

Jerusalem Day festivities shaken by rockets, violent riots

Police stormed the Temple Mount to disperse rioters who fired fireworks and threw stones at security forces. Over 300 people were injured in the clashes.

Rioting broke out in the Old City of Jerusalem and on the Temple Mount and rockets were fired towards Israel's capital on Monday, as Palestinians threw rocks and launched firecrackers at Israel Police officers and Israelis celebrated Jerusalem Day in the city.

Due to the violence, Israel Police decided earlier to change the path of the Jerusalem Day flag march on Monday afternoon. After the rocket fire, police asked revelers to return home.



Jerusalem Day flag march begins, May 10, 2021 (Credit: Marc Israel Sellem)

The march will go through the Jaffa Gate instead of the traditional route through the Damascus Gate.

Despite the decision to change the route, clashes broke out between police and hundreds of Palestinian youth at the Damascus Gate shortly after the

announcement, according to Israel Police.

A number of groups involved in organizing the flag march expressed outrage at the decision, stating that they were canceling the march in protest. Large crowds marched towards the Western Wall carrying Israeli flags and dancing despite the announcements.

Otzma Yehudit head Itamar Ben-Gvir expressed opposition to the decision to change the route of the march, saying “a situation in which the Israeli government and the Jerusalem police are unable to allow the flag dance to pass at the Damascus Gate is a very serious situation.”

“We folded on the Temple Mount, folded at the Damascus Gate, and folded on the Shimon HaTzadik [neighborhood]. We have lost sovereignty in Jerusalem, and it is time to liberate the Temple Mount and Jerusalem and show the rioters who are the owners of the house once and for all,” said Ben-Gvir.

The decision comes after a day of violent clashes between Israeli security forces and Palestinians, as well as attacks on Israeli civilians.

Overnight Sunday, Palestinians at the Temple Mount compound began building barricades and gathering stones with Palestinian media reporting that they were preparing to “confront the occupation forces and settlers.” Palestinians also raised green banners over Al-Aqsa mosque and placed posters of terrorist leaders around the site.

See video: <https://twitter.com/i/status/1391581788254965760>

On Monday morning, the police announced that Jews would not be allowed to enter the Temple Mount compound, and activists and right-wing politicians responded with outrage and dozens gathering at the entrance leading to the Mughrabi Gate, demanding to be let in. Some tried to break through the gate. Three Jews were arrested after attempting to enter the Temple Mount, according to Army Radio.

See video: <https://twitter.com/i/status/1391650865606537218>

Shortly after police made the announcement banning Jews from the site, crowds of Palestinians began attacking police officers with stones and fireworks, with police responding with riot dispersal means, including tear gas and rubber bullets. The clashes quickly grew, with police battling crowds of Palestinians throwing stones and barricading themselves in buildings on the mount.

Video from the area showed crowds running in all directions as police fired tear gas and rubber bullets at the Palestinians who were attacking them. Chairs and other objects were seen strewn across the plaza and clouds of tear gas filled the air and explosions were heard across the compound. Buildings in the compound were also damaged, with windows, tables and chairs damaged in the Al-Qibli

Mosque.

Palestinians called out over the loudspeakers of al-Aqsa Mosque that “the settlers will only pass over our dead bodies” and that “al-Aqsa is defiled,” Palestinian media said.

Police eventually restored calm on the mount for a short period but clashes later flared again as Palestinians, who had remained barricaded in al-Qibli mosque on the mount broke into the main plaza in the compound. On Monday afternoon, Palestinians hoisted a Palestinian flag over the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is illegal according to Israeli law.

See video: <https://twitter.com/i/status/1391806621580419080>

Later on Monday night, a fire broke out at the Temple Mount plaza amid further clashes between Palestinians and police, with video showing trees on fire at the compound. The fire was quickly extinguished.

Near the Lions’ Gate entrance to Jerusalem’s Old City, Palestinians attacked a car driven by a Jewish Israeli, causing him to lose control of the vehicle and swerve onto the sidewalk, hitting Palestinian rioters.

After the car stopped, more stone throwers approached it and they continued to pelt it, opening the doors in an attempt to attack the driver and another male passenger.

The car’s occupants, two men aged 27 and 28, were lightly injured and received medical treatment, according to the Magen David Adom (MDA) ambulance service.

“We came down two streets that should have been secured by the police, but there was no police presence,” said the driver of the vehicle to KAN news.

“We had stones thrown at us during the whole time we were driving on the street, I was talking with the police on the phone during the whole thing and told them that they were throwing rocks at me,” he added. “I had nowhere to go and so I started driving back and forth, at some point the car stopped and they opened the door and began hitting us.”

Additionally, Jewish Israelis and Palestinians clashed in the Old City and near the Damascus Gate on Monday afternoon, according to Palestinian media.

Abu Ubaida, the spokesman of the Izz el-Deen al-Qassam Brigades, warned that the terrorist groups in Gaza were giving Israel until 6 p.m. to withdraw security forces from the Temple Mount and Shiekh Jarrah neighborhood and to release all those detained in the recent clashes.

The Jerusalem District Court, including the ongoing trial of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, was evacuated on Monday due to the explosive security situation in east Jerusalem.

The trial did run from 9:00 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. but was scheduled to run until

3:30 p.m.

No specific threat was occurring at the time, but the judges were advised by their security team that it would be safer to leave before any potential situation might develop later.

Over 337 Palestinians were injured in the clashes on Monday morning, including Red Crescent medics who arrived at the scene to treat the wounded. At least seven people were reported to be in serious condition, the Red Crescent said. Some 21 police officers were injured amid the clashes, according to Israeli media. Hadassah-University Medical Center said it was treating five people who were lightly hurt, including a seven-month-old baby girl, who was hit by a stone.

The clashes have erupted following violence in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and along the Gaza border that was sparked in recent weeks as Palestinians expressed outrage at the planned eviction of a number of families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in east Jerusalem.

Terror groups in the Gaza Strip have also launched dozens of rockets and explosive and incendiary balloons towards southern Israel.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called a meeting of the security cabinet on Monday afternoon due to the heightened tensions.

"A struggle is now raging over the heart of Jerusalem," said Netanyahu, in reference to clashes, during a speech on Monday at the annual state ceremony in memory of the Jews of Ethiopia who died en route to Israel in the 1980s. "This is not a new struggle, this is a struggle between intolerance and tolerance, between law-breaking violence and law and order."

Netanyahu stressed that "only under Israeli sovereignty since 1967 are we are witnessing a long, stable and secure period in which we are working to ensure freedom of worship and tolerance for all."

The prime minister added that ensuring the freedom of worship requires an occasional confrontation with the "forces of intolerance," expressing support for the police and security forces. "These things have of course a misguided, incorrect, and misleading expression in the global media," added Netanyahu.

The Palestinian terror groups have threatened Israel and called for a "general mobilization" in Jerusalem, the West Bank and in Arab-Israeli communities.

"The spiteful Zionist terrorist attack on our Jerusalemites will not pass without a deterrent response, and the enemy must wait for the response of the resisting and steadfast Palestinian people everywhere and at all times," the Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror group said on Monday. "Everyone must act to save the people of Jerusalem. This is everyone's battle, and the resistance is present, and it will not be far from what is happening."

The PIJ also condemned the continued security coordination between the Palestinian Authority and Israel.

Hamas said that the clashes were "a religious war practiced by the occupation,

and it is evidence of the brutality of the Zionist occupation and its Nazism.”

“We call on our people to persevere in the face of the storming, and to offer the precious as a sacrifice for the purification of al-Aqsa and to prevent the settlers from entering it,” said Hamas. “We affirm that the occupation will pay a heavy price as a result of its incursion into al-Aqsa and its worshipers.”

Ismail Haniyeh, head of Hamas’s political bureau, warned on Monday afternoon that the terrorist groups in Gaza are “ready and motivated and will not stand idly by, and its word will be the last word in the battle if the occupation does not retreat and put an end to its satanic plans.”

Yonah Jeremy Bob contributed to this report.

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