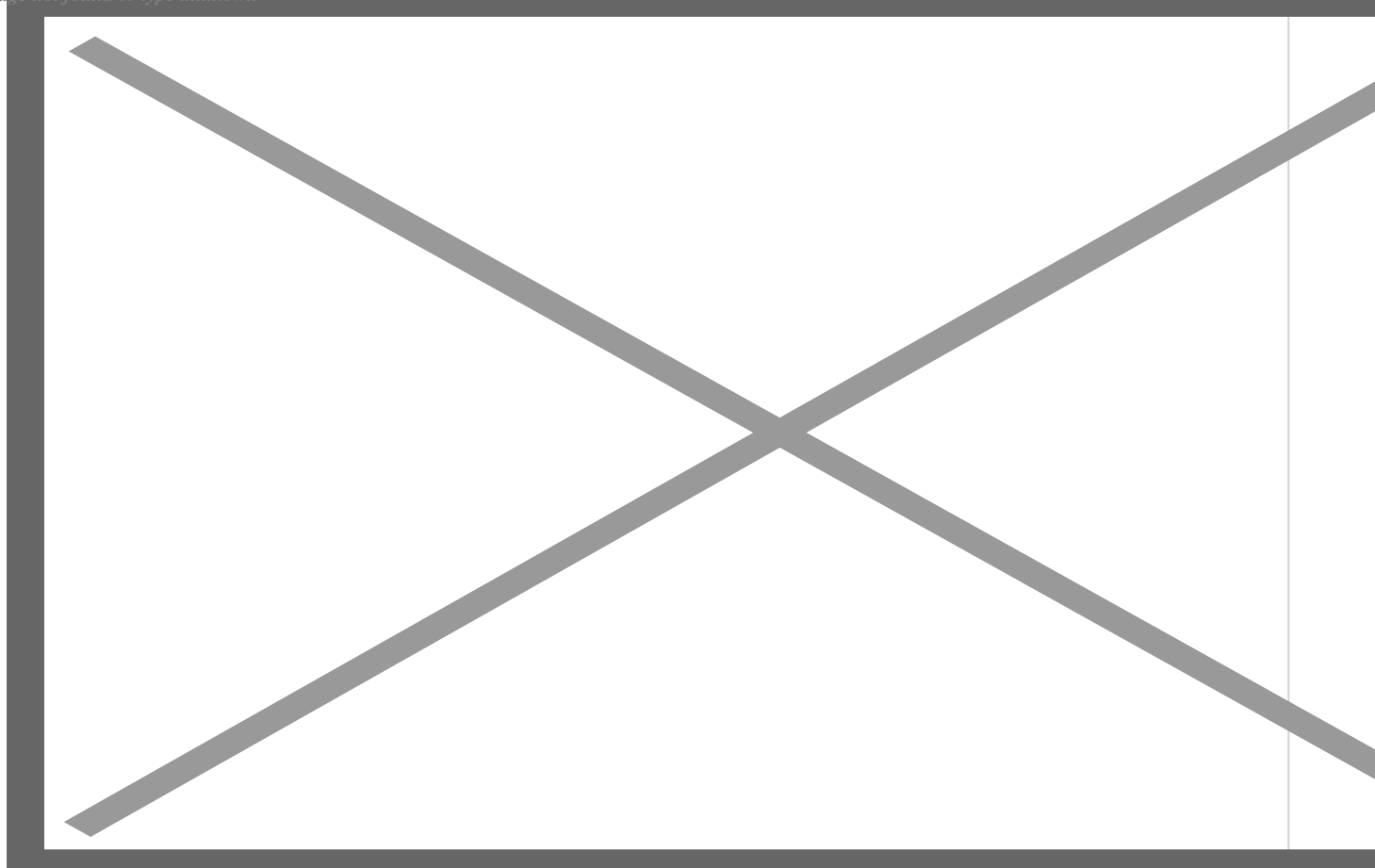


Israeli forces put Sheikh Jarrah under near-complete lockdown

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Israeli forces arresting a Palestinian in the flashpoint neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah in the occupied East al-Quds.

Ramallah, February 18 (RHC)-- Israeli forces have placed the flashpoint neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah in the occupied East al-Quds under a near-complete lockdown. The Zionist forces took the measure on Thursday, shortly after they fiercely attacked dozens of Palestinians and activists there, the official Palestinian Wafa news agency reported.

According to Lebanon's al-Mayadeen news network, the Israeli forces assaulted a sit-in that was being held by Palestinians there in protest against the regime's plans to expel 13 Palestinian families from

Sheikh Jarrah.

The Israelis have threatened the protesters with "severe treatment" in order to break up the sit-in, and have also been preventing medics from entering the neighborhood in order to treat injured Palestinians.

Tensions have flared across the Palestinian territories since Sunday, when Israeli forces and illegal settlers renewed their attacks against Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah.

The Gaza Strip-based Palestinian resistance movement of Hamas has called on Palestinian people across the entire occupied territories, especially the holy occupied city of al-Quds, to "mobilize" in support of their fellow countrymen in the face of the "savage occupiers" and "cowardly settlers."

Palestinians are reportedly planning to flock to the neighborhood to hold Friday prayers in solidarity with its oppressed citizens.

Secretary-General of the Palestinian National Initiative political party, Mustafa Barghouti, has hailed Sheikh Jarrah's protests as wholehearted popular resistance. "The Sheikh Jarrah protesters as well as the entire Palestinians' goal is to destroy the apartheid Israeli regime," he said, calling backing down in the face of the occupiers a "glaring mistake."

Fanning the flames of Israeli aggression, Itamar Ben Gvir, a far-right Israeli lawmaker, opened an "office" on Palestinian-owned land in the restive neighborhood less than a week ago. "Following the move, dozens of settlers raided the neighborhood just after midnight, pelting stones at Palestinian homes and damaging cars," Wafa noted.

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