



## Key events of the Second Crusade

## How the Crusader region of Outremer was established

After the First Crusade (1096–1099), four Crusader states, collectively called Outremer (meaning ‘overseas’ in French), were established in the Levant:

**County of Edessa (1098–1150):** The first Crusader state, formed in 1098. It was the first Crusader state to fall, having been recaptured by Muslims in 1144, prompting the Second Crusade.

**Principality of Antioch (1098–1287):** Founded in 1098 and ruled by the Prince of Antioch. It was an important religious, military and trade hub.

**Kingdom of Jerusalem (1099–1291):** Founded in 1099, after Jerusalem fell in the First Crusade. It was the most important Crusader state.

**County of Tripoli (1102–1289):** Established in 1102, it was the last Crusader state to be set up.

Crusading military orders, such as the **Knights Templar** (founded 1119) and the **Knights Hospitaller** (founded 1113), were established to protect Christian pilgrims and defend these Crusader states. Both orders grew wealthy through donations. The Templars were known for their military skills, while the Hospitallers were famous for their medical care and defence of Christian territories. Both orders had significant influence, including in Wales, where they received land and established commanderies.

## Key people

Pope Eugenius III	Head of the Catholic Church who called for a Second Crusade
Emperor Conrad III	Holy Roman Emperor (King of Germany) who joined the Crusade
King Louis VII	King of France who joined the Second Crusade
Bernard of Clairvaux	Monk who persuaded Conrad and Louis to join the crusade
Baldwin III	King of Jerusalem
Imad ad-Din Zengi	Muslim ruler of Mosul and Aleppo who captured Edessa
Nur ad-Din	Son of Zengi, who unified the Muslim kingdoms against the Crusaders
Mu'in ad-Din Unur	Ruler of Damascus
Sultan Mesud I	Ruler of the Seljuk Turks

**1 December 1145:** Pope Eugenius III issues *Quantum praedecessores*, calling for the Second Crusade.

**September 1146:** Louis VII of France joins the crusade.

**July 1147:** The French and Germans reach Constantinople, where the armies later split.

**June 1148:** The Crusaders' siege of Damascus fails, forcing them to retreat.

**1150:** The remaining crusaders return home, ending the Second Crusade.

**24 December 1144:** Edessa falls to Zengi, leading to calls for a new crusade.

**March 1146:** Conrad III pledges to join the crusade.

**May 1147:** Louis VII and Conrad III depart for the Holy Land.

**March 1148:** Conrad III and Louis VII reunite in Jerusalem.

**1149:** Louis VII and Conrad III return to their respective countries, facing criticism.

## The main events of the Second Crusade

After the fall of Edessa, **Pope Eugenius III** issued the papal bull *Quantum praedecessores* in December 1145, calling for a Second Crusade. He offered indulgences (forgiveness of sins) to those who joined.

**Bernard of Clairvaux**, a monk, was chosen by Eugenius III to preach in favour of the Crusade. He inspired Louis VII of France and Conrad III of Germany to join the Crusade.

In **1147**, both leaders set out to recover Edessa, but they faced many difficulties. Conrad's forces clashed with Byzantine troops and were later ambushed by the Seljuk Turks. Louis VII's army suffered significant losses in Anatolia after being harassed by Turkish forces. The two armies eventually joined at Antioch but were severely weakened.

After arriving in Jerusalem, the Crusaders held a **Council at Acre (1148)** to decide their next move. Louis, Conrad and Baldwin decided to target Damascus, a strategic Muslim city. Some Crusader nobles opposed this, as the local Muslim rulers had opposed the Zengi dynasty.

## Siege of Damascus (1148)

After some initial success, the Crusaders shifted their position, weakening their supply lines. **Mu'in ad-Din Unur** held out. When **Nur ad-Din**, Zengi's son, reinforced Damascus, the Crusaders were forced to retreat after only four days.

The siege of Damascus alienated Muslim allies and damaged Crusader strength. Kings Louis and Conrad returned to Europe. It led to more Muslim states supporting Nur ad-Din, who went on to defeat the Crusaders at the **Battle of Inab (1149)**. This was end of the Second Crusade.

## The Muslim challenge to the Crusades

The **tactics and strategies** of Muslim forces caused the Crusaders many problems:

- They used **Turkish cavalry** (Ghulams and Mamluks), who were fast, highly mobile units able to outmanoeuvre the slower Crusader forces.
- Muslim commanders like Nur ad-Din favoured **guerrilla-style warfare** (hit-and-run), using ambushes and harassing tactics to weaken the Crusaders before large battles.
- The Muslim armies had **knowledge of the terrain**, enabling them to carry out ambushes and live in the harsh conditions.
- Muslim cities like Damascus and Aleppo were **well-fortified**, making them difficult for the Crusaders to capture.
- Muslim forces grew in size as the conflict with the Christians came to be seen as a jihad (holy war).

## Fall of Edessa (1144)

Edessa, the first Crusader state, was besieged by **Imad ad-Din Zengi** in 1144. The city was surrounded by Zengi's army, cutting off supplies and using siege engines to attack the walls. The Crusaders were unprepared, lacking supplies for a long siege. Additionally, most of the city's knights were absent as their leader, Joscelin II, had been tricked to take most of his army elsewhere. After a month-long siege, a section of the wall collapsed on 24 December, allowing Zengi's forces to enter and capture the city.

The fall of Edessa was the first major Muslim victory against the Crusaders and helped to unify Muslim forces. This weakened the remaining Crusader states, leading once again to calls for support from the Pope and Europe's kings.