

Israeli forces attack worshipers, reseal al-Aqsa Mosque gate



Jerusalem, February 19 (RHC)-- Israeli regime forces have resealed one of the al-Aqsa Mosque's gates in the occupied old city of East Jerusalem after a group of Palestinian protesters broke the lock and opened the gate for worshipers.

Palestinian Ma'an News Agency reported on Monday that Israeli soldiers had sealed off al-Rahma Gate (Gate of Mercy) with locks and iron chains a day earlier and prevented the Palestinian worshipers from entering the al-Aqsa Mosque compound.

The agency said the Israeli move sparked clashes between Palestinian youths and the Tel Aviv regime forces, which resulted in the detention of five Palestinians, including a woman.

Firas al-Dibs, spokesperson of the Islamic Waqf (Endowment) organization, said Israeli forces had installed the locks and chains at the gate in response to members of the organization performing prayers at the gate last Thursday.

The al-Rahma Gate is a big building that lays to the east of the al-Aqsa Mosque. The building was sealed by Israeli authorities in 2003 as it was the headquarters of the Islamic Heritage Committee. Israel claimed at the time that the building was being used for political activities.

In a separate development on Monday, dozens of Israeli settlers raided the al-Aqsa Mosque compound through the Moroccans' Gate and performed acts deemed provocative by Palestinians at the mosque's courtyard. This is while Israeli settlers stormed the holy site under tight protection of several groups of Israeli soldiers and special forces.

The al-Aqsa Mosque compound sits just above the Western Wall plaza and houses both the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa mosque. Tensions continue in the occupied Palestinian territories as part of the aftermath of US President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's "capital" and relocation of the U.S. embassy to the occupied city.

On December 21, 2017, the United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly voted in favor of a resolution that calls on the U.S. to withdraw its controversial policy shift.

Despite the vote, the U.S. went ahead with the embassy transfer on May 14, triggering demonstrations in the occupied Palestinian territories, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria, Iraq, Morocco and other Muslim countries.

Infuriated by Trump's move, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas boycotted his administration, saying Washington is no longer qualified to serve as the sole mediator in the decades-long conflict with Israel, and that an international mechanism should be devised to replace the U.S. in the so-called peace process.

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