



IN Jerusalem

THE JERUSALEM POST JULY 18, 2014

Flare-ups in east Jerusalem

How are Jews living in
Arab neighborhoods
affected by the hostilities?

Forgotten residents?

Jews living in Arab neighborhoods who were attacked during the recent riots claim they are neglected by police

• By YARDENA SCHWARTZ

In the volatile aftermath of the kidnapping and murder of four teenage boys, violent riots gripped Jerusalem, leaving behind what will likely become iconic images of the lead-up to Operation Protective Edge. First there was the crowd of right-wing demonstrators marching through Jerusalem chanting “Death to Arabs” and

attacking random Palestinians, just as Naftali Fraenkel, Gil-Ad Shaer and Eyal Yifrah were laid to rest and their families warned against an atmosphere of vengeance. Then, after the body of Muhammad Abu Khdeir was discovered in the Jerusalem Forest, came the reaction from predominantly Arab east Jerusalem. Footage of fierce riots in Shuafat, broadcast around the world, depicted Israeli police

firing tear gas and rubber bullets at young Palestinian stone-throwers. A viral video of police beating one rioter, Abu Khdeir’s 15-year-old cousin, spawned condemnations from the US and Israeli leaders. Reports of Israeli violence against Palestinians appeared in just about every major international newspaper. Receiving arguably less attention were the many cases of incitement and attacks against

the Jews of east Jerusalem. Along the destroyed light rail line in Shuafat, where some of the fiercest rioting took place, graffiti proclaimed, “Death to Israel, Death to the Jews.” Further south, on July 6 in Nof Zion – a Jewish neighborhood that straddles the Arab town of Jebel Mukaber – Palestinians threw Molotov cocktails and firebombs at Jewish homes. One of those Molotov cocktails narrowly missed a mother who

was holding her two-week-old baby, and torching two cars that were parked next to a gas tank. One of the worst incidents took place on Saturday night, July 5, when an elderly Jewish man, his wife and two children were attacked on their walk home in the Old City. The Damascus Gate was closed to Jewish residents that night, so they had to go by way of the market, through the Muslim Quarter.



A close-up of the bullet hole left behind by the alleged shootout at Nof Zion. (Yardena Schwartz)



City councillor Arie King. (Courtesy)

‘In the Jewish neighborhoods, you have police stations and a heavy police presence throughout the year. In east Jerusalem, that’s not the case, and this is why I think we got to where we are today, where the Arabs in Shuafat started to demolish public property, causing damage of tens of millions of shekels, and of course the people who are paying the taxes need to sponsor the repair of these places’

Arie King
city councillor



Batya Kayman with her husband and children at the park in French Hill, which overlooks Shuafat Refugee Camp. (Courtesy Batya Kayman)



Ben Packer with his wife and children in the Old City. (Courtesy Ben Packer)



A view of bullet holes from inside a Nof Zion apartment. (Eliyon Shemesh)

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COVER

"We passed two Arab teens who cursed us and then started to push and beat us up," recalls 60-year-old Hana El-Hai. "At once about 20 other Arabs, who had been sitting in a nearby shop watching the World Cup, rushed out to the street."

According to El-Hai, the group pounced on the family. Soon large flowerpots were being thrown at them from apartment balconies overhead. Her 80-year-old husband, Daniel, was thrown on the ground and brutally beaten. Their 20-year-old son, David, was choked with a thick stick pressed to his throat. Hana had a full can of pepper spray emptied in her face, while her 14-year-old daughter managed to run away and call the police. Meanwhile, Daniel, an IDF veteran, gained his footing, stood up, pulled a pistol out of his pocket, and fired it into the air. It was the first time he had used his personal weapon, says his wife, "after decades of carrying it 'just in case.'"

The mob dispersed immediately, she says. She, her husband and their son were left lying in the street, stunned and in pain, their eyes and throats stinging from the gas, no longer able to stand up. It took a while for the police to show up, and when they did, the El-Hais were shocked by their reaction.

"The first thing they did was point at my husband and say, 'He's the problem!'" Despite our terrible physical condition and the police's promise to let us go home first, they dragged us to the Kishle police station," Hana recounts. "Our son was taken for interrogation, and we sat there waiting for him. My husband's health deteriorated further. Despite all that, they detained him, too, for interrogation, and only hours later was he allowed to go to the hospital. The next morning, we were dumbfounded to find that we were being interrogated under caution, charged with attacking our attackers. His pistol was seized, and we were left beaten body and soul by our evil enemies, and to our great dismay, abandoned by those whose duty it is to protect us."

According to the Jerusalem Police, an investigation into that incident is ongoing, as is an investigation into the attacks in Nof Zion.

On July 7, after the aforementioned Molotov cocktail incident, Jewish residents were guarding the building that had been attacked, when Palestinians allegedly drove up to the same building and started shooting a Kalashnikov rifle at the guards. After one of the Jewish guards took out his pistol and fired back, the car drove away, leaving no casualties except for a bullet hole in a security gate, and two bullet holes through the window of a thankfully empty apartment.

Residents who witnessed the incident and called the police said it took 20 minutes for them to arrive, despite the police station being a one-minute drive up the road. In this case, they took Yoni, the Jewish man who had fired back at his alleged attackers, into custody for a few hours, questioned him, and released him after taking away his pistol.

"The police were here for five minutes, and all they took were the shells from Yoni's gun. They didn't ask any of us what happened. They just took Yoni away and left," says Chen Rosen, a resident of Nof Zion who witnessed the incident. "After the police left, 50 Arabs came back rioting, screaming 'Allahu Akbar!' and throwing rocks."

According to Israel Police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld, initial police reports stated that fireworks had been thrown at the security guard, who had responded with gunfire. After further investigation, police did find bullet holes in the building and determined that the guard had responded correctly to the situation. Police are still searching for the alleged Palestinian shooters, says Rosenfeld, as well as looking into video footage from the building's surveillance camera.

The investigation is ongoing, but Jewish residents who watched the footage say it will prove their side of the story.





One of two cars that were destroyed by fire bombs outside Nof Zion. (Yardena Schwartz)

IF THE residents of Sderot are on the front lines of the air war with Gaza, bearing the brunt of rocket attacks from Palestinian terrorists, the Jewish residents of east Jerusalem are on the front lines of the street war that has boiled over within the country’s borders, enduring near-daily attacks since the beginning of July.

Like those in Sderot, who were living under constant rocket fire long before Tel Aviv residents became accustomed to trading their alarm clocks for early-morning rocket sirens, Jews living in predominantly Arab east Jerusalem have grown used to verbal and physical attacks from their neighbors.

“This week was bad,” says Batya Kayman, who lives in French Hill, the Jewish neighborhood sandwiched between Arab Shuafat and Isawiya. Overlooking the Shuafat refugee camp, Kayman points out that many of the buildings are new, Jerusalem-stone structures, not the tent camp that many watching the news overseas might imagine.

“I’ve seen these riots many times before, especially on ‘Nakba Day’ and ‘Naksa Day,’” says the mother of four, using the Arabic names for Independence Day and Jerusalem Day. “It’s our reality. This is nothing new, it’s just worse than usual.”

Indeed, it is much worse than usual.

Between April and July, there was a four-fold increase in attacks against Jewish residents of east Jerusalem. According to figures from the Construction and Housing Ministry, which is responsible for the safety of this area’s Jewish residents, there were 44 such attacks in the first 14 days of April. In contrast, the first 14 days of July – immediately after the murder of Abu Khdeir – brought 179 attacks against Jews in east Jerusalem.

And much like residents of Sderot, who were hoping the government would take action against Hamas long before Operation Protective Edge began, Jewish residents of east Jerusalem wish the government would do more to protect them.

“We feel that we have no backing. We have no one to turn to,” says Nof Zion’s Rosen.

Rabbi Ben Packer, director of the Jerusalem Heritage House, has lived in the Old City for 15 years and says that Ramadan typically brings more nighttime disturbances among the city’s Arab population. This year, however, he is taking extra precautions that he hasn’t taken in the past, such as limiting how late his five children can leave the house and where they can go.

While Packer blames the kidnapping and murder of the teenage boys for heightening tensions between the city’s Arab and Jewish residents, he faults the police for allowing the situation to escalate as much as it has.

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The marks left behind by a Molotov cocktail thrown at a window, which narrowly missed a mother who was holding her newborn baby. (Yardena Schwartz)

“At night there is definitely a feeling of insecurity, and the feeling that the police could not care less,” says the rabbi. Referring to the protests in Jerusalem by right-wing Israelis, he notes that “the police were able to keep the Jewish rioters in place. You can see that in the videos. When it comes to here, they’ve been an abysmal failure.”

According to Rosenfeld, neither side has been immune to attacks or consequences.

“There have been a number of incidents of violence in east Jerusalem, including violence against Jews by Arab residents, as well as violence against Arabs by Jewish residents,” says the police spokesman.

Since the riots began, he says, 250 Arabs have been arrested for attacking Jews across the country, with 140 of them in east Jerusalem. As for the total number of Jews arrested for attacking Arabs, he says the police do not have national figures, but notes that 47 Jewish Israelis were arrested in that single day of protests in Jerusalem.

Rosenfeld categorically rejects the accusations of police incompetence from east Jerusalem’s Jewish residents, saying, “The situation is being contained by the Israel Police. We’ve stepped up police operations, patrols, anti-riot units and undercover units. Where there have been disturbances in east Jerusalem, police units have responded to them.”

Yaron Zamir, a spokesman for Public Security Minister Yitzhak Aharonovitch, adds

that the minister is working to increase budgets and efforts to secure the east Jerusalem area through both the expansion of security cameras and increased manpower.

DESPITE THEIR feelings of insecurity, Jewish residents of east Jerusalem receive more protection from the police and the government than perhaps

shooting independently around Jerusalem. A couple of weeks ago, there were Jewish protesters looking to attack Arabs. The tensions on both sides are increasing. The extremists on both sides are becoming much more apparent, and this needs to be dealt with.”

According to Jerusalem City Council member Arie King, an unofficial leader of the Jewish

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Nimrod Goren
Mitvim

any other sector of the Israeli population, complete with a special budget for security to which other areas of the country are not entitled.

“The amount of effort put into these areas is quite high,” says Nimrod Goren, founder and chairman of Mitvim – The Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies, who lectures on Middle Eastern studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

“Usually the criticism is that these efforts are too high, not too low,” he says. “I think it’s good that the police took for questioning someone who shot back at an Arab. People should not go around

residents of east Jerusalem, there have been at least 300 attacks in east Jerusalem since the murder of Abu Khdeir. Those attacks, say King and other residents, have included stone-throwing, Molotov cocktails, firebombs, beatings of individuals, and the shooting in Nof Zion.

But unlike many of his followers, King, whose stated mission is to “Judaize Jerusalem,” does not blame the police. Instead, he boldly and unabashedly blames Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu.

“Jerusalem is Jerusalem,” says King, who founded the Israel Land Fund, an organization dedicated to acquiring Jewish

land in east Jerusalem and helping Jews purchase land throughout the country. He was one of the first to settle in Ma’aleh Zeitim 17 years ago, and still lives in this Jewish neighborhood on the Mount of Olives with his wife and six children.

“There should be no difference between east, west, north and south Jerusalem. And yet we see that the government of Israel has no control in east Jerusalem,” he says. “That’s because it is Bibi Netanyahu’s policy not to enforce Israeli law in east Jerusalem.”

He adds that “Netanyahu is doing everything possible in order to divide Jerusalem” – an argument with which many on the opposite end of the political spectrum would likely disagree.

When King ran for city council, he courted the Arabs of neighboring east Jerusalem areas, some of whom voted for him despite his campaign promise to silence the muezzins’ daily calls to prayer. His popular promise, embraced by both Arabs and Jews in east Jerusalem, was to bring them the same services that the western side of the city enjoyed. As a council member for less than a year, he has yet to realize that lofty goal, but he points to Netanyahu as maintaining a policy that leaves east Jerusalem neglected.

“I blame the government that doesn’t have the courage to build even one police station in Arab neighborhoods in east Jerusalem,” says King. “In the Jewish neighborhoods, you have police stations and a heavy police presence throughout the year. In east Jerusalem, that’s not the case, and this is why I think we got to where we are today, where the Arabs in Shuafat started to demolish public property, causing damage of tens of millions of shekels, and of course the people who are paying taxes need to sponsor the repair of these places.”

Like many critics of Netanyahu, King also blames the prime minister’s prisoner release deals for creating an invincibility complex. Just last month, local Palestinians stoned his house on two separate occasions. Both times he called the police, but none came. He has had stones thrown at him several times while walking home through Ras el-Amud, the Arab neighborhood in which Ma’aleh Zeitim is located.

“Once the Arabs see this kind of policy, they get braver,” he argues. “They do things that they wouldn’t have done before, because they will not be arrested, and if they are arrested, they will

be released, even for murder.”

UNLIKE KING, many Jewish residents of east Jerusalem are hesitant to discuss this delicate security situation, for fear of perpetuating an image of fear and violence in Jerusalem that could dissuade other Jews from moving there.

One man who was forced to leave his home in the Old City because cinder blocks were thrown through the windows, leaving it vulnerable to intruders, did not want his name to appear in this article and asked that this reporter write a more positive story about life in Jerusalem. According to King, he is not the only Jewish east Jerusalem resident who has decided to leave, either temporarily or for good.

Daniel Luria, executive director of Ateret Cohanim – a Jewish NGO dedicated to reclaiming the area surrounding the Temple Mount – downplays the current atmosphere of violence.

“This is a new reality we’re facing today, but the day-to-day running of our lives is just as it was before, maybe with a touch more caution,” he says. “One thing terrorists want to do is instill fear in Jews around the world, but they haven’t succeeded in disrupting the lives of our families and children in and around the Old City.”

He adds, “There are those who throw stones to kill, and there are those who use stones to build and bring life. We will continue to build and bring life.”

And that is exactly what many of these ideological families intend to do – not despite but perhaps because of the current situation. After all, the vast majority of Jews living in east Jerusalem did not settle here for the weather, the affordable real estate, or any reason other than a passionate belief that Jerusalem has always been and should always remain the eternal home of the Jewish people.

Kayman, the young mother in French Hill, made aliya in 2003 after growing up in Los Angeles during the LA riots.

“It’s the rockets that scare me, not the rocks,” she says, hours after Color Red sirens sounded across the capital.

“I felt more afraid during the LA riots,” she adds, looking out her window at Shuafat. “How many people get shot every day in New York? Look at all the anti-Semitism in Europe. Yes, there is a lot of hatred against Jews here, but it makes me proud to stand here and say, ‘This is Jerusalem, the eternal, undivided Jewish capital of the world, and I have a right to live here.’” •