

Ben Gvir Breaches Status Quo, Champions Jewish Prayer on Temple Mount Prompting Quick Rebuttal by Netanyahu

After National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir championed Jewish prayer rights on the Temple Mount in direct contradiction to the existing status quo, the Prime Minister's Office quickly released a rebuttal on Wednesday evening.

"The status quo on the Temple Mount has not changed and will not change," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated.

Ben Gvir's comments came amid celebrations of Jerusalem Day, marking the reunification of the capital in 1967. Since then, the status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem has stipulated that Jews are not allowed to pray on the Temple Mount.

Ahead of the Jerusalem Day Flag March on Wednesday, thousands of Jews had ascended the mount, with some of them praying despite the ban.

"I am also happy that Jews went up to the Temple Mount and prayed there today," said Ben Gvir, who as National Security minister oversees the police.

"It is very important. My policy is very clear on this matter: Jews can be anywhere in Jerusalem, pray anywhere."

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During a radio interview later in the day, he repeated his statements, boasting that, unlike in previous times, Jews didn't whisper their prayers but carried them out openly on Wednesday.

"No one whispered. Jews prayed on the Temple Mount. That's the ministerial position and Jews pray on the Temple Mount and that's a good thing."

Talking to the attendees at the march, Ben Gvir stated that the event was intended to send the message to Hamas that "Jerusalem is ours."

"The Damascus Gate is ours. The Temple Mount is ours. And God willing complete victory is ours," he said.

The status quo on the Temple Mount is seen as one of the most sensitive issues for Israel's security situation, as was demonstrated by the almost instant clarification issued by the prime minister.

In the past, Palestinian terror groups have used incidents on the mount as a pretext for violence. For example, clashes with the police in 2021 were used by Hamas to start firing rockets at Israel during the conflict known in Israel as Operation Guardian of the Walls.

Hamas also dubbed its invasion on October 7 the "al-Aqsa Flood" in reference to the Muslim mosque on the mount.

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On Wednesday morning, some 1,600 Jewish pilgrims ascended the Temple Mount, according to Israeli media.

Some of them openly wore tefillin, also called phylacteries, which are part of Jewish prayer rituals. Others were filmed while prostrating themselves toward the Dome of the Rock, the former place of the Holy of Holies in the former Jewish Temple.

Waleed Alhwashla, Knesset Member for the Islamist Ra'am party, wrote that Ben Gvir was doing "everything he can to set

Jerusalem and the entire country on fire” by calling to “undermine the status quo.”

“Every additional day he spends as a minister responsible for the police and law enforcement is a clear and tangible danger to all of us,” Alhwashla wrote on [Facebook](#) while demanding Netanyahu to fire him.

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