

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our Subscriber Agreement and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit [www.djreprints.com](http://www.djreprints.com).

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/israeli-pilgrims-attack-on-palestinians-draws-condemnation-11668959413>

WORLD MIDDLE EAST

# Israeli Pilgrims' Attack on Palestinians Draws Condemnation

U.S. Ambassador to Israel describes the riot in the West Bank city of Hebron as abhorrent



Israeli security forces were deployed during the riot in the West Bank city of Hebron on Saturday.

PHOTO: HAZEM BADER/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

By [Dov Lieber](#) [Follow](#) and [Fatima AbdulKarim](#)

Nov. 20, 2022 10:50 am ET

TEL AVIV—A riot by Jewish pilgrims in the West Bank city of Hebron over the weekend drew widespread condemnation, with Palestinian leaders warning that the incoming right-wing Israeli government could cause further instability in the West Bank.

On Sunday, U.S. Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides called the riot abhorrent and urged rapid de-escalation of the situation. Outgoing Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid called the events, in which one Israeli soldier was injured, a “national disgrace.” Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz condemned the attacks on Palestinians and Israeli forces and said those responsible would be held accountable. Incoming Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu issued no statement about the violence in Hebron, and his spokesman didn’t respond to requests for comment.

Israeli officials estimated 30,000 Jewish pilgrims visited Hebron for a special

celebration over the Jewish Sabbath, during which a section from the Torah was read that describes how the patriarch Abraham bought a plot of land to bury his wife, Sarah. The Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, a holy site for Jews, is believed to be that plot of land referenced in the Bible. The Ibrahimi Mosque, a holy site for Muslims, also stands on that same plot of land.

“They used to come visit in dozens, but yesterday they were in hundreds and maybe thousands,” said Yousef Abu Eisheh, head of the merchants union in Hebron’s Bab Al-Zawiya Square. “What we saw was lots of hate, not people coming for prayers.”

A group of Jewish pilgrims marched through a Palestinian section of Hebron to visit the tomb of a biblical figure. During that march a group of Jewish pilgrims attacked Palestinians, the Israeli military said, followed by subsequent clashes between Jews and Palestinians. Jewish rioters damaged Palestinian homes, vehicles and businesses, throwing stones and bottles at pedestrians, according to Palestinian eyewitnesses and Israeli human-rights groups. Some Palestinians responded by throwing rocks and vegetables, according to eyewitnesses and videos on social media. One Israeli rioter attacked a female soldier, according to the Israeli military.



A member of the Israeli security forces pushed away a man in the West Bank city of Hebron on Saturday.

PHOTO: HAZEM BADER/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

“The confrontation, in which both the Israeli civilians and Palestinians hurled rocks at one another was instigated after a previous riot that took place by

ROCKS at one another was instigated after a previous riot that took place by Israeli civilians, in which they hurled rocks in the area," the Israeli military said in a statement.

Hebron is the West Bank's most populous Palestinian city as well as home to a small enclave of religious Jews. Noam Arnon, a spokesman for Hebron's Jewish Community, said Sunday in an interview with Army Radio that, "We were shocked by this story."

"We don't know who they are and what motivates them," he said, calling them hooligans.

Orit Strook, an Israeli lawmaker from the Religious Zionism party and a resident of Hebron, condemned the rioting in an interview Sunday with Army Radio, and said security officials told her 150-200 Jewish individuals were involved in the violence.

The attack by Jews comes after Mr. Netanyahu and his bloc of right-wing, ultranationalist and religious parties won elections earlier this month and are currently negotiating a coalition agreement.

"This right-wing government will be responsible for the deterioration of the situation and instability," said Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman for Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. Mr. Abu Rudeineh warned that the riot over the weekend "points to what will happen in the next stage with the existence of the radical right-wing Israeli government."

Mr. Netanyahu's would-be coalition partners advocate for expanding Jewish settlements and annexing portions of the West Bank. Bezalel Smotrich, head of the Religious Zionism party, has said he won't join Mr. Netanyahu's coalition if he isn't appointed minister of defense. A ticket that included the Religious Zionism party won 14 seats in the election, making it the third-largest party in the Israeli Parliament, or Knesset.

Co-leader of the alliance, Itamar Ben-Gvir, called the rioter who attacked the Israeli soldier a drunk on Twitter Sunday. He didn't comment on the violence against Palestinians but said, "The 30,000 guests who spent the Sabbath in Hebron love the Israeli army."

The rioting in Hebron comes amid a period of sustained conflict between Israeli security forces and Palestinian militants, which has resulted in one of the bloodiest years in the Israeli-occupied West Bank in more than a decade.

United Nations Peace Envoy to the Middle East Tor Wennesland warned violence by Israeli settlers in the West Bank could further destabilize the area.

“I condemn today’s violent attacks by Israeli extremists against Palestinian residents in the Old City of Hebron. Such acts may aggravate an already tense environment,” he tweeted Saturday night.

The United Nations has reported a steady rise in Israeli settler attacks on Palestinians and their property in the West Bank in recent years. In a report released last month, the U.N. said that up to Oct. 10 this year it recorded 527 settler-related incidents that resulted in physical attacks on Palestinian persons or property. There were 496 in 2021 and 358 in 2020, according to the U.N.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said it treated 10 Palestinians injured by Israeli forces and civilians during the rioting in Hebron, with four being treated on site and six being transferred to a hospital for treatment. All injuries were light to moderate, the medical organization said.

*Appeared in the November 21, 2022, print edition as ‘Riot by Jewish Pilgrims In Hebron Spurs Outcry’.*