

Clashes Erupt Between Israeli Police And Palestinians At Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque

The Israeli police said they responded to dozens of people who were shouting incitement and throwing stones.

Israeli police and Palestinians clashed at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque on Thursday in yet another round of violence at the holy site in recent weeks.

The mosque is the third holiest site of Muslims built on a hilltop that's holiest for Jews who refer it as Temple Mount. Jewish visits to the site were paused for the last 10 days of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr.

On Thursday, Israeli police entered the site to clear away Palestinian protesters after Jewish visits resumed.

As the visits resumed, dozens of Palestinians gathered, chanting "God is greatest". Scuffles broke out when the police went to arrest one of them. Police fired rubber-coated bullets on the sprawling esplanade as some Palestinians sheltered inside the mosque itself. The police could later be seen just inside an entrance to the mosque.

The police said they responded to dozens of people who were shouting incitement and throwing stones and that one police officer was lightly injured.

But unlike in previous confrontations, Palestinian witnesses said there was no sign of rock-throwing initially. Some of those who sheltered inside the mosque began throwing stones when police started to enter the building. The witnesses spoke on condition of anonymity because of security concerns.

Under informal arrangements known as the status quo, Jews are allowed to visit the site but not pray there. In recent years, they have visited in ever-increasing numbers with police escorts and many have discreetly prayed, angering the Palestinians as well as neighbouring Jordan, which is the custodian of the site. The Palestinians have long feared that Israel plans to eventually take over the site or partition it.

Israel says it is committed to maintaining the status quo and accuses the Islamic militant group Hamas of inciting the recent violence.

Thursday is also Israel's Independence Day. Fring groups have in recent days called on Jewish worshippers to celebrate by waving Israeli flags at the holy site. The calls were widely circulated by Palestinians on social media along with calls to confront any such display.

Hussein al-Sheikh, a senior Palestinian official who serves as the main liaison between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, tweeted about the controversy, saying that raising the flag would show "outrageous disregard" for Palestinian feelings and mark the "continuation of extremist racist campaigns".

Hamas warned on Wednesday that Israel was "playing with fire and dragging the region into an escalation for which the occupation bears full responsibility".

On April 15, more than 150 people were injured in clashes between Israeli security forces personnel and Palestinians at the site. These clashes have taken place amid heightened tensions in Israel as the country has seen a number of Palestinian attacks in Israel in last two months in which 15 Israelis have been killed. At least 27 Palestinians have also been killed in this period, including those who carried out these attacks in Israel.

Clashes in and around Al-Aqsa Mosque last year helped ignite an 11-day war between Israel and Hamas, the militant group that rules Gaza. At least 243 people were killed in Gaza and 12 in Israel in the war, as per reports from last year. Israel said it killed at least 225 militants in its attacks.

(With AP inputs)

Source:

<https://www.outlookindia.com/international/clashes-erupt-between-israeli-police-and-palestinians-at-jerusalem-al-aqsa-mosque-news-195013>

[Disclaimer]