

Myth vs Facts: Israel Restricts Freedom of Worship in Jerusalem

Thursday, 17 September 2009

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(source: Washington Post)

Myth: "From 1948 to 1967 Jordan denied Israelis access to their holy sites in East Jerusalem, including the Wailing Wall and the cemetery on the Mount of Olives. After capturing East Jerusalem in 1967, Israel permitted Muslims and Christians free access to their holy sites."

Fact: "Since March 1993, Israel has enforced a closure on Jerusalem, illegally annexing large parts of East Jerusalem and isolating the city from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In order to enter Jerusalem, any Palestinian living on the outskirts of the city or elsewhere in the West Bank and Gaza Strip must apply for a temporary permit that is extremely difficult to obtain."

Fact: "Israel's closure policy has resulted in the denial to hundreds of thousands of Muslim and Christian Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza of access to their holy sites in Jerusalem, even during religious holidays."

Thousands of police in Jerusalem have restricted access to the al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's holiest site in the city, for every Friday prayer since Ramadan began on Aug. 22, 2009. Friday is the Muslim day of worship and is marked by large communal prayers, especially during Ramadan. The huge plaza in front of the silver-domed Al Aqsa Mosque, also home to the golden-topped Dome of the Rock, has room for as many as 300,000 worshippers.

During Ramadan season only men over 50 and women over 45, or Palestinians with the special permits, are allowed to enter the Old City.

We call upon Israeli authorities to permit any Muslim who wishes to pray in Jerusalem this Friday, Sept. 18—the last Friday of Ramadan—to worship in this city, which is holy to three religions, and to celebrate Eid al Fitr, on Sept. 20, in freedom.

We call upon Israel to allow freedom of worship in the holy city of Jerusalem. -----

IOF troops stop thousands of Palestinians from reaching the Aqsa Mosque

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM, (PIC)-- The Israeli occupation authorities deployed troops in large numbers in and around the occupied city of Jerusalem and setup roadblocks in the city on the third Friday of the holy month of Ramadan.

The Israeli radio had announced earlier that only men over the age of 50 and women over the age of 45 and those with passes will be allowed to reach the Aqsa Mosque to perform the Friday prayers.

Thousands of people waited at the Kalandia check point to be allowed into Jerusalem, the IOF allowed a small number and thousands were still waiting at noon when IOF officers running the check point announced it was closed, according to al-Jazeera tv.

Kalandia is the only gateway for Palestinians from the West Bank into Jerusalem and during Ramadan Muslim worshipers try to reach the Aqsa Mosque for their Friday Prayers.

Many people have been waiting at the checkpoint since before dawn hoping to be able to cross into Jerusalem. Palestinian medics were at the scene and helped a number of people who collapsed because of the heat and the overcrowding.

Courtesy The Palestine Information Center