



FACTHSEET | APRIL 2012

By Sawsan Ramahi

Israeli attacks on Muslim-and Christian-owned buildings and religious sites in Palestine

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MIDDLE EAST M **ONITOR**
www.middleeastmonitor.org.uk

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By Sawsan Ramahi

The recent escalation of Israeli attacks on Muslim and Christian religious sites in Palestine, including Jerusalem, other cities in the occupied West Bank and the area occupied in 1948, can be viewed as part of Israel's assault on all things Palestinian since 1967. It is a war declared by Israel and waged by the occupation authority's military and security forces as well as the illegal Jewish settlers. The latter form the spearhead of attacks against mosques with the cooperation and support of military personnel. Although the Israeli occupation authority describes such attacks as "criminal activity", in reality they are attacks of a religious and socio-political nature.

Several Palestinian organisations have documented attacks against Muslim and Christian religious sites. In 2011 alone, for example, Al-Aqsa Foundation noted 150 assaults on Al-Aqsa Mosque and its surroundings. The Solidarity Foundation for Human Rights, meanwhile, believe that the Israeli military and illegal settlers have committed more than 96 attacks on non-Jewish religious sites in Palestine since the beginning of 2011; according to the Palestinian Waqf (religious endowment), there were 160 recorded Israeli violations against the holy sites throughout the year.

The details of some of these violations against Muslim sites in occupied Jerusalem and the West Bank which took place in 2011 are noted below:

DATE	EVENT
2 Jan. 2011	Demolition notice served on mosque in Al-Nueama near Jericho.
4 Jan. 2011	The Israeli Institute allocated millions of dollars for the Judaisation of the mosque in Burj Alnwateer and Ein Silwan villages.
6 Jan. 2011	Israel Judaised the gate names of the Old City of Jerusalem.
9 Jan. 2011	Alkurd Bond: the Israeli occupation attempted to change this into a small wailing wall site.
9 Jan. 2011	The historic Sheppard Hotel in Karm Al-Mufti was demolished.
11 Jan. 2011	Jewish extremists demolished 20 tombs in the ancient Ma'aman Allah Muslim cemetery in Jerusalem, the largest and oldest in the city.
13 Jan. 2011	Plans were announced for a "Museum of Judaisation" next to Ein Silwan Mosque.

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19 Jan. 2011	Israeli magistrates approve demolition of more than 200 graves in Ma'aman Allah cemetery.
20 Jan. 2011	Demolition notice served on a mosque in Nahalin area of Bethlehem province.
23 Jan. 2011	Settlers try to break into the tomb of Yusuf Dweikat in Nablus to perform religious rituals. This is not the tomb of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph). Nevertheless, it is an Islamic monument registered with the Department of Islamic Waqf (religious endowments)
25 Jan. 2011	The Israeli Antiquity Authority admits secret excavations near Al-Aqsa Mosque.
6 Feb. 2011	Israeli authorities threaten to seize Muslim-owned land as well as the Sa'as and Saeed Mosque in Jerusalem.
7 Feb. 2011	Racist rabbi calls for the building of a "temple" on the site of the Noble Sanctuary of Al-Aqsa, and for "visits" to be made to the site, even if his people have to break in to do so.
10 Feb. 2011	Israeli forces desecrate a mosque in Beit Dajan, east of Nablus, as well as monuments and public places.
10 Feb. 2011	Three Israeli government ministers entered Yusuf's Tomb, east of Nablus, accompanied by hundreds of illegal Jewish settlers.
10 Feb. 2011	Israel announces plan to occupy the roof of a building in which a mosque is located in Silwan.
14 Feb. 2011	Plans announced to build 19 synagogues in occupied Abu Ghneim.
17 Feb. 2011	Yezra Mosque, Nablus province, was demolished.
18 Feb. 2011	Jewish groups distribute pictures of the Dome of the Rock Mosque with the Israeli flag superimposed on it and call for complete control over the Noble Sanctuary of Al-Aqsa.
28 Feb. 2011	Demolition notice served on a mosque in Ramadin, near Hebron.
1 Mar. 2011	86 million New Israeli Shekels allocated to Judaisation projects around Al-Aqsa Mosque.

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3 Mar. 2011	Jewish group breaks into Prophet Yunus Mosque in Halhoul, occupied West Bank, to perform religious rituals.
4 Mar. 2011	Judaisation of the Umayyad Palaces to the south of Al-Aqsa Mosque were accelerated.
7 Mar. 2011	Israeli-led Jerusalem Municipality starts process to change alley and street names in the Old City of Jerusalem.
13 Mar. 2011	Israeli occupation forces break into Deir Estia and photograph the Old City and mosques.
17 Mar. 2011	Israel's Supreme Court approves plan to convert part of Al-Rahma Cemetery into a "Biblical park"; Muslims forbidden to bury their dead in the cemetery.
19 Mar. 2011	Israeli occupation forces break into and desecrate Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq mosque in Hosan, West Bethlehem.
20 Mar. 2011	Armed Jewish settlers attempt to break into Al-Aqsa Mosque.
20 Mar. 2011	A group of settlers, protected by Israeli soldiers, invades the town of Kaf Hares in the province of Salfit to perform religious rituals in three Islamic shrines.
21 Mar. 2011	Israel occupation forces break into Al-Aqsa Mosque and assault worshippers.
29 Mar. 2011	For the second time in March, illegal Jewish settlers desecrate Prophet Yunus mosque in Halhoul.
3 Apr. 2011	Jewish extremists break into Al-Aqsa Mosque.
5 Apr. 2011	Plans approved for a "Biblical park" in Al-Esawya.
11 Apr. 2011	Dozens of illegal Jewish settlers break into and desecrate the Islamic cemetery in Hebron in an attempt to dig up graves, which they walked upon and sat on.
18 Apr. 2011	Illegal Jewish settlers break into Al-Aqsa Mosque.
20-21 Apr. 2011	Israeli enforced closure of the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron.

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21 Apr. 2011	Israeli soldier throws a hand-grenade at bushes inside Al-Aqsa Sanctuary.
21 Apr. 2011	Jewish groups break into Al-Aqsa Mosque.
21 Apr. 2011	Israeli occupation escalates pace of excavations underneath and around Al-Aqsa Mosque, and starts new excavations near the Damascus and Flax Gates.
28 Apr. 2011	Female Israeli soldiers break into Al-Aqsa Mosque.
30 Apr. 2011	Illegal Jewish settlers perform religious rituals at Al-Qatanin Gate.
2 May 2011	Hundreds of settlers break into Yusuf's Tomb in Nablus under the protection of the Israeli army and perform prayers.
3 May 2011	Arson attack on the chapel at Hawara School, Nablus.
9 May 2011	Israeli occupation forces break into the Noble Sanctuary and threaten to arrest Al-Aqsa Mosque guards.
18 May 2011	Israeli occupation forces close Ibn Quduma Mosque in Wadi Al-Jouz.
21 May 2011	Settlers throw stones at Khaled Ibn Al-Waleed Mosque near Hebron.
25 May 2011	Israel creates a new settlement overlooking Al-Aqsa Mosque.
26 May 2011	Land levelled as part of Judaisation policy at Damascus (Al-Amoud) Gate to the Old City of Jerusalem.
29 May 2011	The Castle Mosque at Hebron Gate in the Old City is turned into an Israeli museum.
30 May 2011	More than 1,600 Israelis perform their prayers at Yusuf's Tomb in Nablus under the protection of the Israeli army.
1 June 2011	200 illegal Jewish settlers break into Al-Aqsa Mosque.

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7 June 2011	Jewish groups break into Al-Aqsa Mosque on the occasion of the Shavuot religious holiday.
7 June 2011	Arson attack on Al-Mugheer Mosque east of Ramallah.
8 June 2011	Illegal Jewish settlers break into Al-Aqsa Mosque and pour wine over the Noble Sanctuary yard.
9 June 2011	Israeli-led Jerusalem Municipality approves construction of a "Musuem of Tolerance" in part of the historic Ma'man Allah Cemetery in Jerusalem.
10 June 2011	Worshippers attacked by Israelis in Al-Aqsa Mosque.
11 June 2011	Demolition notice served on Omar Ibn Al-Khattab Mosque, the elementary school and a number of facilities in the village of Broqen, Salfit province.
13 June 2011	Israel starts excavations at Waqf (religious endowment) site at Barkat Al-Sultan in the Old City of Jerusalem.
14 June 2011	Demolition notice served on Al-Ma'asara village mosque, Bethlehem.
14 June 2011	Knesset members and Jewish extremists perform Talmudic prayers in Yusuf's Mosque and Tomb in Nablus.
27 June 2011	Palestinian-owned land levelled in Jerusalem.
3 July 2011	Israeli authorities approve committee to Judaize place-names in historic Palestine.
25 July 2011	New excavations started near Al-Aqsa Mosque.
31 July 2011	Fake Jewish tombs created on Jabal Al-Zaytoun (Mount of Olives) in Jerusalem.
31 July 2011	Young worshippers face down attempt by illegal Jewish settlers to break into Al-Aqsa Mosque.
7 Aug. 2011	Official opening of the Silwan tunnel in the Helwa Valley.

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7 Aug. 2011	For the first time in Ramadan, 250 members of Jewish community and settlers' groups break into Al-Aqsa Mosque "on the anniversary of the temple's destruction".
9 Aug. 2011	Jewish groups and illegal settlers break into Al-Aqsa Mosque.
9 Aug. 2011	Israelis install search facilities at the entrance to Ibrahimi Mosque, Hebron.
22 Aug. 2011	New excavations begin at Al-Ketan Cave to the north of Al-Aqsa Mosque.
4 Sept. 2011	Illegal Jewish settlers attack Al-Aqsa Mosque while protected by Israeli police officers.
5 Sept. 2011	Settlers burn Al-Nourin Mosque in Qasra village near Nablus.
7 Sept. 2011	Unknown vandals destroy the mosque of Prophet Lot in Hebron.
7 Sept. 2011	Close to 1,200 illegal Jewish settlers break into Yusuf's Tomb in Nablus under the protection of the Israeli army.
8 Sept. 2011	Israel opens up a new tunnel, 600 metres long, from Ein Silwan to the perimeter of Al-Aqsa Mosque.
8 Sept. 2011	Offensive graffiti written on the walls of Yetma Mosque south of Nablus.
9 Sept. 2011	Settlers write offensive graffiti on Beir Zeit's Grand Mosque.
13 Sept. 2011	Israel occupation authorities open a new tunnel leading towards Al-Aqsa Mosque. It is the longest since their occupation of the city began.
18 Sept. 2011	Illegal Jewish settlers break into Al-Aqsa Mosque accompanied by large contingent of Israeli forces.
20 Sept. 2011	Jewish groups break into Al-Aqsa Mosque; Israeli police arrest two Muslim worshippers who try to stand up to the intruders.
25 Sept. 2011	Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron is closed for two days by Israel.
26 Sept.	Fifty illegal Jewish settlers attack Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Israeli authorities impose restrictions

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2011	on Muslim women visiting the mosque.
3 Oct. 2011	Two hundred illegal Jewish settlers break into Al-Aqsa Mosque; the Israeli police arrest four Muslim students.
6 Oct. 2011	Hundreds of illegal Jewish settlers break into Yusuf's Tomb, Nablus, protected by Israeli soldiers.
11 Oct. 2011	Israel continues to build "Biblical gardens" between Al-Saher Gate and Asbat in Jerusalem.
11 Oct. 2011	Jewish groups break into Al-Aqsa Mosque.
16 Oct. 2011	Illegal Jewish settlers break into Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Israeli authorities close down Silwan ahead of a Jewish religious holiday.
17 Oct. 2011	New Israeli excavations in Wadi Helwa in Jerusalem in an attempt to take over an old Palestinian-owned well.
5 Nov. 2011	Israeli security forces raid and search a mosque in Amresh village in Hebron province.
10 Nov. 2011	Israeli security forces raid and search a mosque in Johar Mountain area in Hebron province.
10 Nov. 2011	Anti-Arab graffiti written at the Ma'aman Allah Cemetery.
17 Nov. 2011	Al-Aqsa Institute exposes Israeli scheme for new Judaisation projects in Awad and Hetta Streets in the Old City.
24 Nov. 2011	The mosque of Kherbet Al-Mafqara, near Hebron, is demolished.
27 Nov. 2011	Israeli occupation forces decide to demolish the Magharba Bridge Gate leading to Al-Aqsa Mosque on the pretext that there are cracks in it.
29 Nov. 2011	Members of Israel's internal security service, Shin Bet, break into Al-Aqsa Mosque.
30 Nov. 2011	A synagogue for women opened beneath the Magharba Gate entrance to the Noble Sanctuary of Al-Aqsa.

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4 Dec. 2011	Israel agrees to build a “national garden” in occupied Jerusalem “to speed up” the Judaisation process.
6 Dec. 2011	UN Report claims that 3.7 million Palestinians are prohibited from entering Jerusalem.
7 Dec. 2011	Arson attack on Kresa Mosque in Dora, Hebron.
7 Dec. 2011	Settlers burn Ali Ibn Abi Taleb Mosque in Broqen to the west of Salfit.
8 Dec. 2011	Draft Israeli law proposes the prohibition of the call to prayer through loudspeakers in occupied Jerusalem and Palestinian land occupied in 1948.
12 Dec. 2011	Israel closes the Magharba Gate Bridge leading to Al-Aqsa Mosque.
13 Dec. 2011	Israel plans to pave a road through the so-called “Hasmonean” tunnel underneath Al-Aqsa Mosque.
14 Dec. 2011	Israel reopens the Magharba Gate Bridge and allows dozens of extremist Jews to enter Al-Aqsa Mosque.
14 Dec. 2011	Arson attack by extremist Jews against the Ukasha Mosque in Jerusalem; anti-Muslim graffiti daubed on the walls.
15 Dec. 2011	Settlers violate the sanctity of Matta Mosque in Hebron.
15 Dec. 2011	Settlers burn down Al-Nour Mosque in Berqa village, Ramallah province.
19 Dec. 2011	Racist slogans daubed on the walls of Al-Sahaba Mosque in Bani Ineem, Hebron.
22 Dec. 2011	140 illegal Jewish settlers break into Al-Aqsa Mosque on the “Nour” religious holiday.
26 Dec. 2011	Illegal Jewish settlers break into Al-Aqsa Mosque.
26 Dec. 2011	Jewish extremists carry out a provocative demonstration near Al-Aqsa Mosque.

27 Dec. 2011	Alad settlers' group excavations cause collapse of Ein Silwan Mosque wall.
28 Dec. 2011	New Judaisation centre approved near the proposed "City of David" settlement in Jerusalem.
30 Dec. 2011	Silwan residents call for halt to Alad settlers' excavations following collapse of mosque wall.

The details of some of the violations during 2011 and 2012 in Israel are noted below:

	DATE	EVENT
1.	16 Jan. 2011	Foundations laid for tourist hotel in the Qishla Cemetery in Jaffa; Muslim graves ploughed up.
2.	16 Jan. 2011	Settlers desecrate Al-Nuzha Mosque in Jaffa, throwing stones and chanting anti-Muslim slogans.
3.	24 Feb. 2011	Confiscation notice served on Waqf (religious endowment) land in Acre for a railway line to be built.
4.	28 Feb. 2011	Arson attack on Salman Farsi Mosque, Burin, West Bank
5.	20 Apr. 2011	A scheme was announced to destroy Hasan Beik Mosque in Jaffa.
6.	19 June 2011	Widespread digging operations in Al-Qishla Cemetery in Jaffa.
7.	22 June 2011	Israeli Supreme Court denies application to reopen the Grand Mosque in Beir Sheva for prayer and decides to change it into a museum for Islamic and eastern peoples' heritage.
8.	25 Sept. 2011	Digging continues at Al-Qishla Cemetery in Jaffa.
9.	3 Oct. 2011	Arson attack on Al-Nour Mosque in the Galilee.
10.	6 Oct. 2011	Demolition notice served by Tel-Aviv municipality on two gates and stairs in the Bahr Mosque in Jaffa.

11.	7 Oct. 2011	Vandals attack Al-Kazakhana Cemetery in Jaffa.
12.	21 Nov. 2011	A Jewish extremist breaks into Hasan Beik Mosque in Jaffa.
13.	14 Nov. 2011	Arson attack by settlers against Ukasha Mosque in West Jerusalem.
	27 Dec. 2011	Grand Mosque in Beir Sheva converted into a museum.
	25 Jan. 2012	Extremists destroy a large number of tombstones in the cemetery of Beit She'an, the population of which was expelled in 1948.

Some of the violations against Al-Aqsa Mosque and in the occupied West Bank in 2012:

DATE	EVENT
5 Jan. 2012	The religious authority of the Israeli army distributes a picture of the Noble Sanctuary of Al-Aqsa without the Dome of the Rock to soldiers and officers.
8 Jan. 2012	Israeli police allow a group of Israeli soldiers in uniform to roam freely around Al-Aqsa.
11 Jan. 2012	Illegal Jewish settlers write racist slogans on Deir Estia Mosque in North Salfit.
12 Jan. 2012	More Israeli soldiers roam freely around Al-Aqsa guarded with police permission and support; new surveillance cameras installed near Magharba Gate, covering large sections of the Noble Sanctuary.
15 Jan. 2012	Workers from the Israeli-led Jerusalem Municipality, accompanied by Israeli police officers, try to "clean" Rebat Alkurd near the Iron Gate of Al-Aqsa Mosque, despite the Department for Religious Endowments (Waqf) refusing to give permission for the work.
31 Jan. 2012	Dozens of Israeli soldiers enter Al-Aqsa in full uniform.
12 Feb. 2012	Members of the ruling Likud Party call for Al-Aqsa Mosque to be destroyed and a temple to be built on its ruins.
19 Feb.	Around forty Israeli special forces break into Al-Aqsa Mosque and attack a number of Muslim

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2012	worshippers.
23 Feb. 2012	Large force of Israeli occupation soldiers prevent many worshippers from going into Al-Aqsa Mosque but allow 65 Jewish settlers to go in.
24 Feb. 2012	Large number of Israeli police and special forces attack the mosque, throwing sound bombs and firing rubber bullets at Muslim worshippers.
28 Feb. 2012	Dozens of illegal Jewish settlers perform Talmudic rituals at Prophet Yunus Mosque in Halhoul, north of Hebron in the occupied West Bank.
3 Mar. 2012	A landslide affects the main street in the Wadi Hilweh neighbourhood, near the historic Ein Silwan Mosque, due to the ongoing excavations of tunnels towards the southern wall of Al Aqsa Mosque.
5 Mar. 2012	An Israeli company markets a cigarette lighter with the Israeli flag and an image of the Dome of the Rock on it; "Israel" is written in Hebrew.
15 Mar. 2012	Moshe Faglin, a senior Likud politician, entered Al-Aqsa Mosque guarded closely by the Israeli troops and accompanied by a group of settlers who performed Jewish and Talmudic rituals around the mosque.
18 Mar. 2012	Group incursions into Al-Aqsa Mosque by Israeli security forces wearing military uniform, with "tours" around the Noble Sanctuary.
24 Mar. 2012	Around 20 Israeli extremists perform religious rituals and desecrate Muslim graves in Bab Alrahma Cemetery, adjacent to the eastern wall of Al-Aqsa Mosque; two tombstones are damaged.

Christian holy sites were not immune to attacks by Israelis and illegal settlers. There is a sense that many of these have racist connotations. The Deputy for Christian Affairs at the Palestinian Ministry of Religious Endowments, Hanna Eisa, said that there have been many violations against Christian holy sites since the beginning of 2011 in the occupied West Bank, including settlers breaking down the doors of churches and destroying crucifixes, as well as breaking into a number of churches in Aboud and Burqen.

The details of some of the violations against Christian sites are noted below:

DATE	EVENT
20 Feb. 2011	A church in West Jerusalem attacked by extremist settlers and the walls daubed with offensive graffiti. Local residents' cars damaged by the settlers.
23 Apr. 2011	Israel soldiers and police attack Christian worshippers in Jerusalem.
7 Oct. 2011	Christian cemetery in Jaffa desecrated.
12 Dec. 2011	Settlers attack the Baptist Church of St. John near the site of the baptism of Jesus Christ on the banks of the River Jordan, protected by security forces. Furniture, fittings and religious artefacts were destroyed during the attack.
7 Feb. 2012	Illegal Jewish settlers attack a 5 th century convent of the Orthodox Church in Jerusalem, writing graffiti that is offensive to Palestinian Christians and include threats of violence. Two vehicles belonging to the convent are damaged.
20 Feb. 2012	A Baptist Church attacked in West Jerusalem. Offensive graffiti daubed on the walls. Three vehicles belonging to the church damaged.

This list is not exhaustive; suffice to say that the freedom of worship called for around the world is not something that is experienced by Palestinians. Many are prevented from attending places of worship by the Israeli authorities, even when they live just a few kilometres away, as in the case of Al-Aqsa Mosque and worshippers from the West Bank.

Israel, meanwhile, continues to push through its Judaisation policies with impunity, damaging Islamic and Christian sites in the process.