

Police and Jews Clash During 'Pentecost Protests'

A Sunday morning clash erupted between dozens of Israelis, many of them Orthodox Jews, and Christians who the Israelis claimed were proselytizing at the Western Wall.

The Christians were part of the Pentecost 2023 Global Day of Prayer for Jerusalem and the Nations, a movement meant launch a decade of prayer and evangelism that seeks to see "100 million people praying, praising, exalting Jesus over the nations" with a "prayer focus on Jerusalem, Israel and Jewish people worldwide" according to the Pentecost 2023 website.

The event angered Israelis who viewed it as an insult to evangelize outside of the Davidson Center in the Old City portion of Jerusalem, in another example of strained relations between Orthodox Jews and Christianity in Israel.

Recently, ultra-Orthodox leaders in the Knesset, including Moshe Gafni, introduced anti-Christian legislation that said "soliciting someone to convert their faith should be punishable by one year in prison and solicitation to convert a minor would be punishable with a two-year sentence," according to the Associated Press.

"Recently, the attempts of missionary groups, mainly Christians, to solicit conversion of religion have increased," the legislation read, highlighting Christians as the main source for the bill's purpose.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu brought the case to a close when he tweeted, "We will not advance any law against the Christian community." The bill's presence alone highlighted the growing divide between the Orthodox community and evangelical Christians, some of Israel's most ardent supporters.

Several of the protesters told The Jerusalem Post that it was the words on the Pentecost 2023 website that they objected to the most, including calls for their salvation and converting them to Christianity.

One of the deputy mayors of Jerusalem and organizers of the protest, Aryeh King, claimed that the location of the Pentecost 2023 event “has nothing to do with Christianity, but actually with Judaism.

“Missionary terrorism is as dangerous as Islamic terrorism,” King said, adding that he has met “at least three of the participants at today’s demonstration who are Israelis that converted to Christianity.

“Do you think they would have allowed the Jews to hold a prayer service at the entrance to the Vatican? Or in Mecca? This is a provocation,” he adds.

The protesters were condemned by many within Israel, including Israel’s Foreign Affairs Ministry that said it “condemns any violation of freedom of religion and worship in Jerusalem and any violence against religious officials in the city. The State of Israel considers freedom of religion and worship in Jerusalem which is holy to Jews, Christians and Muslims, a central value to the fabric of life in the city.”

One deputy mayor, Fleur Hassan-Nahoum, condemned the words of King and the actions of the protesters, saying it was not the groups intent to “missionize” and that much of the anger from the right-wing protestors was due to “misinformation.”

I condemn the demonstration today against our Christian Zionist friends who come to support our country and our eternal capital #Jerusalem watch my interview below..

– 🇮🇱🇮🇱 🇮🇱🇮🇱 Fleur Hassan-Nahoum (@FleurHassanN) May 28, 2023

“We have to fight constant delegitimization of the State of Israel by the foreign press, and for once we have press which is pro-Israel, from the Christian channels,” Hassan-Nahoum said. These Christians “are trying to show Israel in the best possible light.”

Hassan-Nahoum also tweeted her support for the Christian meeting, writing, “I condemn the demonstration today against our Christian Zionist friends who come to support our country and our eternal capital #Jerusalem...”

The Anti-Defamation League also issued a response to the protests, saying, “the undeniable Jewish connection to the holy city must never justify excluding others from practicing their own beliefs and express their heritage.”

Regardless of the actions of a few dozen protesters, the Word of God is filled with an abundance of Scripture to bless and pray for the peace and protection of Jerusalem and Israel.

Even when there is resistance to doing so.

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