



“Al-Aqsa Is in Danger”: The Antisemitic Lie with a Body Count

Summary

- The slogan “Al-Aqsa is in danger” is an antisemitic lie that has become one of the deadliest propaganda tools in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- It portrays Jews and Israel as conspirators plotting to destroy a Muslim holy site.
- It turns security measures or Jewish visits to the Temple Mount into alleged attacks on Islam itself.
- The lie transforms political violence into a supposedly sacred duty and allows terrorism to be framed as “defense of al-Aqsa.”
- Hamas used this mythology when it named the 7 October 2023 massacre “Al-Aqsa Flood.”
- Since the 1920s, Haj Amin al-Husseini and later Islamist movements have used the claim of a Zionist plot against al-Aqsa to mobilize violence.
- After 1967, Israel preserved Muslim administration and prayer rights on the Mount, yet even regulated Jewish visits have been portrayed as “stormings.”
- During Operation Roaring Lion in 2026, Palestinians again accused Israel of harming al-Aqsa, even though Iranian missiles had landed dangerously close to the Temple Mount.

By Jan Kapusnak

There are mornings in Jerusalem when the al-Aqsa compound looks less like a place of prayer than a prepared theatre of confrontation. Young Palestinians barricade themselves inside with stones, fireworks and cameras. Israeli police enter. Within



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minutes, the images are online under the familiar caption: “Al-Aqsa is under attack.”

This is the power of the slogan “Al-Aqsa is in danger.” It turns a local security incident into an alleged assault on Islam itself. Violence becomes sanctified as defense. Terrorism becomes “resistance.” A dispute over access, policing or sovereignty is recast as a civilizational war.

That is why Hamas called its massacre of 7 October 2023 “Al-Aqsa Flood.” The meaning was precise. Hamas was not presenting the murder, rape and kidnapping of Israeli civilians as a crime. It framed it as a sacred act of defense: a battle for the mosque, for Jerusalem, for Islam.

At the heart of this mobilization lies one of the deadliest antisemitic lies in modern Middle Eastern history: the claim that Jews or Israel are secretly plotting to destroy al-Aqsa and rebuild a Third Temple in its place. It is a century-old conspiracy theory, but it remains one of the most powerful engines of Palestinian violence.

The lie works because the al-Aqsa compound sits on the Temple Mount — *Har HaBayit* in Hebrew, *al-Haram al-Sharif* in Arabic. Long before Islam, this hill was the center of Jewish sacred geography: the site of the First and Second Temples, where the Second Temple stood until Rome destroyed it in 70 CE. The Western Wall below is the most visible surviving remnant of the ancient Temple complex.

Islam later layered its own story onto the same hill. Muslim tradition came to identify the site with Muhammad’s Night Journey and Ascension. Yet the Qur’an itself does not name Jerusalem, al-Quds, the Temple Mount, the Dome of the Rock, or any specific building. Only after the Arab conquest of Jerusalem was the Temple Mount gradually claimed as the site of al-Aqsa.

In the 1920s, Jerusalem’s Grand Mufti, Haj Amin al-Husseini, turned al-Aqsa into the emotional center of anti-Zionist mobilization. He helped popularize the narrative that would prove so lethal: “Al-Aqsa is in danger” — code for an alleged Zionist plot to destroy the mosque.

In 1948, Jordan captured the Old City. Jews were expelled from the Jewish Quarter and barred from the Western Wall. Synagogues were destroyed and the Mount of Olives cemetery was desecrated. When Israel captured the Old City in 1967, it could have imposed exclusive Jewish sovereignty over the Mount. It did not. Moshe Dayan



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preserved Muslim administration through the Jordanian-backed Islamic Waqf. Muslims continued to pray on the Mount. Jews and other non-Muslims could visit only at limited hours and were barred from public worship.

It was an extraordinary act of restraint. The first non-Muslim power to control Jerusalem in centuries guaranteed Muslim access to al-Aqsa. It did not help. Since 1967, Arab and Muslim leaders have routinely described even regulated Jewish visits as “stormings” of the mosque.

Hamas quickly understood the usefulness of the myth. In October 1990, despite Israeli police banning a fringe Jewish group’s “cornerstone” march to rebuild the Temple, Hamas helped mobilize thousands to “defend” al-Aqsa. Stones were thrown down at Jewish worshippers at the Western Wall; Israeli police opened fire amid life-threatening violence, killing 17 Palestinians. Hamas folded the episode into its mythology as the “al-Aqsa Massacre.”

The Second Intifada gave the libel its most destructive modern form. The five-year terror war against Israeli civilians was rebranded as the “Al-Aqsa Intifada.” Publicly, it was blamed on Ariel Sharon’s brief visit to the Mount in September 2000. In reality, the violence had been prepared in advance; Sharon’s visit merely supplied the pretext. Suicide bombers invoked the mosque before murdering Israelis in buses, restaurants and shopping centers.

The same myth later powered the so-called “Knife Intifada,” when young Palestinians carried out stabbing, shooting and car-ramming attacks in the name of “martyrdom for al-Aqsa.” By the early 2020s, it had become a Ramadan ritual: youths barricaded inside the mosque with stones and fireworks, Israeli police entering, and Hamas firing rockets from Gaza “for al-Aqsa.” In 2021, clashes on the Mount helped trigger an 11-day war. Hamas had again transformed a political conflict into a religious war.

This is the power of the “Al-Aqsa is in danger” lie. It is immune to facts. If Israel restricts access during riots, it is “attacking al-Aqsa.” If Israel limits entry during an Iranian missile war, it is “punishing Muslims.” Even when Iranian fire threatens the compound itself, the accusation is redirected against Israel.

Two weeks before the 7 October massacre, Hamas again called for escalation “for al-Aqsa.” The name “Al-Aqsa Flood” was presented as its fulfilment. Its message was brutally simple: the road to Jerusalem is paved with Jewish blood.



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The same pattern was exposed during Operation Roaring Lion, the 2026 war with Iran. As Iranian missiles targeted Israel, access to the Old City and its holy sites was restricted for security reasons, including during Eid al-Fitr (the festival marking the end of Ramadan). Palestinian voices accused Israel of using the war as a pretext to tighten its grip on the Temple Mount. Yet the immediate danger came not from Israel but from Iran. Missile fragments fell in and around Jerusalem’s Old City; one missile reportedly struck roughly 350 meters from al-Aqsa shortly after the Eid al-Fitr closure. Israel was accused of endangering al-Aqsa while intercepting missiles fired by a regime that had actually threatened Jerusalem’s holiest places.

The West has too often treated this language as symbolism or religious sensitivity. It is far more dangerous than that. The “Al-Aqsa is in danger” libel is not a misunderstanding. It is a weapon. It turns a holy hill into a battlefield, transforms security measures into proof of conspiracy, and recasts murder as piety.

As long as this antisemitic lie is indulged, every future clash on the Temple Mount can be turned into another call for blood. The tragedy is not that al-Aqsa is in danger from Israel. The tragedy is that al-Aqsa has been made dangerous by those who discovered that a holy place, wrapped in a lie, can become one of the most effective weapons of war.

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