

Police storm Temple Mount to quell rioting Palestinians; 20 injured

Nir Hasson

Fierce clashes continued for several hours yesterday between Israeli police officers and dozens of young Palestinians on Jerusalem's Temple Mount. One policeman and around 20 Palestinians sustained mild injuries in the clashes.

As in a number of similar incidents in the past few years, young Palestinians had amassed rocks to use as missiles and barricaded themselves within the Al-Aqsa mosque, aware of the Israel Police policy of not entering the mosque.

The Palestinians lobbed rocks and firecrackers at the police through the mosque doors. As the police approached, they blocked the entrance with bookcases and other furniture. The police used stun grenades and tear gas to disperse the crowd or at least to push the protesters further into the mosque.

After the clashes subsided, the police allowed a number of groups of Jews onto the Temple Mount; hundreds of visitors were turned away.

Tensions on the Temple Mount, known in Arabic as Haram al-Sharif, or "the Noble Sanctuary," have increased recently, with barely a day passing without any incident in recent months. Most incidents involve Jews attempting to access the area in order to pray or demonstrate a Jewish presence. The growing strength of the Jewish Temple Movement and other organizations that seek to change the status quo on the Temple Mount has exacerbated these tensions, as has the crisis in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

Goat sacrifice halted

On Passover Eve, Monday, once again a group of right-wing Jews was detained while trying to bring a goat up to the Temple Mount, in a revival of the ancient sacrifice ritual. A few days earlier, a goat was sacrificed in the city's Kiryat Moshe neighborhood.

Pesach is traditionally the most important holiday for the Temple renewal movements, and bringing a sacrifice to the Temple Mount on Passover has been one of their main aims, along the way to realizing their goal of renewing Jewish worship on the Temple Mount.

"The commandment of the Passover sacrifice is one of the most important commandments in Judaism, on par with circumcision. We believe that we can renew this practice without any changes to the mount, without infringing upon the rights of any Arabs in the area. It's part of freedom of religions, and does not hurt anyone," says Arnon Segal, a journalist for the Makor Rishon newspaper and a leading activist in the Temple movement.

"It's hard to avoid the feeling that the police are okay with the riots, which allow it to easily explain why the rights of Jews are violated on the Temple Mount left and right," Segal says.

The Jerusalem police said in a statement that despite the violence, efforts are under way to develop the Temple Mount for visitors, and a few hundred people did visit the mount. "We could have closed it down ahead of time, but we did everything we could to allow visitors to enter," a Jerusalem police official said.



Women waiting as police block off the Temple Mount yesterday.

Reuters

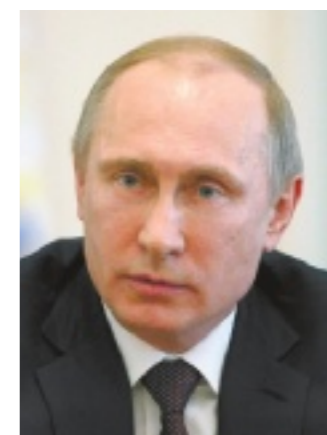
Putin to Netanyahu: Ukraine to blame

Haaretz Staff

Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke by phone with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday night, to discuss a number of issues including Iran and the escalating crisis in Ukraine.

During the conversation, which was initiated by Netanyahu, the leaders discussed "current issues in bilateral cooperation and on the international agenda, including progress in talks on the Iranian nuclear program," Putin's website reported.

At Netanyahu's request, Putin provided an assessment of events in Ukraine. "The President of Russia pointed out that the sharp escalation of the crisis is the result of Kiev's irresponsible policy, which disregards the lawful rights and interests of the country's Russian-speaking citizens. He stressed the inadmissibility of the current regime's use of armed forces to suppress public protests in



Vladimir Putin

Reuters

southeastern Ukraine."

The leaders agreed to continue regular exchanges of opinion on issues of mutual interest.

Netanyahu had come under fire recently from the United States over Israel's failure to back its stance in condemning Russia. A senior U.S. official said one of the reasons for the White House's anger was Israel's absence two weeks ago at

a UN General Assembly vote to condemn the Russian invasion and support Ukraine's territorial integrity.

Israel has told the United States of its concerns that taking a public stance against Russia over the invasion of Ukraine could cause real damage to its security interests, an Israeli official involved in the talks with Washington told Haaretz on Sunday.

Putin also had a telephone conversation with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in which he said that the current escalation in Ukraine "essentially puts the nation on the brink of civil war."

According to the website, "the leaders of Russia and Germany stressed the vital importance of the four-party (Russia, EU, US, Ukraine) talks scheduled for Thursday. Hope was expressed that the meeting in Geneva would send a clear signal to help take the situation in a peaceful direction."

OUR DOORS ARE OPEN...



KINNERET

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Dead Sea, including Ein Gedi, while hundreds of families visited other spots in the south, including the Ashkelon National Park and Park Habesor. Heavy traffic was reported in the Kiryat Gat area, and at Kama and Lehavim junctions.



Bathers yesterday.

Gil Eliad

The heavy holiday traffic in and out of Jerusalem was exacerbated by a bus going up in flames near Neveh Ilan yesterday morning, which closed the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway in both directions for some two hours. No one was injured in the fire.

Roads to and within Jerusalem are expected to be especially crowded today, as people make their way to the capital for the traditional semi-annual priestly blessing at the Western Wall this morning. Attractions in and around the capital, especially in the Old City, are likely to be jammed with out-of-town visitors.

The weather is expected to be warm for the rest of Hol Ha'moad. Today will be partly cloudy to clear, with a slight drop in temperatures, though it will continue to be unseasonably warm. Tomorrow will be clear and warmer, while on Shabbat temperatures will rise further.

Letters to the Editor

NGO Monitor vs. New Israel Fund

In responding to allegations that New Israel Fund (NIF) funds organizations that promote BDS campaigns ("Who has the right to Celebrate Israel?" April 6, 2014), NIF spokesperson Naomi Paiss obfuscates. As clearly demonstrated in NIF's own financial statements, NIF funding for the Coalition of Women for Peace continued into 2012 – contrary to Paiss' claims.

NIF funding for Coalition of Women for Peace enabled the coalition to launch a major BDS initiative, "Who Profits." This initiative continues to be a significant component of the international campaign against Israel, identifying corporations for boycotts and divestment. Recent cancellation of economic cooperation and divestment in the Netherlands is directly traceable to CWP reports, authored during the time of NIF funding.

After intense public pressure and criticism, in 2012 NIF ended funding for groups such as Coalition of Women for Peace and Mada al-Carmel, which promote a BDS agenda.

Now, NIF should turn its attention to other grantees that, to varying degrees, contribute to international campaigns to delegitimize Israel and other anti-Israel activities that erode, rather than strengthen, support for Israel. This is the least NIF can do to mitigate the damage it has caused.

Lena Bakman

Deputy director of communications, Knesset liaison and social media strategy manager
NGO Monitor

When Kashua writes about Indians

Although I have enjoyed reading Sayed Kashua's writings, his recent caricature of Indians in his column, "Too many smiles, too much cheese: Sayed Kashua bids farewell to the U.S.," April 11, 2014, is far from amusing. His characterization of the Indian as having a temperament marked by spicy curries and being the dodgy immigrant reflect British colonial and contemporary stereotypes of the temperamental native with no normative ethics. Kashua's ingenuity in using stereotypes to reflect on his own experience in an oppressed minority in Israel appears absent due to his inability to reflect on the experience of other minorities and other cultures.

Geetanjali Srikantan
Tel Aviv

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Wishing you Kosher Passover



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