

Israeli City's 'Modesty Squad' Suspected of Violence

Two residents of the ultra-Orthodox city of Beitar Illit were recently arrested on suspicion that they had assaulted, abducted and imprisoned young men and women whom they deemed immodestly dressed. The two had allegedly assumed the role of a vigilante modesty squad in the city.

Beitar Illit Mayor Meir Rubinstein was also questioned in the case, on suspicion of obstruction of justice, fraud and breach of trust. Rubinstein has since been released.

Police recently received information about a possible modesty squad attacking residents in the streets in Beitar Illit, just beyond the Green Line near Jerusalem. Police launched an undercover investigation that revealed that several men in the city were habitually assaulting young men and women they described as "dropout youth," beating them and making threats.

Investigators learned that the modesty squad would ambush these "dropout youth" at bus stops across the city and search for them in the streets. Police investigators suspect that at least in one instance the suspects even abducted a young man whose behavior they deemed immodest. He was allegedly taken to a remote location, imprisoned and beaten by the suspects.

The undercover investigation also revealed that senior city officials were aware of the modesty squad's illegal activities but had turned a blind eye and refrained from taking action against the suspects.

Additional suspects were interrogated in the case and placed under temporary house arrest.

A senior police source said there had also been many complaints in Beitar Illit of a man who verbally assaulted

women from his vehicle over immodest dress. In one instance, the man reportedly got into a physical brawl with another man over insults he directed at the latter's wife.

This is not the first time Israel Hayom has reported on illegal modesty squad activity in Beitar Illit. Over a year ago, the Israel Hayom weekend supplement ran a feature on a cell comprised of Beitar Illit men who targeted "spiritual offenders" and "problem youth"—young men and women who deviated from the city's ultra-Orthodox status quo. The treatment of these young men and women, according to firsthand accounts, included physical and verbal violence and harsh threats.

The cell was supported by an organization called the "communities committee of Beitar Illit" which works in conjunction with Mayor Rubinstein. The municipality even allocated resources to fund the modesty cell's patrols and activities in the city.

The activities included, among other things, preventing the mixing of boys and girls and treating "spiritual offenses" on public transportation: immodest dress, offensive music, and failure to observe strict segregation between men and women (which has been ruled illegal by the High Court of Justice).

In response to the Israel Hayom report, the Beitar Illit municipality issued a statement defending the cell's activities, saying, "In his capacity as a neighborhood activist in the youth department, the head of the cell has done his job very efficiently. The municipality and the residents of the city fully support his work. The members of the cell are operating exclusively within the law and with noteworthy dedication and efficiency."

For the original article, visit [.](#)