



مركز العمل المجتمعي  
Community Action Center



AL-HAQ

# INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST INTERVENE TO END ISRAEL'S TARGETING OF JERUSALEM



20 JULY 2017



## **INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST INTERVENE TO END ISRAEL'S TARGETING OF JERUSALEM**

On Friday, 14 July 2017, following an alleged attack near Al-Haram Al-Sharif (Al-Aqsa compound) in the Old City of Jerusalem,<sup>1</sup> the Israeli government took measures amounting to collective punishment against the Palestinian population.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the closure of the Al-Aqsa compound for three days, beginning the morning of Friday, 14 July 2017. The religious site reopened for noon prayers on Sunday, 17 July 2017. During this period, the Old City was closed off to Palestinians except for those whose IDs confirmed their residence in the Old City.

Also immediately following the incident, the Israeli police arrested 58 employees of the Awqaf (Religious Endowment) who were at work in the Al-Aqsa compound on Friday morning. All of the employees were detained at the Masqubiyeh (Russian) detention center. Fifty-five of these employees were released in the afternoon or evening of the same day, while 3 employees were detained until the evening of Monday, 17 July 2017. Israeli authorities also contacted 18 employees of the Awqaf, and informed them that they were prohibited from entering the Al-Aqsa compound without detailing the timeframe. Only one employee was given a formal written order which prohibits him from entering for four months.

On Sunday July 16<sup>th</sup>, only three out of the eight entrances leading to Al-Haram-Al Sharif were reopened to worshippers. The Israeli government installed metal detectors on the open entrances that worshippers have to cross in order to access the site. The Awqaf issued a statement declaring that Muslims should not enter the compound through the metal detectors. Accordingly, Palestinian worshippers have been praying in front of the metal detectors of the Majlis and Asbat entrances to the compound since

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<sup>1</sup> Three Palestinians from Um Al Fahm and two Israeli border police were killed in the incident. It is still unclear as to whether the alleged attack began inside or outside the Al-Aqsa compound.



Sunday, as a sign of protest to these measures. Palestinian worshippers interviewed by our organizations stated that they feared that the metal detectors would become permanent fixtures at the holy site, facilitate further Israeli control, and may lead to partition of the site similar to the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron. Given that it is a place of worship, individuals also stated that it should not become like other security checkpoints throughout the OPT.

Clashes between Palestinians and the Israeli Occupying Forces have also been ongoing since Sunday, 16 July. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society stated that 31 individuals were seriously injured and required transfer to hospitals from clashes between July 16-18.<sup>2</sup> Numerous arrests have also taken place.

## **ECONOMIC IMPACT ON EAST JERUSALEMITES**

Measures imposed on the Old City have not only impacted worshippers and residents therein, but affected Palestinians throughout East Jerusalem. Many main streets, including Sultan Suleiman Street- one of the main thoroughfares in East Jerusalem, were closed to traffic between 14-16 July. Moreover, the closure of the Old City between 14-16 July led to the forced closure of Palestinian businesses in the Old City; owners and employees who live outside of the gates were unable to access their shops. One shopkeeper told Al-Haq:

On 15 July 2017, I left my house and headed out to work at my shop. When I arrived towards Herod's Gate, the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) had set up a military checkpoint to prohibit residents of Jerusalem and neighbouring areas from entering. They denied me entry as it was only allowed to residents of the Old City. They were searching everyone and verifying their place of residency as it is written in their personal identity documents. I told them that I am a shopkeeper, that I own a shoe store, and that I need to work but they refused to let me in. I remember that there were maybe tens of others also trying to enter. None were allowed to

<sup>2</sup> Information found on the Facebook page of the Palestinian Red Crescent on 20 July.



do so. I then returned to my home in At-Tur. On the following day, Sunday, 16 July 2017, I tried again to access the road leading to my shop. All the Gates and entrances were closed off to all those who were not amongst the residents of the Old City with the exception of Jaffa Gate. In front of Jaffa Gate there was also a military checkpoint, through which I entered after a long ordeal. I remember seeing the IOF allowing foreigners and tourists to pass unrestrictedly...There was no business activity as a result of the closures and the checkpoints that the IOF had set up at all entrances into the Old City and the Al-Aqsa compound. There was no one to buy anything and the streets of the Old City were practically bare... I am the sole breadwinner for my family, living with my wife and two unmarried sons in At-Tur. I have incurred damages as a result of having been forced to close down my shop for two days on Friday and Saturday because of the checkpoints, the closures, and the curfew imposed by the IOF after the attack... in addition to the absence of customers on Sunday, the third day, which was also due to the closures.<sup>3</sup>

## COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT AS MEANS TO FURTHER ISRAELI OBJECTIVES

Since 2015, Israel has used a broad array of collective punishment measures throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). Al-Haq and the Community Action Center (CAC) have repeatedly drawn attention to Israel's policies and practices targeting Palestinian East Jerusalemites and the city itself, including collective punishment measures such as punitive [residency revocations](#), punitive [home demolitions](#), and movement and sd access [restrictions](#).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Al-Haq Affidavit 411/2017

<sup>4</sup> Illegal Israeli Measures Target Palestinian Youth and their Families in Occupied East Jerusalem, 19 January 2017, available at <http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/topics/wall-and-jerusalem/1095-illegal-israeli-measures-target-palestinian-youth-and-their-families-in-occupied-east-jerusalem>

Illegal collective punishment measures against women and children: The case of Nadia Abu Jamal and her family, 1 February 2017, available at <http://www.alhaq.org/documentation/weekly-focuses/1100-illegal-collective-punishment-measures-against-women-and-children-the-case-of-nadia-abu-jamal-and-her-family>

Al-Haq Special Focus: In Pictures, Jerusalem Dissected, 20 October 2015, available at <http://www.alhaq.org/documentation/field-updates-2015/973-al-haq-special-focus-in-pictures-jerusalem-dissected>



Measures, such as a [48-hour ban](#) on the entrance of Palestinians (with the exception of residents) to the Old City, which was deemed as unprecedented in October 2015, has again taken place.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Israel's actions towards the Al-Aqsa compound fall in line with its [past](#) policies and practices, which include arbitrary restrictions on entry for worshippers, and provocations by Israeli settlers and government leaders at the site.<sup>6</sup> Such actions, and all modifications to the holy site by Israeli authorities are in violation of the status quo. The intent behind these provocations, however, have and continue to be verified by statements by Israeli officials. Following the 14 July incident, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu stated “[I] instructed that metal detectors be placed at the entrance gates to the Temple Mount. We will also install security cameras on poles outside the Temple Mount but which give almost complete control over what goes on there.”<sup>7</sup> Israeli Minister of Public Security Gilad Erdan similarly emphasized Israel's control over the area stating, “Israel is the sovereign at the Mount, no matter what other states think. If we decide that an action has certain advantages, we’ll act.”<sup>8</sup>

Erdan's statement emphasizes Israel's continued disregard for its obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Palestinians, as the protected population, are entitled to respect for their religious convictions and practices,<sup>9</sup> and should be “allowed to practice their religion and to receive spiritual assistance from ministers of their faith.”<sup>10</sup> The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights further holds the right to freedom of religion, which includes the

5 See page 28, East Jerusalem: Exploiting Instability to Deepen the Occupation, Al-Haq, available at <http://www.alhaq.org/publications/Special.Focus.on.jerusalem.pdf>

6 Al-Haq Action Alert: International community must take concrete action to end Israel's aggression against Al-Aqsa, Al-Haq, 30 October 2014, available at <http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/topics/wall-and-jerusalem/864-al-haq-action-alert-international-community-must-take-concrete-action-to-end-israels-aggression-against-al-aqsa>

7 PM Netanyahu's Remarks before Leaving for Paris, 16 July 2017, available at <http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Events/Pages/eventflight160717.aspx>

8 Officials bolster security as Temple Mount set to reopen after attack, 16 July 2017, available at <http://www.timesofisrael.com/officials-bolster-security-as-temple-mount-set-to-reopen-after-attack/>

9 Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention

10 Article 38 of the Fourth Geneva Convention



right “to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.”<sup>11</sup>

Israel's actions over the past week also violate the right of Palestinians to freedom of movement, liberty and security of person, and the right to work, and contravenes prohibitions against collective punishment under international law.

As repeatedly emphasized by our organizations, Israel has used security as a pretext to further its own goals throughout the OPT, including East Jerusalem. The measures implemented in Jerusalem since July 14 are part and parcel of its strategy to create an environment which undermines the ability of Palestinians to stay in the city.

Our organizations are deeply concerned over the current situation and worry that it will continue to deteriorate due to the importance of Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the Old City of Jerusalem to all Palestinians if threats against both persist. We call upon the international community to take effective action to ensure that Israel immediately ends all collective punishment and other unlawful measures taken in East Jerusalem.

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<sup>11</sup> Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights