

Israeli forces put occupied West Bank on lockdown for rituals



Jerusalem, October 8 (RHC)-- Israeli military forces have put the occupied West Bank on complete lockdown in order to pave the way for Israeli settlers to perform religious rituals in East Jerusalem.

The Israeli army has announced that all crossings into the occupied West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip will remain closed until Thursday morning. The Israeli military also said that border crossings between the occupied territories and the neighboring countries would be closed until Wednesday night on the occasion of the Jewish holiday of Atonement, also known as Yom Kippur.

Israeli forces have imposed traffic restrictions, with public transportation, government services and television broadcasters ceasing operations during the holiday. All flights from the Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv were also canceled.

According to Palestinian media, more than 200 settlers, who were being escorted by armed Israeli forces, provocatively toured the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the occupied Old City of East Jerusalem al-Quds to attend the ritual ceremony.

Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, begins at sundown Tuesday, and is marked by fasting, abstinence and prayer over its 25 hours.

The al-Aqsa compound sits just above the Western Wall plaza and houses both the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque. The Israelis regard the site as their most holy place, as it is located where Jews believe the First and Second Temples once stood. Palestinians say the Tel Aviv regime seeks to change the status quo of the sacred site.

The Jewish visitation of al-Aqsa is permitted but according to an agreement signed between Israel and the Jordanian government after Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem al-Quds in 1967, non-Muslim worship at the compound is prohibited.

Furthermore, the number of Israeli lawmakers who come to the sacred compound has increased after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu decided last July to allow such visits once every three months. In a separate development Israeli forces raided Palestinian home in the occupied West Bank on Monday night, arresting at least nine people.

The nine were detained over various allegations, including participation in anti-occupation protests, according to the Jerusalem Post.

In recent months, Israeli forces have frequently raided the houses of Palestinians in the West Bank, arresting dozens of people, who are then transferred to Israeli prisons, where they are kept without any charges.

The occupied Palestinian territories have been the scene of heightened tensions since August 2015. The tensions were triggered by an Israeli move to impose restrictions on the entry of Palestinian worshipers into the al-Aqsa Mosque compound.

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