

Mass Palestinian Outpouring Defeats Israeli Land Grab at al-Aqsa Mosque

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Featured image: Masses of Palestinians praying outside al-Aqsa Mosque (Source: [Liberation News](#))

Mass civil disobedience of thousands of Palestinian people has defeated an Israeli attempt to take territory around al-Aqsa mosque in occupied East Jerusalem by installing barricades and metal detectors at entrances.

“The spirit of unity amongst Jerusalemites today has been extraordinary. People from all walks of life, practicing Muslims and non-practicing Muslims and even Christians, have taken part in directly protesting the closure of Al-Aqsa. We all recognize the significance of this battle, and so we all resist,” according to Jalal Abukhater, who lives in East Jerusalem ([Electronic Intifada](#), July 25).

For two weeks Palestinian worshippers refuse to go through metal detectors, and prayed in the thousands in the streets outside the compound, day and night. Thousands of jubilant, chanting Palestinian surrounded the Israelis removing the final security obstacles in the early hours of July 27. A celebratory fireworks display was held in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

The Western media has given scant coverage to this important struggle, nor to the increasing repression which ignited it. Corporate media reporting on Palestine, when it does happen, often obscures the issues. For instance, recent reporting in the *New York Times* and other outlets gives the impression that Israel has some claims at al-Aqsa. The reality is that Israel’s presence there violates international law.

The compound, known to Muslims as the Holy Sanctuary, includes the al-Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock. It is one of the holiest shrines for Muslims all over the world, as well as an important symbol of Palestinian identity. The shrine is located in the West Bank, which Israel has illegally occupied for 50 years. No government recognizes Israeli sovereignty there.

Rightwing groups, some funded by the Israeli government have long sought to occupy this sanctuary, even to destroy the Islamic holy sites at the al-Aqsa mosque compound and replace them with a Jewish temple.

Israel’s unilateral installation of metal detectors and barricades at the shrine was a

challenge to the Palestinian Muslim authorities who govern the Sanctuary and to Palestinian sovereignty in this holy site. The Palestinian National Authority, Fatah, Hamas and the Waqf religious trust that administers the site all backed the boycott. The Palestinian Authority even suspended its security cooperation with Israel in protest. .

Protests spread to Jordan

Jordan is the legal custodian of the shrine. Israel's encroachment there even provoked protest from Amman, an Israeli ally and U.S. client. Adding insult to injury, an Israeli security guard in the Israeli embassy compound in Amman who shot dead two Jordanians was given a hero's welcome on his return to Israel by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. Hundreds responded by demonstrating outside the Israeli compound on July 28, demanding that the Israeli embassy be closed.

Boycotters withstood repeated Israeli attacks

The al-Aqsa boycotters withstood repeated attacks by Israeli forces firing tear gas canisters, rubber bullets, and concussion grenades, and spraying the protesters with water hoses. More than 1,000 Palestinians were injured according to the Palestinian Red Crescent and three Palestinians killed.

East Jerusalem leaders were arbitrarily arrested. The Palestinian al-Makassed hospital, where the wounded were treated, was stormed twice by Israeli soldiers and police. The Committee to Protect Journalists reported that journalists covering al-Aqsa were punched in the chest, hit on the head with batons, tear gassed and shot with rubber bullets by Israeli security forces.

On July 27, just one hour after the mosque reopened without metal detectors, as thousands poured in, Israeli soldiers attacked the crowd with stun grenades, rubber bullets, tear gas and water hoses, wounding 100, and prohibiting all men under 30 from entering. By July 28, however, all Palestinians had won their right to enter the mosque, and more than 10,000 came to worship, according to the Waqf.

50 years of Israeli provocations

The metal detectors were installed following a July 14 incident. Israel maintains that men coming out of Al-Aqsa mosque that day shot dead two Israeli occupation police guarding the compound. But Israeli police have no business on Palestinian land which is not theirs to "guard," and their presence, particularly at this shrine, is a provocation. The site, which Israel calls the Temple Mount, has been the scene for Israeli government and rightwing provocation since it was seized in 1967.

For example, those who seek to destroy the mosques are allowed to tour the Holy Sanctuary grounds on a daily basis under military protection. They try to provoke Palestinian worshippers by shouting and singing Israeli anthems.

Life in Jerusalem's Old City is constantly disrupted by Israeli security forces that strut through the streets and alleys fully armed, threatening and humiliating Palestinians. The Israeli invasion increases on Fridays, when thousands come to worship. Barricades are put up and the police block the roads so that thousands of worshippers must walk single file surrounded by heavily armed soldiers. IDs are checked, and police arbitrarily denying

worshipper's entry into the Old City where the shrines are located.

"Al-Aqsa is also central to Palestinian economic and social activity in Jerusalem, said Abukhater. Palestinians also view Israel's measures at al-Aqsa as part of an ongoing effort to erase all Palestinian life in the city, said Abukhater.

"I see the decline of the city in growing poverty, disappearing street vendors, the total absence of nightlife and the lack of public hangout places and cafes... Palestinian traders in Jerusalem depend largely on the vast numbers of worshippers who regularly make their way to al-Aqsa," he added. ([Electronic Intifada, July 25](#))

Israeli settlers not "innocent victims"

In the midst of this struggle, on July 21 a young Palestinian man wielding a knife killed three Israelis in the West Bank Israeli settlement of Halamish. Much of the western media has derided this as "killing of innocent civilians." A close look at the residents of Halamish reveals they are far from innocent. They are the front line of Israeli confiscation of Palestinian land. Settlers from Halamish regularly burn the olive trees of neighboring Palestinians, attack the villagers, and take their land and water. For several years Palestinian have held protest marches against Halamish violence. The Israeli military suppresses the protests, while doing nothing to curb the settler violence.

A more realistic picture of settler behavior can be seen in a [video](#) circulating on Facebook and available on Electronic Intifada. It shows scores of settlers storming a Palestinian home in Hebron and terrorizing the family living there while Israeli soldiers do nothing. The settlers returned the next day under military escort, took over two of the three floors, and moved in their own furniture.

"Abu Rajab" family resist the theft of their house as Israeli settlers and soldiers try to occupy/seize it - Dura city, south of West Bank.
pic.twitter.com/UnuCdF86gY

— Quds News Network (@QudsNen) [July 26, 2017](#)

U.S. funds Israeli repression

This blatant and gut wrenching repression wouldn't be possible without the billions of dollars in financial, military and political assistance that the U.S. gives to Israel each year. U.S. aid to Israel should be stopped, and the money used instead to meet human needs here at home. No U.S. elected official, will raise this demand. Instead, a group of 43 senators — 29 Republicans and 14 Democrats — wants to implement a law that would make it a felony for people in the U.S. to support the international boycott against Israel which protests the occupation of Palestine!

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