

Are Palestinians encouraging an escalation in clashes?

ANALYSIS

• By SETH J. FRANTZMAN

There have been protests in Jerusalem every day since the terrorist attack on Friday next to the Lions' Gate entrance to the Old City. On Sunday and Monday night Muslims gathered near the nearby entrance to the Temple Mount and prayed. They continued a low level protest through midnight. The police, who had been on high alert securing the Old City since Friday's attack, kept violence from breaking out.

On Monday clashes erupted in the Silwan neighborhood and near Lions' Gate where three people were wounded. Palestinian media claimed that Mustafa Barghouti, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council and of the PLO Central Council, was among those hit by rubber bullets.

Each step of the way the demonstrations against security measures in Jerusalem seem to have been choreographed in a campaign led by local Palestinian religious leaders and activists. Those pushing the protests have chosen Lions' Gate as their center of activism because that is where the attack took place. Damascus Gate, where most Muslim worshippers usually enter the Old City for Friday prayers, has not been a center of protest, although that could change.

The fact that the three men who carried out the terrorist attack on Friday were citizens of Israel was unusual and initially pre-

vented the Palestinian political leadership from jumping on the bandwagon to describe them as martyrs or heroes. They weren't members of a Palestinian faction in the West Bank. In fact Palestinian Authority President Mahmud Abbas sought to sooth tensions. But over the weekend when Israel kept the Temple Mount and access to al-Aksa Mosque closed, the religious leaders in Jerusalem, led by the Wafk Islamic trust, began to press the issue. On Sunday police installed metal detectors at the entrances to the Temple Mount.

"People will try entering in every possible way without going through the electronic devices," Barghouti said earlier in the day Monday. His was only one of many statements claiming the metal detectors were "humiliating" and asserting that a campaign of mass public prayer would be held until they were removed. Latching on to the issue of the security is largely an attempt to create a "conspiracy" against al-Aksa where none exists, in order to fan flames and encourage young Muslim men in Jerusalem and the West Bank that they must "defend al-Aksa" or "save al-Aksa." This is a refrain that has been heard before going back to the 1920s and it has always been used to affect to create violence when there are tensions.

Palestinians who visit Jerusalem already pass through security on the way to the Temple Mount. Those who come from the West Bank already pass through metal detectors at

the checkpoints. Jewish worshippers who go to the Kotel go through detectors. Muslims on Hajj to Saudi Arabia pass through security and metal detectors on the way, either at airports or in other modes of travel. So the issue is not really security. The Temple Mount always has Israeli police at its various gates.

The protest is designed to stoke tensions after a tragic terrorist attack on Friday. Instead of lowering the flames and allowing police to investigate the crime scene and open the area again, as happens in every city in the world, and would happen at any holy site where there was a murder, Palestinian local activists, especially centered in Jerusalem, have sought to exploit the terrorist attack in a combustible city and could create a new round of violence.

These kinds of cycles of riot and repression are well known in Jerusalem. They exist throughout the year as low-level weekly protests percolate up in neighborhoods like Silwan or Jebel Mukaber or Isawiya or elsewhere. Over the past 10 years there have been serious riots in Israel's capital and dozens of stabbing attacks. These grow out of smaller events that become symbols around which protests gather.

Former Hamas leader Khalid Mashaal said that the "Israeli occupation exploits the recent developments to Judaize al-Aksa," and his statement was tweeted in English by Hamas. Now youth are rioting in Isawiya and in Abu Dis.



MKS AHMAD TIBI, Jamal Zahalka, Haneen Zoabi, Osama Saadi and Juma'a Azbaraga take part in evening prayers outside the Lions' Gate to Jerusalem's Old City yesterday. (Courtesy)

The problem for Hamas and Fatah and other Palestinian movements is they don't have deep roots in Jerusalem where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians live. Yet voices and local leaders want to use the terrorist attack to create a robust movement, based on religious anger. This attempts to bridge the gap between Arabs in Israel, Jerusalem residents, and the West Bank and Gaza. In essence this is the Greater-Palestinian movement that some activists want to see, and al-Aksa unites it. The symbol of the Dome of the Rock can be found in all these places, even on new mosques in the Negev built to resemble the Jerusalem landmarks.

Video also surfaced online Monday of Palestinian businessman Munib al-Masri visiting Jerusalem and being accosted by Muslim youth as some shouted "Allahu akbar." This

represents a deep challenge to authority and traditional leaders. It is a symbol of the leaderless but dangerous violence that can erupt in Jerusalem. Instead of trying to reduce this rudderless violence, there is an attempt to push it forward over the issue of the metal detectors. Those encouraging it through social media and religious circles hope to get Muslim countries, such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia to pressure Israel. If youth are harmed in violence, those encouraging it emerge as heroes, accompanying young men to hospital or worse.

Looking at this through the dangerous prism of how it has been choreographed and exploited, whether violence increases or does not, teaches an important lesson for the future, for Israel and Palestinian political leaders and for security forces in Jerusalem.

HIKER

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doing so only after Fried got involved and met with Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked.

The Newman family next appealed to Nitzan to reexamine the decision to close the case by the Southern District Attorney's Office, in light of the written testimonies of two former students who were on the hike with Newman.

Some of the evidence in the *Post's* June 1 exposé was new, including testimony from a witness who came forward following a February 26 report by the newspaper.

Based on the new evidence, the Newmans asked Nitzan to reopen the case, arguing there was significant evidence that the tour guide on the hike, Josh Ettinger, pressed Newman into continuing the hike despite his pleas that "I feel like I'm going to die."

According to the case file obtained by the *Post*, neither the police nor the Southern District Attorney's Office ever interviewed either of the two witnesses before closing the case against Ettinger and other Mechinat Yeud officials.

Based on a record in the file obtained by the *Post*, they also closed the case without carrying out a basic step in a police investigation: challenging Ettinger to explain contradictions between his testimony and that of the other witnesses.

Ettinger's explanation, in light of the new testimony, would be key to understanding whether there are grounds to press charges against him or any of Mechinat Yeud's other former employees.

In 2015, Ettinger told police that Newman did not complain to him at all during the hike. On the other hand, the testimonies of the other two witnesses obtained by the *Post* claim that Newman screamed at Ettinger and pleaded with him to let him stop hiking.

Mechinat Yeud, based at Kibbutz Migdal Oz in Gush Etzion, was a program for Modern Orthodox American high-school graduates to spend a "gap year" before college studying traditional Jewish texts in a yeshiva. Unlike many other such programs, it had a significant hiking component.

However, only eight days into his year in Israel, on the second day of a long trek, Newman collapsed in the extreme heat of the Judean Desert and died.

His parents obtained a medical report that cited the cause of death as exertional heat stroke accompanied by dehydration.

A letter to the Newmans sent by the prosecution appeal's unit on Monday and obtained by the *Post* on Tuesday said Nitzan's No. 2, Deputy State Attorney Shlomo Lemberger, had reviewed the case evidence and ordered the police to perform further investigation.

The letter also said that Lemberger expected to review any new evidence from the additional investigative activities and make a final decision by October 1.

Evidence existed even before the *Post* exposé, including a notarized, six-page affidavit signed by one of the other hikers on May 17, 2015. The *Post* has respected the request

for anonymity by the author of the affidavit, as he also submitted it to police.

However, the police did not attempt to interview the affidavit's author prior to the order to reopen the investigation.

According to the affidavit: "Ariel complained of feeling very dehydrated and having symptoms of heat exhaustion, but Josh [Ettinger] said that since he was able to drink and eat while we were having lunch, he was not dehydrated and he would be fine to continue."

The affidavit continued: "The three of us asked if there was any way to get the bus to come back for us... but Josh said that the bus is an hour-and-a-half or so away and it would be inconsiderate to make the driver come and pick us up. Ariel was in the worst condition out of the three of us and could barely stay awake, but Josh said he would be able to continue."

Further, it says, "Josh kept dismissing his pleas for help by saying that 'if he was really dehydrated he wouldn't be able to drink,' to the point where I can remember Ariel basically yelling at Josh that he couldn't go on and that he was dehydrated... Josh kept prodding him to continue and telling him he would be okay... that he knows what heat exhaustion looks like and that Ariel did not have it."

The most striking new evidence was a Facebook post from February 28 and a three-page affidavit from March 5 by another hiker, Ross Abramson.

Following the *Post's* first report on the case, Abramson emailed his affidavit to Newman's parents, pledging to sign it so it could be used as evidence against Ettinger, but he subsequently changed his mind.

In his unsigned affidavit, Abramson wrote that Ariel "exclaimed out loud to Josh [Josh was directly in front of him], 'I feel like I'm going to die.' Josh asked, 'What's wrong?' Ariel said, 'I think I have heat stroke.' Josh responded by saying, 'You don't have heat stroke - I know guys who had heat stroke. You wouldn't be able to function if you had heat stroke.' I remember Ariel saying, 'I don't want to do [it] anymore' (Ariel was referring to hiking). The moment he said that was either when the food car was still present or right after he left," wrote Abramson.

On May 19, 2015, under questioning by police, Ettinger gave his side of the story on what happened at the resting point referred to by Newman's co-hikers as the point where they and Newman pushed hard to stop hiking, passing the point of no return for Newman.

"I checked each of them... to get a feel for each one and to understand if it was hard for any of them or to offer to anyone who could not continue to get into the car. There were no problems or instances in which someone solicited me [to stop and get into the car] or said to me that it was hard for him," Ettinger said, according to a transcript of his testimony.

The police investigator then asked if Ettinger was really saying that none of the hikers complained. Ettinger responded, "No. There was nothing, especially with Ariel who did not look in bad condition or

even when he fell, he did not look hot or red, his face was white."

The *Post* has tried repeatedly to contact Ettinger regarding his prior stories by email, text message and telephone, and through Mechinat Yeud's lawyers.

Ettinger never formally responded, though the *Post* received an email from an unidentified address with a title referring to "The Truth" that was received at the exact deadline time the *Post* had sent Ettinger by text message to respond for this report.

The response, which the *Post* could not confirm came from Ettinger or a surrogate, presented significant detail and documentation attacking the veracity of the affidavit of the anonymous co-hiker student, claiming it was forced on the student by his father as part of a financial dispute with Mechinat Yeud. It did not, however, respond to the allegations made by Abramson in his affidavit.

HUNGARIAN

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unequivocal terms, just as he did now, publicly. I appreciate that."

Not everyone, however, was equally impressed. Yesh Atid head Yair Lapid issued a statement saying that while Orban's words were welcome, "We must be clear - Hungary had a significant role in the Nazi extermination machine and was actively involved in the murder of Jews. In the murder of my family. That only heightens the severity of praising Miklos Horthy."

Lapid said that Israel must not be silent when a European prime minister calls an antisemite an exceptional statesman. "That it is our moral responsibility to the millions who were murdered in the Holocaust," he added.

Netanyahu - who arrived in Budapest on Monday and will take part in a summit with Orban and the leaders of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia on Wednesday - is the first sitting Israeli prime minister to visit Hungary since the fall of Communism in 1989.

Orban acknowledged this and said the purpose of the visit was "to consolidate and to fortify the relationship of the two countries for a long time to come." Hungary, he said, has a lot to learn from Israel, "because Israel teaches the world and us also, that if you don't fight for something you will lose it, because nowadays you have to fight for everything in the modern world."

Orban, whose brand of "illiberal democracy" has strained his country's ties with large parts of the European Union, said in reference to Netanyahu that he was happy to welcome a "dedicated patriot" to Hungary.

"I am convinced that patriotic governments are nowadays the successful governments in the world, and successful countries in the future will be the ones which do not disregard national identity, national interests, [and] instead keep it in the forefront of their action," he said.

Orban, who has taken a very tough approach to migrants, said he told Netanyahu during their discussions, "We respect and acknowledge the right of Israel to self-defense, and this

is something we also believe of ourselves, that we would like our self-defense to be acknowledged by others."

He said Hungary is in a "serious substantial debate" with the EU over the migrant issue "because we do not want to have a mixed population. We do not want to change the ethnic mix in this country by any artificial outside pressure. We would just like to remain the way we are, even if I have to admit that we are not perfect."

Netanyahu noted that Budapest was the birthplace of Zionist visionary Theodor Herzl and thanked Orban for "standing up for Israel in international forums. You've done that time and again. We appreciate this stance, not only because it's standing with Israel, but it's also standing with the truth."

Before their meeting - which included the signing of agreements dealing with cultural exchanges, technology and economic cooperation - Orban greeted Netanyahu and his wife, Sara, with full state honors at the parliament in Budapest. Netanyahu met with President Janos Ader later in the afternoon and in the evening was Orban's guest for dinner.

Netanyahu also met during the day with the Hapoel Beersheba soccer team in town for a Champions League qualification match tomorrow against Budapest Honved.

SUBMARINE

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The postponement of the signing comes shortly after several senior officials and key suspects in the case were detained and placed under house arrest, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's personal lawyer David Shimron, businessman Miki Ganor, former deputy head of the National Security Council Avriel Bar-Yosef, and former Israel Navy commander Eliezer Marom.

A spokesman for the German Defense Ministry told the *Post* "Israel is thinking about acquiring additional submarines that will begin in 2027 replace the three submarines previously obtained. Conversations on many levels took place to explore possible German support, including the modalities of a financial contribution."

The spokesman continued, "The agreement between the Federal Republic of Germany and Israel over financial support for the acquisition of three additional submarines for Israel's navy to replace the first delivery has not been signed.

"Regarding other matters concerning the Federal Security Council and individual cases of armament exports, especially on preliminary questions or press reports from the foreign media, the Defense Ministry will not comment."

Despite the probe, Shimron was allowed to fly to the United States on Saturday after his period of house arrest ended. Shimron is reportedly suspected of illegally pushing the purchase of submarines from German shipyard ThyssenKrupp over the objections of the defense establishment, including then-defense minister Moshe Ya'alon.

Ya'alon has testified against Netanyahu, who is not a suspect in this affair, offering the police details about contacts the premier held with Ger-

man officials regarding the acquisition of three submarines and several other warships, all of which happened without the knowledge of the security establishment.

Ya'alon continues to voice his opposition to the deal, stepping up his attacks by accusing Netanyahu of being corrupt, saying that there was no way that he could not have been involved in the scandal.

On Monday it emerged that Ganor, who brokered the agreement between Israel and ThyssenKrupp, is in the process of striking a deal to become a state's witness in the case.

ThyssenKrupp spokesman Tim Proll-Gerwe, in an email statement to the *Post*, said that the company found no concrete indications of corruption and had "suspended" business relations with Ganor when the allegations against him became known.

"The complete clarification of the allegations in Israel are very important to us. Our company stands for honest business. Compliance is for us a central building block of good company leadership and means more than merely the compliance with provisions and laws. Compliance is a question which affects daily the attitude of every worker of ThyssenKrupp."

Proll-Gerwe added that the company is closely observing the controversy in Israel and that while the internal investigation has temporarily finished, it has offered its cooperation to both the Israeli and the German authorities, adding that the company was limited by not being allowed to conduct its own investigation in Israel, as that "could be interpreted as criminal obstruction of justice."

Questions over the 2014 submarine deal surfaced in November, when Channel 10 reported that Shimron worked for the Israeli representative of ThyssenKrupp.

Israel currently has three Dolphin-class submarines and two Dolphin 2-class submarines (another one is expected to be delivered in 2018). The three additional Dolphin 2-class submarines under order, which would not reach Israel for another decade, are set to replace the older Dolphins.

Herb Keinson and Daniel Eisenbud contributed to this report.

OREN

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the deal begrudgingly after arguing with his top national security team for nearly an hour, Oren said Trump was "clearly not ripping up the deal any time soon."

During the election campaign, Trump called the JCPOA the "worst deal ever," and vowed to tear it up.

While Oren praised the US decision on Monday to slap additional sanctions on some Iranian entities and individuals for support of terrorism and for developing ballistic missiles, he said Israel should enter into discussions with Washington regarding the sunset clauses in the deal.

These clauses sets expiration dates on the restrictions on Iran's nuclear program if it abides by the deal.

Under one such clause, Iran will be able to increase its centrifuges beyond its current limit of 6,000 in 10 years' time, and in 15 years it will be able to increase its stockpile of

low-enriched uranium beyond its 300-kilogram cap.

If Iran abides by the deal, Oren said the restrictions will be lifted and "you will have a situation where Iran is going to remain the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism; is complicit in the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Syrians; is going to try to build bases and ports in Syria, and missile laboratories in Beirut; is attacking in Iraq and Yemen; and is publicly committed to destroying the one and only Jewish state. But that country is going to have all the restrictions lifted from its nuclear program."

In addition, Oren said, all of Iran's nuclear infrastructure remains intact. "Some of it is detached, some unplugged, some mothballed, but it is all there," he said, adding that Israel should be working with the US "to ensure that the sun never sets on the sunset clause, until there is a different Iranian regime."

Oren said he has discussed this situation with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"We are already two years into the agreement," Oren said, adding that the time before the sunset clause kicks in is not that long. He said one remark Netanyahu once said about the deal resonates very true: "Ten years is a young man's idea of a long time."

For the Iranian regime, Oren said, a decade is no time at all, "because they are very much in control. There is nothing shaking this regime," he said, noting that there has not been a single protest against the regime since June 2009 and the green revolution that the government crushed with an iron fist.

EXODUS

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After independence, the US was the first country to recognize the State of Israel, said Snowden, "and we've been proud to stand with Israel ever since." He was hopeful that the memorial would instruct and inspire future generations and make them aware of "the contributions Americans made and continue to make to the State of Israel."

Jewish Agency Chairman Natan Sharansky said that at the end of the 1960s, Russian Jews began to explore their heritage, studying in clandestine groups from books provided by Jewish tourists and sympathetic diplomats. As liaison between Russian Jewry and the Diaspora, Sharansky sent a note to a contact in New York asking for 100 paperback copies of *Exodus*. The books were read by families who passed them on after everyone in each family finished reading. "We had just begun to relate to the Bible, but we instinctively identified with *Exodus*."

Throughout the years, he said, the Jewish Agency, which had been involved in illegal immigration during the British Mandate era, has brought 3.5 million Jews to Israel and it continues to bring more.

Klinger first came to Israel nearly 50 years ago as a lone soldier without close family in the country to help him and has been back many times since. When he learned there were *Exodus* memorials in other countries but not in Israel, he decided to do something about it, even if it meant paying for it himself.