

Jerusalem: Along divided city's seam, two die in third recent attack

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([The Christian Science Monitor](#)) Jerusalem appears to be coming apart, literally at its seam, with three violent attacks in as many weeks taking place on the main road separating mostly Jewish West Jerusalem from the largely Arab East.

On Wednesday two people were killed, including the attacker, and more than a dozen wounded when a Palestinian man, Moussa Ibrahim al-Akari, rammed his car into a crowd at a light rail station before continuing down the road and hitting a few more cars. He exited the car with a metal rod in his hand and wounded several people, one fatally, before police shot and killed him, according to police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld.

The militant Palestinian organization Hamas praised the attack and identified Akari, who was recently released from Israeli prison, as a member of the group.

Just two weeks before, about a mile away on the same road, Abdul Rahman al-Shaludi, from the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Shuafat, drove his car into a crowd of waiting passengers, killing a Jewish baby girl. Police also shot him dead at the scene.

And on the same road, but just south of the Old City, a Palestinian man shot Jewish activist Yehuda Glick at close range last week. Police killed the suspect, Moataz al-Hijazi—also from East Jerusalem—the following morning at his home.

All three attacks bear testament to the rising tensions in Jerusalem, which are at their worst since the second intifada, or uprising, a decade ago. Israel has increased its police force by more than 30 percent in the past few weeks in an attempt to keep a lid on the violence, but many Palestinians say the long-simmering frustrations of their people are boiling over and will continue so long as Israel's oppressive measures persist.

Within minutes of the attack, hundreds of mainly ultra-Orthodox Jews had gathered at the scene, along with medics and dozens of police, some on horseback. A shattered window lay in the street where the attacker had struck a police SUV with his rod.

Palestinian bystanders stood about 100 meters up a nearby street, behind several police cars guarded by officers. They said the police had forced them back from the scene.

“All the stress on Jerusalem people make an explosion,” said Hussam, a human rights worker in the Shuafat refugee camp, from which Akari hailed. “If police continue [like this], you will see more and more operations like this in Jerusalem,” he adds, looking over at the scene of the attack.

For years, public services from schools to water supplies in East Jerusalem have languished far behind the western half of the city, as Palestinians refused to participate in municipal elections in protest against Israel’s annexation of land captured in the 1967 war. When Palestinian teenager Muhammed Abu Khudeir was kidnapped and brutally murdered in a revenge attack this summer, the frustrations ignited into massive protests that were further fueled by the Gaza war.

Old City tensions

The tensions have flared up badly in recent weeks. Palestinians have reported an increase in police and municipal officials targeting them for traffic violations, illegally built homes, and lack of tax records in what they see as collective punishment, and there have been frequent clashes in a number of East Jerusalem neighborhoods.

There also have been serious clashes in the Old City flashpoint known to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary and to Jews as the Temple Mount. Israeli authorities closed it Wednesday for the second time in a week, amid an uptick in rhetoric from both Jewish and Arab leaders about the need to defend their sovereignty there.

“When there’s occupation, the violence never stops,” said Hala Marshood, a student at nearby Hebrew University, who was also near the scene.

Fawzi Barhoum, a Hamas spokesman in Gaza, praised the attack as “heroic.” He said, “We call for more such . . . operations.”

The junction where today's attack ended is just a few dozen yards from a bus stop in the ultra-Orthodox neighborhood of Mea Shearim. In August, a Palestinian man drove a construction vehicle into a public bus there, killing one before he was shot dead by police.

Reacting with prayer

Right nearby is the Mir yeshiva, the largest in Israel, which counts many Americans among its student population, many of whom came out to the scene of the attack.

"The terrorist attacks just make us want to study and learn more and get close to God," said Yitzchak Bamberger, an American student whose parents used to live here. "We believe the more we study, the more prayer we do, we ultimately will prevent tragedies from coming to the world."

But a resident of the neighborhood who gave his name only as Yossi offered a less hopeful view. He said it's inevitable that such attacks will happen given the close proximity of Jews and Arabs in Jerusalem, recalling a suicide bombing that killed 23 here during the second intifada.

What is the solution? "Build a giant wall to separate us," he said.