

# *Dozens of Israeli settlers storm Aqsa Mosque in latest provocation against sacred site*

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## **Israeli settlers attack mosque?**

Ramallah, November 1 (RHC)-- Dozens of Israeli settlers have stormed the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the occupied Old City of al-Quds under the protection of the regime's forces in the latest provocation against Palestinian people and their holy sites.

The Islamic Endowment Department in al-Quds said in a statement that the settlers entered the compound through the Moroccan Gate in the early hours of Sunday to mark a Jewish religious occasion. They performed Talmudic rituals at the site, which is venerated by Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Hardline Israeli legislators and settlers regularly storm the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the occupied city, a provocative move that infuriates Palestinians. Such mass settler break-ins almost always take place at the behest of Tel Aviv-backed temple groups and under the auspices of the Israeli police in al-

Quds.

The al-Aqsa Mosque compound, which sits just above the Western Wall plaza, houses both the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque. The Jewish visitation of al-Aqsa is permitted, but according to an agreement signed between Israel and the Jordanian government in the wake of Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem al-Quds in 1967, non-Muslim worship at the compound is prohibited.

Earlier this month, an Israeli court upheld a ban on Jewish prayers at the al-Aqsa Mosque compound, after an earlier lower court's decision stirred outrage among various Palestinians and across the Muslim world.

Judge of the district court in al-Quds, Aryeh Romanov, on October 8 confirmed that Jews are barred from worshipping openly at the site, and only Muslims are permitted to pray there.

In issuing the ruling, Romanov said the fact that the defendant, an Israeli settler identified as Rabbi Aryeh Lippo, had been caught served as proof that his prayer at the al-Aqsa Mosque compound was overt.

"What is important... is the fact that there was someone who noticed the appellee praying, which evidently shows that the prayer was overt. If it was not overt, no one would have noticed it," the judge wrote.

The ruling came after Israel's public security minister Omer Bar-Lev appealed the lower court's decision days earlier not to regard prayer by Jewish worshipers as a "criminal act" if it remained silent, and warned that "a change in the existing status quo" would spark violent protests and could cause a flare-up.

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