

Christian Pastor Calls Israel to Clamp Down on Church Vandalism

In the latest in a string of vandalism incidents to hit Christian holy sites in Israel this year, Calvary Baptist Church was defaced Monday. "The sign pointing people to the church was defaced with white paint with 'Justice' written on the wall next to the sign," said Pastor Steven Khoury, the head of Calvary Baptist Church.

In September, vandals burned a door of the Trappist Monastery in Latrun and spray-painted anti-Christian graffiti with the words "Jesus is a monkey." Last month, the Church of the Dormition Abbey on Mt. Zion, near Jerusalem's Old City, was defaced with graffiti that included the words "price tag."

According to Khoury, church members are taking precautionary measures to ensure that no further attacks are carried out against the church. Security cameras are being installed and round-the-clock watch groups will patrol near the church building in the interim.

"It is our wish to help law enforcement in east Jerusalem to help capture any culprits who think to further vandalize as has occurred over the last few years to Christian, Muslim and Jewish holy sites," remarked Khoury. Police are currently investigating the matter.

Khoury is calling upon the State of Israel to clamp down on these incidents and have perpetrators who commit these types of acts of vandalism to be prosecuted under Israel's hate crime statutes. Khoury emphasized that it is important that Israel demonstrates that defacing holy sites is a serious offense under the law as well as its democratic values and "one cannot just receive a financial slap on the wrist."