

New Diplomatic Tensions Could Spell Trouble for President Trump's Middle-East Peace Initiative

Urgent prayer is needed for Israel, Jordan and the Middle East right now.

The relationship between Jordan and Israel, who have had a strong diplomatic relationship since 1994, is fraying—quickly—and it's now endangering President Donald Trump's efforts to secure a lasting Middle East peace and to root out Islamic terrorism.

Thursday, Jordan's King Abdullah II slammed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's "political showmanship" regarding the controversy over an Israeli security guard who was recently attacked near the Israel's embassy in Amman. The guard, who has only been identified by his first name, Ziv, was stabbed with a screwdriver by 17-year-old Mohammed Jawawdeh, a worker who was at the Israeli embassy compound in Amman to install furniture.

The guard opened fire on his attacker, fatally shooting him. In the process, a Jordanian doctor, who owned the building where the attack took place was hit by a stray bullet and later died of his injuries. The guard then barricaded himself inside the embassy to prevent Jordanian security agents from taking him into custody.

During the standoff, Jordan briefly "detained" 20 Israeli tourists who were visiting Petra. They were in the country to visit the gravesite of Moses' brother, Aaron, who died at Mount Hor in modern-day Jordan. They were reportedly arrested for praying, which is illegal for Jews in that country, but

were soon released.

Nadav Argaman, the head of Shin Bet, Israel's security agency, flew to Amman and negotiated the release of the guard and all of Israel's diplomats, who were safely returned to Israel. Netanyahu and Abdullah had spoken over the phone as well.

But, the king's ire was raised the next day when Netanyahu hosted an event at his office in Jerusalem, where he praised the guard's actions. Jordan has charged the guard with two counts of murder and illegal possession of a firearm. Israel, meanwhile, says it conducted its own investigation, which exonerated the guard.

In an official statement, the king was quoted as saying:

A staff member at the Israeli embassy in Amman has shot two of our sons. We will dedicate all the efforts and resources of the Jordanian state to ensure that justice takes its course.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu must honor his responsibilities and take the necessary legal measures to ensure that the killer is tried and justice is served, rather than exhibiting political showmanship in dealing with this crime to score personal political points."

The likely cause of the attack was Jawawdeh's anger over Israel's installation of metal detectors at the Temple Mount in response to the July 14 terrorist attack there. The Temple Mount is administered by the Jordanian Islamic Waqf, and the presence of the metal detectors had caused a considerable amount of outrage among Jordan's people.

President Trump dispatched Jason Greenblatt, his international negotiations representative, to mediate discussions that ultimately led to the removal of the metal detectors. But, the Palestinian Authority is using the situation to foment further anger against Israel, and called for a "day of rage" event at

the Temple Mount.

That turned into a violent riot Thursday in which Palestinians hurled rocks and other objects at Israeli police. At least 100 Palestinians were injured—mainly by rubber bullets, but also with burns and bruises—when they clashed with police who entered the Temple Mount compound to control the riots.

Maj. Gen. Yoram Halevi, Commander of the Israeli police's Jerusalem District, issued the following statement:

"Police personnel deployed in increased numbers on the Temple Mount, at the gates and entrances to ensure security and order, and will respond harshly to any attempt to breach public order and to harm civilians or police ...

"Do not test us tomorrow, and no one should be surprised if there are injuries on the other side. I call on the leadership of the other side act to calm the atmosphere and again, not to test us tomorrow."

Palestinian leaders, as of this writing, were still calling upon their followers to continue their protests at the Temple Mount.

JNS contributed to this report.