

Women of the Wall Intercessor Threatened

Unknown vandals spray-painted graffiti in an apartment building in the Talpiot neighborhood of Jerusalem Monday, where Women of the Wall member Peggy Cidor resides. The graffiti, reading “Peggy, your time has expired,” “Peggy, we know where you live,” “Torah tag” and “Jerusalem is holy,” were sprayed on the stairway and door leading to Sidor’s apartment.

Her neighbors called the police and the two officers who arrived at the scene found that the vandalism was limited to Cidor’s apartment. An investigation is underway.

The act is likely related to the growing controversy surrounding the Women of Wall’s demand to hold prayer services at the Western Wall while performing religious rituals typically reserved for men under Orthodox Judaism, such as donning tallitot (prayer shawls) and tefillin (phylacteries).

In April, the Jerusalem District Court ruled that the group’s prayer services were not illegal, and that the legal term “custom of the place” – which the group has been repeatedly accused of violating – needed to be interpreted in a more inclusive manner than is currently the practice.

“Two policemen in black uniforms were banging down my door about 10 minutes ago. They wanted to talk to me. The stairway and my door have graffiti all over them. The neighbors called the police,” Cidor wrote on her Facebook page. “The one slogan that was hardest to read was ‘Peggy, your time has expired’ because there is something very personal and harsh about it,” she later said in a statement.

A statement by the Women of the Wall said, “This was most likely the work of bored young men acting on their leaders’

inciting orders. The real issue Israeli society faces is not what they did but rather what the leaders of the haredi public chose to do next.”

“The writing is literally on the wall. We urge the rabbis to speak out, denounce this act and stop the incitement against the Women of the Wall regardless of the legitimate public debate.”

The group stressed that its members only seek to “exercise our right to prayer in the women’s section of the Western Wall, in a manner that coincides with Jewish Halachah. We regret that in a Jewish and democratic country there are those who try to prevent us from doing so with violence and threats.”

Western Wall Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz denounced the vandalism, calling it a “heinous criminal act. This is not the way of the Torah, which preaches only peace.”

“I have warned against this unjustified hatred and against any further escalation and I pray that we can stop this situation from deteriorating further. I hope that we can devise a solution that will see the Western Wall as a source of unity, not strife; and I urge zealots to keep away from this holy place,” he said in a statement.

MK Michal Rozin (Meretz), who frequently participates in the group’s monthly prayer service at the Western Wall Plaza, also denounced the act, calling it “a direct result of the haredi MKs and haredi leaders’ incitement.”

“This act has crossed the line and I demand police action on the matter. I urge the haredi leaders and MKs to issue unequivocal condemnation of this act and to ensure such a thing does not happen again,” Rozin said.

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