

A Sad Friday in Jerusalem. Who gave the order to attack the worshippers inside the Al Aqsa Mosque?

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Today is "Sad Friday" in Jerusalem, known to Western Christians as "Good Friday" when they believe Jesus was hung on a cross in Jerusalem. To the Eastern Orthodox Christians of the Middle East, it is "Palm Sunday", and they celebrate the arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem.

To the Muslims of the world, this is the third Friday of Ramadan, and this morning worshippers attempting to pray at the [Al-Aqsa Mosque](#) in East Jerusalem were prevented entry to the area and severely beaten by Israeli Police batons. Street vendors and shopkeepers were also attacked by Israeli Police. It is indeed a sad Friday.

Who gave the order to attack the worshippers inside the Al Aqsa Mosque?

[Kobi Shabtai](#) is the Commissioner of the Israel Police. In 2021, he ordered the police to prevent access to the Damascus Gate in East Jerusalem in a similar escalation of tensions then.

National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir leaked a recording of a conversation with Shabtai, in which he said, "There's nothing we can do. They murder. It's in their nature. That's the mentality of the Arabs." There were calls by Israeli Arab politicians for his dismissal because of his racist remarks.

Why did Israeli police storm Al-Aqsa Mosque?

On April 4, about 80,000 worshippers attended the evening prayers at the [Al-Aqsa Mosque](#) in East Jerusalem. Some of the Palestinians stayed overnight in the mosque to pray in a tradition observed during Ramadan. Some voiced concern to protect the third holiest site in Islam from extremist Jewish settlers who had threatened to come to the mosque to offer animal sacrifices in honor of Passover, which began on April 4.

The extremist Jewish settlers have a plan to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque and build a Jewish Temple on its site.

By the early hours of April 5, Palestinians had filled the streets near the mosque to pray the early morning prayer. The Israeli police were ordered to prevent Palestinians under the age of 40 to enter the area for prayers. By evening, the [police entered the mosque by force](#) and arrested dozens of worshippers after severely beating both men and women praying inside.

Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh said in a statement

“What happened in Jerusalem is a major crime against the worshippers. Prayer in Al-Aqsa Mosque is not with the permission of the [Israeli] occupation, but rather it is our right.”

Israeli air strikes on Gaza

In response to the attacks on Al Aqsa Mosque, several rockets were fired from Gaza into Israel. The Israeli air force then targeted [multiple locations across Gaza](#) causing damage to homes and the Al-Durrah Children’s Hospital in Gaza City. The Geneva Convention prohibits attacking civilian health facilities.

Israel has imposed a [blockade upon Palestinians in the Gaza Strip](#) since 2007, an illegal act of collective punishment. Israel’s repeated attacks upon the Gaza Strip have primarily impacted civilians, resulting in potential war crimes and crimes against humanity according to international investigations. Israel uses US weapons to enforce its blockade and attack the Gaza Strip in violation of US laws.

Lebanon rockets

A Palestinian resistance group in southern Lebanon launched rockets yesterday at Israel from Marjayoun in southern Lebanon in response to the Israeli attacks on the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The Israeli forces then retaliated by striking southern Lebanon, but both sides have since stopped, and no casualties were reported. The flare-up came at a time when Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh is in Lebanon on a private visit.

Previous attacks

The Arab League met in an emergency session after the Israeli police raid on the Al-Aqsa Mosque left at least [12 Palestinian injured](#), and 400 arrested on April 5, who remains in custody at Atarot police station in East Jerusalem.

The raids continued into the morning as Israeli police were videoed assaulting and pushing Palestinians out of the compound and preventing them from praying, while Israeli extremist settlers were allowed in under police protection. The police used stun grenades, tear gas, batons, and rifles to beat the worshippers. Some victims suffered respiratory injuries due to the gas which was thrown into the mosque after the police first broke the upper windows.

The Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit said,

“The extremist approaches that control the policy of the Israeli government will lead to widespread confrontations with the Palestinians if they are not put to an end.”

The Palestinian Red Crescent reported that the Israeli police prevented them from reaching the mosque to attend to three injured victims who needed hospitalization.

Israeli police said in a statement that they were forced to enter the compound after “masked agitators” locked themselves inside the mosque with fireworks, sticks, and stones. No violence would have occurred if the police had remained outside. The police had never been threatened by people inside the mosque, and it was an unprovoked attack on people praying inside a closed building.

“Israel is committed to maintaining freedom of worship, freedom of access to all religions and the status quo and will not allow violent extremists to change that,” Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said.

Netanyahu is calling the victims inside the mosque ‘extremists’ when in fact it is his citizens, the extremist Jews who provoked the attack by insisting on going to the mosque during Passover. Netanyahu’s government is an alliance between his party and extremist Jewish parties who call for the deportation of all Palestinians, and refuse all calls for human rights for Palestinians. Netanyahu is bound to be beholden to those extremists, even though he has ridiculed them in the past. If he were to stand up to them now, the alliance would be broken, his government would fall, and he would go straight to jail. The only thing keeping him out of jail on multiple corruption charges is those extremists like Ithamar Ben-Gvir.

The US reaction

The [UN](#), [Turkey](#), [the US](#), [Canada](#), and several other countries and bodies have expressed concern about Israeli forces storming the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Washington said on Wednesday that it was “extremely concerned” about the violence.

“We urge all sides to avoid further escalation,” White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters. “It is imperative now more than ever that Israelis and Palestinians work together to de-escalate tensions and restore calm.”

“We remain extremely concerned by the continuing violence and we urge all sides to avoid further escalation,” White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said.

Since 1948, the US has provided Israel with [over \\$125 billion in military aid](#), which transformed the Israeli forces and police into one of the world’s top forces. Israel has been designated as a US Major Non-NATO Ally, and yet the US has never once held [Israel accountable for war crimes](#), crimes against humanity, and the [apartheid state](#) in Israel.

With its silence, the US stands complicit in the crimes against the Palestinian people who are deprived of every human right.

Turkey

Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan condemned the Israeli police raid, calling such acts in the mosque compound a “red line” for Turkey.

“I condemn the vile acts against the first qibla of Muslims in the name of my country and people, and I call for the attacks to be halted as soon as possible,” Erdogan said.

“The name of this is the politics of repression, the politics of blood, the politics of provocation. Turkey can never remain silent and unmoved in the face of these attacks.

Canada

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said,

“We need to see the Israeli government shifting in its approach, and Canada is saying that as a dear and close and steadfast friend to Israel, we are deeply concerned about the direction that the Israeli government has been taking.”

UAE

The UAE foreign ministry said in a statement,

“The UAE called on Israeli authorities to halt escalation and avoid exacerbating tension and instability in the region.”

Saudi-Iran agreement

The recent restoration of full diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia has changed the Middle East. Now, the two biggest powerhouses in the region have put differences aside and are willing to work together for peace and security. Neither nation has normalized a relationship with Israel, even though Netanyahu stated in December 2022 that getting a deal with Saudi Arabia was one of the two biggest goals of his new administration.

The US has not offered any leadership for decades on an Israeli-Palestinian peace plan. In the meantime, the US has slipped from global leadership, especially from the days of influence in the Middle East, since the area has turned independent of dictates from the Oval Office.

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