

Suspected arson at East Jerusalem mosque

Author:

Sat, 2020-01-25 00:56

JERUSALEM: Israeli police launched a manhunt on Friday after an apparent arson attack, accompanied by Hebrew-language graffiti, at a mosque in Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem.

"Police were summoned to a mosque in Beit Safafa, in Jerusalem, following a report of arson in one of the building's rooms and spraying of graffiti on a nearby wall outside the building," a police statement said.

"A wide-scale search is taking place in Jerusalem," police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld told AFP. "We believe that the incident took place overnight. We are searching for suspects."

The spokesman would not say if police viewed it as a hate crime. The graffiti, on a wall in the mosque compound and viewed by an AFP journalist, contained the name Kumi Ori, a small settlement outpost in the north of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

The Times of Israel newspaper said on Friday that the wildcat outpost "is home to seven families along with roughly a dozen extremist Israeli teens." "Earlier this month security forces razed a pair of illegally built settler homes in the outpost," it reported.

All settlements on occupied Palestinian land are considered illegal under international law, but Israel distinguishes between those it has approved and those it has not.

The paper said: "A number of young settlers living there were involved in a string of violent attacks on Palestinians and (Israeli) security forces." Police said that nobody was injured in the mosque incident.

The attack had the appearance of a "price tag" attack, a euphemism for Jewish nationalist-motivated hate crimes that generally target Palestinian or Arab Israeli property in revenge for nationalistic attacks against Israelis or Israeli government moves against unauthorized outposts like Kumi Ori.

"This is price tag," Israeli Arab lawmaker Osama Saadi told AFP at the scene. "The settlers didn't only write words, they also burned the place and they burnt a Qur'an," said Saadi, who lives in the area.

Ismail Awwad, the local mayor, said he called the police after he found apparent evidence of arson, pointing to an empty can he said had contained petrol or some other accelerant and scorch marks in the burned room.

"The fire in the mosque burned in many straight lines which is a sign that somebody poured inflammable material," he said.

There was damage to an interior prayer room but the building's structure was unharmed.

In December, more than 160 cars were vandalized in the Shuafaat neighborhood of east Jerusalem with anti-Arab slogans scrawled nearby.

The slogans read "Arabs=enemies," "There is no room in the country for enemies" and "When Jews are stabbed we aren't silent."

The attackers were described by a local resident as "masked settlers."



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Emmanuel Macron loses cool with Israeli security in 'Chirac moment' at Jerusalem church
Jerusalem rabbi arrested for slavery after women found

[Saudi-led military committee moves heavy weapons outside Aden](#)

Author:

Sat, 2020-01-25 00:52

AL-MUKALLA, Yemen: A military committee led by Saudi officers in Yemen has transported heavy weapons from bases in the southern port city of Aden, a committee member told Arab News on Friday.

"We've moved tanks, cannons and ammunition from Aden military bases to a military outpost in Ras Abbas, on the outskirts of Aden," said the member on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the press.

Under the Riyadh Agreement, the internationally recognized government and the separatist Southern Transitional Council are obliged to hand over their heavy weapons to the Saudi-led military committee, which is tasked with collecting

them at a location outside Aden before dispatching them to battlefields.

The committee is also charged with making other security and military arrangements, including the withdrawal of forces from the southern provinces of Shabwa and Abyan.

The Riyadh Agreement, signed in the Saudi capital in November, was designed to defuse tensions between both sides following bloody clashes last year in Aden, Shabwa and Abyan.

Residents in Aden reported seeing columns of lorries carrying tanks leaving military bases and heading to the city's outskirts.

Despite failing to meet some deadlines included in the Riyadh Agreement, many of its terms have been implemented.

These include the return of the prime minister, the partial withdrawal of forces, an exchange of prisoners and the process of disarmament.

Following the relocation of military units, Yemen's President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi is expected to appoint a new governor for Aden before forming a new government.

FASTFACT

Under the Riyadh Agreement, the internationally recognized government and the separatist Southern Transitional Council are obliged to hand over their heavy weapons to the Saudi-led military committee.

On the battlefield, heavy fighting continued on Friday in the Nehim district just outside Houthi-held Sanaa as government forces, backed by Saudi-led warplanes, pushed forward to pave the way for the liberation of the capital. Dozens have been killed since Wednesday as both sides claimed gains on the ground.

In Marib, senior army commanders on Friday said the army would keep pressing its offensive until the Houthis are expelled from Sanaa.

At a meeting attended by the Saudi-led coalition commander in Marib, Maj. Gen. Abdul Hamed Al-Muzaini, Defense Minister Lt. Gen. Mohammed Ali Al-Maqdashi said the Yemeni Army is determined to push the Houthis out of Sanaa and other areas under their control, and to work on restoring state institutions.

The commanders discussed military plans and the recent escalation of fighting in Nehim, Jouf and Marib.

The conflict in Yemen began in late 2014 when the Houthis seized Sanaa and began expanding across the country.

A military coalition led by Saudi Arabia has helped government forces advance

on all fronts, pushing the Houthis to mountainous provinces in northern Yemen.



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Missile attack on Yemen MP home kills two including child Saudi-led military committee ends heavy weapons counting in Aden

[Lebanon has 28 days to present rescue plan](#)

Sat, 2020-01-25 00:24

Lebanon has 28 days to prepare a statement showing how it will resolve its crises following a meeting Friday between the UN's special coordinator for the country and Prime Minister Hassan Diab.

The UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jan Kubis met Diab and reiterated that the most important step that should be taken was "reforms, reforms, and reforms, break up with previous corruption practices, adopt transparency,

reestablish trust, and listen to the demands of people demonstrating in the streets in order to win their confidence.”

The government has 28 days to prepare its statement, which includes a plan to address the turmoil coursing through Lebanon.

The formation of a new government earlier this week ended months of political deadlock following Saad Hariri’s resignation as prime minister in October in response to mass protests over corruption and mismanagement.

Information Minister Manal Abdel Samad said the ministerial committee tasked with drafting the statement intended to promptly issue it as there were “pressing internal and external situations, and the crisis is getting more aggravated.”

Hundreds of people were injured in Beirut last weekend after security personnel fired tear gas, water cannons and rubber bullets at demonstrators who threw stones, attempted to invade the Parliament building, and attacked bank offices and shops.

There were also recent clashes between activists and supporters of the Amal Movement, which is associated with the country’s Shiite community. People wanting to protest corruption outside a public institution in the southern part of the capital were targeted by knife and stick-wielding men.

“Young men attacked us and accused us of being spies and agents, then started beating women and men alike,” said one activist. “We fled in every direction and the guards of a major store denied us entry to hide, for they feared being attacked by the aggressors.”

Amal’s leadership said the attack was perpetrated without its knowledge and was a “mere improvised reaction” by inhabitants of the area.

But newly appointed Interior Minister Mohammed Fahmy condemned the “brutal attack.”

“Security services will not hesitate to pursue the aggressors and unveil their identities,” he warned. “We will no longer accept that those who tamper with security continue to violate the rights and dignity of any citizen under any circumstances or pretext, for demonstrations, sit-ins are legitimate rights protected by law.”

There is also anger at the makeup of the new Cabinet, with senior political figures saying it showed that Hezbollah’s takeover of the Lebanese state was complete.

Former Prime Minister Fouad Siniora said Hezbollah had become the party with the most authority in Lebanon as it was able to extend its influence, authority and control to the head and members of the government.

“What happened so far will have negative repercussions on the government and its approach to a large number of problems, which have become aggravated since Michel Aoun became president and led to a significant decline in the

confidence of citizens in the government and the political class as a whole,” he told Arab News.

The new government did not bring independent ministers as promised, he added.

Earlier this week former minister Marwan Hamade told Arab News that Hezbollah regained a parliamentary majority in 2018 thanks to an electoral law designed to benefit the pro-Iranian party.

“Now Hezbollah completes its takeover through the new government where we find the fingerprints of the Syrian regime. The majority of the new ministers in key positions depend either on Hezbollah or on the former security chief, the pro-Syrian Jamil Sayyed, or on Gebran Bassil, their ally,” Hamade said.



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‘Jury still out’ on new Lebanon government, says rights chief
Lebanon MPs call for extra security

Powerful quake hits eastern Turkey, four dead

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Fri, 2020-01-24 20:13

ISTANBUL: A powerful earthquake with a magnitude of 6.8 hit eastern Turkey on Friday, killing at least four people, causing buildings to collapse and sending panicked residents rushing into the street.

Rescue teams were being sent to the scene of the quake, which had its epicenter in the small lakeside town of Sivrice in the eastern province of Elazig.

"It was very scary, furniture fell on top of us. We rushed outside," 47-year-old Melahat Can, who lives in the provincial capital of Elazig, told AFP. "We will spend the coming days in a farmhouse outside the city," she said. The Turkish government's disaster and emergency management agency said the quake hit Sivrice at around 8.55 p.m. (1755 GMT).

The US Geological Survey assessed its magnitude at 6.7, and said it had a depth of 10 kilometers (about six miles).

Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu said four people had died, two in Elazig province and two in the neighboring province of Malatya, which lies to the southwest.

"We are hoping we will not have more casualties," he was quoted as saying by the official Anadolu news agency.

Turkish television showed images of people stuck in apartments rushing outside in panic, as well as a fire on the roof of one building.

"Sivrice was shaken very seriously, we have directed our rescue teams to the region," Soylu, who is due to go to the affected area, told reporters.

Sivrice – a town with a population of about 4,000 population – is situated south of Elazig city on the shores of Hazar lake – one of the most popular tourist spots in the region.

The lake is home to a "Sunken City," with archaeologists finding archaeological traces dating back 4,000 years in its waters.

The tremor was felt in several parts of eastern Turkey near the Iraqi and Syrian borders, the Turkish broadcaster NTV reported, adding that neighboring cities had mobilized rescue teams for the quake area.

"We have sent four teams to the quake region," Recep Salci of Turkey's Search and Rescue Association (AKUT) told AFP.

"We have news of collapsed buildings, and are preparing more teams in case of need."

Zekeriya Gunes, 68, a resident of Elazig city, said a building 200 meters down on his street had collapsed but he did not know whether it was inhabited.

"Everybody is in the street, it was very powerful, very scary," he said.

Ferda, 39, said she felt worried and desperate.

"It lasted quite long, maybe 30 seconds," she told AFP. "I panicked and was

undecided whether to go out in this cold or remain inside.”

Turkey lies on major faultlines and is prone to earthquakes.

In 1999, a devastating 7.4 magnitude earthquake hit Izmit in western Turkey, leaving more than 17,000 people dead including about 1,000 in the country's largest city Istanbul.

In September, a 5.7-magnitude earthquake shook Istanbul, causing residents to flee buildings in the economic capital.

Experts have long warned a large quake could devastate the city of 15 million people, which has allowed widespread building without safety precautions.



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More than 20 dead as Albania hunts for earthquake survivorsIran 5.9 magnitude earthquake kills at least 5, injures 120

[Putin calls for summit on Libya](#)

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Fri, 2020-01-24 21:09

LONDON: Russia's president on Thursday proposed that the UN Security Council's five permanent members hold a special summit in 2020 to discuss the ongoing conflict in Libya.

Vladimir Putin said Russia wanted a "serious conversation" with the US, UK, China and France over the situation in the North African nation, as well as other geopolitical issues.

He added that Moscow was happy for a summit to happen "in any country, at any point" to find a way to resolve the conflict in Libya.

"There are many tasks before us. We discussed one of them very recently in Berlin ... that is Libya. We need to return to this problem at the Security Council and adopt the corresponding resolution," Putin said.

"We discussed (this) with several colleagues and, as far as I understand, in general we saw a positive reaction to holding a meeting of the heads of the permanent members."



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Libya's neighbors, global envoys seek solutions to conflict Turkey says it won't send more advisers to Libya while cease-fire is observed