

Thousands of Palestinians attend Friday prayers at al-Aqsa mosque

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A Palestinian woman in headscarves and long robes seated on the floor of the Al-Aqsa mosque compound reading the Quran holy book [File: Anadolu]

Jerusalem, April 17 (RHC)-- Thousands of Palestinians streamed to Al-Aqsa mosque in Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem on the first Friday of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, in the largest such gathering since the coronavirus pandemic.

Sheikh Azzam Al-Khatib, head of the Waqf Islamic affairs council in Jerusalem, told Anadolu Agency that 70,000 worshippers performed Friday prayers at Al-Aqsa Mosque. Last Ramadan, "They (Israeli authorities) did not allow anyone to enter Al-Aqsa except for me."

By early afternoon, Palestinian women in headscarves and long robes were seated on the carpeted floor of the Al-Aqsa mosque compound – considered the third holiest site in Islam – reading the Quran holy book.

Earlier this week, Palestinians accused Israel of breaking into four mosque minarets and cutting wires to prevent the call for prayers from being broadcast on loudspeakers.

Mustafa Abu Sway of the Waqf council said the action came after Islamic officials refused to turn off loudspeakers Wednesday during a memorial for fallen Israelis at the adjacent Western Wall.

Jordan, custodian of Islamic sites in Jerusalem, condemned what it called Israel's "blatant" violation of the status quo and accused it of provocation.

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