

Palestinians fear more incursions after Friday's Israeli Al-Aqsa aggression

Sat, 2022-04-16 19:16

RAMALLAH: Palestinians returned to the Al-Aqsa compound on Saturday following Friday's violent clashes between worshippers and Israeli forces, but tension and anxiety remain as extremist Jewish groups threaten to storm the mosque on Sunday.

Nabil Faydi, a political analyst from East Jerusalem, said Jerusalemites feared the temporal division of Al-Aqsa Mosque between Muslims and Jews as happened at the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron.

But he added that it would be impossible for such a policy to succeed at Al-Aqsa.

"Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock are a red line for the Palestinians," he told Arab News. "Israel is trying to separate the 350,000 Palestinians living in East Jerusalem from the Palestinians living in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and inside Israel. But recent events have proven that the Palestinians are united. It is a matter of Al-Aqsa Mosque."

He described Friday's attack as an Israeli "test balloon" to measure the Palestinian reaction. "But what happened in Al-Aqsa confirms that the Palestinians are ready to redeem the mosque with their lives. They will not allow the practice of Jewish rituals inside Islam's third holiest site."

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation condemned the Israelis' incursion into the sacred mosque and their assault on worshippers inside Al-Qibli Mosque and in Al-Aqsa plaza, which left over 150 worshippers injured and saw hundreds of others arrested.

"This dangerous escalation is an affront to the feelings of the entire Muslim Ummah and a blatant violation of international resolutions and instruments," the OIC said.

It held the Israeli occupation fully responsible "for the fallout of such daily crimes and offenses against the Palestinian people, their territories and sanctuaries."

It called on the international community, particularly the UN Security Council, to act against these constant violations.

Despite political differences among Palestinian groups – whether they are secular, Islamist, or Marxist – about the best method to adopt in their struggle against the Israeli occupation to liberate their land, the only thing that unites them is Al-Aqsa Mosque, which they consider a red line, not to be touched.

Ibrahim Al-Anbawi, a resident of East Jerusalem, described the situation as worsening and said there was intense anger among the Jerusalemites because of what had happened on Friday, which caused a great deal of embarrassment for Jordan and the Palestinian Authority.

Both were accused of failing to protect Islamic holy sites, and they were urged to take strong positions on the Israeli threats.

Meanwhile, massive incursions will mark the week-long Jewish Passover into Al-Aqsa, which would keep the pot boiling, said Palestinian sources.

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said: "The battle is not over and the resistance will not stop. There is no truce agreement with the criminal Israeli occupation, and it must stop its violations."

Dozens of students from Al-Quds University in Abu Dis, southeast of Jerusalem, suffered after inhaling tear gas fired by Israeli troops in and around their campus on Saturday. The students had gathered to condemn Israeli atrocities in Jerusalem and Jenin.

Roni Shakid, a senior researcher at the Truman Institute for Peace Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, told Arab News: "As the Palestinians' dream of having an independent Palestinian state fades, the only thing they can fight for is protecting national symbols, and here Al-Aqsa Mosque stands out as the most important of those sacred symbols they believe they should protect and preserve."

Imad Mona, a bookstore owner in East Jerusalem, told Arab News that the merchants in the Old City and East Jerusalem were expecting more sales in Ramadan as the number of Al-Aqsa visitors from the Palestinians living in Israel, the West Bank, and even from East Jerusalem, was increasing.

But the prevailing tension and Israeli permit restrictions on West Bank residents during the Jewish holidays have limited the number of worshippers visiting the mosque.

Any security deterioration in Al-Aqsa Mosque will quickly cast a shadow over the situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Last May, Hamas targeted Jerusalem and Tel Aviv with missiles following the Israeli authorities' attack on Al-Aqsa Mosque.

At the end of 2000, the Palestinians fought the Al-Aqsa second Intifada, which lasted nearly four years, during which about 4,464 Palestinians were killed, 47,440 were wounded, and 9,800 were arrested.

The violence began with a provocative visit to Al-Aqsa by former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.



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Clashes at Al-Aqsa draw regional, international condemnation Saudi Arabia condemns Israeli raid over Al-Aqsa Mosque and attack on Palestinian worshippers

[Turkish envoy attracts attention with veiled criticism of Iran in article for Israeli think tank](#)

Author:

Sat, 2022-04-16 18:38

ANKARA: An article by Turkey's Ambassador to Washington for Tel Aviv

University's Dayan Center for Strategic Studies journal *Turkeyscope*, has raised questions about the state of Turkey's relations with Iran.

Apart from seeking cooperation between Turkey and Israel in fields of security and energy, Hasan Murat Mercan noted that the two states are under threat from similar regional malign actors, without mentioning Iran.

The article didn't go unnoticed by the Iranian media. The London-based TV station Iran International commenting on the article: "Ankara's envoy to Washington has called for Israeli-Turkish cooperation in countering regional threats, in a possible hint at Iran, amid improving bilateral ties."

The ambassador also underlined the need for cooperation against terrorism.

"Turkish-Israeli interaction offers more than a conventional regional partnership in the face of malign actors and trends. Conventional partnerships are for a particular issue, be it against a threat or for an objective. Conventional partnerships have expiration dates. Turkey and Israel, on the other hand, share a common neighborhood, heritage, and not least, a common future," he said in his article, which was entitled "Turkey and Israel: Optimism must prevail."

The ambassador continued: "Dealing with malign actors and their activities throughout our region is a particular area for enhanced coordination. The Turkish-Israeli partnership would be effective to further curb destabilizing moves in the broader Middle East and North Africa."

Israel and Turkey have always shared concerns over Iranian influence in Syria, with Iran's proxies, including Hezbollah and Shiite militias, threatening Turkish interests.

Ambassador Mercan, a figure close to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and a founding member of the ruling Justice and Development Party, called for re-designing Turkish-Israeli relations toward mutual trust.

"Turkish and Israeli geostrategic interests dictate a close and multi-layered partnership. "There is no room for complacency for both countries when it comes to: (i) managing regional dynamics that contain, inter alia, (a) symmetrical security threats and challenges, (ii) the need to further secure and diversify energy supply routes, and (iii) promoting inter-cultural synergy as a bulwark against Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism and all sorts of hate crimes."

It is not the first time that Mercan has underlined Turkey's concerns about the Iranian threat to the region's security.

In a speech to Haaretz in 2008 as president of the Turkish parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, Mercan said a nuclear-armed Iran would pose a threat to Turkey.

As part of bilateral moves to mend ties, Israeli President Isaac Herzog met Erdogan last month in Ankara. Erdogan recently said that Turkey and Israel can cooperate to carry Israeli natural gas to Europe.

"While there are fluctuations in Turkey-Iran relations, these countries know how to keep the relationship in certain contours," Gallia Lindenstrauss, a senior research fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies in Israel, told Arab News.

"There is, however, Turkish frustration from the growing competition between the two in northern Iraq, as well as the continuing competition in Syria," she added.

Several acts of espionage by Iranian agents against Israelis and Iranian dissidents on Turkish soil were recently revealed and thwarted by Turkish intelligence agencies.

Since last year, Turkish security forces increased their operations against the Iranian espionage network in the country.

After detaining Iranian spies over a plot to kidnap a former Iranian soldier last October, other spies were also arrested in February before they carried out a plan to kill Turkish-Israeli businessman Yair Galler.

On the energy front, Iran also halted gas flow to Turkey for 10 days in January.

Lindenstrauss said that cases such as the revelation of Iranian spies and the temporary halt of gas supply in the winter also increase tensions.

"Also, one cannot overlook the fact that Turkey is getting closer to the Arab Gulf states – mostly out of economic necessity – which also makes it less tolerant of Iranian attempts to increase its regional influence," she said.

Despite being part of the Syria-focused Astana peace talks with Iran and Russia, Ankara mostly shares a common perception with Gulf countries of Iran as a threat.

However, Soner Cagaptay, director of the Turkish program at the Washington Institute, said that Turkey has always separated its relations with Iran from its rapprochement process with Israel.

"Turkey has had competitive relations with Iran in the region. They see each other as two large 'former imperial' but 'currently hegemonic' powers that have the right to shape regional developments," he told Arab News.

"Throughout history, both countries avoided direct clashes despite coming very close to conflict in Syria with Turkish troops on one hand and Hezbollah and Iranian proxies on the other coming at close fire range."

According to Cagaptay, the normalization of ties between Turkey and Israel will first include energy cooperation.

The US government has repeatedly suggested the establishment of alternative pipelines from Israel to Greece passing through Turkey amid sanctions on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine that threaten severe shortages across Europe.

“At this stage, Turkey and Israel have similar objectives in Syria. They both have right of passage agreements, which allow Israel to strike Hezbollah and Turkey to strike the Kurdistan Workers’ Party,” he said.

In the meantime, Turkish state-run media channel TRT World recently published an article about whether the Ukraine fallout may lead to Iran gaining the upper hand over Russia in Syria.

“Tehran is trying to take advantage of the Ukraine crisis and strengthen its own position in the Syrian arena. Soon after Russia attacked Ukraine in late February, Iran and the Syrian regime increased their strategic engagement by increasing military diplomacy,” the article said. “At the same time, pro-Iranian fighters are working on relocating to different parts of Syria.”



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Iran’s Quds Force vows to continue ‘leading’ militias across region
New Iran underground nuclear workshop

[Egypt slams Israeli storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque](#)

Author:

Sat, 2022-04-16 18:13

CAIRO: Egypt's Foreign Ministry has condemned Israeli forces' storming of Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque and violence against Palestinians in its courtyards, which resulted in dozens of injuries and arrests.

Ministry spokesman Ahmed Hafez stressed the "necessity of self-restraint, providing full protection for Muslim worshippers and allowing them to perform Islamic rituals in Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is an Islamic endowment purely for Muslims."

He reaffirmed "the rejection of violence and incitement in all its forms, including calls for storming Al-Aqsa Mosque during the month of Ramadan," which will affect "stability and security in the Palestinian territories and the region."



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Clashes at Al-Aqsa draw regional, international condemnation Saudi Arabia condemns Israeli raid over Al-Aqsa Mosque and attack on Palestinian worshippers

[Egypt approves India as new wheat supplier](#)

Author:

Sat, 2022-04-16 18:00

CAIRO: Egypt has added India to its list of countries from which it imports wheat, Cairo has announced.

El-Said Marzouq El-Qosair, Egypt's minister of agriculture and land reclamation, said this comes within the framework of the state's efforts to secure new sources of wheat.

Egypt is the largest importer of wheat in the world and depends on Russia and Ukraine, which have been in conflict for nearly two months, raising concerns about supplies.

An Egyptian delegation went to India to discuss wheat imports, visiting fields and grain stores in various regions. The two sides also discussed facilitating the flow of Egyptian agricultural exports to India.



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Bloomberg
Lebanon facing wheat crisis amid Ukraine war, trade minister tells
CNN

[Clashes at Al-Aqsa draw regional, international condemnation](#)

Fri, 2022-04-15 19:51

LONDON: The international community on Friday expressed deep concern over a recent upsurge in violence in the occupied West Bank and clashes between Palestinians and Israeli police at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. At least 152 Palestinians were injured in clashes with Israeli riot police and 400 worshipers have been arrested inside Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque

compound on Friday, the latest outbreak in a recent upsurge of violence that has raised fears of a slide back to wider conflict.

The UN said it was “deeply concerned by the deteriorating security situation in Jerusalem during these holy days,” adding that the provocations must stop. “I call on political, religious, and community leaders on all sides to help calm the situation. Allowing tensions to spiral further only risks another escalation,” Ton Wennesland, UN special coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, said in a statement.

He said the UN was in close contact with key regional partners to calm the crisis and also urged Israeli and Palestinian authorities to “immediately deescalate the situation and prevent any further provocations by radical actors.”

Deeply concerned by the deteriorating security situation in [#Jerusalem](#). Provocations on the Holy Esplanade must stop now. [#UN](#) is in close contact w/ key regional partners & the parties to calm the situation. Allowing tensions to spiral further only risks another escalation. pic.twitter.com/4bu9SUeh20

– Tor Wennesland (@TWennesland) [April 15, 2022](#)

The clashes come at a particularly sensitive time. Ramadan this year coincides with Passover, a major weeklong Jewish holiday beginning Friday at sundown, and Christian holy week, which culminates on Easter Sunday. The holidays are expected to bring tens of thousands of faithful into Jerusalem’s Old City, home to major sites sacred to all three religions.

The European Union also said it was following the situation with deep concern and called for violence to stop immediately.

“Further civilian casualties must be prevented as a priority,” said Peter Stano, spokesperson for the EU’s external affairs. “The status quo of the holy sites must be fully respected (and) Palestinian-Israeli security

cooperation is essential.”

Stano reiterated the EU’s call on all parties to engage in de-escalatory efforts, and said all leaders have a responsibility to act against extremists.

The foreign ministries of Germany, France, Italy and Spain condemn the violence on Friday in East Jerusalem in a joint statement.

“We call on all sides to exercise maximum restraint as well as to refrain from violence and from all forms of provocation,” spokespersons for the ministries said in their statement.

Neighboring Jordan, which has custodianship over the holy site, and the Palestinian Authority issued a joint statement accusing Israel of “a dangerous and condemnable escalation that threatens to explode the situation.”

The Palestinian Foreign Ministry said it “holds Israel fully and directly responsible for this crime and its consequences.”

Israel/Palestine: follows with deep concern latest upsurge of violence in West Bank & clashes at Al Aqsa Mosque. Violence must stop immediately, status quo of holy sites has 2B respected, leaders must act against extremists, all side need to de-escalate
<https://t.co/ksMCT9Utbe>

– Peter Stano (@ExtSpoxEU) [April 15, 2022](#)

Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesperson for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, said the international community should intervene immediately to “stop Israeli aggression against Al-Aqsa mosque and prevent things from going out of control.”

Arab League chief Ahmed Aboul Gheit warned against igniting the situation in the Al-Aqsa Mosque and blamed the Israeli occupation forces, saying they were committing serious aggression against the Palestinians and their right to

perform rituals inside Al-Aqsa during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. "Israeli attacks on worshipers represent a continuation of the series of Israeli transgressions and provocations that aim to divide Al-Aqsa spatially and temporally," he said, expressing solidarity with Jerusalemites and Palestinians.

Secretary-general of the Gulf Cooperation Council condemned Israeli police and special forces for storming the mosque compound and urged Israel to respect the historical and legal status quo in occupied Jerusalem and its sanctities and to stop all illegal measures.

Nayef Al-Hajjraf also called on the international community to assume its responsibilities to preserve the safety of Al-Aqsa Mosque and worshipers, and the need for Israel to abide by its obligations as an occupying power in accordance with international humanitarian law.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation said it holds Israel "fully responsible" considers this dangerous escalation an attack on sacred sites of the entire Islamic nation, and a flagrant violation of international resolutions.

It also called on the international community, especially the UN Security Council, to put an end to these repeated violations, and to provide protection for the Palestinian people and the holy sites.

Egypt also condemned the Israeli raid.

(With Reuters and AP)



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Saudi Arabia condemns Israeli raid over Al-Aqsa Mosque and attacking
Palestinian worshippers