

Vandals damage cars in Arab neighborhood of east Jerusalem

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1575906306336988000

Mon, 2019-12-09 15:30

JERUSALEM: Vandals slashed the tires of over 160 vehicles and sprayed slogans such as "Arabs=enemies" in a Palestinian neighborhood of Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem, Israeli police said Monday. Elsewhere, Palestinian residents of the volatile West Bank city of Hebron staged a general strike to protest the construction of a new Jewish settlement there.

Masked suspects operated under the cover of darkness to vandalize the cars in east Jerusalem's Shuafat neighborhood and spray-painted Hebrew graffiti on a nearby wall, police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said. He said the authorities were treating the incident as criminal with "nationalistic motives."

Jerusalem Mayor Moshe Lion condemned the "hate crime" and called upon the police "to find the criminals as fast as possible and bring them to justice." The graffiti included the phrases "When Jews are stabbed, we aren't silent," and "There is no place in the land for enemies."

Hard-line nationalist Israelis have been known to execute so-called "price tag" attacks against Palestinians in response to Palestinian militant attacks or perceived efforts by Israeli authorities to limit settlement expansion. It was unclear what motivated Monday's incident.

In Hebron, the West Bank's largest city, Palestinian shops, schools and businesses were shuttered for the one-day strike. Some youngsters hurled stones at Israeli military patrols, and soldiers fired tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse the crowds.

Israel's new defense minister, Naftali Bennett, presented his plan for a new settlement there early this month. Bennett, a longtime supporter of the West Bank settlement movement, said his plan will double the Jewish population of Hebron.

Hebron is frequent flashpoint of violence. Hundreds of hard-line Jewish settlers guarded by thousands of soldiers live in the heart of the city, which has a population of over 200,000 Palestinians.

Palestinian Mayor Tayseer Abu Sneineh said the city has formed a legal team to challenge the decision in Israeli courts.

Israel captured the West Bank and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war and quickly began settling the newly conquered territory.

Over the past five decades, Israel, citing security needs, has established a military bureaucracy in the West Bank that enforces movement restrictions on Palestinians through a complex permit system. Some 600,000 Israelis now live in settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem.

The US announced a new American doctrine last month that does not consider Israeli settlements a violation of international law. It was the latest in a string of diplomatic gifts by the Trump administration to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.



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Israel closes Palestinian organisations in Jerusalem

[Heavy rain causes floods, paralyzes Lebanon's capital](#)

Author:

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1575906289986986200

Mon, 2019-12-09 15:25

BEIRUT: A rainstorm paralyzed parts of Lebanon's capital Beirut on Monday, turning streets to small rivers, stranding motorists inside their vehicles and damaging homes in some areas.

The flooding came as protesters have been holding nearly two months of

demonstrations against the country's political elite and decades of widespread corruption and mismanagement. Protesters remained in their encampments in Beirut and other cities amid the heavy rain. Despite spending billions of dollars since the 1975-90 civil war on improving infrastructure, Lebanon still suffers hourslong electricity cuts every day, and many people rely on tanker trucks to bring water to their homes. Every year when it rains, roads get flooded with water because of an inadequate sewage system.

The rain began to fall Sunday morning and has affected the entire country, but Beirut and its suburbs were hit the worst. In the southern suburb of Ouzai, cars were nearly submerged in the rising water, leaving motorists stranded. A tunnel that passes under the Rafik Hariri International Airport remained closed for hours because pumps that clear water from inside it didn't work. A man was seen using a surf board to pass through the tunnel, while in other parts of the city some residents used small boats to get around. Outgoing Minister of Public Works and Transpiration Youssef Fenianos blamed the crisis on what he said was 50-year-old infrastructure and population increases in some areas. He added that as a result of Lebanon's recent economic and financial crisis, it was difficult to open lines of credit for infrastructure work.

"I am ready to take full responsibility," the minister said during a news conference.

Fenianos was part of the Cabinet of former Prime Minister Saad Hariri, who resigned Oct. 29 under fire from the anti-government protesters. A stalemate has since ensued over who should head the new government amid a deepening economic crisis, shortage of liquidity and hard currency.





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Lebanon PM widens plea to secure food imports
Job losses and pay cuts as Lebanon's economy crumbles

[2 Turkish soldiers killed, 7 wounded while defusing bomb](#)

Author:

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Mon, 2019-12-09 11:46

ANKARA: At least two Turkish soldiers were killed and seven others were wounded on Monday while attempting to defuse an improvised explosive device, officials said.

The device exploded in a village near the town of Idil, in the mainly-Kurdish

populated Sirnak province, according to a statement from the regional governor's office. It said the explosive device was planted by militants of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK. The statement didn't provide further details but said Turkey's operations to combat the PKK were continuing with "determination." There was no word on the wounded soldiers' conditions. The PKK, which is considered a terror organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union, has been waging an insurgency inside Turkey since 1984. The conflict has killed tens of thousands of people since then. In October, Turkey invaded areas of northeast Syria in a bid to drive Syrian Kurdish fighters away from its border. Turkey says the Syrian Kurdish fighters are linked to the PKK and has been infuriated by Western nations' support to the militia.



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Turkey protesters demand sacking of top police officers Turkey kills Daesh suspect, detains 4 more

Netanyahu pushes annexation plan as new elections loom

Author:

Sun, 2019-12-08 23:57

JERUSALEM: Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday touted his plan to annex a swathe of the occupied West Bank and Israeli settlements in a last-ditch effort to prevent another general election.

"It's time to apply Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and legalize all the Judea and Samaria settlements, those that are in settlement blocs and those outside of them," he said, using the biblical term for the West Bank.

"They will be part of the State of Israel."

US resolution

On Friday, however, the US House of Representatives passed a resolution supporting a Palestinian state and determining that the US should "discourage" steps such as "unilateral annexation of territory."

Around 400,000 Israeli settlers live in the West Bank alongside around 2.6 million Palestinians.

The settlements are viewed as major stumbling blocks to peace as they are built on land the Palestinians see as part of their future state.

Netanyahu has said in the past that the wider moves to annex or "legalize" settlements in the West Bank would be in coordination with US President Donald Trump and his long-awaited peace plan.

Israeli aircraft carried out attacks in the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip early on Sunday, Palestinian security officials said, hours after militants in the enclave launched three rockets at the Jewish state.

The strikes targeted two sites belonging to Al-Qassam Brigades, the Hamas military wing, in northern Gaza, with another series of sorties at a Qassam site west of Gaza City, Hamas officials said.

There were no immediate reports of injuries.

The Israeli army said "fighter jets and attack helicopters struck a number of Hamas terror targets" in Gaza, as well as "a military post belonging to the Hamas naval force in the northern Gaza Strip."

All three projectiles were intercepted by the Iron Dome defense system, the army said, amending an earlier statement according to which two of the three rockets were shot down over southern Israel.

Medics had treated three people in the southern Israeli town of Sderot who

suffered minor injuries while seeking shelter as air raid sirens went off, the Magen David Adom emergency medical service said.

There were no immediate reports of material damage.

On Nov. 29, Israeli warplanes struck Hamas positions in Gaza in response to rocket fire at the Jewish state the previous day.

Netanyahu announced in September, a week before general elections, that he planned to annex the Jordan Valley, which accounts for around a third of the West Bank, if re-elected.

His Sunday remarks, at a conference organized by rightwing newspaper Makor Rishon, came alongside an appeal to rival Benny Gantz to form a unity government and save the time and money involved in elections.

"I have offered to Benny Gantz to join a unity government and today too I'm telling him to join a unity government with me," Netanyahu said. "It's not too late."

The September polls yielded no clear winner, and Wednesday is the last day for a member of parliament to propose a coalition before the country heads to another vote – the third in a year.

"I want American recognition of our sovereignty over the Jordan Valley, it's important," Netanyahu said, noting he recently discussed the issue with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, without presenting a formal plan.

Pompeo last month announced that the US no longer shared the widely held international position that Israeli settlements in the West Bank are illegal.



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Israel strikes in Gaza after rocket attack Israel detains Palestinian journalists for 'illegal activity'

[Lebanese donor hands Nazi artifacts to Israel, warns of anti-Semitism](#)

Author:

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1575824605739419300

Sun, 2019-12-08 15:51

JERUSALEM: wealthy Lebanese-Swiss businessman said Sunday he had bought Adolf Hitler's top hat and other Nazi artifacts to give them to Jewish groups and prevent them falling into the hands of a resurgent far-right.

Abdallah Chatila said he had felt compelled to take the objects off the market because of the rising anti-Semitism, populism and racism he was witnessing in Europe.

He spent about 600,000 euros (\$660,000) for eight objects connected to Hitler, including the collapsible top hat, in a November 20 sale at a Munich auction house, originally planning to burn them all.

But he then decided to give them to the Keren Hayesod association, an Israeli fundraising group, which has resolved to hand them to Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial center.

Chatila told a Jerusalem press conference it had been a "very easy" decision to purchase the items when he saw the "potentially lethal injustice that those artifacts would go to the wrong hands."

"I felt I had no choice but to actually try to help the cause," he added.

"What happened in the last five years in Europe showed us that anti-Semitism, that populism, that racism is going stronger and stronger, and we are here to fight it and show people we're not scared.

"Today – with the fake news, with the media, with the power that people could have with the Internet, with social media – somebody else could use that small window" of time to manipulate the public, he said.

He said he had worried the Nazi-era artifacts could be used by neo-Nazi groups or those seeking to stoke anti-Semitism and racism in Europe.

"That's why I felt I had to do it," he said of his purchase.

The items, still in Munich, are to be eventually delivered to Yad Vashem, where they will be part of a collection of Nazi artifacts crucial to countering Holocaust denial, but not be put on regular display, said Avner Shalev, the institute's director.

Chatila also met with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin and visited Yad Vashem. Chatila was born in Beirut into a family of Christian jewellers and moved to Switzerland at the age of two.

Now among Switzerland's richest 300 people, he supports charities and causes, including many relating to Lebanon and Syrian refugees.

The auction was brought to Chatila's attention by the European Jewish Association, which has sought to sway public opinion against the trade in Nazi memorabilia.

Rabbi Mehachem Margolin, head of the association, said Chatila's surprise act had raised attention to such auctions.

He said it was a powerful statement against racism and xenophobia, especially coming from a non-Jew of Lebanese origin.

Lebanon and Israel remain technically at war and Lebanese people are banned from communication with Israelis.

"There is no question that a message that comes from you is 10 times, or 100 times stronger than a message that comes from us," Margolin told Chatila.

The message was not only about solidarity among people, but also "how one person can make such a huge change," Margolin said.

"There's a place for optimism."





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