance established with Saladin Ayyubi, who rose in Egypt during his time, was a critical step in forming a common front against the Crusaders. Nureddin Zengi's belief that Jerusalem would be reconquered and the valuable pulpit he had built for the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Aleppo for this purpose are important indicators of the spiritual preparation felt for the conquest of Jerusalem.

After Nureddin Zengi's death in 1174, Saladin accelerated his efforts to unite the scattered Muslim principalities in Syria and thus formed a powerful army capable of targeting Jerusalem. The Zengi State's long-lasting struggle against the Crusaders paved the way for Saladin to achieve this unity and weaken the Crusaders' power.



#### POLITICAL RELATIONS

##### **Ayyubids Political Relations with Foreign States**

**Relations with the Zengid State:** Saladin's rise took place under the shadow of the Zengid ruler Nureddin Mahmud Zengi, to whom he was initially loyal. Nureddin aimed to send

Saladin to Egypt to eliminate the Fatimid threat and take control of the region. However, Saladin's increasing power in Egypt and the establishment of his own authority led to tensions between the two leaders. Nureddin was concerned about Saladin's independent actions and tried to keep him under control. Nureddin's death in 1174 eliminated this tension and paved the way for Saladin to establish dominance in Syria. However, during this process, it was necessary to struggle with Nureddin's heirs.

**Relations with the Abbasid Caliphate:** The Ayyubids declared that they represented Sunni Islam and were loyal to the Abbasid Caliphate. This increased the legitimacy of the Ayyubid state and helped it gain respect in the Islamic world. Regular relations were maintained with the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad, and the caliph's approval reinforced the authority of the Ayyubid sultans.

**Relations with Other Muslim States:** Saladin pursued a policy of forming a united Islamic front against the Crusaders. To this end, he tried to establish political and military alliances with other Muslim emirates and dynasties in Syria and the surrounding area. However, this process was not easy, and some Muslim rulers tended to protect their independence or prioritize their regional interests. Saladin's efforts to unite these elements under his authority constituted one of the important political dynamics of the period. For example, relations with other Turkmen principalities that emerged with the weakening of the Seljuk Empire could sometimes include competition and conflict.

### **Political Relations of the Kingdom of Jerusalem with Foreign States**

**Papacy:** The Papacy continued to exert some influence by appealing to the Holy Land for aid and attempting to mediate disputes. However, its ability to effectively mobilize European powers was diminishing.

**Italian City-States:** The Italian maritime republics (Venice, Genoa, Pisa) maintained a strong presence in the Levant through trading colonies and naval forces. Their primary focus was often commercial interests, and their political support for the Crown could be inconsistent, sometimes leading to conflict within the Crusader states themselves.

**Principality of Antioch and County of Tripoli:** Traditionally, Jerusalem held a senior position among the Crusader states. However, the relationship was not always smooth. These northern states often pursued their own interests and alliances, sometimes straying from Jerusalem's politics. Dynastic ties and strategic considerations continued to play a role in their interactions, but it became increasingly difficult to maintain a united front.



**Byzantine Empire:** The alliance with the Byzantine Empire, a major factor in the early years of the kingdom, became even more strained during this period. The death of Manuel I Komnenos in 1180 was a turning point that ended any possibility of effective Byzantine-Latin cooperation.

## **CHARACTERS**

### **Ayyubids**

#### **Selahaddin Eyyubi**

Saladin, known by his full name Salah ad-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub, was a prominent Muslim military leader and statesman of the 12th century. Born in 1137 or 1138 in Tikrit (modern-day Iraq), Saladin was of Kurdish origin and rose to become one of the most respected and influential figures of the medieval Islamic world.

He founded the Ayyubid Dynasty after abolishing the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt in 1171 and reestablishing Sunni rule. Saladin is best known for recapturing Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1187 following the decisive Battle of Hattin. His conduct during and after the conquest of Jerusalem was marked by mercy and tolerance, distinguishing him from many of his contemporaries and earning him admiration across both the Muslim and Christian worlds.

During the Third Crusade, Saladin faced off against European leaders such as King Richard the Lionheart of England. Despite the intense military conflict, both leaders demonstrated mutual respect, and their correspondence became legendary examples of diplomacy and chivalry.

Saladin passed away in 1193 in Damascus. He left behind not only a powerful state but also a lasting legacy of leadership, justice, and honor that continues to inspire generations.

## **Muzaffereddin Gökbörü**

Muzaffar ad-Din Gökbörü (also spelled Gökbörü), born in 1154, was a prominent Turkic military commander and regional ruler during the late 12th and early 13th centuries. He is best known as a close ally and brother-in-law of Saladin (Salah ad-Din), with whom he fought during the campaigns against the Crusaders.

Gökbörü played a significant role in various military operations throughout the Levant, including the famed Battle of Hattin in 1187, which led to the recapture of Jerusalem by Muslim forces. His military expertise and unwavering loyalty to Saladin contributed significantly to the successes of the Ayyubid campaigns.

After years of service, Gökbörü became the ruler (atabeg) of Erbil (modern-day northern Iraq), where he governed with notable fairness and administrative skill. He was also known for his patronage of education, architecture, and charitable institutions. Under his leadership, Erbil became a center of learning and culture.

Gökbörü died in 1233, leaving behind a legacy not only as a military commander but also as a just and generous ruler. His life reflects the ideals of loyalty, strategic competence, and statesmanship that were central to the leadership of the medieval Islamic world.

## **El-Muzaffar Takiyüddin Ömer**

Taqi al-Din Umar (also known as Emir Taqi al-Din or Taqi al-Din al-Majdī) was a key military commander and close relative of Sultan Saladin (Salah ad-Din). Active during the late 12th century, he played a vital role in the Ayyubid military campaigns, particularly during the wars against the Crusaders.

He was not only Saladin's trusted general but also his nephew by marriage, holding high-ranking administrative and military responsibilities within the Ayyubid state. Taqi al-Din Umar led troops in several important battles, including the decisive Battle of Hattin in 1187, which paved the way for the Muslim reconquest of Jerusalem.

Beyond the battlefield, he governed important territories such as Hama and Homs, and later Aleppo, helping to consolidate Ayyubid control in Syria. Known for his loyalty, competence, and political acumen, he was instrumental in maintaining the unity of the Ayyubid front after Saladin's death.

Taqi al-Din Umar died in 1191, only a few years after the fall of Jerusalem, but his contributions were crucial to the military and administrative foundation of the Ayyubid

dynasty. His leadership exemplifies the cooperation and strength that defined the Muslim resistance during the Crusader period.

### **Melik El Adil**

Al-Malik al-Adil (full name: al-Adil Sayf al-Din Abu Bakr ibn Ayyub, 1145–1218) was a prominent Ayyubid ruler, military commander, and the younger brother of Saladin (Salah ad-Din). As a trusted advisor and general, he played a critical role in both the administration and military strategies of the Ayyubid state during and after Saladin's campaigns against the Crusaders.

Al-Adil supported Saladin in major military engagements, including the Battle of Hattin and the siege of Jerusalem. After Saladin's death in 1193, al-Adil emerged as a unifying figure among the Ayyubid princes, eventually becoming the Sultan of Egypt and Syria in 1200. His reign was marked by political stability, diplomatic engagement with the Crusader states, and efforts to strengthen the internal coherence of the Ayyubid realm.

He was known for his wisdom, pragmatism, and ability to maintain a balance between military power and statecraft. Al-Adil's legacy includes not only his role in preserving Saladin's achievements but also expanding and institutionalizing the Ayyubid dynasty's power in the region.

### **Husameddin**

Husam al-Din Lu'lu (or simply Husam al-Din) was one of Saladin's most loyal and capable military commanders. Originally a mamluk (slave soldier) who rose through the ranks due to his courage and leadership, Husam al-Din became a close associate and field commander under Saladin during the wars against the Crusaders.

He distinguished himself in several key battles and sieges throughout the Levant, often tasked with leading elite units or overseeing strategic positions. His deep personal loyalty to Saladin and tactical acumen earned him a respected position within the Ayyubid military hierarchy.

Though less politically prominent than figures like al-Adil or Gökböri, Husam al-Din represented the trusted core of Saladin's inner circle. He embodied the martial values of discipline, faith, and dedication that characterized the Ayyubid military elite during the struggle for control over the Holy Land.

### **Bedrettin**

Badr al-Din, also known as Badr al-Din ibn Shaddad (1145–1234), was a prominent Islamic jurist, historian, and close confidant of Saladin (Salah ad-Din). As a respected scholar of Islamic law (*faqih*), he served as the *qadi al-qudat* (chief judge) of Aleppo and later became one of Saladin's most trusted advisors.

His close relationship with Saladin was not only personal but also intellectual and administrative. He accompanied Saladin on several military campaigns and played a key role in mediating disputes, drafting treaties, and organizing governance in newly conquered territories.

Badr al-Din is also renowned for writing one of the earliest and most comprehensive biographies of Saladin, titled *al-Nawādir al-Sultaniyya wa'l-Maḥāsin al-Yūsufiyya*. His work remains a critical source for historians studying the Ayyubid period and the Crusades.

Through both his legal expertise and historical record-keeping, Badr al-Din helped shape the legacy of Saladin and offered future generations insight into the values and policies of the Ayyubid leadership.

### **İsmet Hatun**

İsmat al-Din Khatun was a prominent noblewoman and political figure of the 12th-century Islamic world, and the wife of Saladin (Salah ad-Din). Born into the ruling Zengid dynasty—her father being Nur al-Din Mahmud's ally—she was initially married to Nur al-Din himself. After his death, she later married Saladin as part of a strategic alliance during his rise to power in Syria.

İsmat al-Din was not only a symbolic figure in the unification of Muslim territories but also an example of the influential roles noblewomen could hold in medieval Islamic politics. Her marriage to Saladin helped solidify his legitimacy and authority in Syria following the decline of the Zengids.

Although historical sources provide limited detail about her direct political actions, İsmat al-Din Khatun's position as queen consort and member of two powerful dynasties places her among the notable women who contributed to the dynastic and diplomatic structures of the Ayyubid state.

### **Aziz Osman bin Selahaddin**

Al-Aziz Uthman ibn Salah ad-Din (d. 1198) was the second son of Saladin and a significant political figure during the early post-Saladin period of the Ayyubid dynasty. After Saladin's

death in 1193, al-Aziz inherited the rule of Egypt, in accordance with his father's decision to divide the Ayyubid territories among his sons and relatives.

Though relatively young and lacking his father's military stature, al-Aziz maintained a degree of stability in Egypt and attempted to consolidate power within the fragmented Ayyubid realm. His rule, however, was challenged by ongoing rivalries between Ayyubid princes, including his own brothers, particularly al-Afdal and al-Adil.

Al-Aziz is remembered for both his efforts to assert authority and his internal struggles to manage a divided dynasty. His sudden death in 1198 further intensified the power struggle among the Ayyubid elite and paved the way for his uncle al-Adil to eventually take control.

### **Efdal bin Selahaddin**

Al-Afdal Ali ibn Salah ad-Din (d. 1225) was the eldest son of Saladin and one of the key figures involved in the succession crisis following his father's death. He was given control over Damascus and parts of Syria, but his leadership was often criticized for its lack of political finesse and military strength.

Despite being Saladin's firstborn, al-Afdal struggled to assert dominance over his brothers and uncles. His conflicts with al-Aziz (his brother in Egypt) and later with al-Adil (his uncle) led to a period of internal instability within the Ayyubid dynasty. Al-Afdal was eventually defeated and removed from power by al-Adil, who unified the Ayyubid territories under his own leadership.

Al-Afdal's career reflects the challenges of dynastic succession in medieval Islamic polities, where lineage did not always guarantee effective rule. His life illustrates how internal divisions weakened the unity that Saladin had built during his reign.

### **Tuğtekin**

Toghtekin (d. 1128) was a powerful military leader and atabeg (governor) of Damascus during the early 12th century. Originally a Turkish mamluk in the service of the Seljuk Empire, he rose to prominence following the death of his master, Tutush I, and eventually established his own semi-independent rule over Damascus, founding the **Burid dynasty**.

Although Toghtekin lived before Saladin's rise, his political and military legacy deeply influenced the political landscape that Saladin would later navigate. As a regional ruler, Toghtekin maintained a careful balance between resisting the Crusaders and managing the complex web of rival Muslim powers in Syria. His pragmatic diplomacy and military acumen helped preserve Damascus during a period of great external threat and internal fragmentation.



By asserting autonomy while formally recognizing Seljuk suzerainty, Toghtekin set a precedent for local dynasties like the Zengids and, later, the Ayyubids under Saladin. His rule contributed to the gradual consolidation of Muslim power in the Levant, paving the way for Saladin's unification of Egypt and Syria decades later.

## **Crusaders**

### **Baldwin IV**

Baldwin IV (1161–1185), known to history as the “Leper King,” was the King of Jerusalem from 1174 until his death. Diagnosed with leprosy at a young age, Baldwin nonetheless demonstrated remarkable strength, intelligence, and resilience, defying expectations both as a ruler and as a military commander. Despite his illness, he led armies into battle and played a central role in defending the Crusader Kingdom during a period of growing threat from Saladin.

Educated by the renowned historian and churchman William of Tyre, Baldwin was known for his sharp mind and deep understanding of political strategy. His reign was defined by efforts to maintain the fragile unity of the Crusader nobility amid increasing internal rivalries and external pressures. His most famous military success was the Battle of Montgisard in 1177, where he led a vastly outnumbered Crusader force to a surprising victory over Saladin's army.

However, Baldwin's declining health created a complex succession crisis. He attempted to secure stability by appointing his sister Sibylla's son, Baldwin V, as co-king, and later

sidelined her husband, Guy de Lusignan, whom he distrusted. These decisions reflected Baldwin's political foresight, though they could not ultimately prevent the fragmentation of the kingdom after his death.

Baldwin IV is remembered not only for his bravery and strategic acumen, but also for his tragic and symbolic role as a young, afflicted monarch trying to preserve a kingdom under siege. His leadership during a time of existential threat earned him respect from both his allies and enemies—including Saladin himself.

### **Guy De Lusignan**

Guy de Lusignan (c. 1150–1194) was a French nobleman who became King of Jerusalem by marrying Princess Sibylla, sister of King Baldwin IV. His rise to power was controversial, as many Crusader nobles doubted his competence and leadership. Nevertheless, Sibylla's strong political will ensured his coronation following the deaths of Baldwin IV and Baldwin V.

Guy's reign was defined by one of the most catastrophic defeats in Crusader history: the Battle of Hattin in 1187. Against the advice of more cautious nobles like Raymond of Tripoli, Guy led the Crusader army into open desert against Saladin, resulting in the annihilation of the army and his own capture. This defeat led directly to the fall of Jerusalem later that year.

After being released by Saladin, Guy remained politically active. Despite losing favor among the barons of the Kingdom of Jerusalem—who eventually supported Conrad of Montferrat—Guy retained the loyalty of a faction and was later granted the Kingdom of Cyprus by Richard the Lionheart during the Third Crusade. He ruled there until his death in 1194, laying the foundation for Lusignan rule on the island.

Guy's legacy is a subject of debate. While some view him as a chivalrous but unlucky knight, others see him as a reckless and unqualified ruler whose poor decisions cost the Crusaders dearly. His story is a symbol of how personal ambition and factionalism could undermine the Crusader cause.

### **Princess Sibylla**

Princess Sibylla (c. 1160–1190) was the eldest daughter of King Amalric I and the sister of King Baldwin IV. She became a central figure in the succession politics of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem during one of its most perilous periods. Trained in courtly and

political affairs from a young age, Sibylla was seen as a legitimate heir to the throne, especially as her brother's leprosy made it unlikely he would produce an heir.

Sibylla married Guy de Lusignan in 1180, a decision encouraged by factions at court but opposed by others. Despite growing opposition to Guy after Baldwin IV's death, Sibylla skillfully outmaneuvered her rivals. In 1186, she agreed to annul her marriage in order to be crowned queen—on the condition that she could choose her next husband. She then promptly remarried Guy and crowned him king, securing his position through her own royal legitimacy.

Her reign coincided with the catastrophic events of 1187, including the loss at Hattin and the fall of Jerusalem to Saladin. Throughout this crisis, Sibylla stood by Guy, showing strong personal loyalty and political resolve. She accompanied him during the siege of Acre, where she died—along with her daughters—during a plague outbreak in 1190.

Sibylla is remembered as a politically astute and determined queen, whose actions shaped the course of Crusader history. Her life reflects the limited but critical role royal women could play in medieval politics, particularly during the dynastic crisis.

### **Balian of Ibelin**

Balian of Ibelin (c. 1143–1193) was a prominent Crusader noble and military commander known for his critical role in the defense of Jerusalem during the crisis of 1187. As Lord of Nablus and a member of the influential Ibelin family, Balian held both military authority and political respect among the Crusader barons.

After the devastating defeat at the Battle of Hattin, Balian took command of the defense of Jerusalem in the absence of King Guy, who had been captured. Despite being vastly outnumbered and poorly supplied, Balian negotiated directly with Saladin to delay the siege and organize the city's defense. Ultimately, recognizing the impossibility of victory, he brokered a peaceful surrender of Jerusalem, securing safe passage for thousands of Christian civilians—a rare act of humanity in medieval warfare.

Following the fall of the city, Balian became a key political figure in the reorganized Crusader states. He supported Queen Isabella's claim to the throne and played a central role in the internal politics of the kingdom during the Third Crusade. Known for his pragmatism, integrity, and diplomatic skill, Balian is often portrayed as a model of responsible leadership in the face of disaster.

### **Raynald of Châtillon**

Raynald of Châtillon (c. 1125–1187) was a French knight and one of the most controversial figures in the history of the Crusader states. Initially serving as Prince of Antioch through marriage, he later became Lord of Oultrejordain, a strategic region controlling routes between Egypt and Syria.

Raynald was infamous for his aggressive and provocative behavior, frequently violating truces and launching raids against Muslim caravans, even during times of peace. His most infamous act was an attempted naval raid on the Red Sea, aiming to attack Mecca and Medina—an action that deeply enraged the Muslim world and Saladin in particular.

His repeated provocations helped trigger the full-scale war that culminated in the Battle of Hattin, where Raynald was captured. Refusing to convert to Islam or ask for mercy, he was personally executed by Saladin after the battle—a moment often highlighted as symbolic justice.

Raynald's legacy is one of religious fanaticism, recklessness, and personal ambition. While admired by some for his boldness, most historians agree that hi

### **Raymond III of Tripoli**

Raymond III of Tripoli (c. 1140–1187) was Count of Tripoli and a leading statesman in the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. Known for his intelligence, diplomatic skills, and military experience, Raymond often found himself at odds with the more aggressive factions of the kingdom, including Raynald of Châtillon and Gerard de Rideford.

Raymond served as regent for the young Baldwin IV and later advocated for peaceful coexistence with Muslim neighbors when possible. He even negotiated temporary truces with Saladin, recognizing the growing imbalance of power between the Crusaders and Muslim forces. Though criticized by some for perceived appeasement, many modern historians regard Raymond as one of the few leaders who understood the need for diplomacy.

In the events leading up to the Battle of Hattin, Raymond advised caution and opposed marching the entire Crusader army into the arid Galilean terrain. His advice was ignored, and the resulting defeat proved disastrous. Raymond managed to escape the battlefield, but he died shortly afterward, likely from wounds or grief.

Raymond's legacy is one of moderation, foresight, and statesmanship—qualities often overshadowed in the violent and factionalized politics of the Crusader states.

### **Gerard de Ridefort**

Gerard de Ridefort (d. 1189) was a French knight and the 22nd Grand Master of the Knights Templar during the late 12th century. Gerard was a controversial figure, known for his

zealous leadership and his impulsive decision-making during critical periods in the Crusader states. His tenure as Grand Master was marked by a series of reckless military actions that ultimately led to major defeats for the Crusaders.

One of the most notable events during his leadership was his role in the Battle of Hattin in 1187. Gerard was instrumental in convincing the Crusader leadership to march into the arid desert terrain, leading to the army's catastrophic defeat at the hands of Saladin's forces. His failure to heed advice from more cautious commanders like Raymond of Tripoli sealed the Crusader army's fate.

After the defeat at Hattin, Gerard was captured by Saladin, who later executed him. His death was seen by many as symbolic retribution for his reckless actions, and he remains a controversial figure in Crusader history. While some see him as a martyr of the Christian cause, his legacy is largely viewed as one of military misjudgment and failure.

### **Baldwin V**

Baldwin V (1177–1186) was the last King of Jerusalem from the House of Ibelin, the grandson of Amalric I and the nephew of Baldwin IV. Baldwin V was crowned co-king with his uncle, Baldwin IV, as part of a political strategy to ensure the succession of a stable ruler for the Crusader kingdom. However, Baldwin V was a child, and his reign was largely symbolic due to his age and the presence of adult regents managing the kingdom in his stead.

Baldwin V's short reign was plagued by internal divisions within the Crusader elite and by ongoing pressure from Saladin's forces. His untimely death in 1186, at the young age of nine, left the throne vacant, leading to a succession crisis that saw Guy de Lusignan ascend to the throne, setting the stage for the fall of Jerusalem to Saladin in 1187.

Baldwin V's reign, though brief, marked the end of the Ibelin dynasty's control of Jerusalem. His death significantly weakened the political stability of the kingdom, which had already been fragile after Baldwin IV's illness.

### **Isabella I**

Isabella I (1172–1205) was a key figure in the final years of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. She became queen following the tumultuous period of Saladin's conquests and the subsequent fall of Jerusalem in 1187. Isabella was the daughter of Amalric I and Agnes of Courtenay, and her marriage alliances played a central role in the kingdom's attempt to maintain power.

Isabella was initially married to Humphrey IV of Toron, but this marriage was annulled, and she later married Conrad of Montferrat, a significant figure in the Third Crusade. After

Conrad's assassination in 1192, Isabella married Henry II of Champagne, strengthening her political influence and consolidating power in the Crusader states.

Throughout her reign, Isabella faced significant challenges from rival factions, both internal and external. Despite these challenges, she is remembered as a resilient and pragmatic queen who navigated the complex political landscape of the Crusader Kingdom. Her marriages, in particular, were a critical factor in maintaining the ties between the Latin Christian rulers and the remaining Crusader territories in the Levant.

### **Agnes of Courtenay**

Agnes of Courtenay (c. 1133–c. 1184) was a French noblewoman and the mother of Baldwin IV and Sibylla. As a member of the influential Courtenay family, she played a central role in the politics of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem during the 12th century. Agnes's political influence was significant, particularly through her children, who would become key figures in the kingdom's dynastic struggles.

Agnes was married to Amalric I of Jerusalem, and after his death, she became an important figure in the court. Her son Baldwin IV, who suffered from leprosy, was groomed to rule, while Sibylla, his sister, would later become queen. Agnes was often criticized by contemporary chroniclers for her manipulation of court politics, particularly in her efforts to maintain her family's power.

Her influence over the succession of the kingdom is seen in her involvement in the crowning of her son Baldwin IV and later Sibylla's controversial marriage to Guy de Lusignan. Agnes's political machinations and her role in the complex and often fragmented politics of the Crusader states make her a figure of intrigue in the history of Jerusalem.