

Crisis in East Jerusalem

Israel and the Third Intifada?

By [Timothy Alexander Guzman](#)

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The Israeli government knows how to provoke a response from the Palestinians. They are repressing the Palestinians by controlling their right to enter the sacred Al-Aqsa mosque located in the Old City of Jerusalem. This action, I believe is intentional. It is to provoke a response from the Palestinians so that Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) would respond militarily. Why would the Israeli government allow right-wing Israeli extremists to continue their violent actions against Palestinian worshippers? The Israeli government knows that it would only inflame a religious hatred among Palestinians against the Jewish population.

Perhaps, that is what Israel wants, a decisive war with the Palestinians to finally get their wish to have absolute control over all of East Jerusalem including Al-Aqsa and the Ibrahimi mosques. The U.S. main stream media usually blames the Palestinians for attacking Jewish worshippers as they conveniently ignore the facts that there is a collaboration of the Israeli government (IDF soldiers and police) and extremist Jewish settlers who has committed numerous attacks on Palestinian worshippers in East Jerusalem for the last 50 years. Palestinian scholar, journalist and author Ramzy Baroud points out Israel's coordinated efforts with various political parties, the military and Jewish settlers in an article he wrote in early 2014 titled 'Al-Aqsa vs. Israel: The lurking danger beneath' and declared the following:

Most alarming about these attacks is their political context, which indicates that a great degree of coordination is underway between politicians, security forces and Jewish settlers. In anticipation of a Palestinian backlash, on March 2004, an Israeli court sentenced Islamic leader Sheikh Rade Saleh to eight months in prison for 'incitement.' The Sheikh is the most outspoken Palestinian leader regarding the danger facing Al-Aqsa. Why silence Sheikh Saleh now when the attacks against al-Aqsa are at an all time high?

It was on Feb. 25, 1994, that U.S.-born Jewish extremist Baruch Goldstein stormed into the Ibrahimi Mosque in the Palestinian city of al-Khalil (Hebron) and opened fire. The aim was to kill as many Arabs as he could. At that moment, nearly 800 Muslim worshippers were kneeling down during the dawn prayer in the holiest month of the Muslim Calendar; Ramadan. He killed up to 30 people and wounded over 120. Exactly 20 years later, the Israeli army stormed al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest Muslim site, and opened fire. The timing was no accident.

Baroud's assessment regarding incidents involving both the Ibrahimi and Al-Aqsa mosques are no accidents, it was intentional. A report by Saed Bannoura of IMEMC News confirmed what happened on February 25th of this year:

The sources said that the soldiers fired concussion grenades and firebombs at dozens of Palestinians who tried to stop Israelis from invading the mosque area. The attack came a few hours before a special Knesset session to discuss "Israel's full control of the al-Aqsa Mosque", instead of the Jordanian supervision. Likud Member of Knesset, Moshe Feiglin, presented the bill. Dozens of soldiers and undercover units of the army invaded the yards of the mosque, preventing hundreds of Palestinians from entering it.

The Ibrahimi mosque massacre was led by American-born Israeli Baruch Goldstein, a member of the Israel's far-right Kach movement opened fire on unarmed Palestinian Muslims inside the Ibrahimi mosque on February 25, 1994 which left 29 dead and 125 wounded.

I would go further to say that it was an orchestrated plan for an internal "religious" conflict for the Israeli government to use a pretext to control all of the West Bank including its holiest sites for both Israelis and Palestinians. It is also a public relations campaign to discredit Islam and portray Judaism as the victim of Islamic extremism. Western media outlets had reported that Jews are the victims of religious hatred. After the recent murders of the five Israelis including three with U.S. passports by two Palestinian cousins named Ghassan and Uday Abu Jamal during morning prayers who both were killed by police officers with titles such as *'Fear of deadly 'religious war' between Jews and Muslims raised after synagogue attack'* by the Washington Post, *'Israel Shaken by 5 Deaths in Synagogue Assault'* by the New York Times and CNN with *'In synagogue attack, five lives dedicated to faith and service are lost'*. A tragic incident it was, but the Israeli government and right-wing settler's actions provoked a response from the Palestinians. Their actions for the last 50 years has only created resentment among the Palestinians who want their sovereignty and religious rights to be respected, just as the Jews. According to Ramzy Baroud's article, Israel has carried out numerous attacks not only against Al-Aqsa but other holy sites as well:

In a statement released on March 7, the Palestinian Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs said Israeli forces carried out 30 attacks against al-Aqsa Mosque and other holy sites during the month of February alone. Most of the attacks targeted al-Aqsa itself. While the recurring violations at al-Aqsa were led by Jewish settlers, according to the statement, they have done so under the watchful eye, protection and support of the Israeli police and army.

When Former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon entered Al-Aqsa mosque in 2000 only proved to be provocative when it angered the Palestinians causing the Second Intifada. Palestinian demonstrators began throwing stones at the police. Then IDF forces used tear gas and rubber bullets igniting the Second Intifada. Once the Second Intifada ended in 2004, it was estimated to cause the lives of more than 3,000 Palestinians and 1,000 Israelis. That was not the end of Israel's aggression against Palestinian worshippers. Friends of Al-Aqsa (FOA) released a statement on the recent actions taken by the IDF:

Hundreds of armed Israelis have once again violently trespassed onto the sacred al-Aqsa sanctuary. Worshippers within the Palestinian holy site have faced years of brutal assaults, which have intensified since 2013. Yesterday, the attacks involved firing stun grenades, tear gas and rubber-coated steel bullets at civilians who were completely unarmed and surrounded.

"The raid follows tensions over the last couple of weeks in which Israeli forces barred Palestinians from entering the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and

facilitated the entry of right-wing Israeli extremists. Such actions undermine Palestinian sovereignty over their cherished holy sites, creating a great deal of anger and frustration on the ground,” said Shamiul Joarder, Head of Public Affairs at FOA.

Israel’s claims it made its decision to close Al-Aqsa for security reasons last month right after right-wing Jewish activist Yehuda Glick was shot in an alleged assassination attempt. Glick remains in stable condition. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas had called the closure an “*act of war*.” Israel wants a new war with the Palestinians to take control over all of Jerusalem. The death of the five Israeli worshipers is tragic. It should not have happened. But the Palestinians have been victims of Israel’s brutality for decades. The world recently witnessed more than 2000 Palestinians including women and children murdered by the IDF. Israel purposely targets religious sanctuaries to provoke a reaction from the Palestinians. Israel’s government led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu knows that their actions have consequences. They know it could lead to a new war, perhaps a third Intifada. This is what Israel would want since the U.S. and its allies including ISIS are planning to attack Syria to remove President Bashar al-Assad. Israel will use all of their military capabilities in an attempt to defeat the Palestinian resistance.

War will continue unabated, that is a fact that the world will have to live with, at least for now.

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Articles by: [Timothy Alexander Guzman](#)

About the author:

Timothy Alexander Guzman is an independent researcher and writer with a focus on political, economic, media and historical spheres. He has been published in Global Research, The Progressive Mind, European Union Examiner, News Beacon Ireland, WhatReallyHappened.com, EIN News and a number of other alternative news sites. He is a graduate of Hunter College in New York City.

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