

Riots Over Israeli Claim to West Bank Heritage Sites

By [Global Research](#)

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Israeli soldiers have clashed with protesters in the West Bank town of Hebron after two disputed shrines were listed as Israeli heritage sites.

Palestinian protesters threw bottles and stones at soldiers who responded with tear gas and stun grenades.

The protesters say the move to list the shrines as heritage sites would restrict Muslims access to them, but this has been denied.

The Hebron shrine is an important site for both Jews and Muslims.

The rioting was the most serious unrest in the area for months, the Associated Press reported.

The Israeli military said one soldier was lightly injured in the clashes.

Restoration plan

On Sunday Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the Tomb of the Patriarchs, known to Muslims as the al-Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, and the site of Rachel's tomb in Bethlehem would now be included in a \$107m (£69m) restoration plan.

About 100 protesters clashed with soldiers, a military spokeswoman said.

Many of the rioters were students from a school in the southern part of the city.

"The occupation has devoted all of its efforts to steal Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem, Hebron and Palestinian cities to change their Arab and Islamic character to prove the country is Jewish," the Palestinian Mufti Sheikh Muhammad Hussein told the Palestinian Maan news agency.

Jordan condemned what it called Israel's "provocative" plan to include the sites, saying it would "harm peace efforts" and "anger millions of Muslims around the world", AFP reported.

The UN's special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, Robert Serry, said he was "concerned" about Israel's announcement, and called for "restraint and calm".

The Hebron burial site is where the Bible says Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were buried along with three of their wives.

It has been a flashpoint for decades, with 500 Jewish settlers now living in enclaves near the disputed site, surrounded by 170,000 Palestinians.

The Tomb of Rachel – a shrine to the Biblical matriarch – has also been a source of controversy.

Some Muslims say it is the site of a mosque.

Also, Israel’s West Bank barrier juts far into Bethlehem so that the tomb is located on the Israeli side, ostensibly for security reasons.

However, Palestinians say it impedes their access and represents a land grab illegal under international law.

Close to 500,000 Jews live in more than 100 settlements built since Israel’s 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Arab East Jerusalem.

The settlements are illegal under international law, though Israel disputes this.

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