

Netanyahu attacks on all fronts to suppress anti-government protests with war fever

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Israeli security forces launched a horrific attack at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied East Jerusalem for a second consecutive night early Thursday morning.

Tear gas, stun grenades and rubber-coated steel bullets were fired at 20,000 Palestinian worshippers, while armed soldiers forcibly removed worshippers gathered there for Ramadan prayers, beating them with batons and rifle butts.

Less intense than the first ferocious raid when at least 37 people were injured, the second raid injured six people, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent, which said that Israeli forces prevented medical staff from attending to the wounded.

The second round of violence came the day after the arrest and removal of around 450 worshippers in a police raid and a ban on Palestinians under the age of 50 entering the Mosque. Itamar Ben Gvir, the fascist national security minister who heads Jewish Power, praised the police.

Israel's onslaught provoked outrage throughout the Arab and Muslim world amid appeals to ease tensions from the United Nations, US, Canada, the European Union and Turkey.

Militant groups in Gaza launched several rockets into Israel, most of which were intercepted or fell without causing damage or injury. The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) launched attacks on the besieged enclave. Hamas, the clerical group that controls Gaza, condemned the Israeli raid and called for Palestinians to demonstrate in response, but stopped short of calling for a military confrontation.

Ramadan, which this year coincides with Passover, has in the past few years seen Israeli soldiers attack worshippers at the al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third holiest site, preventing them from following the custom of spending the night inside the mosque for Itikaf.

In May 2021, similar attacks, along with provocations by far-right groups and attempts to evict six Palestinian families from their homes in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah, sparked a murderous 11-day assault by Israel on Gaza's defenceless population. Israeli air strikes killed 261 Palestinians, including 67 children, injured 2,200 more and displaced 113,000 Palestinians from their homes. This led to protests and riots in the West Bank and within Israel's predominantly Arab towns and cities.

This week's attacks at the al-Aqsa Mosque, the occupied West Bank and on Israel's own Palestinian citizens, as well as against Iran and Syria, are the spearhead of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's campaign to whip up war fever within Israel. As the protests against his efforts to give his far-right government dictatorial powers continue into their fourth month, he is determined to block attempts, as yet small but growing in the wake of the pogrom-like settler attack on the West Bank town of Huwara, to unify Palestinian and Jewish workers and youth against his government.

Netanyahu calculates he can create some kind of national "unity" based on militarism to deflect political tensions towards Israel's "external enemies", the Palestinians and Iran. On Sunday, he told a cabinet meeting, "Israel's internal debate will not detract one iota from our determination. Strength and ability to act against our enemies on all fronts, wherever and whenever necessary." He has announced the convening of the security cabinet, the first time since February.

Police have released at least 397 of the approximately 450 Palestinians arrested during Tuesday night's raid but have banned them from entering Al-Aqsa Mosque for a week. Forty-seven detainees from the West Bank have been transferred to the Ofer military prison, while six Palestinians from East Jerusalem are being held and interrogated. According to the Palestinian Commission of Detainees Affairs, "The conditions of arrest and detention are humiliating and inhumane, and no medical attention is being provided to the injured detainees."

The police escorted dozens of Israeli settlers as they entered the al-Aqsa courtyards Thursday morning, prompting fears that preparations are being made to divide the mosque between Muslims and Jews, as the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron was divided in the 1990s.

Far-right groups, including the Temple activists determined to carry out Jewish prayers at the compound—outlawed under an international agreement governing the site—seek to replace the Mosque with a Jewish temple. Earlier, they called for mass stormings throughout the week-long Passover holiday and announced their intention of performing a Passover animal sacrifice, something Ben-Gvir has repeatedly called for. On Wednesday, the police detained "a number of people" near the Mosque with "lambs or goats that they were suspected of

intending to sacrifice at the site for the Passover holiday.”

Adding to the tensions in Jerusalem, an Israeli settler shot a 14-year-old Palestinian boy in the arm with live ammunition in Jerusalem’s Old City.

In the West Bank, Israeli security forces used poisonous gas to disperse marches and angry confrontations with Israeli settlers for a second night in Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarm, Hebron, Ramallah, Jenin, Bethlehem and Jericho, injuring at least 12 people in Nablus, dozens more in Beit Ummar near the southern city of Hebron and wounding another with live fire.

Within Israel, police suppressed angry protests over the storming of the al-Aqsa Mosque in Umm al-Fahm, a Palestinian city on Wednesday night, with stun grenades and arrested at least 12 people. Other protests broke out in the neighbouring northern towns of Reineh and Kafr Manda.

In the last week, Israel has launched four air strikes on Syria, killing two Iranian officers. The IDF followed up Tehran’s retaliatory launching of an unmanned drone into northern Israel from Syria with another airstrike near Damascus Tuesday morning that killed two civilians.

Syria’s foreign ministry warned that Israel’s attacks risked dragging the region toward “total escalation” and accused Tel Aviv of striking Syria in order to “escape its internal problems through aggressions and crimes outside its borders.”

On Tuesday, Iranian Revolutionary Guard spokesman Ramazan Sharif speaking in central Tehran at the funeral processions of the slain guards pledged to avenge their deaths.

IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi boasted that Israel was “ready” to attack Iran and could do so even without support from the United States. i24NEWS quoted Halevi as saying, “We are ready to act against Iran. The Israeli army has the ability to strike both in distant countries and near home.”

On Thursday afternoon, dozens of rockets were fired on Israel from Lebanon, injuring two and causing a few fires. While no organisation has taken responsibility, Israel assumed they must have been fired with Hezbollah’s approval and shelled the southern Lebanese town of al-Qlaileh. The Iran-backed militia and political group had said it would support “all measures” taken by Palestinians to defend al-Aqsa.

Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, whom Netanyahu had sought to sack on March 26 for calling on him to halt the judicial overhaul because of the anger it had caused within parts of the armed forces, has now appeared alongside him. The man the self-proclaimed leaders of the opposition movement heralded as Israel’s saviour warned Iran that Israel would “not allow the Iranians and Hezbollah to attack us... We will push them out of Syria to the place they ought to be, and that is Iran.” On Wednesday, he insisted that the IDF was preparing “for every possibility.”

Gallant’s backing of Netanyahu’s fascistic onslaught against the Palestinians and bellicosity against Hezbollah, Syria and Iran, confirms that the official opposition in no way represent an alternative to dictatorship and authoritarianism, much less to

war against the Palestinians and Iran.

Netanyahu knows that opposition leaders Yair Lapid, Benny Gantz and the host of former generals, security and intelligence chiefs and business executives that head the movement have no essential policy disagreements with him. Their opposition stems from their fear that he and his fascist coalition partners are undermining Israel’s thin democratic veneer and risking splintering an already deeply polarised society, one of the most unequal in the OECD group of advanced countries.

As loyal defenders of the Israeli bourgeoisie and Zionist state, they will agree some cosmetic changes to his plans to neuter the judiciary to demobilise the largest protest movement in Israel’s 75-year history and prop up the rule of Israel’s oligarchs against the people. In the event of a Palestinian insurgency or an external war, they will do their utmost to block any attempts by the protest movement to reach out to the Palestinians and oppose Israel’s system of apartheid rule within Israel and military rule over the occupied Palestinian territories.

Israeli and Palestinian workers must break with the capitalist politicians that seek to control the protest movement. The decisive question is the forging of a revolutionary leadership to secure the political independence of the working class, in an implacable struggle against all representatives of the bourgeoisie, unifying the struggle of Israeli and Palestinian workers with those of their brothers and sisters in the region—Arab, Iranian, Kurdish and Turkish—and in the imperialist centres, against capitalism and for socialism.



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