

Palestinians say Israel ‘playing with fire’ by closing Temple Mount gate

The Jerusalem Police detained five east Jerusalem Arabs who tried to enter the premises of the Golden Gate, which has been closed by a court order.



A general view of Jerusalem’s old city shows the Dome of the Rock in the compound known to Muslims as Noble Sanctuary and to Jews as Temple Mount, October 25, 2015. (photo credit: AMIR COHEN/REUTERS)

The Palestinian Authority on Monday warned that Israel was “playing with fire” after clashes erupted at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem over the closure of the Golden Gate site, also known as the Gate of Mercy, to Muslim worshipers. The PA also accused Israel of “waging war on Islam” and called for the intervention of the international community.

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Palestinians claim that Israel is planning to turn the area into a prayer site for Jews. The site, which once housed the offices of the Islamic Heritage committee, was closed by the Jerusalem Police in 2003 after for alleged involvement in political activities. In 2017, a court issued an order to keep the site closed until further notice.

Last week, Muslim worshipers entered the premises and prayed there, prompting

the police to lock the gate with chains.

On Monday morning, dozens of worshipers, accompanied by officials from the Wakf Department, which is in charge of Islamic religious sites, attempted to force their way into the area, sparking a confrontation with police officers. The move came after east Jerusalem activists called on Muslims to arrive at the area to protest against the closure of the site.

Despite the detention of the five worshipers, routine visits to the Temple Mount will continue, the Jerusalem Police clarified.

Mahmoud Habbash, religious affairs adviser to PA President Mahmoud Abbas, condemned what he called the “occupation’s criminal measures in Al-Aqsa Mosque and at its gates, especially the closure of Bab al-Rahma (Gate of Mercy) and the eviction of worshipers by force and under the threat of weapons.”

Habbash said that the “assault” on the site was a “war on Islam” and accused Israel of “playing with fire.” The Palestinians, he added, will defend the “precious and blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque.”

Habbash said that Abbas and the Palestinian leadership were following the events at the Temple Mount and were in contact with international parties to pressure Israel to rescind its measures there.

PA Minister for Wakf Affairs, Yousef Edais, also strongly condemned Israel for sealing off the site and called on the international community to exert pressure on the Israeli authorities to halt its “violations” against Islamic religious sites.

A senior Wakf official told *The Jerusalem Post* that the Jordanian government was holding contacts with the Israeli government in an attempt to persuade it to reopen the site to Muslims. The official warned that the continued closure of the site would trigger a wave of protests in Jerusalem similar to those that erupted after Israel installed metal detectors and security cameras at one of the entrances to the Temple Mount in 2017.

Jordan, meanwhile, protested to Israel over the closure of the site and said it constitutes a “flagrant violation of the historical and legal status quo and Israel’s obligation under the international law and humanitarian law.”

A spokesman for the Jordanian Foreign Ministry said that his ministry was

“following up on this dangerous development through various channels to secure the reopening of the gate and the restoration of calm” to the holy site.

Source: <https://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/Police-chase-suspect-onto-Temple-Mount-developing-report-580994>

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