



Israel-Palestinian Tensions Reignite

Product of the Research & Information Support Center (RISC)

The following report is based on open-source reporting.

Overview

Over the past several weeks, Israeli-Palestinian tensions have erupted into widespread protests, clashes, and nationally motivated attacks using guns, knives or vehicles as weapons. These attacks consist of lone Palestinians attacking Israelis, and conversely attacks by Jewish Israelis upon Israeli Arabs and by settlers upon Palestinians.

Such violence erupts periodically (See OSAC reports on previous conflicts: [November 2014](#), [Summer 2014](#)), with some analysts citing a correlation with conflict over Israeli settlements in Palestinian neighborhoods, Israeli visits to the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount (HAS/TM) compound, restrictions on HAS/TM for Palestinians, reports of Palestinians killed as a result of Israeli security force action, settler violence against Palestinians, and other issues. Currently, the attacks are heavily concentrated in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Incidents have also occurred throughout Israel (including the Tel Aviv metropolitan area) and Gaza, highlighting that no area is immune. Israeli-Palestinian violence is cyclical and often unpredictable in nature, and often ends as quickly as it begins; however, assessing the longevity of each period can be challenging.

Recent Events

During this recent uptick in violence, eight Israelis have died in stabbing attacks, shootings and the stoning of a vehicle and 30 Palestinians have been killed in violence since October 1.¹ In one of the most serious attacks, two Palestinians stabbed passengers and opened fire aboard a bus on Olei Hagardom Street, located in East Jerusalem's Armon Ha Natziv neighborhood. Two people were killed and at least 16 others were injured. Police shot and killed one assailant and arrested the other.

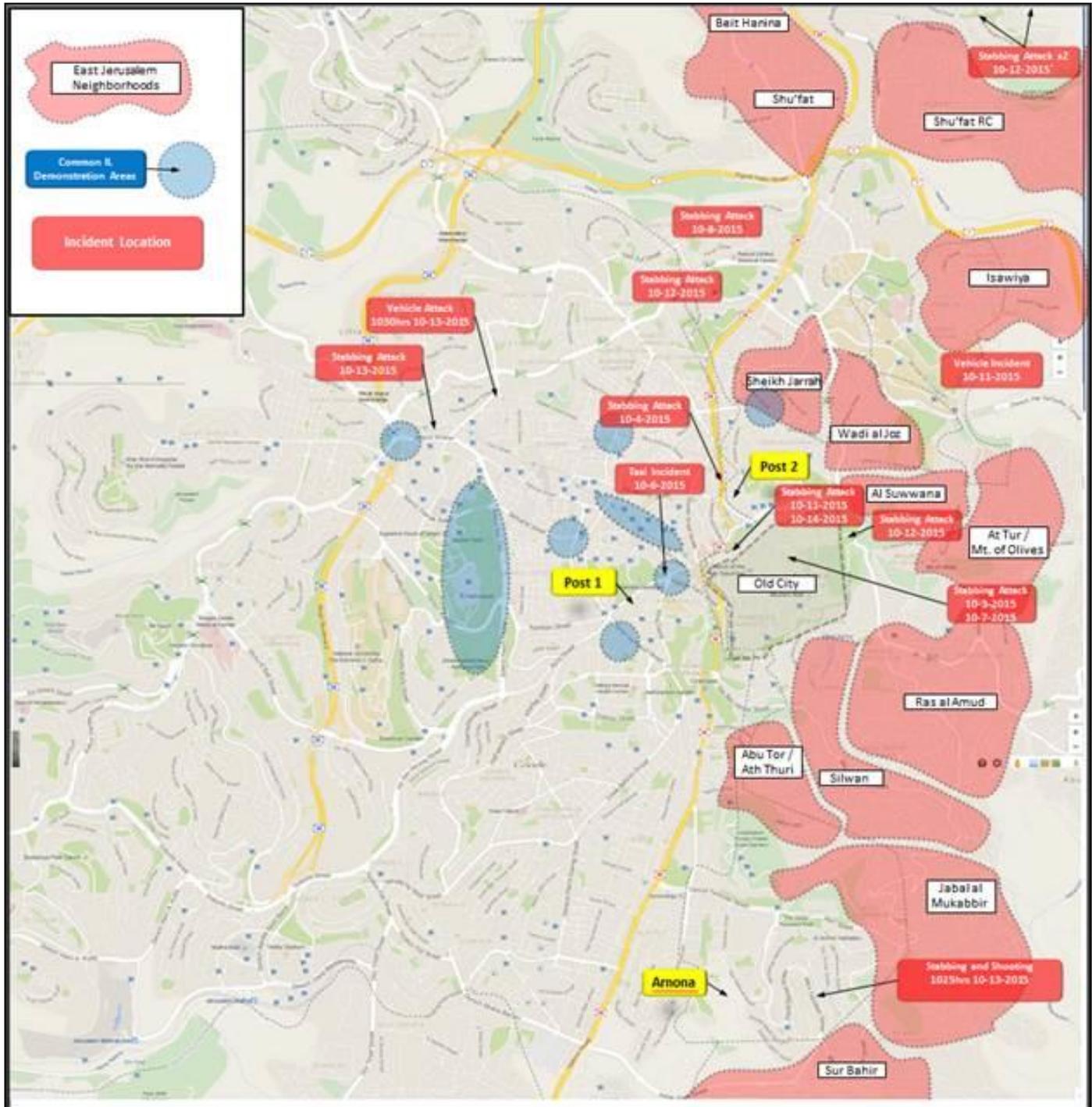
Israeli security, law enforcement and defense services have responded with increased patrols, checkpoints, additional deployed personnel, more aggressive crowd control tactics and response measures, which often involve the use of force to include tear gas and gun fire (both live fire and rubber bullets). Local media report that Israeli authorities have confirmed that Palestinian Authority Security Forces are making a concerted effort to calm tensions in the West Bank and have, so far, succeeded in limiting confrontations there.

Additionally, Israel's Security Cabinet has implemented the following measures to respond to the heightened violence:

- Police have imposed a closure on centers of friction and incitement in East Jerusalem, with increased checkpoints and some street closures.
- The homes of attackers will be demolished, and no new construction will be permitted at that site.
- The property of terrorists who perpetrate attacks will be confiscated.

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- The permanent residency rights of terrorists who reside in East Jerusalem will be revoked.
- Three hundred additional security guards will be recruited for public transportation in Jerusalem. Up to six companies of Israel Defense Force soldiers were ordered to reinforce the Israel Police in Israeli cities and along major roads and the operational



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force of the Israel Police will be expanded.

Protests and clashes are localized, and many occur with limited notice; based on precedent, many are likely to devolve into violence. Because of the localized nature of the protests, most OSAC constituents may be able to avoid protest activity by monitoring local news and avoiding areas where tensions are known to be highest, such as East Jerusalem and West Bank cities such as Bethlehem, Hebron, Ramallah, and Nablus. Typical areas of protests in Israel include Jaffa, and other mixed or predominately Arab cities (to include Haifa, Nazareth, Afula) which are often the scene of Palestinian solidarity protests.

Private Sector Implications

Both U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv and U.S. Consulate General Jerusalem have issued several Security Messages in October regarding the persistent violence; the most recent was issued on [October 21](#) and provided additional security recommendations on Consulate General employees in the West Bank and Jerusalem (Please see previous recent messages from [October 13](#), [October 6](#), and [October 4](#)). The following new restrictions are in place for all U.S. government employees:

- The U.S. Consulate has prohibited U.S. government employees and their dependents from using the Jerusalem Light Rail north of the City Hall stop along Jaffa Road.
- U.S. government employees and their dependents may enter the Old City during daylight hours only (from 8:00 am -6:00 pm), but they must check-in with the Consulate prior to entering the Old City, and must check-out again with the Consulate upon leaving the Old City. Travel to the Old City after dark (6:00 pm -8:00 am) continues to be restricted for U.S. government employees unless a visit is deemed mission essential and receives permission and support from the Consulate's Security Office. The Consulate strongly advises avoiding the use of the Damascus, Lions, and Herod's gates in the Old City as these locations have been the scene of past attacks.
- U.S. government employees and their dependents may now drive through the West Bank portion of Route 443, but are prohibited from turning off the main highway.
- U.S. government employees and their dependents are prohibited from personal travel to Bethlehem, and personal travel to Jericho requires advance approval by the U.S. Consulate. U.S. government employees are only permitted to travel to the West Bank for official, mission-critical business.
- Official travel to the West Bank is restricted for other than mission-critical business.

Due to Israel's robust security apparatus, complex, coordinated attacks are less likely to be successful in Jerusalem and Israel. Low-level "lone wolf" attacks perpetrated by solitary assailants such as stabbings and vehicular attacks are likely to continue as tensions remain high. Stabbings have become a common tactic in recent weeks,. Hamas-affiliated sympathizers reportedly recently distributed an online instructional video on how to conduct stabbing attacks more efficiently.ⁱⁱ Copycat incidents may also perpetuate the violence.

U.S. private-sector interests and Western travelers are generally not targeted in these incidents, but may be impacted by collateral violence (e.g. "wrong place, wrong time"), especially considering the popularity of the area among tourists. Israeli soldiers and law enforcement

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officers are a prime target, with many incidents targeting security forces at checkpoints and other clearly identifiable targets; therefore, proximity to these actors could raise the risk for travelers. OSAC constituents are advised to exercise caution and heighten their sense of awareness when traveling through busy, heavily-populated areas where stabbings or vehicular attacks are also common. Public buses, bus stations, and bus stops have traditionally been a targeting priority in Israel; OSAC constituents are advised to avoid these locations as well. Both the U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv and U.S. Consulate General Jerusalem have standing security policies prohibiting U.S. government personnel from using the public buses and their associated stops and terminals for this very reason.

Constituent response to the current state of violence is largely to avoid known areas of conflict such as the West Bank and Old City Jerusalem, although some constituents have temporarily suspended all travel to Jerusalem and the West Bank. Some constituents have also reported providing security briefings to their staff operating in impacted areas and offering them the option to telecommute to reduce their exposure to risk.

As the situation evolves, constituents should monitor for an escalation of violence to include Gaza where on October 9 Israeli forces fired across the border during a protest in Gaza, killing seven Palestinians and there have been several violent protests along the border and Israel Defense Security Forces incursions. In response to the concern of small arms, mortar and rocket fire originating from within Gaza towards and into Israel, U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv restricts travel within 7 miles of the Gaza Strip to official travel with special security protocols in effect.

Currently, an outbreak of rocket-fire from the Gaza Strip appears unlikely, although occasionally rockets have been fired from Gaza towards and into Israel. These incidents have resulted in rockets falling short within Gaza, impacting in undeveloped areas of southern Israel and interceptions by Israel's missile defense system near developed areas of Israel. On October 11, an IDF airstrike in Gaza City caused a home to collapse, killing a pregnant woman and her 3-year old daughter and injuring a 5-year old boy and another Palestinian. As Hamas took significant losses during the 2014 conflict with Israel, it is assessed that they may not yet be in a position to engage in another round of violence. That said, all personnel in Israel would be well advised to monitor Israel's "red alert" application and be prepared for the possibility of rocket attacks.

OSAC Constituents are reminded to register with the Department of State's [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) (STEP) to monitor messaging from the U.S. Embassy and Consulate in country. Constituents can also monitor real-time rocket incidents through the [Red Alert: Israel](#) app. Information on rocket attacks and self-protection can also be found on the Israeli [Home Front Command](#) page.

For Additional Information

For additional information on this report or other regional security developments, please contact OSAC's Middle East and North Africa team at OSACnea@state.gov.

Appendix

There have been dozens of incidents reported over the past week, below is a small percentage of recent incidents, focusing on stabbing attacks.

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October 14:

- Jerusalem: One Palestinian was shot dead by police after rushing past a checkpoint near Damascus Gate. Reports suggest the individual was shot during an attempted stabbing attack.ⁱⁱⁱ

Attacks and protests in Israel and the Palestinian territories



1 | Two Palestinians board bus in Armon HaNetziv area and stab passengers, killing two and injuring four. One attacker killed, the other detained

2 | Palestinian rams his car into a bus stop on Malchi Yisrael St, then stabs pedestrians. One Israeli killed and three injured

3 | Two stabbing incidents leave five injured

4 | Israeli soldiers fire at protesters on the Gaza border. Five reported injured

5 | Israeli police says a Jewish Israeli man stabs another Jew in a suspected failed revenge attack

- Jerusalem: One Palestinian was shot dead by police the Central Bus Station after he stabbed and injured one Israeli civilian.^{iv}

October 13:

- Jerusalem: Two Palestinians stabbed passengers and opened fire aboard a bus on Olei Hagardom Street, located in East Jerusalem's Armon Ha Natziv neighborhood. Two people were killed and at least 16 others were injured. Police shot and killed one assailant and arrested the other.

- Jerusalem: In the Geula neighborhood (Malchi Yisrael Street) a vehicular attack, in which a vehicle is rammed into a group of pedestrians, killed one Jewish victim and injured three others. Israeli security forces shot and killed the assailant.

- Raanana: Two stabbing incidents took place in Raanana, a suburb located approximately 6 miles north of Tel Aviv . Five people were reported injured..

- Kiryat Ata: a Jewish man reportedly misidentified as an Arab was stabbed.

- Netanya: a Jewish man attacked an Israeli Arab.

- Sakhnin: Around 20,000 protesters marched in Sakhnin, northern Israel, in solidarity with Palestinians.

October 12:

- Jerusalem: A 13-year-old Palestinian was shot after launching a stabbing attack on a Jewish boy in the East Jerusalem settlement of Pisgat Ze'ev neighborhood with another

Figure 2 Map of High-Profile Incidents on October 13 Courtesy of The Guardian

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Palestinian teenager who was his cousin. Another Jewish individual was injured in the attack. Israeli security forces shot and killed one assailant and detained the second, who was reportedly run over and injured.

- Jerusalem: A Palestinian was shot dead near Lion's Gate by Israeli police. Some reports say he stabbed a soldier's vest, while other reports deny that he stabbed anyone.
- Jerusalem: A Palestinian teenager conducted a stabbing attack outside a police station at Ammunition Hill (or Sheikh Jarrah). Police shot and injured her. One Israeli border guard was injured.
- Jerusalem: One Palestinian was shot dead while trying to grab an Israeli soldier's gun on a bus. The Palestinian attempted to stab the soldier when he failed to grab the gun, leading to a scuffle. One Israeli security officer was injured.

October 11:

- West Bank: Reports of a potential attack was reported when a Palestinian woman allegedly activated an explosive device when her vehicle was pulled over for a security check near the a-Zaim checkpoint. Details of the incident, including confirmation that it was an intended terrorist incident, remain unconfirmed; indeed the Palestinian Authority reports that the incident was triggered by an internal engine fire that caused the car's airbags to deploy. The Palestinian woman was critically injured and an Israeli security officer lightly injured.
- Hadera: An Israeli Palestinian man drove his vehicle into two Israeli soldiers at a bus stop and then exited the vehicle to stab them near Hadera in northern Israel near Haifa. The assailant was arrested and three people injured.
- A rocket was fired from Gaza landing on unoccupied land in Israel and causing no injuries.

October 10:

- Jerusalem: A Palestinian teenager injured two elderly Jewish victims in a stabbing attack on HaNevim Street near Damascus Gate in Jerusalem's Old City; he was killed by authorities. Two Israeli civilians were injured.
- Jerusalem: A Palestinian youth stabbed two Israeli police officers near Damasus Gate. A third officer was reportedly injured by friendly fire. The assailant was shot dead by police.

October 9:

- Gaza Strip: Violence broke out on the Gaza-Israel border as protesting Gazans approached the border fence. Israeli authorities later entered the Gaza Strip resulting in the deaths of several Palestinians.
- Dimona: Four Palestinians were stabbed by an Israeli youth.
- Jerusalem: An Israeli youth was stabbed on Shmuel Hanavi Street.
- Kiryat Arba: A Palestinian stabbed a police officer in Kiryat Arba and then attempted to steal his gun before police shot him near Hebron.

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- Afula: A Palestinian woman was shot and injured after trying to stab an Israeli security guard at the Central bus stop in Afula.

October 8:

- Tel Aviv: Stabbing near Kyria (Israel's Defense Headquarters). A uniformed Israeli service personnel and several others were stabbed. The Palestinian assailant was shot and killed by Israeli authorities. This incident occurred approximately 1 ½ miles east of the U.S. Embassy.

October 7:

- Petah Tikva: Israeli civilian was stabbed at a shopping mall; the Palestinian male assailant was later apprehended by police.
- Lod: Police and Arabs clash, resulting in reported injuries.
- Jaffa: Rocks thrown at a city bus, 2 persons arrested.
- Al Zaim Checkpoint on Route 1: A vehicle tried to run over two pedestrians, the Palestinian driver was shot by Israeli authorities.
- Old City: A Palestinian stabbed and injured two Israeli civilians.

October 6:

- Jaffa: During a Palestinian solidarity protest clashes erupted resulting in injuries.

ⁱ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/14/israel-authorises-police-to-seal-off-palestinian-areas-of-jerusalem>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/WATCH-Palestinian-instructional-video-on-how-to-stab-goes-viral-on-social-media-385942>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/man-shot-dead-after-rushing-cops-jerusalem-n444291>

^{iv} <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/man-shot-dead-after-rushing-cops-jerusalem-n444291>