

Israel reopens Jerusalem's Noble Sanctuary after deadly shooting

16/07/2017 09:24 by admin

Jerusalem: Israel reopened Jerusalem's Noble Sanctuary-Temple Mount compound on Sunday, drawing a protest by Muslim religious authorities over the installation of metal detectors at entrances two days after a deadly shooting. On Friday, three Arab-Israeli gunmen shot dead two Israeli policemen on the outskirts of the holy site, holy to Muslims and Jews, and were then killed by security forces. It was one of the most serious attacks in the area in years.

The Dome of the Rock Mosque in the Al Aqsa Mosque compound is seen in Jerusalem's Old City Saturday, July 15, 2017. (AP Photo/Mahmoud Illean)

Israeli authorities then closed the compound, citing security concerns, hours before Muslim Friday prayers. That move prompted anger among Muslim worshippers and was condemned by Palestinian religious and political leaders, Jordan and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Two of the nine gates to the site, known to Muslims as Noble Sanctuary and to Jews as Temple Mount, were back in operation in what Israel described as a gradual reopening.

Leaders of the Muslim religious trust that runs the site urged worshippers not to pass through the metal detectors, describing them as a violation of a delicate status quo with Israel and held a prayer service next to the devices. Several Palestinians ignored the call, while at the second entrance more people headed into the compound, Reuters photographers said. Police said 200 people had entered some 90 minutes after the reopening.

FLASHPOINT

The area, in the eastern part of Jerusalem captured by Israel in a 1967 Middle East war, houses the Aqsa Mosque and the golden Dome of the Rock. It is adjacent to the Western Wall, the holiest site where Jews are permitted to pray. The site has proved a tinder-box in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the past. Under the status quo agreement, which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged late on Saturday to continue to uphold, Jews are allowed to enter the compound under close supervision, but only Muslims are permitted to worship there.

Palestinians want East Jerusalem as the capital of a state they seek in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Israel views all of Jerusalem as its capital, a claim that has not won international recognition. In a move promoted by an ultranationalist political party, an Israeli cabinet forum on Sunday approved a bill that would require any territorial handovers in East Jerusalem to be ratified by at least 80 of parliament's 120 members.

Legal analysts noted, however, that if the law is adopted by parliament "where it now goes for a series of votes" it can be overturned in the future by a majority of 61 legislators.

- TIE