

Israeli forces attack Al-Aqsa protesters during Prophet rally

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At least 47 Palestinians also hurt by tear gas, rubber bullets near the town of Beita in the occupied West Bank, says Palestine Red Crescent

Ramallah, June 18 (RHC)-- At least three Palestinians were hurt after Israeli forces stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied East Jerusalem on Friday. Following Friday prayers, Palestinian worshippers started a rally in support of the Prophet Muhammad in response to insults directed at him during a hardline Israeli march through the area on Tuesday.

Palestinians gathered in the courtyard, but before they began their march from Al-Aqsa to the Old City's Damascus Gate, Israeli forces raided the compound through Bab al-Silsila, one of its entrances. They fired rubber-coated steel bullets, tear gas, and stun grenades, emptying the compound of thousands of worshippers.

Hundreds demonstrated after Friday prayers in response to a rally held by Jewish ultranationalists on Tuesday, in which dozens chanted "Death to Arabs" and "May your village burn." The Palestinians protested against insulting Prophet Muhammad after an online video showed some of the participants in the Tuesday march denigrating him.

The Middle East Eye reported Israeli forces shot one of its journalists, Latifeh Abdelatif, in the knee with a rubber-coated round as they raided the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. The London-based news website said one of its contributors, Sondus Ewies, was also wounded, but the extent of her injuries remained unclear.

The incidents come hours after Israeli fighter jets launched a series of air raids on the Gaza Strip for the second time since a shaky ceasefire ended last month's 11-day war.

Palestinian sources on the ground said Israeli missiles on Thursday night hit several sites belonging to armed groups northwest of Gaza City and north of Beit Lahia in the besieged territory.

The raid comes as a fragile ceasefire that came into effect less than a month ago holds in the besieged Gaza Strip, ending the Israeli bombing campaign that killed at least 256 people, including 66 children.

Another Israeli police crackdown on worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound during Ramadan and the threat of forced expulsions of Palestinians from their homes in occupied East Jerusalem ignited protests across the occupied Palestinian territories. Israeli forces violently put those down as well.

Hamas, the group that controls the Gaza Strip, issued a deadline to Israel to halt the crackdowns. It passed unheeded, resulting in Hamas firing rockets towards Israel, and Israel launching an intensive bombing campaign on Gaza.

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