

Netanyahu Approves Trial Run for Israeli Lawmakers to Visit Temple Mount

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu approved a week-long “trial run” Sunday, allowing members of Knesset (MKs) to ascend the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. This reverses an October 2015 decision made during a wave of stabbing attacks against Israelis and was intended to prevent Arab riots in response to Jewish visits to the Mount.

Sunday’s decision followed a petition to the High Court of Justice by MK Yehuda Glick, a longtime activist fighting for Jewish prayer rights at the site, to have the decision reversed. On Sunday, Glick called the latest move “correct and praiseworthy” but expressed sorrow that it took a court case to force Netanyahu’s hand.

“We will continue to wish that the Mount will fill its purpose to become a world center for peace and reconciliation,” Glick stated.

Glick also called on MKs to avoid politicizing the Mount. “I call on all MKs to visit the Temple Mount and to give honor to the site in a dignified way. (We must) leave our disagreements and our agenda,” he said in a statement.

Notably, Arab MKs had routinely ignored the ban on Israeli lawmakers.

“Our entry into the al-Aqsa Mosque as Arab MKs and as Muslims was never, and will never be, dependent on a decision of the Israeli government or the Prime Minister of Israel,” said Knesset members representing the Islamic Movement in Israel in a statement. “Al-Aqsa Mosque is our holy space, as Muslims, and we are the only ones who have the right to visit the site

and to pray there.”

“[The Temple Mount] is occupied Palestinian territory. The Israeli government must leave the area. We will continue to exercise our rights to enter and pray at al-Aqsa, without waiting for an OK from the prime minister of Israel,” they added.

Glick, executive director of Haliba, the initiative for Jewish freedom on the Temple Mount, and chairman of the Temple Mount Heritage Foundation, was shot in the chest almost three years ago after delivering a speech at the Menachem Begin Heritage Center in Jerusalem, advocating equal rights for Jews on Judaism’s holiest site. He survived the assassination attempt, albeit after multiple surgeries and weeks of hospital care.

Several months later, in the wake of a traffic accident that killed eight Israeli Bedouin women traveling to the Mount, Glick called for a joint Jewish-Muslim prayer session on the site.

Netanyahu announced at the end of March that he would reconsider the ban after the Islamic holy month of Ramadan and four-day Eid al-Fitr holiday, which ended last week. The trial period will run July 23-28.

The Temple Mount is Judaism’s holiest site and third-holiest to Muslims. {eo}

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