

Al Aqsa mosque sees Israeli-Palestinian clashes

CLASHES ROCK HOLY SITE

Jerusalem

Palestinian youths clashed with Israeli police at Jerusalem's flashpoint Al Aqsa mosque compound yesterday, hours before the start of the Jewish New Year, the latest violence over access to the site sacred to both faiths.

The clashes came with tensions running high after Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon last week outlawed two Muslim groups that confront Jewish visitors to the compound.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas condemned what he called an Israeli police "attack" at the site, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said authorities must prevent rioting at the compound.

Witnesses said police entered the mosque, Islam's third-holiest site, and caused damage. Police only said they closed the doors to the mosque to lock in rioters throwing stones, fireworks and other objects. Authorities

have used the same tactic in the past in a bid to restore calm and which has seen them briefly enter.

According to police, the rioters had barricaded themselves in the mosque overnight with the aim of disrupting visits by Jews to the site ahead of the start of New Year celebrations yesterday evening.

Authorities said they raided the compound at around 6:45am (0345 GMT) to ensure visits to the site could go on as usual. Protesters then targeted police from inside the mosque, according to the statement.

"Masked protesters who were inside the mosque threw stones and fireworks at police," it said. "Suspect pipes that could be filled with homemade explosives were also found at the entry to the mosque."

Protesters have previously used such pipes to direct the trajectory of fireworks.

A witness accused police of entering the mosque much further than would have been



A masked Palestinian wearing a Hamas headband takes a burnt carpet out of Al Aqsa mosque

needed to close the doors and prayer mats were partially of causing damage, saying burned.

Far-right minister visits

Authorities cleared people from the site, including members of the Waqf, the Jordanian organisation that administers the sensitive compound, a Waqf spokesman said.

Far-right Israeli Agriculture Minister Uri Ariel was among Jewish activists who visited the site later, local media reported.

"It's the first time that they evacuated all the guards," Waqf spokesman Firas al Dibs said, adding that two had been wounded by rubber bullets. "The director of Al Aqsa mosque, Omar Kaswani, was injured and arrested."

Police said calm later returned to the mosque complex, though clashes continued outside in the narrow alleyways of Jerusalem's Old City, with authorities firing tear gas and stun grenades.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said 20 people required hospital treatment.

Abbas said sites such as Al Aqsa constituted a "red line," adding "we will not allow attacks against our holy places."

"The presidency strongly condemns the attack by the occupier's military and police against the Al Aqsa mosque and the aggression against the faithful who were there," a statement from his office said.

Netanyahu said in a statement that Israel would act "to maintain the status quo and order" at the compound, venerated by Jews as the Temple Mount.

"It is our responsibility and our power to act against rioters to allow the freedom of worship at this holy place," he said.

Jordan condemned what it described as an assault by the Israeli army. Egypt, the only other Arab country to have signed a peace treaty with the Jewish state, also condemned Israeli actions at the compound. (AFP)



Smoke from fireworks could be seen rising over the Al Aqsa compound



Palestinians clean up debris inside Al Aqsa mosque



A Palestinian woman shows rubber bullets reportedly used by Israeli riot police

Bangladesh cricketer suspended for 'beating child maid'

Dhaka

Bangladesh national cricketer Shahadat Hossain was suspended yesterday from all forms of the game as police investigate allegations that he and his wife beat their 11-year-old maid.

Police are still searching for the 29-year-old paceman who went into hiding last week after claims he "tortured and abused" the maid who is undergoing treatment in hospital.

"The allegations against Shahadat Hossain have tarnished our image," Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) spokesman Jalal Yunus

said. "We've therefore decided to temporarily suspend him from all sorts of cricket being organised by the BCB," Yunus said, adding that Shahadat would only be allowed to play if cleared by the police.

He said the BCB had vocally opposed the abuse of children and women in the past, including the use of minors for labour. The suspension means Shahadat, who missed the recent series against India and South Africa after twisting his ankle in a Test match in May, cannot play in the national cricket league starting later this week. A



File Photo of Bangladeshi cricketer Shahadat Hossain

top performance in the league usually guarantees a place in the national team.

Shahadat, who played 38 Tests and 51 one-day

internationals for Bangladesh, is now all but certain to miss the two Tests against Australia next month.

Police raided the house

of the pace bowler and his wife, Nritto Shahadat, who is also on the run, on the night of September 6 after officers found the injured and crying maid on a street in the capital Dhaka.

"We've also raided his village home and houses of his relatives and friends. But we did not find Shahadat and his wife anywhere," Inspector Shafiqur Rahman, who is investigating the case, said.

The maid, Mahfuza Akter Happy, has told police and local media that the couple beat her. Television footage showed the girl, looking frail and thin, being taken to

hospital with swollen black eyes. "She told us that the couple beat her very often. Her hand was charred with a hot cooking paddle. She had injury marks all over her body," Rahman said.

"The day she fled Shahadat's home she was also beaten mercilessly by both the cricketer and his wife," he said.

A case has been filed against the cricketer and police are seeking his arrest, as the story dominates local media headlines. Meanwhile, a team of doctors is treating the girl at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.