

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

ATTACKS ON CHRISTIANS IN ISRAEL AND EAST JERUSALEM



ROSSING CENTER
FOR EDUCATION AND DIALOGUE

מרכז רוסינג
לחינוך ולדיאלוג
מركز روسينج
للتربية وللحوار

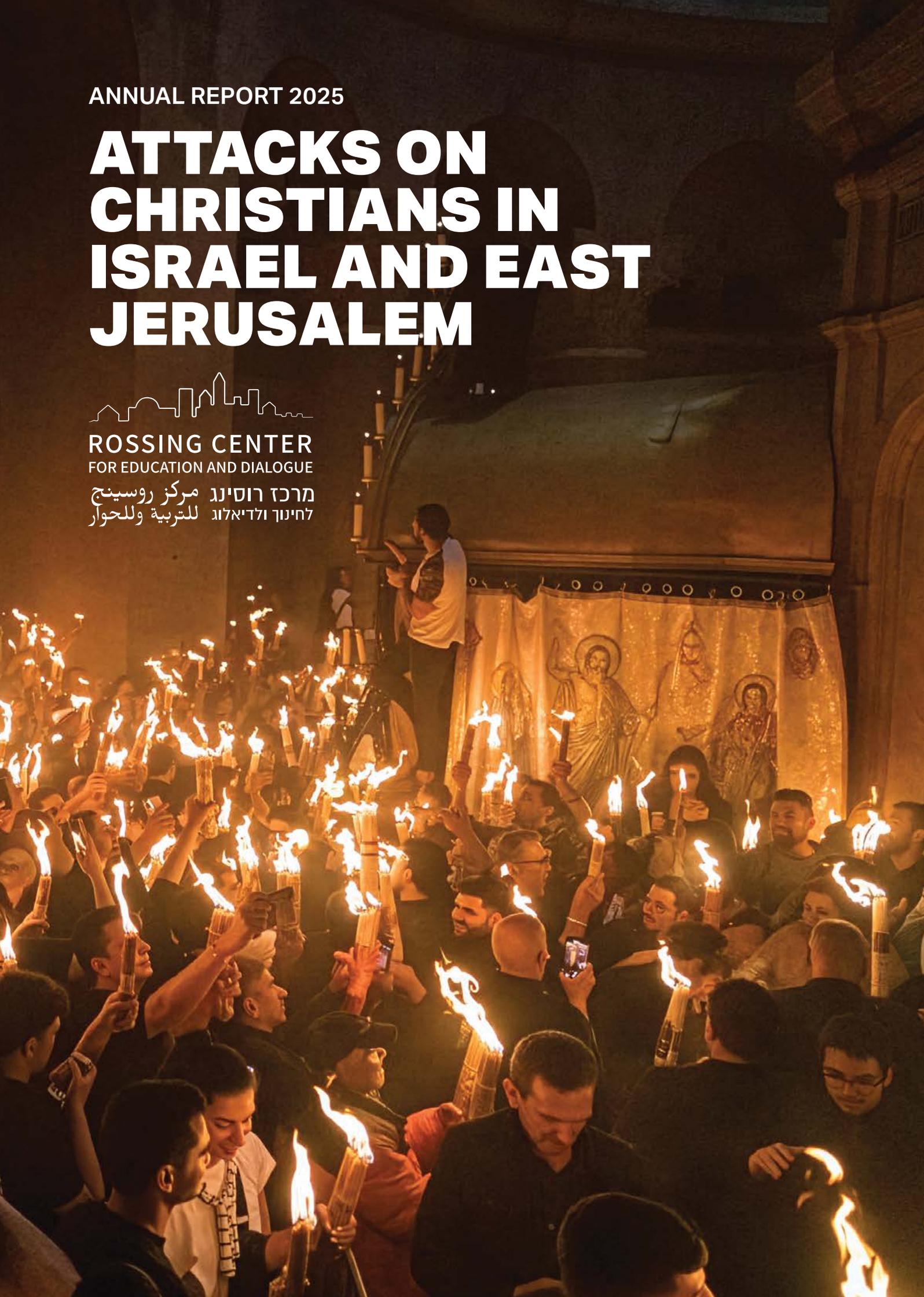


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Celebrations of the Descent of the Holy Fire in the Christian Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem in April 2025. | Credit: Shutterstock

About the Rossing Center for Education and Dialogue

The *Rossing Center for Education and Dialogue* is a Jerusalem-based interreligious, peacebuilding organization, and our mission is to build the desire and capacity of Israelis and Palestinians to create truly shared societies for all groups. We believe that understanding, justice and equality will enable Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace, and we envision societies which embrace religious, ethnic and national diversity as an asset rather than a threat.

We launched our *Advocacy and Education Initiative* to address the escalating harassment Christian communities have faced for many years, in Jerusalem and other areas of the country. The Initiative is part of our program focusing on Jewish-Christian relations, which seeks to enhance understanding of Christianity and its unique status in the Holy Land, among local and international audiences. It also aims to foster better Jewish-Christian relations within this distinctive context. The *Advocacy and Education Initiative* is designed to provide local and international stakeholders with reliable information about the abuses suffered by Christians in order to help reduce the phenomenon. It comprises a data gathering process to document attacks, and annual reports which analyze the data in light of the socio-political context and serve as advocacy tools. For now, the active monitoring of our *Initiative* is mainly focusing on attacks within Jerusalem, but we aim to extend our coverage to a wider territory in the coming years. Finally, data from our monitoring processes will be integrated into our educational curricula and resources to ensure that our programs accurately reflect the current situation.



Back of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre | Photo: John Munayer

Executive Summary

This report offers an in-depth analysis of harassment and violence directed at Christian communities in Israel and East Jerusalem during 2025. Building on the trends documented in 2024, it records a continued and expanding pattern of intimidation and aggression—most visibly against clergy and church properties—while situating these incidents within the wider regional and socio-political upheaval that shaped daily life across Israel and Palestine. In a year marked by ongoing war, escalating regional confrontation, and deepening political polarization, the report highlights how Christians are increasingly affected not only as a religious minority but, in the case of Palestinians, also because of their national identity. The report further examines the dynamics driving these developments and outlines the implications for the long-term sustainability of Christian presence in the Holy Land.

Out of 155 documented incidents in 2025, physical attacks remained the most prevalent category, with 61 recorded cases, followed closely by attacks on church properties (52 cases). The remaining incidents consisted of harassment (28 cases) and the defacement of public signs with Christian content (14 cases). While these figures represent only the “tip of the iceberg,” they nevertheless reflect a persistent and worrying pattern in which both overt violence and everyday humiliations accumulate into a broader atmosphere of exclusion.

As in 2024, the majority of physical attacks targeted clergy—monks, nuns, friars, and priests—who are easily identifiable in public due to distinctive garments and visible Christian symbols. Spitting continued to be the most common expression of hostility, and what was once often carried out covertly is now frequently performed openly, in

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broad daylight, sometimes in front of crowds and even police officers. Clergy in areas such as Mount Zion and the Armenian Quarter report that harassment has become so routine that stepping outside can carry an almost certain risk of abuse.

A significant shift from 2024 is the **rise in verbal harassment, which increased from 13 recorded cases in 2024 to 28 known cases in 2025.** These incidents ranged from degrading anti-Christian slurs to disruptions of religious processions and confrontations with tour guides explaining the Christian history of holy sites. Such episodes—often spontaneous, difficult to document, and rarely prosecuted—reinforce among Christians the perception that they are viewed not as an integral part of the land’s social fabric, but as outsiders and, at times, unwanted guests. This delegitimizing message is especially destabilizing for local Christians, for whom Jerusalem and the Holy Land are not merely sites of pilgrimage but a homeland rooted in centuries of continuous community life.

The 59 cases of attacks on church properties included graffiti, trespassing, vandalism of religious

statues, stone-throwing, garbage dumping, and arson, as well as spitting directed at churches and holy places. The continued recurrence of these incidents—many of them low-level but symbolically charged—feeds a sense of vulnerability around sacred spaces and reinforces concern over the erosion of respect for Christian religious life in the public sphere. In parallel, 18 recorded incidents of defacement of public signs reflect a broader effort to erase or diminish Christian visibility, particularly in contested urban environments where symbolic control of space is deeply politicized.

In line with the “Squeeze and Smash” framework adopted in the report, the more severe incidents of violence and property damage represent “smash” events—high-impact attacks that can draw public attention and sometimes prompt a formal response. Yet the report emphasizes that the deeper long-term danger often lies in the “squeeze” events: spitting, insults, intimidation, minor vandalism, and obstruction. Individually, these acts are easily dismissed, particularly in a region accustomed to daily violence and insecurity. Collectively, however, they are humiliating and exhausting, producing a climate in which Christians feel increasingly unwelcome, pressured to conceal their identity, and uncertain about the future of their communities.

The socio-political developments of 2025 help explain why these trends persist and, in key areas, intensified. The year was dominated by multi-front conflict and instability, including the June escalation linked to the Israel–Iran war and ongoing volatility in Gaza even after a ceasefire agreement began implementation in October. These events compounded public anxiety, accelerated economic decline—especially in tourism—and contributed to the hardening of identities and social boundaries.

Within Israel, the report identifies a continued deepening of polarization and ultra-nationalist political trends, reflected in renewed efforts to reshape key institutions and embed religious-nationalist narratives more firmly in public life. In such an environment, minority communities are more exposed to scapegoating, exclusionary rhetoric, and permissive social norms around harassment.

To better understand the social attitudes underpinning attacks against Christians, **in September 2025 the Rossing Center conducted a survey examining perceptions of Christianity and Christians among the Jewish Israeli population.**

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Survey data will be presented in a separate report, but findings referenced in this report further illuminate the broader dynamics emerging from religious-nationalist narrative, indicating that younger Jewish respondents and those with higher levels of religiosity are more likely to express intolerant positions toward Christianity and Christians. Attitudes toward Jerusalem's importance in the Christian world, the legitimacy of foreign clergy residing in Israel, and the severity of spitting as an offense all reveal significant gaps between secular and ultra-Orthodox respondents—and suggest that the harassment observed on the ground is not only a matter of isolated acts, but also reflects deeper ideological patterns, particularly among segments of youth.

At the same time, the report is careful not to generalize across Jewish Orthodox society. The majority of people do not engage in these actions, and police and officials have condemned harassment. Yet persistent concerns remain regarding accountability, including high rates of investigations closed without clear outcomes, and the widespread belief among Christians—especially foreign clergy—that reporting incidents is futile or could jeopardize visas and legal status. This combination of normalized hostility and limited consequences creates an enabling environment in which perpetrators face minimal deterrence.

Beyond harassment itself, the report situates Christian vulnerability within a broader pattern of systemic pressure on community life. Churches continue to face concerns over visa policies for clergy, disputes over the fiscal status of church properties (regarding the municipal tax called *Arnona*), and initiatives affecting church-owned land around the Old City. In addition, growing restrictions on major religious gatherings—particularly during Holy Week and the Holy Fire ceremony—have become a central point of tension. While framed as security measures, these restrictions are widely experienced by local Christians as disproportionate and exclusionary, limiting freedom of movement and participation in foundational communal rituals. Incidents of excessive force and

Taken together, the 2025 findings point to a concerning trajectory: harassment and violence against Christians are continuing within a socio-political climate that is increasingly intolerant of diversity and more assertive in exclusivist national-religious claims.

lack of transparent coordination deepen mistrust and reinforce perceptions of unequal treatment.

For Palestinian Christians, these pressures intersect with the broader realities facing Palestinians across the region. Within Israel, record levels of crime and violence in Arab communities—experienced as a crisis of insecurity and state neglect—impact Christian communities as part of the wider Palestinian public. In the West Bank, rising settler violence, movement restrictions, land confiscations, and intimidation have directly affected Christian towns and livelihoods. Christians are not necessarily targeted primarily for their religious identity in these contexts, but their national identity as Palestinians exposes them to the same structural and physical threats—intensifying emigration pressures and undermining community continuity. Gaza's Christian community, already extremely small, remains under existential strain amid prolonged devastation and uncertainty, a reality that reverberates across Christian networks in Israel and Jerusalem through close familial and communal ties.



Church of the Holy Sepulchre during the Eastern Easter ceremony known as "Holy Fire". Photo: Cole Martin

Taken together, the 2025 findings point to a concerning trajectory: harassment and violence against Christians are continuing within a socio-political climate that is increasingly intolerant of diversity and more assertive in exclusivist national-religious claims. The report underscores that the challenge is not solely the number of incidents, but the cumulative message they convey—that Christian presence is contested, conditional, and vulnerable to erosion. In a land where Christian communities have maintained a continuous presence for two millennia, these developments raise urgent questions about sustainability, equal belonging, and the resilience of pluralism. Without consistent accountability for offenders, meaningful engagement with Christian community leadership, and renewed commitment to protecting minority rights and the Status Quo, the long-term presence of Christians in the Holy Land risks further weakening in the years ahead.

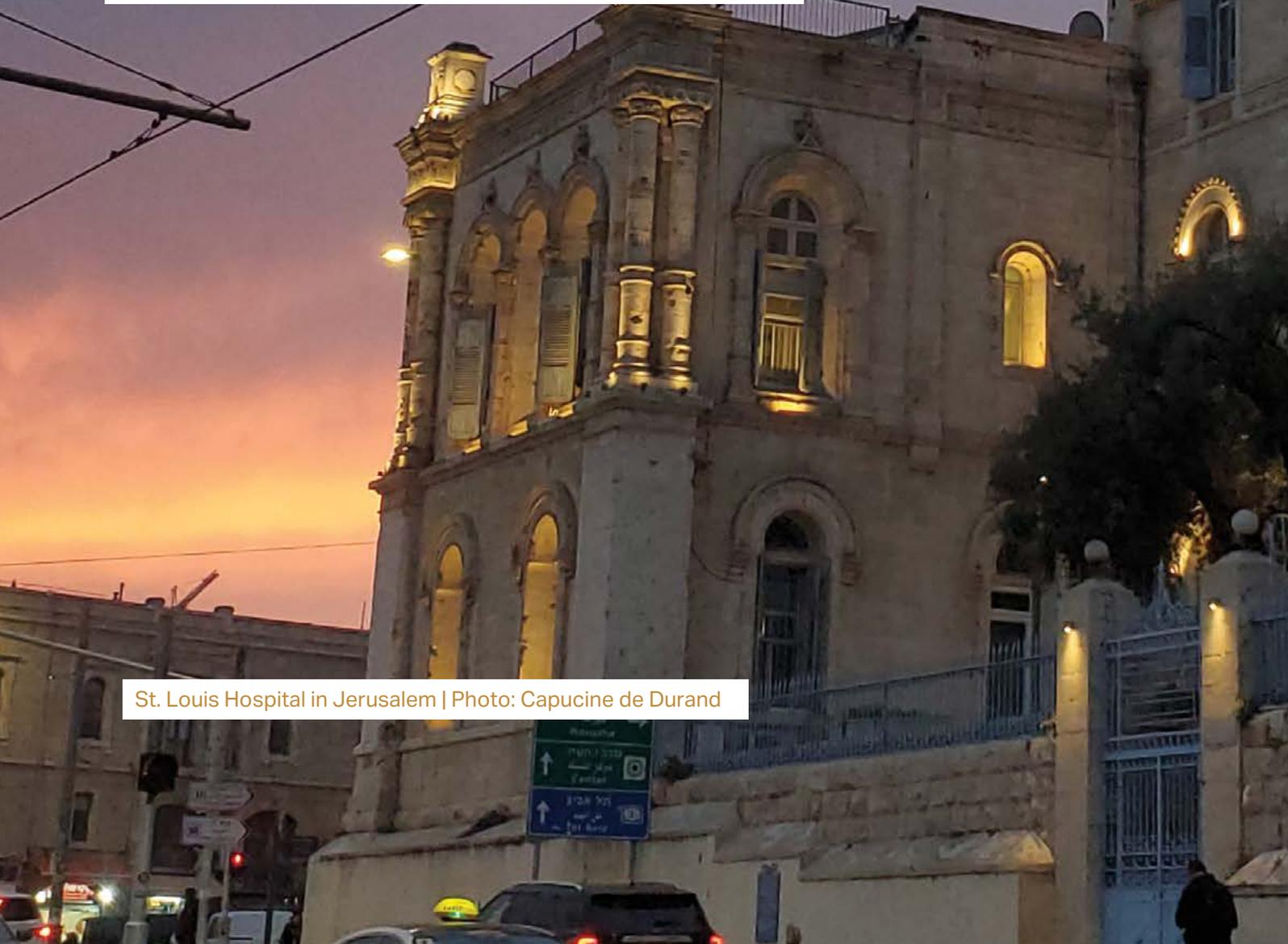
This Report Aims to be a Basis for:

- Building data-based, contextualized knowledge about the challenges faced by Christians in the Holy Land in general, and in Jerusalem in particular.
- Supporting policy advocacy efforts to foster the physical and perceived security of Christian communities.
- Creating and promoting new educational resources to expand the literacy about lived Christianity in the Holy Land among the Israeli Jewish population and relevant stakeholders (local authorities, media, local educational institutions, etc).
- Promoting justice in Christian-Jewish relations. We will strive to do so by increasing awareness about intolerance towards Christians among the wide majority of Israelis who ignore the extent of harassment suffered by Christians.

Terminology and Key Findings

This report is based upon the concept of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The two key principles of FoRB are: freedom to have or not to have (including the right to change) a religion or belief; and the freedom to manifest it individually or collectively, in public or private, "in teaching, practice, worship and observance." Our monitoring efforts gather and analyze incidents of harassment towards Christian communities, including violations of FoRB based on this understanding of freedom of religion. This may comprise abuses committed by state or non-state actors limiting individual and collective exercise of this freedom.

St. Louis Hospital in Jerusalem | Photo: Capucine de Durand



Overview

61

Physical attacks

Examples include spitting, pepper spraying, hitting

52

Attacks on Church properties

Examples include graffiti, trespassing, damaging statues, throwing of stones and garbage within Church properties, arson. *Including spitting at churches

28

Harassment

Examples include verbal harassment, attacks and protests during Christian gatherings, anti-Christian propaganda.

14

Defacement of public signs

Total cases:

155

Socio-Political Context

Statistics

According to statistics released in December 2025 by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, as of December 31, 2025, the population of Israel is estimated at 10.178 million residents. Of this population, 7.771 million (76.3%) are Jewish, 2.147 million (21.1%) are Arab, and 0.260 million (2.6%) are classified as others, including foreign residents.¹ Christians living in Israel are 184,200 (approx. 1.9% of the Israeli population), and 78.8% of Christians present in Israel are Arab, constituting 6.9% of the total Arab population of Israel.² According to data released in December 2025, the Christian population grew by 0.7% in the last year.

As for Jerusalem, the most recent data published by the Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research reports that in 2022, "Jerusalem was home to 597,000 Jews making up 61% of the city's population. The Arab population in Jerusalem numbered 384,700 residents – 371,400 Muslim Arabs and 13,000 Christian Arabs (96% and 4% respectively) – constituting 39% of the city's population".³ Furthermore, data released by the Central Bureau of Statistics to mark Jerusalem Day in 2024 reported that at the end of 2023, 39.5%

were Arabs. About 29.2% of all the city's residents were ultra-Orthodox Jews, about half of the Jewish population in the city.⁴

Legal Framework

Israel has no formal constitution, but the Declaration of Independence is the fundamental document defining the character of the State. According to it, Israel "will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations".⁵ Due to the lack of a Constitution, legal principles are enshrined in a series of Basic Laws. For example, the 1992 "Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty" addresses the protection of human rights⁶ and describes the state as Jewish and democratic.

However, the "Basic Law: Israel - The Nation State of the Jewish People", approved in 2018, declares that "the Land of Israel is the historical homeland of the Jewish people; the State of Israel is the nation

1 Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, "Population of Israel on the eve of 2026", https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/mediarelease/DocLib/2025/422/01_25_422b.pdf

2 Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, "Christmas 2024 - Christians in Israel", https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/mediarelease/DocLib/2025/413/11_25_413e.pdf

3 Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research, Report on Trends and Changes in Jerusalem, 2024 <https://jerusalemstitute.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024%D7%A2%D7%9C-%D7%A0%D7%AA%D7%95%D7%A0%D7%99%D7%99%D7%9A%D7%A2%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%AA-%D7%A2%D7%95%D7%AA%D7%A7-%D7%93%D7%99%D7%92%D7%99%D7%98%D7%9C%D7%99.pdf>

4 Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, "Selected Data on the Occasion of Jerusalem Day, 2024", https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/mediarelease/DocLib/2024/165/11_24_165e.pdf

5 Declaration of Independence, <https://main.knesset.gov.il/en/about/pages/declaration.aspx>

6 Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty <https://m.knesset.gov.il/EN/activity/documents/BasicLawsPDF/BasicLawLiberty.pdf>



Easter Vigil 2025, Catholic procession towards the Church of the Holy Sepulchre | Photo: Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

state of the Jewish People, in which it realizes its natural, cultural, religious and historical right to self-determination; and exercising the right to national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish People.”⁷ The law was criticized by legal experts and civil society organizations dedicated to safeguarding the rights of minorities, including the Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries, which called the attention to the tension that exists in the wording of the declaration about the State being both ‘Jewish’ and ‘democratic’⁸ and to the fact that although the 2018 Basic Law changes very little in practice, it does provide a constitutional and legal basis for

discrimination between Israel’s citizens, clearly laying out the principles according to which Jewish citizens are to be privileged over and above other citizens.⁹

Israeli state institutions are generally secular, however, a distinct separation between Religion and State is lacking, impacting personal status in significant life domains such as marriage, divorce, and death. The administration of these matters is entrusted to leaders of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths, who preside over religious courts operating in accordance with the respective religious laws—halakhah, sharia, and canon

7 Basic Law: Israel - The Nation State of the Jewish People <https://main.knesset.gov.il/EN/activity/documents/BasicLawsPDF/BasicLawNationState.pdf>

8 Statement of the Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land on the Nation State Law <https://www.medialpj.org/posts/assembly-of-catholic-ordinaries-calls-on-israel-to-rescind-its-nation-state-law-5e470fb-f59a6f.html>

9 Ibid.

law. The law officially recognizes only Judaism, Christianity, Islam, the Baha'i faith and the Druze religion. Religious communities belonging to these main traditions are exempt from taxation on their places of worship, but municipalities may impose property taxes on religious properties that are not used for worship purposes (such as schools, pilgrim hostels, hospitals).

Lastly, in regard to missionary activity, it is often wrongly believed that the practice is outlawed in Israel, while the only restrictions declare that it is illegal to proselytize to a person younger than 18 without the consent of both parents, and to offer a material benefit to potential converts while proselytizing.¹⁰

Socio-Political Developments

The year 2025 in Israel and Palestine was once again marked by the war, multiple fronts of violence, and heightened instability. The fate of the Christian communities living in Israel and East Jerusalem has been directly affected by the ongoing, multi-front and multi-year conflicts and their very concrete consequences on daily life, especially for those residing in areas impacted by aerial confrontations and rocket launches. In June, the region experienced a sharp escalation during the 12-day Israel–Iran war (13–24 June 2025), marked by Israeli and US attacks on Iran through airstrikes, and Iranian retaliation through missile and drone fire toward Israel. This resulted in extensive disruption to daily life and heightened public anxiety amid repeated air-raid alerts, while also dealing a further blow to tourism in the region and adding pressure to an economy already severely strained by prolonged conflict.

The polarization and ultra-nationalist political trends that have shaped the socio-political

Ethiopian worshippers ascend the stairs to reach the Golgotha section of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre | Photo: Adi Marer



landscape for years—and that intensified further in the aftermath of the October 7 attack—continue to deepen. This is reflected in renewed efforts to alter the judicial system, as well as in a rapid succession of proposed legal provisions aimed at embedding religious-nationalist values and narratives more firmly within Israeli institutions and the public sphere.

Later in the year a ceasefire agreement began implementation in October 2025, tied to phased exchanges and humanitarian measures. The deal involved the release of around 2,000 Palestinian prisoners, and by early 2026 the final recovery of the last Israeli hostage's remains. The return of all the hostages brought a sense of closure to two years of anguish for families and for the broader Israeli society, yet the ceasefire has not yet translated into a pathway to peace or even lasting security for civilians in Gaza. According to reports, in the four months following the ceasefire, more

10 International Court of Jurists - Israel Penal Law, Art. 174a, 174b, 368a, 368b.
<https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Israel-Penal-Law-5737-1977-eng.pdf>

Among the trends that persisted in 2025 is also the violence that afflicts Arab communities living in Israel. This reached the highest number on record in 2025, with 252 Palestinians citizens of Israel murdered in crime-related incidents¹²

than 520 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli airstrikes or gunfire in Gaza,¹¹ and in general, life in the coastal enclave continues to be marked by extreme volatility. The entry of essential aid—such as medicine, fuel, tents, and other basic supplies—continues to be restricted by Israeli authorities. As a result, although these items are entering the Strip, the quantities remain insufficient to meet the population's needs. Meanwhile, despite the formal agreement, Gaza's future administrative and political status remains unclear.

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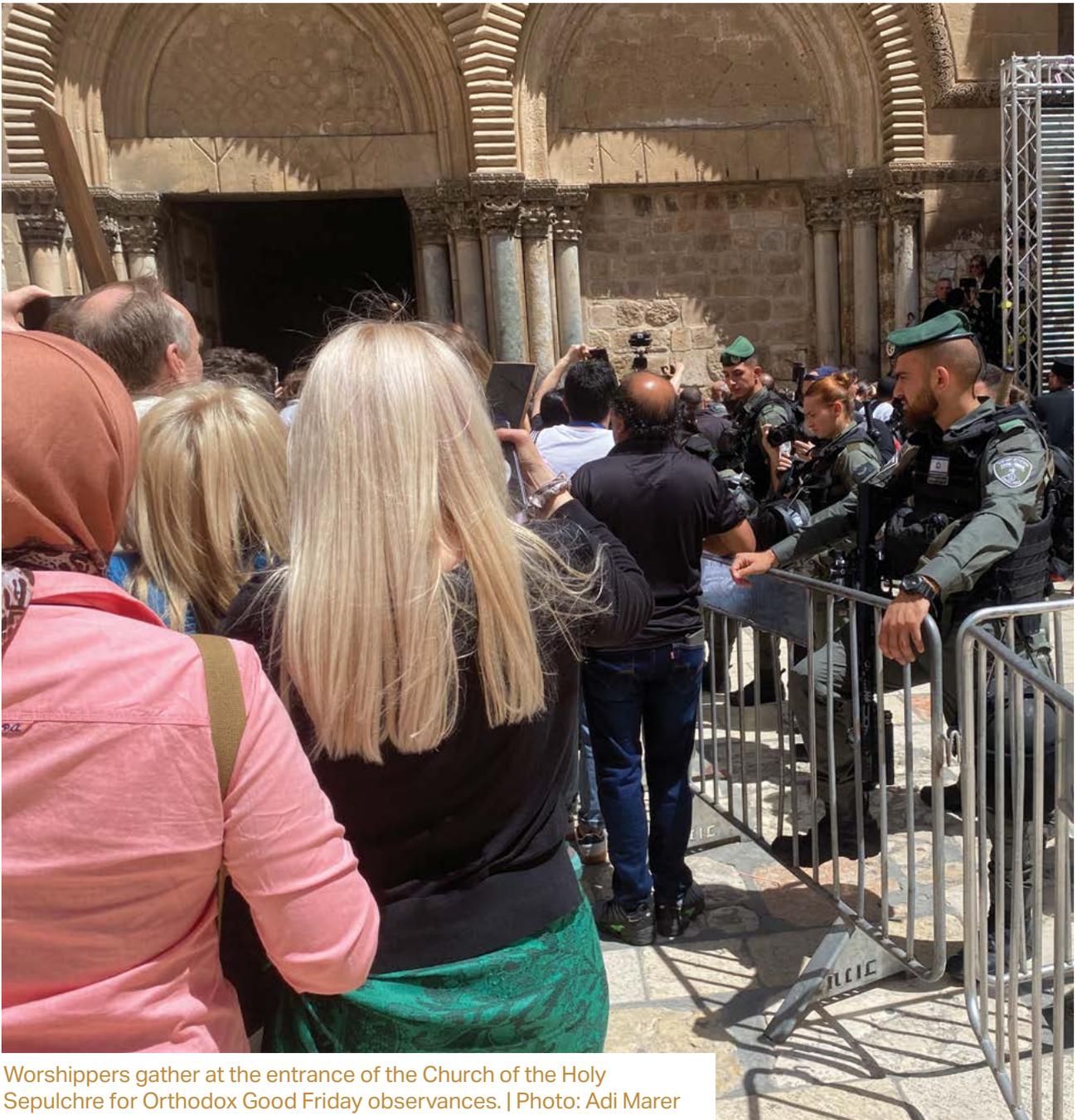
Israel murdered in crime-related incidents¹². These killings are largely linked to organized crime imposing protection rackets and inter-family feuds, and the consequences of this violence are experienced also by Arab Christian populations as part of a broader pattern of insecurity and limited state action. Organizations such as the Abraham Initiatives, which are monitoring this issue, highlight that severe crime impacts all aspects of life in Arab society and the heavy price is paid by entire communities irrespective of age or involvement with criminal feuds. More than 70 percent of the victims are between the ages of 18 and 40, many of them under 30,¹³ residents of urban centers, small and big, live in constant fear, with some even resolving to leave their homes and relocate to Jewish areas. Lastly, although this report does not cover the situation of Christians in Gaza and the West Bank, it is not possible to disentangle the challenges facing Palestinians across these areas from those facing Palestinian citizens of Israel, who are deeply affected even if they are not targeted specifically for their religious identity. The West Bank continues to experience sharp increases in settler violence, with official data indicating a 25% rise in settler attacks against Palestinians in 2025. In 2025, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), has documented over 1,800 settler attacks that resulted in casualties or property damage across the West Bank, an average of an incident per day.¹⁴ These attacks include property damage, physical assaults, and

11 Le Monde, "Gaza: Israeli strikes cause near-daily deaths despite ceasefire", https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2026/02/02/gaza-israeli-strikes-cause-near-daily-deaths-despite-cease-fire_6750046_4.html

12 Times of Israel, "Arab society marks deadliest year on record, with 252 murder victims in 2025", <https://www.timesofisrael.com/arab-society-marks-deadliest-year-on-record-with-252-murder-victims-in-2025/>

13 Times of Israel - Amnon Be'eri-Sulitzeanu's blog, "Ben Gvir is fighting Arab citizens instead of fighting crime", <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/fighting-israels-arab-citizens-instead-of-fighting-crime/>

14 OCHA, Humanitarian Situation Update #352 West Bank, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-352-west-bank>.



Worshippers gather at the entrance of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for Orthodox Good Friday observances. | Photo: Adi Marer

the denial of Palestinians' ability to access and tend to their land. In the context of military operations, they have also resulted in the forced displacement of thousands of people. Meanwhile, Christians in Gaza, like the broader population of the Strip, have endured extreme hardship for more than two years amid intense military attacks. As one of the smallest religious minorities in the region, Gaza's Christian community faces not only the immediate

devastation of war—including attacks on churches, homes, hospitals, and educational institutions—but also profound uncertainty regarding its future and the possible erosion of its historic presence. This broader regional reality is particularly significant given the close familial, communal, and religious ties connecting Christian communities in Israel and East Jerusalem with their relatives and fellow Christians in Gaza.



Analysis

Introduction

In a context as deeply marked by violence and anxiety as that of Israel and Palestine, acts such as spitting at Christians or verbal harassment may seem minor compared to the broader realities of conflict. Yet these behaviors contribute to an atmosphere in which local Christians are made to feel unwanted in their own homeland, and Christian visitors and pilgrims are made to feel like unwanted guests. Over time, such dynamics foster uncertainty regarding the long-term Christian presence in the region. At the *Rossing Center*, we believe that, despite the gravity of the wider socio-political situation, these issues must not be overlooked. The dynamics and relationships between religious communities here continue to shape global politics and international relations, and what occurs in Jerusalem—and in the Holy Land more broadly—resonates far

beyond its borders. Taking a clear and principled stance on interreligious relations in this context can therefore serve as an important model for other complex, conflict-affected societies around the world. In line with this commitment, we have continued over the past year to monitor incidents of harassment against Christians in their various forms.

Trends

We find it important to start our analysis emphasizing that the recorded incidents represent only a fraction of the actual occurrences, serving as the "tip of the iceberg" of daily realities on the ground. To better illustrate the effect of the ongoing harassment on the communities, we have adopted the definitions of "Squeeze and Smash" events¹⁵. Violent attacks which include physical violence or serious property damage fall under the "smash"

15 We would like to credit the Dutch organization "Care 4 You" for introducing us to this terminology.

category. These attacks often draw public attention and prompt a response, albeit sometimes limited, from the police and relevant authorities. Despite their destructive nature, such incidents can also foster a sense of solidarity within the affected community as they unite to confront and address the challenges posed. But in many ways the greater danger is represented by the “squeeze” events, the small things that tend to be dismissed. Events that don't feel too serious and in general involve no physical harm: spitting, cursing, minor graffiti on a Christian's house, or even graffiti calling for death to Christians on the wall of a monastery, a street sign with Christian content that is defaced, or someone preventing you from passing or entering a religious site. The effect of these events accumulates, they are humiliating, exhausting, and make Christians feel threatened and unwelcome in their own home. Furthermore, it creates a norm which, once accepted, makes it easier to disregard and downplay further encroachments on freedom of religion.

Data collected throughout the year regarding harassment shows that over the 155 known attacks, the wide majority fall under the category of physical attacks (which include spitting, hitting or pepper spraying), followed by attacks against Church property (including spitting at holy places) and verbal harassment.

During the reporting period, 61 physical attacks were reported, which mainly targeted clergy: monks, nuns, friars and priests from the diverse religious orders present in Jerusalem and Israel, who are easily identifiable as Christians due to their distinctive garments often featuring a visible cross. As was the case during the previous year, in virtually every interaction we had with clergy we were told that episodes of spitting take place on a regular basis. Even though spitting has been a known aspect of religious life in Jerusalem for decades, in recent years it has transformed from a covert act to perpetrators openly spitting at clergy, holy places, and even pilgrims, in broad daylight, before crowds and in the presence of

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security cameras. But in the last two years we have started hearing something else. According to Christian clergy, incidents of spitting and verbal harassment have escalated even further, and in particular, clergy members report an increase in the aggressiveness of such encounters. According to the testimonies we collected during our conversations, priests and nuns living in certain areas of Jerusalem - such as the Armenian Quarter and Mount Zion in the Old City - now face an almost certain risk of harassment each time they step outside. This raises serious concerns about the safety of religious figures and their ability to perform their duties without fear of intimidation or harm. Unfortunately, the immediate and transient nature of these attacks makes systematic monitoring extremely challenging. Moreover, there is a pervasive belief among Christian communities that reporting incidents to authorities is futile, given a proven track record of dismissing claims or releasing suspects without appropriate consequences. This lack of accountability, combined with the fear that

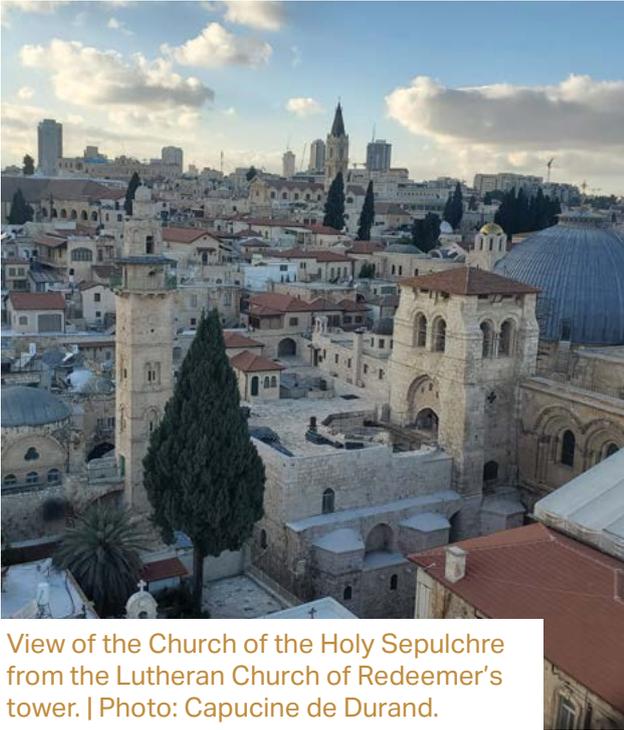


Ethiopian Orthodox pilgrims participate in the Holy Fire ceremony at the Ethiopian section of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem in April 2017. | Photo: Shutterstock

reporting complaints may jeopardize their legal status or visas, has historically discouraged victims from coming forward, creating an environment where such incidents can continue unchallenged. According to article 378 of the Israeli penal law, spitting is included in the felony of assault. In addition, article 144F states that "if a person commits an offense out of a racist motive [...] or out of enmity toward a public because of their religion, religious group, community of origin [...] then he shall be liable to double the penalty set for that offense or ten years of imprisonment, whichever is the lesser penalty."¹⁶ But victims are generally not aware of this legal aspect, and the

wide majority choose not to report the incidents. Consequently, a common attitude among religious individuals, particularly those from Eastern traditions, is a form of acceptance of this insulting behavior, mostly out of humility. A smile and a silent blessing are typically the response to unknown passersby who engage in spitting. It should be noted that in recent years, the police have responded to the spike in attacks by declaring that harassment of minorities will not be tolerated, and in some cases have promptly intervened to investigate incidents. In February 2025, Commander Dvir Tamim, the Police Chief in charge of the David area in the Old City condemned spitting

16 Israeli Penal Code, accessed through the OECD website <https://www.oecd.org/investment/anti-bribery/anti-briberyconvention/43289694.pdf>



View of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre from the Lutheran Church of Redeemer's tower. | Photo: Capucine de Durand.

as an "ugly phenomenon that harms the unique fabric of life that has existed in this area for many years".¹⁷ Commander Dvir's declaration followed the arrest of eight individuals (including adults and minors) for spitting on a church in the Old City. He assured that the police would not "tolerate expressions of hatred toward anyone, Christians, Jews or Muslims, in the Old City or anywhere else in Jerusalem." Clergy in Jerusalem have also noted that police officers are often supportive and responsive when incidents are brought to their attention. While there have been instances in which reports of harassment were not pursued to the satisfaction of those affected, it would be inaccurate to generalize regarding these cases vis-à-vis the police as a whole. The more

persistent concern relates to the high proportion of investigations that are ultimately closed without a clear outcome or accountability for the perpetrators.

A notable difference between the incidents monitored in 2025 and the data surveyed in 2024 is the increase in verbal harassment: the numbers went from 13 cases recorded in 2024, to 28 known cases in 2025. These incidents have taken various forms, ranging from degrading comments directed at Christians to the harassment of Jewish Israeli tour guides explaining historically and religiously significant sites. In one case, a tour guide explaining the history of the Mount Zion area to a group was interrupted by a Jewish student shouting, "Enough with that f*** Jesus, stop talking about it!" In another instance, a group of nuns visiting a nature reserve were harassed by religious Jewish boys who shouted "F*** Jesus" and other derogatory remarks. Similarly, a nun walking near Damascus Gate was confronted by two Orthodox Jewish men in their thirties who yelled insults about Jesus upon seeing her. When she stopped to question their behavior, they responded with even greater intensity and apparent satisfaction. In a separate episode, a large group of religious Jewish women and girls shouted "Disgusting!" and repeatedly spat at a procession carrying the cross from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to the Armenian Patriarchate.¹⁸ Israeli law criminalizes verbal harassment and considers the infliction of injury to religious sentiments a criminal offense. This includes "publishing or saying something that is liable to offend the religious sentiment or faith of others."¹⁹ However, as seen in cases of spitting attacks, such incidents are particularly challenging to document. Victims, often

17 Times of Israel, "Eight people arrested for spitting at church in Jerusalem's Old City, say police", https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/8-people-arrested-for-spitting-at-church-in-jerusalem-old-city-say-police/

18 See ANNEX I for details about the attacks.

19 US Department of State, "2023 Report on International Religious Freedom, Israel, West Bank and Gaza" <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/israel-west-bank-and-gaza/>

caught by surprise, feeling shocked, humiliated and intimidated, rarely have the opportunity to record the event as it unfolds.

Beyond the legal classification of the offense, these verbal incidents—no less than the acts of spitting—reinforce among Christians the perception that they are regarded as “guests,” and at times as unwanted guests, in the city. Such behavior conveys a delegitimizing message that unsettles clergy who reside in Jerusalem, but especially local Christians, whose communities have formed an integral part of the city’s social, cultural, and religious fabric for centuries. For these communities, Jerusalem and the Holy Land are not external sites of pilgrimage but their historical homeland, where their religious, communal, and familial life has been continuously rooted across generations. Framing them—explicitly or implicitly—as outsiders challenges their identity and their belonging to the land and the city.

Episodes of verbal and physical harassment aiming at delegitimizing Christian presence in Jerusalem (and in Israel at large), align with broader exclusivist socio-political trends observed in recent years which are reflected in the survey we conducted in September 2025 to examine perceptions of Christianity and Christians among the Israeli Jewish population. One of the most striking findings of the survey is the indication that younger respondents and those identifying as more religious are more likely to express intolerant positions. When asked whether they agreed with the statement that Jerusalem is one of the most important cities in the Christian world, 72% of overall respondents expressed agreement, while 21% disagreed. However, agreement was lower (61%) among younger respondents (aged 18–34) compared to other age groups and a clear correlation emerged between level of religiosity and degree of agreement: as religiosity increased, disagreement with the statement regarding Jerusalem’s importance to Christians also increased. Among ultra-Orthodox respondents, there was an almost equal split between those who agreed and those who disagreed (43% agreed; 45% disagreed), compared to 86% of secular

One of the most striking findings of the survey we conducted to examine perceptions of Christianity and Christians among the Israeli Jewish population, is the indication that younger respondents and those identifying as more religious are more likely to express intolerant positions.

respondents who agreed with the statement. These findings suggest that perceptions of Jerusalem’s importance to Christians may be shaped less by familiarity with Christian history or holy sites and more by ideological positions that seek to define the symbolic ownership of the city in exclusive terms.

Another survey question asked was whether the State of Israel should allow Christian clergy to reside within its borders. Overall, 62.0% of respondents said that the state should permit foreign clergy to live in Israel. However, only 26% believed that residence should be allowed for an unlimited period, while 22% of respondents said that clergy should not be permitted to reside in the country at all. Once again, significant gaps emerged according to respondents’ level of religiosity: 74% of the ultra-Orthodox believed that clergy should not be allowed to reside in Israel under any circumstances, compared to 45% among the religious group. Among secular respondents, this rate drops sharply to just 5.7%.

Among the issues addressed in the survey, we also sought to examine attitudes toward the phenomenon



Our Lady who brings down walls” at the entrance of the Immanuel Benedictine Sisters Monastery next to the Checkpoint 300, Bethlehem. | Photo: Capucine de Durand

of spitting at Christians. The findings show that 55% of Jewish respondents in Israel view the act as serious and believe it warrants punishment, while another 22% consider it a serious act, but one that does not justify punishment. For 14% of respondents spitting is not a serious act, although they would not engage in it themselves, but 3.7% of Jews in Israel express support for those who spit at Christians, including some who even affirmed that they themselves would do so (2.5%). Very little active support was recorded among traditional or secular respondents, while support for the phenomenon of spitting rises to 19% among the ultra-Orthodox, including 12% who testified that they themselves would spit. Lastly, we found that 12% of respondents in the 18–24 age group expressed support for the phenomenon or stated that they would themselves spit.

These findings reflect the reality on the ground, where a higher prevalence of spitting is evident among young people. In fact, all attackers responsible for incidents tracked during the reporting period and in previous years are Jewish, and most perpetrators are

teenagers or young adults—including some uniformed soldiers—while a minority are older men and even children. The assailants can be further classified into two main groups: those who engaged in spitting on or near clergy and churches, curses and verbal harassment, and those involved in more severe actions such as graffiti, vandalism, and physical attacks. The first group typically consists of ultra-Orthodox ultra-nationalist individuals, referred to in Hebrew as *Hardal*, the most religiously and socially conservative end of the Religious Zionist block, together with the most nationalist part of the Ultra-orthodox world. This group may include students from prominent yeshivas in Jerusalem, as well as young men who have been defined by authorities and the media as *Hilltop Youth*.²⁰ Presently, these groups play a more dominant role in the phenomenon of spitting. On the other hand, more serious attacks typically emanate from marginalized individuals on the social periphery, those who have not found their place within existing frameworks, including members of communities on the very fringes of Haredi society. The rise of the phenomenon among *Hardal* groups is linked, on the

20 Hilltop Youth is a definition applied to extremists, right-wing young men, who are usually driven by nationalist positions but often consider themselves also anarchists, who establish or live in illegal outposts in the West Bank and carry out violent attacks against Palestinians.

one hand, to their increased presence at intersections between Christians and Jews, showcasing sovereignty in the city, especially in areas like the Muslim Quarter and Mount Zion. Furthermore, within the current political landscape of the Israeli government, the influence of the Hardal sector and extreme religious Zionists can be seen having significant impact on government decisions. Representatives of extremist national religious and Hardal groups in the Knesset provide support and legitimacy for harassment and attacks. Attackers come from a variety of locations: some live in settlements - either within Palestinian neighborhoods in Jerusalem or in the Occupied Territories - while many reside in West Jerusalem or other parts of Israel. And although they may support settlements, in Israeli terminology they cannot all be labeled as settlers. Lastly, it is crucial to note that this report does not seek to generalize the entire Jewish Orthodox society. This behavior is not normative, and the majority of people, regardless of their views on Christianity or other religious minorities, do not engage in these actions.

The majority of verbal harassment and spitting incidents monitored in 2025 were directed at foreign Christians. This finding is consistent with the results of our 2024 survey conducted among local Christians (the population we surveyed consisted of lay people), in which nearly 90% of participants reported that they had never experienced harassment by Israeli Jewish citizens because of their Christian identity. In a context of heightened intolerance toward diversity and deep mistrust between Jewish and Arab populations in Israel, such a high rate of respondents reporting no harassment is noteworthy. However, the survey highlighted the complexity of realities in Jerusalem, where 20% of respondents reported experiencing harassment due to their Christian identity, compared to only 5% in the Galilee and 2% in Haifa. Additionally, 42% of respondents in Jerusalem reported feeling uncomfortable displaying religious symbols, such as a cross, in predominantly Jewish environments, in contrast to 15% of respondents living in Central Israel or 18% in the Galilee. This data sheds light on the situation in Jerusalem, a city that

The heightened vulnerability of Arab Christians living in Jerusalem stems from their layered identity as both Arab and Christian individuals, placing them at the intersection of multiple socio-political tensions.

serves as the hub for a significant number of foreign clergy who frequently encounter daily tensions and friction with more religious Jewish Israelis, particularly in the Old City. At the same time, local Arab Christians in Jerusalem navigate a distinct and multifaceted dynamic shaped by the city's unique social and religious fabric. Unlike their counterparts in predominantly Christian towns in the Galilee, they are in regular contact with Jewish Israelis, which significantly increases their exposure to potential discrimination or harassment by ultra-religious and nationalist segments of society. This heightened vulnerability stems from their layered identity as both Arab and Christian individuals, placing them at the intersection of multiple socio-political tensions.

It is important to highlight that the targeting of Christianity is not part of the political agenda, but is linked to a socio-political climate that year after year is rapidly becoming less tolerant of diversity. The ongoing shift towards the far-right, a growing sense of ultra-nationalism, and the emphasis on Israel primarily as a state for the Jewish population have collectively undermined both the legal and perceived sense of equality for all minorities within the country. The attacks outlined in this report are in fact connected to a set of broader issues that the Churches have been grappling with. These challenges encompass escalating difficulties

in securing visas for foreign clergy, ongoing debates concerning the state's proposed changes to the fiscal status of Church properties, and initiatives aiming to convert Church land surrounding the Old City into a national park. In particular, in recent years the issue of Arnona (the property tax collected by municipalities) became prominent once again, threatening to drastically reduce the economic resources of the Churches which are channeled to support vital services to the communities, such as schools, hospitals and more. Historically, churches in Jerusalem have been exempt from Arnona for properties used for religious purposes, a privilege rooted in agreements dating back to Ottoman rule and upheld through subsequent administrations, including under Israeli governance. The churches argue that imposing Arnona on their properties violates these historical agreements and threatens their financial viability, as many properties are used for worship, education, and charitable activities rather than commercial purposes. The standoff has deepened mistrust and raised concerns about the preservation of the delicate Status Quo governing church-state relations in Jerusalem, and indeed, the status of Church properties remains the central issue in negotiations between the Vatican and Israeli authorities, an ongoing process since 1993. The outcome of these discussions will not only impact the Catholic Church but also might shape relations between the State of Israel and all Christian denominations.

The Churches also perceive as a threat to the Status Quo a pattern of increasing restrictions of access to religious celebrations that involve large gatherings of worshippers, such as the Eastern Easter ceremony of the Holy Fire, or the feast of the Transfiguration celebrated by the Greek Orthodox Church on Mount Tabor, in the Galilee. Since the tragic 2021 Mount Meron tragedy, where 45 men and boys lost their lives in a crowd crush during a Jewish religious gathering, authorities have significantly reduced the number of attendees at highly

Christians must navigate a challenging reality: while their overall freedom of religion is ostensibly guaranteed, they have experienced a gradual, subtle erosion of both their symbolic and physical spaces over the years.

important liturgies. This was once again exemplified by the handling of the Feast of the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor in the middle of August 2025, where worshippers were barred from the site for the third year in a row due to the lack of fire department approval and the absence of an event manager. Similarly, in December 2025, Nazareth police imposed strict restrictions on the annual Christmas tree lighting ceremony held in the city's main square. Authorities ordered shop owners to close their stores and limited attendance to 1,000 people — a significantly smaller number than the crowds the event regularly drew before the war in Gaza. In response, the local Orthodox Council decided to cancel the ceremony altogether in protest of these measures.²¹ While these measures cannot be defined as outright violations, they are perceived by the Christian community as a lack of cultural sensitivity and slow increase of systemic pressure on the life of Christians. This has fueled perceptions of unequal treatment compared to other religious groups, and a gradual erosion of the ability to fully express their religious identity. But despite all of the above, and especially the concern Christians feel about the authorities' approach to managing ceremonies

21 Independent Catholic News, "Nazareth: Christmas tree lighting in Jesus hometown canceled by police", <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/53932>

that have been peacefully conducted in the past, it is important to note that 72% of respondents to our survey among Christians affirmed that their freedom to worship remains largely intact.

The apparent contrast in these data reflects the challenging reality Christians must navigate: while their overall freedom of religion is ostensibly guaranteed, they have experienced a gradual, subtle erosion of both their symbolic and physical spaces over the years. Christian communities have been proudly rooted in the Holy Land for two thousand years. However, in recent years they have increasingly expressed serious concerns regarding the combination of forces that could drive younger generations away. Our 2024 survey among Christians found that 48% of respondents under 30, and 52% of respondents under 45, are considering leaving the region. The primary reasons for these considerations include: the surge in violence within the Arab sector of Israeli society, the Israeli authorities' failure to address mafia-style crime gangs which are deeply disrupting the life of living in Israel, and an increasingly hostile socio-political climate, where democratic institutions are under attack and hostilities among national groups are at their peak. Palestinian citizens of Israel make up about 20% of Israeli population, but they accounted for over 80% of violent killings in Israel in 2025, a rate that taken in isolation ranks number eight globally, just behind countries such as Ecuador, Haiti or Jamaica.²² According to police reports, in 2025 there were at least 241 homicides within the Arab community compared with 47 among the Jewish population,²³ but only a fraction of the shootings within the Arab sector resulted in indictments. For Palestinian and Jewish Israeli activists involved in this issue, this discrepancy constitutes evidence of

neglect by the Israeli authorities, who have demonstrated the ability to effectively deploy intelligence, policing, and technological tools in addressing other types of crime, yet appear unable to curb the organized crime networks that are plaguing Arab society. The current government in particular has been criticized for failing to reduce crime, and instead turning "violence into a political instrument ... an opportunity to advance a broader political agenda."²⁴ In light of these trends, we included in the survey conducted among the Israeli Jewish population a question addressing their views on the Israeli government's responsibility regarding the emigration of Arab Christians from the country. The data show that 25% of respondents believe the state should act to encourage emigration, 41% of respondents believe the state should refrain from taking any position or action on the matter, and 19% think efforts should be made to reduce the phenomenon. A breakdown of respondents by religious identity indicates that there is significant support among the religious and Haredi public: 59% of Haredi respondents and 49% of Orthodox respondents believe the state should act to encourage emigration of Arab-Christians from Israel.

Beyond the broader socio-political trends outlined above and their impact on relations among religious and cultural groups, the recent surge in overt animosity toward Christianity can also be attributed to the unique and complex dynamics that characterize Jewish-Christian relations in the Holy Land. This region stands as the only space where the historical majority/minority relationship has undergone a reversal, with Jews constituting the majority tasked with safeguarding the rights of Christians in their midst. While Jewish identity

22 Times of Israel, "Arab society marks deadliest year on record, with 252 murder victims in 2025" <https://www.timesofisrael.com/arab-society-marks-deadliest-year-on-record-with-252-murder-victims-in-2025/>

23 New York Times, "Israelis protest surge in gun crime within Arab community", <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/10/world/middleeast/israelis-protest-surge-in-gun-crime-within-arab-community.html>

24 Times of Israel - Amnon Be'eri-Sulitzeanu's blog, "Ben Gvir is fighting Arab citizens instead of fighting crime", <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/fighting-israels-arab-citizens-instead-of-fighting-crime/>



Ruins of the St George Church in Taybeh, Ramallah, December 2025. | Photo: Capucine de Durand.

was historically molded by centuries of perceived inferiority vis-à-vis the Christian world, the contemporary scenario, where Christianity no longer poses a threat and a robust, independent Jewish state is established, has fostered a new and unapologetic attitude among Orthodox Judaism and its authorities. As argued by Hebrew University senior lecturer Karma Ben Johanan in her book "Jacob's Younger Brother," "Orthodox Jews are not "raising the fences" out of fear of Christianity and "gentile" culture; on the contrary, they part ways from previous, more lenient positions toward Christians precisely because they no longer fear them. The new freedoms brought by the post-World War II liberal ethos gave rise to initiatives of rapprochement and friendships that were previously unimaginable, at the same time that they surfaced old resentments that were repressed under a thick barrier of cultural and political inferiority".²⁵This renewed sense of Jewish identity finds its most extreme manifestation in right-wing ultranationalism, which has become a significant factor in Israeli society. This trend has been particularly evident among members of the current government

and has been further intensified by the collective trauma experienced since October 7, 2023.

In this complex landscape, Christians see themselves as a community deeply rooted in millennia of history, an integral part of the region's social fabric, and "a small sign of a different way of living and relating."²⁶ The survey we conducted in December 2024 highlighted that despite the numerous challenges they face, Christian communities remain committed to preserving their presence in the Holy Land, and it is crucial to ensure their continued existence.

Christians in the West Bank

Even though our monitoring activities don't include the West Bank beyond East Jerusalem, we want to highlight the effect of increased settler and military violence in the West Bank on Christian Arab communities living in those areas. Christians are not targeted specifically for their religion, but as part of the broader Palestinian population they suffer many of the daily impact of settler violence as well as restrictions on movement and risk of displacement. In 2025, amid ongoing military operations and almost daily settler attacks on Palestinian villages and communities, the number of recorded incidents affecting Christians rose. These incidents have ranged from land confiscation to arson, graffiti, and physical assaults. For example, the town of Taybeh—one of the last predominantly Christian villages in the West Bank—suffered repeated arson attacks, targeting both church and private property. In July 2025, after settlers set fire to land near the ancient Church of Saint George (Al-Khadr), the priests of Taybeh's three churches—Latin, Melkite Greek Catholic, and Greek Orthodox—issued a joint statement drawing attention to the repeated attacks on the town's land, holy sites, and properties,

25 Karma Ben-Johanan, *Yacob's Younger Brother - Christian-Jewish Relations after Vatican II*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2022, p. 193.

26 Vatican News, "Patriarch Pizzaballa: A year after October 7 we implore peace", <https://www.vatican-news.va/en/church/news/2024-10/pizzaballa-a-year-after-october-7-we-call-for-peace-for-humanity.html>

describing them as “a series of dangerous, systematic attacks.”²⁷ The last incident recorded in 2025 occurred on the night between the 4th and 5th of December, one day after the inauguration of the “Christmas Nights” celebrations, when two cars were set on fire and a building was defaced with a threatening graffiti message—“the same messages used across the West Bank,” noted Father Fawadleh, the priest of the Latin Church of Taybeh.²⁸ Settlement expansion and systemic intimidation to prevent farmers from tending their land is also one of the different forms of violence suffered by Christians. In November 2025, settlers groups started bulldozing lands in the Christian town of Beit Sahour, near Bethlehem, to prepare the ground for the establishment of a new outpost settlement called Shedma. Overnight bulldozers had leveled the ground and some caravans were on site. According to the Israeli organization Peace Now, fifteen years ago the area had been designated for the construction of a children’s hospital for Bethlehem’s residents, but settlers began establishing unauthorized outposts pressuring the government to halt the project.²⁹ Christians also suffer from regular restrictions of access to their land, destruction of crops and damage to olive trees. This has been the reality for years for the Nassar family, who run an ecological farm known as the Tent of Nations, located about ten kilometers

south of Bethlehem. Since 1991, the family has been engaged in a legal battle in Israeli courts to prevent the expropriation of their land by the state. Today, the farm is completely surrounded by settlements, and the Nassars have adopted a strategy of nonviolent resistance based on the tenets of Christianity in response to repeated attacks by groups of settlers, who have destroyed dozens of trees, uprooting or burning them. In August 2025, twelve new houses were built in an outpost just meters from the farm’s fence³⁰

Lastly, it is important to note that the 2025 olive harvest season was particularly difficult. Weather and natural conditions were not optimal, and, in addition, according to estimates from the Agricultural Directorate in Bethlehem, approximately 30% of the groves around Bethlehem were inaccessible to farmers due to settler violence and restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities.³¹ The combined pressures of conflict, insecurity, and economic instability continue to influence community cohesion, mobility, and decisions about future prospects in the region for local Christians as well as for the general Palestinian population. As stated by ACT Palestine Forum, “This is not voluntary migration; it is displacement produced by sustained political pressure and insecurity.”³²

27 Nabd Ed-Haya, "Settlers' Fires threaten Taybeh's Heritage: Priests Urge Immediate International Intervention", <https://nabd10.ps/en/news/settlers-fires-threaten-taybehs-heritage-priests-urge-immediate-international-intervention>

28 Vatican News, "Despite new settlers attack on Taybeh, Christians continue to hope", <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2025-12/taybeh-west-bank-christians-attacks-settlers-fr-fawadleh.html>

29 Peace Now, "Settlers Established a new Outpost Today East of Bethlehem", <https://peacenow.org.il/en/settlers-established-a-new-outpost-today-east-of-bethlehem>

30 Tent of Nations, <https://tentofnations.com/about-us/>

31 Ma'an News Agency, "Poor Olive Harvest Expected, Prices to Rise due to Settler Attacks", <https://www.facebook.com/MaanNewsAgency/posts/poor-olive-harvest-expected-prices-to-rise-due-to-settler-attacksbethlehem-maan-/837700168772923/>

32 ACT Palestine Forum, "Statement on Escalating Israeli Settler Violence in the West Bank and Targeting of Palestinian Christian Communities", <https://actalliance.org/act-news/statement-on-escalating-israeli-settler-violence-in-the-west-bank-and-targeting-of-palestinian-christian-communities/>

Hotspot: Restrictions around Eastern Easter and the Holy Fire Ceremony

The events of Holy Week, commemorating the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, represent the pinnacle of the Christian liturgical year and a cornerstone of the religious and communal life of Christian communities in Jerusalem. During this period, tens of thousands of pilgrims from around the world arrive in the city, alongside members of local Christian communities, to take part in the holiday rituals.

A central component of these ceremonies takes place in the medieval structure of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (the Church of the Resurrection), which has only a single entrance and exit, in accordance with the Status Quo arrangements in place since the mid-19th century. In addition to the ceremonies inside the church, significant religious processions are held throughout the Old City, including processions from the Mount of Olives and along the Via Dolorosa, as well as ceremonies and processions in the courtyard of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the surrounding streets.

At the heart of Holy Week observances of the Eastern Churches is the Holy Fire (Holy Light) ceremony, which marks the resurrection of Jesus and constitutes a peak event in the ecclesiastical calendar. Due to Status Quo arrangements, the ceremony is held on Saturday afternoon, shortly before Easter according to the Gregorian calendar. In ordinary years, tens of thousands of believers from local communities and abroad attend the ceremony, seeking to witness what, according to their faith, is a miracle that takes place inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, during which fire descends from heaven.

Following the appearance of the fire, the flame is passed among the faithful with great excitement using candles—most commonly bundles of 33 candles—within the crowded Church of the Holy Sepulchre and throughout the narrow streets of the Old City. For the local Arab Orthodox community, the Holy Fire ceremony is not merely an official

Members of the local community report feelings of frustration and exclusion due to the difficulty in reaching the central ceremonies and holy spaces, which for them are not merely sites of worship but an integral part of their collective identity and living heritage.

religious ritual or a focal point for pilgrims, but a major day of communal gathering. Many community members assemble on the roof of the nearby Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, where they receive the fire and participate in processions.

Members of the local community play an active and meaningful role in the various ceremonies, rather than serving merely as passive observers. Church processions are accompanied by members of the Scouts movement, who lead and support community processions and include participants of all ages, from children to adults. Within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre itself, long-standing traditional rights allow young people to enter shortly before the appearance of the Holy Fire, singing and drumming. This active participation constitutes a central element in preserving the religious, communal, and cultural identity of Christian communities in Jerusalem.

Over the years, the authorities have maintained a significant presence at these events in order to ensure the safety of worshippers and visitors, as reflected in historical documentation. However,

a persistent tension has developed between the legitimate need to ensure public safety and the desire of church representatives, local community members, and pilgrims to be present at the ceremonies and in the holy spaces. Each year, negotiations take place regarding the number of participants permitted to enter the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Christian Quarter.

In recent years, there has been a notable tightening of restrictive policies, not only within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—where genuine safety challenges exist due to overcrowding, the lack of emergency exits, and the extensive use of candles—but also in the surrounding areas. As the number of visitors has increased, restrictions on access for pilgrims and local community members to the sites of the ceremonies have expanded, including extensive closures throughout the Christian Quarter and the Armenian Quarter.

These trends intensified following the COVID-19 pandemic, and particularly after the Meron disaster in 2021, in which dozens of people were killed due to overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, and severe failures detailed in the findings of the official commission of inquiry. Against this backdrop, police concerns regarding mass gatherings increased, resulting in even stricter limitations on access to places of worship and to the Old City more broadly. On the day of the Holy Fire ceremony, numerous checkpoints are erected, including at Jaffa Gate, the New Gate, and Zion Gate, and many Arab Christians report feeling that access to what they perceive as their home—the Christian Quarter—is denied to them. In 2025, these restrictions were felt particularly strongly and multiple media sources highlighted the excessive use of force by the police³³. One incident in

particular drew attention, when on April 19, a member of the Israeli border police officer aimed his gun at a member of the Greek Orthodox Scouts. The border police later removed the reserve officer from his role,³⁴ but this episode reflects a deepening crisis regarding the situation of Christians.

Members of the local community report feelings of frustration and exclusion due to the difficulty in reaching the central ceremonies and holy spaces, which for them are not merely sites of worship but an integral part of their collective identity and living heritage. According to their accounts, dialogue with the authorities lacks sufficient transparency, meaningful participation of community representatives in decision-making processes, and, at times, respect for understandings or demands raised through legal channels.

From the perspective of local communities, these policies constitute a substantial infringement on freedom of movement and freedom of religion—fundamental rights enshrined in both international law and the foundational principles of a democratic state. Beyond the practical impediments to participation in religious ceremonies, this reality causes deep harm to the sense of belonging, the continuity of tradition, and the fabric of communal life of Christians in Jerusalem.

In light of this situation, there is a clear need for a renewed examination of security and access policies, seeking an appropriate balance between safety considerations and the rights of local communities to sustain their religious and communal life within the Old City. A policy grounded in ongoing dialogue, transparency, cooperation, and the principle of proportionality has the potential to reduce tensions and strengthen trust between the authorities and the Christian communities in the city.

33 The Guardian, "‘They are trying to make it unbearable’: Jerusalem Christians face Easter under Israeli crackdown", <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/apr/18/jerusalem-christians-easter-israeli-crackdown-church-holy-sepulchre>

34 National Catholic Reporter, "Christians in Jerusalem face restrictions, violence amid holy celebrations", <https://www.ncronline.org/news/christians-jerusalem-face-restrictions-violence-amid-holy-celebrations>



View of the Church of the Ecce Homo in the Old City of Jerusalem. | Photo: John Munayer

Methodology

The *Rossing Center's Advocacy and Education Initiative* seeks to monitor criminal and non-criminal incidents of harassment and violence towards Christian communities and individuals. This includes cases of harassment in its different manifestations, physical assaults, attacks against property and violations of freedom of religion. Our initiative aims to cover territories within Israel and East Jerusalem to the best of our capabilities.

Since 2024, our incident database has been a joint undertaking with the *Religious Freedom Data Center* created by Mrs. Yisca Harani. Establishing a unified list of attacks was essential to avoid duplication or dispersion of information and to compile a reliable body of data on these attacks. The *Religious Freedom Data Center* coordinates a network of Israeli Jewish volunteers, each in contact with one or more religious communities both within and outside Jerusalem. Over the course of the last two years, thanks to the essential partnership with the *Religious Freedom Data Center* and their volunteers, and by building established relationships of trust with religious leaders and lay individuals, it was possible to deepen the outreach within Christian communities and to track incidents that would have otherwise gone unreported. Through the volunteers' work it was also possible to record attacks directed to communities located in rural areas or in the region of the Galilee.

In 2025 data was collected from several sources:

- directly from the victims, a category which comprises the religious leadership of local Churches, religious and lay members of local communities, pilgrims, and Christian tourists
- from partners working in the field
- from media reports
- from the Police.

Finally, throughout 2025, we continued monitoring media coverage addressing attacks and the challenges faced by Christians in the Holy Land in order to conduct an assessment of the overall discourse within the Israeli media concerning the harassment of Christian communities.

We want to stress that due to the very nature of the incidents, our report offers only a partial view into a structural, pervasive issue. Many attacks go unreported daily, either because victims deem it useless to report to the authorities, or because it is very difficult to track down and apprehend the perpetrators of incidents such as verbal harassment or spitting. Therefore, one of the goals of our Advocacy and Education Initiative has been to increase the awareness among Christian communities about the legal standing of incidents and the importance of reporting them - first and foremost to the police, and subsequently to us or the Religious Freedom Data Center.



The Dominus Flevit chapel on the Mount of Olives. | Photo: John Munayer

Recommendations

Enhancing police intervention, boosting the presence of police officers in critical areas, and promoting awareness of attacks on Christians.

Identifying perpetrators through collaboration between police officers in the field and technological tools such as body cameras and street cameras. Investigating incidents, including seemingly minor ones like spitting, to establish deterrence. Instructing officers to handle spitting cases in accordance with legal standards and emphasizing the importance of not dismissing any reports.

Offering training regarding Christianity to members of local police, municipality and other relevant authorities in order to build literacy and improve their ability to communicate properly with Christian leadership and members of the communities.

This will limit frictions and avoid incidents which may fall under the scope of Freedom of Religion or Belief, such as the escalating tensions surrounding the celebration of the Holy Fire ceremony at the Holy Sepulchre during the Greek Orthodox Easter. These programs may encompass brief reviews, lectures, or a series of lectures, meetings, and tours. They aim to provide a communication channel for consultation, fostering shared dialogue to enhance understanding and relationships with Christian denominations.

Establishment of two official positions - one within the municipality and one within the national government – as

liaisons with the Churches' leadership.

Both local and national authorities currently lack a designated liaison to address any questions or issues concerning the Christian communities. While there are specific officials responsible for certain matters, there is a gap in addressing broader issues. Many problems either go unresolved or fail to reach the appropriate person who can provide assistance. Therefore, we strongly advocate the appointment of a coordination person in the municipalities of mixed cities and government offices. These individuals will need knowledge of the special status and unique challenges faced by churches and Christians, facilitating assistance, referrals, and communication with relevant parties. The Rossing Center is happy to offer training and ongoing consultation services, as needed. It is noteworthy that in the past, such a liaison position existed within the Municipality of Jerusalem but was discontinued over 10 years ago. However, the Christian communities department at the Ministry of Interior is currently overwhelmed with existing obligations.

Improve curricula about Christianity in the public education system.

We acknowledge that the rise in attacks against Christians can be attributed, on one hand, to an implicit message that non-Jewish minority groups do not merit respect or recognition, allowing extremists to exploit the atmosphere to target not only Christians but also other vulnerable groups. On the other hand, a lack of awareness about the issue, unfamiliarity with Christianity and Christians in Israel, and a failure to comprehend the sensitivities contribute to these attacks going unnoticed by most Israelis. Whether due to indifference



Christian Quarter, Old City of Jerusalem. | Photo: David Heger

or insufficient knowledge, many Israelis do not respond or condemn these incidents. To foster delegitimization of these attacks and encourage widespread condemnation, it is crucial to address the issue through educational initiatives. This involves promoting exposure, providing education, facilitating access to knowledge, and incorporating information about Christians in Israel into the school curriculum. These efforts collectively contribute to increased awareness and a proactive approach to tackling the problem.

Direct engagement with educational institutions within the religious-national sector.

Because many perpetrators are teenagers

or young adults linked to specific yeshivot and nationalist religious frameworks, engagement must extend into those educational settings. The Ministry of Education, in coordination with civil society actors, should develop structured programs for religious-nationalist schools and pre-military academies that address: the legal implications of religiously motivated harassment; Jewish teachings on human dignity and the prohibition against humiliating others; The historical and contemporary significance of Christian communities in the Holy Land; The civic responsibilities of living in a sovereign Jewish state that protects minority rights. For such initiatives to gain acceptance, they should not be presented as external criticism,

but rather as efforts that reinforce core Jewish ethical values and democratic responsibility, while also raising awareness of the harmful impact and reputational consequences of harassing religious minorities, including the repercussions for Jewish communities abroad.

Ensuring appropriate coverage in mainstream media and social media messaging.

Communication tools and social media play a pivotal role in raising awareness, shedding light on a subject, and fostering discourse around it. Presently, most information is disseminated to the public through official and social media channels rather than traditional educational methods. Media platforms serve to acquaint the general public with instances of assault and harm against Christians, as well as the responses from state authorities, the police, the attorney's office, and various government agencies. Leveraging both traditional and social media enables the dissemination of reliable and well-organized knowledge about Christians in Israel to the broader public. Social media in particular serves as a tool for cultivating a reciprocal dialogue between content creators and their audience. It encourages engagement and activism among the public, fostering a dynamic conversation that motivates participants to take actions contributing to the eradication of the identified issues.

Stronger condemnations from the authorities and religious Jewish leadership in order to communicate support and solidarity to the Christian leaders and the communities at large.

Taking a strong stance and disseminating it through influential figures, elected officials, and representatives is instrumental in conveying a message that delegitimizes attacks and harm against minority communities. Specifically for

Christian communities, expressions of support and concern coming from Jewish Israeli authorities demonstrate recognition of their belonging to the Holy Land, their societal role, and the value and esteem that the majority society places on their presence in the region.

Encouraging Christian communities to report and be aware of the importance of not dismissing attacks.

We are unable to accurately assess the extent and severity of the phenomenon without the collaboration of church leaders, members of religious communities, employees at Christian sites, tour guides, and tourists. As previously mentioned, there exists a reluctance to report, either due to fear or because clergy may not find it worthwhile, as outlined earlier. The essential key to combating and eliminating the phenomenon lies in the cooperation of these communities, facilitated by the encouragement and support of church leaders.

Increasing awareness and understanding among diplomatic representatives regarding Jewish-Christian relations in Jerusalem.

We acknowledge the necessity for broader engagement from the international community to have a more substantial impact on Israeli authorities. To elevate the priority of this issue, we propose encouraging churches worldwide, Christian communities, diplomats, and aid organizations, among others, to actively address this matter. This involves raising awareness among their peers in their respective countries, fostering media exposure, and exerting pressure on Israeli authorities to address the phenomena seriously. It is imperative to treat incidents of attacks with the utmost seriousness, issue official condemnations, and ensure that captured attackers are brought to justice.



The Holy Edicule, Church of the Holy Sepulchre. | Photo: Adi Marer

ANNEX I: Detailed List of Known Attacks

Physical attacks

Examples include spitting, pepper spraying, hitting

January 10, West Jerusalem. A Jewish teenager spat behind a nun's back.

January 20, Jerusalem, Old City, Jaffa Gate. A clergyman was guiding foreign tourists, when two boys spat in their direction.

January 25, West Jerusalem. A tour guide was guiding a group of tourists on a Saturday. As they were standing on HaNeviim Street in front of the Swedish Theological Institute when a Jewish man, dressed as ultra-Orthodox, passed by, spat and cursed both the residents of the house throughout the generations and also the group, saying to the tour guide, "Because of you, the gentiles are coming and polluting the city."

January 26, Jerusalem Old City, Armenian Quarter. A Catholic monk was walking on a sidewalk in the Armenian Quarter, with a suitcase and rucksack, when a Jewish man walked by and spat in front of the monk in a provocative way. The monk stopped to confront his behavior. The Jewish man pretended that the Christian monk bumped into him and made a scene as if he had been attacked. A Jewish friend of the man also joined and argued that the monk was the first one to attack and then called the police. The monk called the head of the police in charge of the Old City and during this time also the other Jew spat near the monk. The police arrived and the Catholic monk was taken to detention. The monk spent 2 hours at the police station, where he had to defend his behavior and it was explained to him that he should not react at all after spitting and only call the police. After interrogation, he was photographed and released.

January 30, Jerusalem, The stairs descending from Jaffa Gate to the Mamilla Mall. A nun parked her car in the Karta parking lot and walked on foot toward Jaffa Gate. As she ascended the stairs leading to the Jaffa Gate plaza, two religious boys looked at her and spat on the stairs.

January 30, Jerusalem, The Jewish Quarter Parking Lot. A Russian clergyman wearing a chain with a cross, was passing through the Jewish Quarter parking lot when a group of children in the area spat in his direction.

February 15, Jerusalem, Old City. Two young men spat towards a Church and were caught by the police.

March 8, Jerusalem, Old City. A procession of about twenty Armenian priests left the Armenian Patriarchate and headed towards the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, carrying a large cross. A policewoman and a policeman led and brought up the rear of the procession. Along the way, several Jewish individuals spat demonstratively on the ground when they saw the procession passing by.

March 8, Jerusalem, Old City. An ultra-Orthodox man spat five times upon seeing the Armenian priests and, on one occasion, spat in the direction of one of them. At the same time, another religious Jewish man who passed by also spat on the pavement when he saw the priests.

March 8, Jerusalem Old City, Jaffa Gate. A Jewish man spat at a Latin procession carrying the cross.

March 9, Jerusalem Old City, Jaffa Gate. A Jewish child spat at a Latin Catholic procession carrying the cross.

March 11, Ashkelon. A statue of Jesus was made as part of a Purim art festival at a school. A

group of students spat at the statue and eventually tore it up.

March 11, Jerusalem, Old City, Jaffa Gate. An ultra-Orthodox child spat at a monk.

March 15, Jerusalem, Jaffa Gate. A Jew spat at the Latin procession heading towards the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

March 16, Jerusalem, Jaffa Gate. A Jewish man spat at a procession carrying the cross, and then again, after a priest reacted and told him not to spit.

March 16, Jerusalem, Old City. On the eve of Purim, an Armenian resident of the Old City, returned home from work. Near his home, a Jew suddenly approached him, grabbed him in a chokehold, and called out to his friends who had gathered around. A Jewish couple passing by rescued the Armenian man and managed to bring him safely to his home. The wife came down to the street and the attackers began cursing her, shouting, 'Armenians, go back to Armenia,' and similar remarks.

March 17, Jerusalem, Mount Zion. During a training tour guide course offered by staff of the Rossing Center, a man who seemed somewhat high or not entirely sober attacked one of the students who was wearing a cross around his neck. He yelled at him that they shouldn't be here and that this place is only for Jews. Some of the students tried to confront him, and distanced him from the group by threatening to call the police. Later, staff from the Rossing Center called the officer responsible for Mount Zion and asked for patrols to be sent, as during the visit the group had encountered several problematic individuals who were shouting at passersby, behaving aggressively, and cursing.

March 29, Jerusalem, Old City. A group of ultra-Orthodox Jewish men spat at a procession of Armenians returning from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

March 29, Jerusalem, Old City. An Armenian procession carrying a cross made its way to the Patriarchate after prayers at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. On David Street, between Christian

Street and Ammar Ibn al-Khattab Square, a group of ultra-Orthodox Jews passed by, and one of them spat at the procession.

March 30, Jerusalem, Old City. A processional cross was carried from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre towards the Armenian Patriarchate when a large group of religious Jewish young women passed by and began shouting 'Yuck, yuck,' 'disgusting' and began spitting on the floor – not just once or twice, but perhaps ten times or more.

April 5, West Jerusalem, Abu Tor. In the early morning of Saturday April 5, a Capuchin friar reported that he had just been spat at by a religious Jewish man.

April 13, Jerusalem, Old City. An ultra-Orthodox Jewish man spat toward a Latin procession carrying a processional cross, in full view of the monks, who expressed great anger. The procession, led by the Latin Patriarch and accompanied by bishops and many monks, was walking from the Latin Patriarchate toward David Street on its way to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. As they exited the Latin Patriarchate Street into the plaza inside Jaffa Gate, the ultra-Orthodox man saw them and spat.

April 15, Jerusalem, Old City. A child spat towards a woman carrying a cross during a Via Crucis procession.

April 16, West Jerusalem, near the Cinemateque. Four religious youths, one of them wearing a Magen David Adom (equivalent of the Red Cross) jacket, passed by a Greek Orthodox monk who was walking with another clergyman, and spat right on their faces. The Greek Orthodox Monk managed to photograph the assailant from behind, tried to stop a Magen David Adom vehicle and asked for help, but the driver said he couldn't do anything. The monk asked him to call the police for him, but he refused to do even that and drove away.

April 17, Jerusalem, Old City. On Good Friday, the Latin Catholic procession left the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at 5 p.m. after the end of the prayer service. It included many different clergy, including



Worshippers gather at the entrance of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for Orthodox Good Friday observances. | Photo: Adi Marer

bishops and Franciscan monks. The procession arrived at the Jaffa Gate and clergy were unable to turn right into Latin Patriarchate Street because a police vehicle was blocking the street. The procession stopped and asked the police to clear the way, but the officers only told the participants not to stop and to continue, even though this was impossible because the vehicle was blocking the passage. As the procession stopped, religious Jews gathered and began cursing and spitting at the procession. The police did not do enough, and by the time they removed the attackers and moved the vehicle quite a bit of time had passed.

April 17, Jerusalem, Old City. On Good Friday, one of two young men resembling hilltop youth spat on the Franciscan procession on its way to the Cenacle (Room of the Last Supper).

April 17, Jerusalem, Old City. On Good Friday, a procession of Franciscan friars left the Cenacle and headed towards the Armenian Quarter. As they exited the Zion Gate, a bottle of water was thrown at them by a tourist standing on the promenade along the walls. Later, a young man who looked like a hilltop youth spat several times near the procession.

April 20, Jerusalem, Old City. On Catholic Easter Sunday, the Catholic procession to the Church of

the Holy Sepulchre set off from Latin Patriarchate Street towards David Street. Just at the turn, a Jewish man stood and spat in the direction of the procession and then made an obscene gesture.

April 20, Jerusalem, Old City. The Latin procession was on its way to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for Easter celebrations. On the way, a Jewish man spat at the procession.

April 20, Jerusalem, Old City. A Catholic procession returned from Easter celebrations at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. A car stopped in front of the Imperial Hotel and the driver opened the door and spat towards the procession.

April 23, Jerusalem, Old City. Two children spat in the direction of the Armenian procession that was about to depart to reach the site dedicated to the Armenian genocide.

April 27, West Jerusalem. A Greek Orthodox monk was walking in Sacher Park when a group of four or five young men dressed in ultra-Orthodox attire spat on the ground in his direction as he passed by. When he asked them in English why they were doing this, they waved their hands dismissively and asked condescendingly, 'What do you want?' He did not engage with them and left the area.

April 28, Jerusalem, Old City. Two ultra-



Worshippers exit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre after the liturgy of Eastern Easter and the Holy Fire Ceremony. | Photo: John Munayer

Orthodox Jews were walking down the street and saw an Armenian monk standing in the middle of the street. When he turned towards another monk who was at the scene, one of the Jewish men spat on the ground in the direction of the monk and the other spat in the direction of the Patriarchate.

May 17, West Jerusalem. A Capuchin friar was spat at by a religious man riding a bike.

May 24, Jerusalem, Old City. A group of young people spat multiple times at an Armenian monk.

May 26, Jerusalem, Old City. On Jerusalem Day, a Franciscan monk in a habit was walking on the Via Dolorosa when he was spat on by Jewish young man.

May 26, Jerusalem, Old City. On Jerusalem Day, a group of Jewish individuals walked past a monk walking on the Via Dolorosa, and someone deliberately bumped into him with their shoulder. Another person, separate from the previous group, spat at the monk. Another Jewish person passed by and said, 'Idolaters!'.

May 26, Jerusalem, Old City. A group of children aged 10-15 spat at an Armenian priest.

June 2, Jerusalem, Old City. On the holiday of Shavuot, two children repeatedly spat at an Armenian cleric.

June 8, Jerusalem, Old City. Two men spat at the Franciscan procession heading to Mount Zion.

June 8, Jerusalem, Old City. A boy was walking together with his mother and other siblings in the area of Mount Zion. The mother was pushing a pram. The older boy, who was holding a baby, walked ahead of the family following a few monks and then spat three times behind them, saying 'yuck' loudly.

June 18, Jerusalem, Old City. Two Jewish men spat at an Orthodox monk.

June 27, West Jerusalem, Musrara. A family living in Musrara, a neighborhood bordering the ultra-Orthodox area of Mea Shearim, has experienced several incidents of harassment, including spitting and garbage being thrown into their courtyard. In one instance, a neighbor's grandchild spat at their children. On another occasion, the youngest child of the neighbors living upstairs spat directly on their baby from the balcony. The neighbors have also spat at the family's windows and thrown garbage into their courtyard.

June 28, Jerusalem, Old City. Two ultra-Orthodox men spat at a Franciscan friar walking on the Via Dolorosa.

July 2, Jerusalem, Old City. A teenage girl spat at a nun walking from the church of Santa Anna to the Church of the Flagellation.

August 27, Jerusalem, Old City, Three Jewish individuals walked in front of the Armenian procession on the way down to the church of Mary's Tomb. One of them spat in the direction of the procession.

September 6, Migdal HaEmek. The house of a Christian family was pelted with stones. The family also suffered from verbal harassment.

September 7, Jerusalem, Old City. A Jewish man riding a bike passed by a procession of Armenian clerics on their way to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. He spat on the ground as the procession passed him, and after they had passed, he looked back at them and spat on the ground again.

September 9, West Jerusalem. Children threw small stones at a Catholic nun from a monastery bordering ultra-Orthodox Jewish neighborhood. While she was parking her car in the monastery parking lot, they threw the stones while the parking lot gate was open, then after she closed the gate, they threw larger stones.

October 8, West Jerusalem. During the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, seven monks and nuns from Abu Ghosh walked from Notre Dame Center to the Mamilla parking lot along the Old City's walls. Suddenly, a young couple passed by, and the man turned around and spat at the nun who was walking in front of the group. He then did the same to two nuns walking behind her. The young man and woman continued on their way quickly, turning back several times and laughing.

October 10, Jerusalem, Old City. A minor on a bicycle kicked a tourist, spat and then shouted violent anti-Christian slogans.

October 12, Jerusalem, Old City. While a procession of monks from the Armenian Patriarchate was heading toward the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, two young men of religious appearance spat at the procession.

October 13, Jerusalem, Old City. Encouraged by their father, a boy and a teenage girl spat at the Armenian Patriarchate.

October 20, Jerusalem, Old City. A Jewish individual made an obscene and offensive gesture towards the participants in an Armenian procession.

November 9, West Jerusalem. A young man spat at a woman wearing a visible necklace with a cross.

November 16, Jerusalem, Armenian Patriarchate Street, Old City. A group surrounded a Christian family in their car, on Friday night, and the father of the family was beaten up and injured. The family was later rescued by the police, but the father was detained from midnight till the morning without medical treatment.

November 22, Jerusalem, Old City. An Orthodox man kicked the glass window of a coffeehouse in the Armenian Quarter.

December 19, Jerusalem, Old City. Religious men passed by Café Toma in the Armenian Quarter, when one of them turned toward the restaurant and urinated on a table and chair standing outside.

Harassment

Examples include verbal harassment, attacks and protests during Christian gatherings, anti-Christian propaganda.

January 5, West Jerusalem, A religious boy on a bus saw a nun standing on the street and made an obscene gesture at her.

January 12, Site of the Baptism of Jesus, Jordan River, As hundreds of pilgrims arrived to enter the site of the Baptism of Christ to celebrate Mass on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the entrance was closed to unregistered cars. This had not been the rule for years, as the site has

been open to the public. After an hour of diplomatic exchanges, 500 pilgrims were allowed to enter the site. The Mass for the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord began an hour late.

January 12, West Jerusalem. A UPS courier refused to deliver a heavy parcel inside the premises of a Catholic monastery. The worker contacted the sisters to inform them about the package's arrival but told one of the sisters, "I am a Jew, and I am not allowed to enter your premises." The sister responded kindly, "I am a nun, and I kindly ask you to enter our yard and not leave the parcel on the street." Eventually, the package was brought inside the yard.

January 13, Jerusalem, Mount Zion. A tour guide on a training course was explaining the history of Mount Zion and the Christian traditions, and one of the yeshiva students living nearby shouted at the group through a window, "Enough with that f***ing Jesus, stop talking about him."

January 21, Ein Gedi Nature Reserve. A group of Benedictine nuns from Abu Ghosh was touring the Nahal David Nature Reserve. A group of ultra-orthodox boys shouted at them: "F*** Jesus" and other derogatory terms about Jesus.

March 8, Jerusalem, Old City near Damascus Gate. A nun was walking in the area near Damascus Gate, directed up towards the New Gate, when two young Orthodox men started yelling insults towards Jesus Christ. She stopped and asked them why they were speaking like this, and if they realized that it was deeply insulting. But after hearing her questions they went on, with even more satisfaction. She tried to take a picture or film them, but they walked fast and she was not able to get any image. Then she walked to a police patrol that was stationed nearby and explained to two officers what just happened.

April 12, Jerusalem, Old City. A young, religious man passed by a religious Catholic procession muttering to himself, 'Damn it'.

April 12, Jerusalem, Old City. An elderly man passed by a religious procession and said, "May their name be erased."

April 13, Jerusalem, Old City. Four Jewish men passed by the entrance of the Armenian Patriarchate, and one of them spat on the ground toward the monastery wall. When a volunteer from the Religious Freedom Data Center asked why he had spat, one of the men replied, "Because they are Christians," and added, "One day we will burn you all."

April 18, Jerusalem, Old City. During the procession to the Armenian Patriarchate, a group of Orthodox Jews passing nearby began singing loudly, laughing, clapping, and making disruptive noises in apparent mockery of the ceremony. Israeli security forces were standing behind the group and did not intervene; instead, they laughed. At the same time, a Jewish woman threw litter onto the pathway of the Armenian procession.

June 2, Jerusalem, Mount Zion Old City. On the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, an Evangelical delegation visiting the area of Mount Zion was verbally attacked by a Jewish woman who shouted in English, "Go back to your country, you have nothing to do here".

June 9, Jerusalem, Mount Zion Old City. A Jewish man blew his shofar outside the Room of the Last Supper, in order to disturb the prayers held on Mount Zion on the occasion of the Christian holiday of Pentecost.

July 20, Jerusalem, Old City. A girl on the scooter passed by an Armenian procession on Armenian Patriarchate Street and shouted, 'Tfu-Amelek!' (in the Hebrew Bible, Amalek is the enemy of the nation of the Israelites)

August 25, Jerusalem, Old City. Representatives of Jerusalem's various churches held a reception for the Ethiopian archbishop at Jaffa Gate. An ultra-Orthodox man rode by on an electric bicycle and shouted, "Go to hell now!"

August 27, Jerusalem, Old City. Three Jewish women stood near the Dung Gate as the Armenian procession descended to the Church of Mary's Tomb. One of them shouted at them, "Die!"

September 4, West Jerusalem. A group of kids yelled from windows to a nun who was in a Catholic

monastery's garden. The monastery is located in the middle of a Jewish Ultra-Orthodox neighborhood and is overlooked by apartment buildings. The kids were leaning from the windows of a school. They mocked her and then yelled "Christian, die!"

September 11, West Jerusalem. A foreign Catholic woman living in Jerusalem was walking along Ben Yehuda Street with her Palestinian husband and their five-year-old child. The child was wearing the "Terra Sancta" kindergarten uniform, which a Jewish woman seemed to recognize. After noticing the child, the woman began shouting in Hebrew that the family "must go away," repeatedly approaching them and gesturing to emphasize that they had no right to be there. The parents chose not to respond and just walked away to avoid frightening their child further.

September 12, Kiryat Shmona. A resident of Kiryat Shmona, burst into a space in the Kiryat Shmona industrial zone where a Christian community was praying. He threatened those present, saying they had no business being there and should leave Kiryat Shmona. In a video that appeared on social media, he explains that Christians should not be in Kiryat Shmona.

September 20, Migdal HaEmek. Residents of the city of Migdal Haemek gathered around and close to the house of a Christian family - peeking through the fence and looking at the family's activities in their yard, culminating in an evening protest against "non-Jews" living in the city. Loud music was played followed by dances- all in close vicinity to the residential unit. The family reported the event to the authorities and were told that the intruders received a permit to protest.

November 12, Jerusalem, on the road to Tantur. An Orthodox priest was subjected by a police officer to a demeaning search of his belongings, accompanied by mocking of his clerical attire.

November 22, Jerusalem, Old City. Four young people harassed a Catholic group walking along Via Dolorosa.

November 30, Jerusalem, Old City. Two boys began yelling at a Christian tourist. Eventually the police intervened and took one of the boys away from the scene.

December 4, Online incitement. A tour guide produced an educational film about Haifa's Jewish history, in which he speaks pejoratively about Christians explaining that they took over the Church of Stella Maris. He describes the "impurity" of the place and calls on Jews to come and pray outside the church to retake the site.

December 6, West Jerusalem. While walking from the Ratisbonne Monastery toward Ha-Rav Kook Street, two clergy members and two children were verbally harassed on King George Street by a young Jewish man in his twenties. The man made hostile and exclusionary remarks, telling them that Jews hate non-Jews and that they were not wanted in the country. When asked to stop, he escalated his behavior, claiming the police would remove them. The situation intensified when he directed insults at one of the clergy members, spat at him, made obscene gestures, and shouted further accusations and profanities. The children were sent away in another direction for their safety. A young woman passing by intervened in their defense and accompanied the group for several minutes. Although the harasser briefly calmed down, he resumed cursing before eventually crossing the street and leaving the area.

December 14, Kibbutz Sasa. Students deliberately damaged a Christmas tree that had been arranged in the school as part of a program on seasonal holidays. They kicked and destroyed the tree. Many students joined in and heated up the atmosphere with shouts and songs that hurt both the school atmosphere and the non-Jewish students who study there.

December 23, Netanya. A video clip with racist and anti-Christian content was circulated by Muslim students in a WhatsApp group for Arab students of the Netanya College. The "Christian Voice"

association contacted the leadership of the college who handled the situation together with the Police.

December 25, Be'er Ya'akov. A Christmas tree, placed by one of the hospital's employees, was removed from Assaf HaRofeh Hospital following a request by the religious-nationalist organization Hotam.

December 25, Kinneret College, Kibbutz Beit Zera. Christmas decorations and a Santa Claus figure placed in the courtyard of the mixed Jewish-Christian-Aramaic preparatory school were vandalized. According to a report, two young men were caught and were forced to repair the damage.

Attacks on Church properties: Examples include graffiti, arson, trespassing, damaging statues, throwing of stones and garbage within Church properties.

January 14, Old City, Christian Quarter. Posters depicting the Madonna, placed at a crossroads in the alley leading to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, were torn down. This was reported several times on separate occasions.

January 20, West Jerusalem. A sign describing the Salesian monastery was vandalized by black spray paint.

January 24, Old City, Mount Zion. A Franciscan monk reported that unknown individuals splashed black coffee sludge on the monastery door and doorframes. It is evident that this was done intentionally.

January 29, Old City. On January 29, the eve of Rosh Chodesh Shevat, a "Sivuv Shaarim" event was held by the "El Har HaMor" movement, with the participation of hundreds of Jews, including many children. When the crowds attempted to ascend the Via Dolorosa, many participants began spitting on and toward the facades of churches. The spitting was directed at the Church of the Flagellation and the Sisters of Zion Church.

The "Sivuv Shaarim" ("Circling the Gates") are

monthly religious gatherings held on the night marking the beginning of the Jewish month (Rosh Chodesh). During these events, participants assemble near the gates of the Al-Aqsa Mosque/ Temple Mount compound and circle the gates while reciting prayers. Through circling the gates of the Temple Mount, the organizers seek to express their aspiration for the rebuilding of the Temple and to raise this issue on the public agenda.

February 18, West Jerusalem. A plastic table was thrown onto the roof of the kindergarten located in the compound of a Christian monastery.

February 28, Jerusalem, Old City. Eight Jewish individuals (both adults and minors) were arrested by the police for spitting against a Christian church sites during the "Sivuv Shaarim" (Circling the Gates) that was held for the beginning of the Jewish month of Adar.

March 7, Jerusalem, Garden of Gethsemane. One of the Franciscan fathers in charge of the church called the police after a Jewish man (who had apparently jumped over the wall) was wandering around the Franciscans' olive grove, opposite to the complex of the Basilica of Gethsemane. He was behaving strangely, picking flowers, scattering building materials that were there, after generally trespassing on church property. The police told the monk to open the gate and let the man out even though the monk asked them to arrest him or at least take his identity details.

March 8, Jerusalem Old City, near the Armenian Patriarchate. A soldier with a weapon walked along Patriarchate Street, accompanied by two young men. The three looked around to see if anyone was watching them and perhaps searched for security cameras. When they believed no one was watching them, the soldier spat on the ground and in the direction of the Patriarchate Gate.

March 8, Migdal HaEmek. A stone was thrown into the grounds of a Catholic monastery.

March 11, Jaffa-Tel Aviv. During a photo shoot for a wedding in Old Jaffa, the photographer asked

the groom to move a bit in order not to be portrayed near a church. The groom followed the instruction after spitting toward the church.

March 28, Jerusalem, Old City. An ultra-Orthodox Jewish youth stood praying in front of the Armenian seminary. An Armenian bishop and another clergyman told him that it was inappropriate to pray in front of the Armenian seminary and that he should leave. He refused to move and only fled when a police car approached, after spitting. The police managed to catch him, but when he claimed that he had not spat, he was released.

March 29, Jerusalem, Old City. Monks were traveling in the Armenian Patriarchate's vehicle which had a cross on the windscreen. Three young religious Jews were walking in a manner that made the monks suspect something was up. A few of them spat on the windscreen, i.e. in the direction of the monks inside. Later, one of them spat on the pavement after another monk passed by. The monks were unable to locate the act of spitting on the vehicle on video, but they photographed the saliva on the windscreen. The additional spitting, after a monk passed by, was captured on camera.

April 9, Jerusalem, Old City. Two Jews spat openly at the Armenian Patriarchate while Deputy Mayor Adir Schwartz was present. Adir Schwartz published a post and sent a letter to the police regarding the spitting incident.

April 16, Jerusalem, Old City. Two separate incidents of spitting at the door of the Church of the Flagellation (Station II of the Via Dolorosa).

April 17, Jerusalem, Old City. A Jewish young woman asked a volunteer of the *Religious Freedom Data Center* what the place was, where she was standing. The volunteer replied that it was the Armenian monastery. The girl grimaced and spat heavily on the floor.

April 17, Jerusalem, Old City. A young man, possibly a hilltop settler given his appearance passed by the Armenian monastery and spat ostentatiously at the entrance.

April 17, Jerusalem, Old City. Teenagers spat at the entrance of the Armenian Patriarchate.

May 26, Jerusalem, Old City. On Jerusalem Day, a Jewish man passed by the Armenian monastery. and, despite the group of volunteers who were there, spat on the floor in front of the monastery entrance.

May 26, Jerusalem, Old City. On Jerusalem Day, passersby spat a few times on the entrance to the convent of the Sisters of Zion on the Via Dolorosa.

May 26, Jerusalem, Old City. On Jerusalem Day, a Jewish man passing in front of the convent of the Sisters of Zion asked a rabbi walking with him, 'Rabbi, is this a church?' and then spat.

May 26, Jerusalem, Old City. On Jerusalem Day, a girl spat in front of the entrance to the Armenian Patriarchate.

May 28, Jerusalem, Gethsemane. A pastor was guiding 16 students and stood in front of the Basilica of Gethsemane. A group of students passed by with their guide and spat towards the church entrance.

June 2, Jerusalem, Old City. On the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, a religious person spat on a wall near the entrance to the Armenian Patriarchate. An Armenian man approached the group where the spitter was standing and asked why he had spat. Soon, Jews of all kinds gathered around him, some of them claiming that the place belonged to them. A car passing by stopped, opened its window, took an interest, and then said something and spat. Someone called the police, but the patrol arrived 25 minutes later, when the Jewish crowd had already dispersed.

June 2, Jerusalem, Old City. On the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, an Ultra-Orthodox man spat at the gate of the Armenian Patriarchate.

June 2, Jerusalem, Old City. On the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, a group of religious Jewish individuals spat at the Armenian patriarchate.

June 5, Jerusalem, Old City. During the Jewish holiday of Shavuot. A group of ultra-Orthodox Jews stood near the entrance to the Syriac monastery.

From time to time, they approached and spat on the monastery door, loudly.

June 6, Jerusalem, Old City. Spitting towards the entrance to the Armenian Patriarchate.

June 6, West Jerusalem. The glass of the gate of the Templar cemetery in the neighborhood of the German Colony was smashed.

June 8, Jerusalem, Old City. A group of four young Jews entered through the monastery gate. The guard told them that it was closed and that they were not allowed to enter, but they continued with their intention to enter. An Armenian who arrived told them they could not enter, but they replied, 'This is our land,' 'You have no business here,' 'We will enter wherever we want.' Their behaviour was arrogant, and it can be assumed that they intended to trespass.

June 14, Tabgha, The Church of the Primacy of Peter. A group of five religious men trespassed and were bathing on the beach included within the church's property. An employee of the monastery approached them to ask them to leave. 'You'd be better off being Muslim,' they told him.

June 23, Jerusalem, Old City. The diplomatic car of the Latin Patriarchate was spat at, while the deputy Patriarch was sitting in the vehicle.

July 24 July, Tabgha. Ultra-Orthodox yeshiva students entered the compound of the church of the Primacy of Saint Peter, which is designated for prayer only, to bathe on the beach included in the property. They behaved rudely, said they did not want to leave (but eventually did), and one of them spat.

August 7, Jerusalem, Old City. Spitting at the Armenian Patriarchate.

August 8 August, Tabgha, Church of the Primacy of Peter. A group of teenagers entered the closed compound, wandered around the church grounds and then left by jumping over the gate.

August 11, Tabgha, Church of the Primacy of Peter. The friar in charge of the church saw a father with his four trespassing the property when

it was closed.

August 23 August, Jerusalem, Old City. A Jewish man spat contemptuously at the entrance to the Armenian monastery.

September 3, West Jerusalem. Plastic and glass bottles were thrown onto the roof of the Polish monastery. One of the glass bottles shattered on impact, scattering shards across the roof. The bottles could only have been thrown from the neighboring house.

September 19, Jerusalem, Old City. Spitting at the Armenian Patriarchate.

September 23, Tiberias. A couple dressed in beachwear sat on the beach of the monastery of the Church of the Primacy of Peter. They were asked to get dressed or leave, but they refused. They remained inappropriately dressed and even started to eat.

September 28, Jerusalem, Old City. The cameras of the Armenian Patriarchate captured a young Orthodox man urinating against the gate that fences the garden of the Armenian seminary.

October 8, West Jerusalem. A Catholic community reported three incidents of harassment, at least two of which occurred on the same night: Two bottles of wine were thrown at the kitchen window, luckily hitting a net net and causing no damage. Then two cars blocked the community's parking space with two cars left till the morning. Lastly, the community found out that someone defecated in their parking space and left food scraps.

October 8, Jerusalem, Old City. A group of over a hundred people gathered to pray in front of the entrance to the Armenian monastery. A similar phenomenon had occurred a couple of years before, during Jewish holidays. A young woman stood right next to the monastery door and prayed. It is possible that there was no malicious intent, but it was certainly insensitive, given that of all the public spaces in the area, the least convenient spot was chosen, right in front of the monastery entrance. No one bothered



Catholic Easter vigil at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Clergy are the primary targets of attacks such as spitting and verbal harassment. | Photo: Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

to check the location and whether it was respectful. The guard then said that the community police officer had arrived.

October 8, Jerusalem, Old City. Several separate spitting incidents occurred on the same day near the entrance of the Church of the Flagellation on the Via Dolorosa. In one incident, an ultra-Orthodox man spat at a passing couple. When the couple passed by again, the man's wife also spat at them.

October 9, Jerusalem, Old City. A man was spitting on the floor in front of the Armenian monastery gate and said, "Spit on the Christians."

October 9, Jerusalem, Old City. An ultra-Orthodox man spat at the entrance to the Church of the Flagellation, at the Via Dolorosa.

October 18, Banias, Northern Golan. Crosses were sawn off and then thrown from a church roof.

October 22, Banias, Northern Golan. Some drivers stopped near a church, spat toward it and drove away.

October 26, Jerusalem, Old City. A Jewish man

passed by the entrance of the Armenian Patriarchate and spat, despite the presence of policewomen who were standing at the location, ready to escort the Armenian procession.

December 30, Jerusalem, Old City. Four individuals spat at the entrance of the Church of the Flagellation.

Defacement of public signs:

February 18, Ein Karem Ma'ayan Miriam. A sign explaining the Christian context of the Miriam Spring had been vandalized so that the names and explanation of the Christian context are illegible. In the English explanation, the word 'Palestinians' had been vandalized.

March 26, Galilee. Stars of David were engraved on a stone with a cross marking a Christian trail and a walking path between the Mount of Beatitudes and Lake Tiberias.

June 1, Jerusalem, Old City. The sign providing information about the Cenacle (The Room of the Last Supper) was defaced.

July 19, Beit Shemesh area. The road signs at the Tzora junction, which point to the Deir Rafat monastery, have been spray-painted white so that the pictograms of a church and a cross are no longer visible.

August 6, Capernaum Junction. A street sign indicating the Church of the Multiplication was vandalized.

August 10, Mount of Beatitudes Junction. The sign indicating the Mount of Beatitudes was vandalized.

August 15, Monastery Latron Junction. The pictogram on the road sign for Latroun Monastery has been spray-painted.

September 3, Ein Karem. The sign marking the Christian site known as "Mary's Spring" was vandalized.

September 16 Jerusalem, Old City. Signage directing visitors to the Dormition Abbey was intentionally covered with stickers.

October 19, West Jerusalem. The sign pointing to the Ethiopian church was spray-painted white.

October 25, Abu Gosh. A sign on Route 425 directing to the monastery in Abu Ghosh was vandalized, with the church symbol and the cross spray-painted over.

October 27, Beit Shemesh. Two road signs indicating the monastery of Deir Rafat were spray-painted in white to erase the cross symbol and the church.

October 30, Tabgha. A sign pointing to the church of the Primacy of Peter was vandalized to erase the symbol of the church.

November 12, Beit Jamal. The street sign on Route 38 directing visitors to the Beit Jamal Monastery was vandalized, with the cross symbol spray-painted over.

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Cover Photo: Worshippers in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre during the liturgy of Eastern Easter and the Holy Fire Ceremony. | Photo: Cole Martin.

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