

# Israeli Extremists Burn the Church Where Jesus Multiplied Loaves and Fishes

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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Image: Church burned in Tiberias (image by 'Palestinian Christians' Facebook group)

The fire was set at about 3 am in the early hours of Thursday morning, severely damaging church offices and storage rooms. The entire church was saturated with smoke damage.

In addition, Hebrew graffiti was spraypainted all over the front entrance to the church reading "Pagans" in red paint.

The Church of the Multiplication is believed by Christians to be the site of Jesus's miracle of multiplying two fish and five loaves to feed 5,000 people.

Several church volunteers suffered from smoke inhalation while trying to extinguish the fire before the firefighters arrived on the scene. The fire was put out several hours after it began.

The church, which is run by the Catholic Benedictine Order, is best known for its fifth-century mosaics, including one depicting two fish flanking a basket of loaves.

Christian churches have been targeted by right-wing Jewish Israeli attacks hundreds of times in recent years.

In May 2014, the Romanian Orthodox Church on Hahoma Hashlishit Street in Jerusalem was defaced in a suspected hate attack. That incident saw the words "price tag", "Jesus is garbage" and "King David for the Jews" spray-painted on the site's walls.

Two weeks earlier, ahead of a visit to the country by Pope Francis, suspected Jewish extremists daubed hate graffiti on Vatican-owned offices in Jerusalem.

The Hebrew-language graffiti, reading "Death to Arabs and Christians and those who hate Israel," was sprayed on the walls of the offices of the Assembly of Bishops at the Notre Dame center, a complex just outside the Old City, the Roman Catholic Church said.

Dmitry Diliani, a member of the Fateh revolutionary council, as well as the Secretary-General of the national Christian Assembly in Palestine, issued a statement that the attack on the church represents a practical application of the stances taken by the Israeli government, which funds fanatic groups.

He noted that some of the leaders of those fanatic groups hold political positions in spite of their incitement. By refusing to list those groups as terrorist organizations, Diliani argued,

the Israeli Knesset is effectively providing them with legal protection, and is not taking seriously the ongoing, multiple attacks by right-wing Israelis against Christian and Muslim holy sites.

Knesset Member Dr. Basil Khattas was quoted as saying,

“Those terrorist groups attack both Christian and Muslim holy sites with impunity. The Israeli government must open a serious investigation into this and other incidents of violence against holy sites.”

Israeli authorities say they are investigating to see if the fire was an accident or was intentional. But Christians who live in the area say that the Israeli police are not taking the investigation seriously – adding that this was obviously an anti-Christian hate crime, given the graffiti that was written on the site of the fire.

No arrests have been made in connection with the arson.



Church burned in Tiberias (image by ‘Palestinian Christians’ Facebook group)



Church burned in Tiberias (image by ‘Palestinian Christians’ Facebook group)



Graffiti on front entrance of church in Tiberias (image by ‘Palestinian Christians’ Facebook group)

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