

## Denial of Access and Worship on the Temple Mount / Haram al-Sharif in 2012-2014

In this document we present a summary of the instances when worshipers and visitors were denied access to the Temple Mount / Haram al-Sharif by Israeli police in 2014-2012. Emek Shaveh received the information following a request filed to the police. According to the information, the restrictions apply to two categories: visitors and worshipers. "Visitors" are all non-Muslim (including Jewish) tourists and the general public that comes to the Haram. The term "worshipers" refers to Muslims. This division is based on the status quo from 1967, which determined that the Haram al-Sharif/ Temple Mount will continue to serve a complex of prayer exclusively for Muslims.

The police can close the compound to Muslim worshipers, an event that happened only once in the reporting period, after the attempted murder of Yehuda Glick, or it can deny entry to all visitors (which occurred 56 times in the three years). Police often take the approach of reducing the presence on the Haram, whether by imposing an age limit on the worshipers (52 times in three years), or by denying entry to Muslim women (5 times in three years). The police also reduced the hours of entrance for visitors (35 times), usually by preventing visits in the afternoon.

Out of 144 partial or complete denial of entrance to visitors or worshipers, most of the restrictions were made in 2013 and 2014. In 2014, the restrictions to Muslims reached a peak—41 instances of restriction by age (see Chart 3) or gender, and one closure of the entire compound for prayer.

### History of Access to the Haram al-Sharif

Between the start of the 1st century CE until the end of the 19th century the Temple Mount had been off-limits to various populations. During Roman and Byzantine times Jews were prohibited from ascending the Mount. From the seventh century onward, except for the Crusader period (12th century), the Haram al-Sharif was off-limits to non-Muslims. This policy changed only in 1885, when high-profile Christian guests were allowed to ascend to the compound. Changes in access to the Mount took place during the British Mandate, when non-Muslims were allowed to go there for a fee. After the Six Day War (1967) it was decided to continue the policy of the

British Mandate and to allow the Muslim Waqf to have autonomy on the Haram. Today non-Muslims can enter the compound solely through the Mugrabi Gate, which they reach through a wooden ramp. Orthodox Judaism and the Chief Rabbinate oppose Jews' entry to the Temple Mount out of fear that they might step on the place where the Holy of Holies once stood, as its location remains unknown today. Since the second intifada (2005-2001) the Muslim Waqf decided to prevent the entry of non-Muslims to the mosques (Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock).<sup>1</sup>

**Table 1. Entry restrictions to the Temple Mount / al-Haram al-Sharif according to years 2012-2014**

	Visitors (Jews, Christians)	Total closure	Total Visitors (Jews, Christians, etc.)	Muslims	Total Muslims	Everyone	General total
Year	Partial closure			Restriction by age*		Total closure	
2012	2	14	16	3	3		19
2013	17	19	36	8	8		44
2014	16	23	39	41	41	1	81
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>144</b>

\* In 2014, female worshippers were restricted 5 times.

<sup>1</sup> For more on developments and changes in the status quo on the Temple Mount from 1967 to the present, see: Y. Mizrahi, [Archaeology in the Political Struggle over the Temple Mount / Haram al-Sharif](#), Emek Shaveh, January 2015.





• Of the 56 times that the Haram was closed to visitors, 43 of the instances occurred during the Muslim holy days. In other words, only 13 closures for visitors occurred for security reasons, including one day on the occasion of the Pope's visit, and one day following the attempted murder of Yehuda Glick. Of these 9 days coincided with Jewish holidays. This indicates that except for an average of three days a year (11 days total), the police does not prevent visitors from entering the site.

**Table 3. Restricting the entry of worshipers by age in 2014-2012**

Minimum age for worship	2012	2013	2014	Total
35			1	1
40	3		5	8
45			6	6
50		8	26	34
60			3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>52</b>

• The police prefer to limit the age of worshipers rather than close the site to Muslim prayer. The restrictions are mostly to worshipers under the age of 50 (out of 52 times when entry was restricted to worshipers, 34 times prohibited entry to men under the age of 50, and 3 times to men under the age of 60). Women were forbidden entry 5 times.

• Most of the age restrictions occurred in 2013 and 2014, in tandem with increased tension regarding Jews' claim to the right of prayer at the site.

## Conclusions

The data shows that when there are political and security tensions in Jerusalem, the status quo on the Temple Mount / al-Haram al-Sharif is harmed. For example, in 2014 the Israeli police imposed age restrictions on worshipers 41 times. This amounts to nearly 15% of the year. This number indicates that the feeling among Palestinians that Israel is changing the status quo in the area, is backed up by police data, even if the restrictions are made due to extenuating circumstances, such as the murder attempt of Yehuda Glick. At the same time there is a direct link between rising restrictions on visitors in 2013 and 2014 and increasing attempts by right-wing groups to upset the status quo in the area.

The main challenge facing the Israeli authorities is to maintain the status quo during tense times, especially when the pressure for change comes from the Right and the Israeli government. According to the experience of 2014, this goal was not achieved. It seems that in the future it will be impossible to separate events in Jerusalem from the changes to freedom-of-worship in the Haram al-Sharif and the ability of the police to maintain the status quo.

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