Ramadan and Passover 2023: A Multi-Theater Timeline

As in previous years, the confluence of Ramadan and Passover has heightened unrest and stoked violence across various theaters of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Amid an uptick in Muslims and Jews visiting the site during the holidays, Jerusalem’s Temple Mount is frequently an epicenter of religious tension around Passover and Ramadan, which ignites additional violence throughout the Israeli-Palestinian arena.

Saturday, April 1

The Temple Mount and Jerusalem: Police shot and killed Mohammed Khaled Alasibi, a Bedouin from southern Israel, next to the Chain Gate leading to the Temple Mount. The police claimed that Alasibi had tried to steal an officer’s weapon, although they were unable to prove it definitively given that there is no video footage capturing the whole incident.

Sunday, April 2

Israeli Political Developments: The cabinet voted to approve the creation of a national guard, funded by cutting all ministries’ budgets by 1.5%. The national guard will presumably be under the command of National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir.

Tuesday, April 4

The Temple Mount and Jerusalem: Bearing fireworks and rocks, hundreds of Palestinians barricaded themselves inside al-Aqsa Mosque after prayers had ended. Israeli police broke into the mosque and fired stun grenades and clashes ensued between Israel and militants. The police published videos of fireworks exploding in the mosque and a Palestinian video showed Israeli forces beating Palestinians with batons.

Background: Prior to the holidays, Israel, the PA, and Jordan had agreed that worshippers would be allowed to stay in the mosque overnight starting on April 11 to observe itikaf, a Muslim practice involving multi-day prayer inside the mosque. Contrary to that agreement, Hamas encouraged them to stay overnight in al-Aqsa prior to April. As in previous years, Palestinian rioters were also motivated by fears that Jews would hold ritual sacrifices on the Temple Mount.
Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria: Palestinian militants launched five rockets into Israel in response to clashes on the Temple Mount. All were intercepted by the Iron Dome. Israel subsequently carried out an airstrike in Gaza.

Wednesday, April 5

The Temple Mount and Jerusalem: Clashes continued into Wednesday, with Israel announcing that it had detained 350 Palestinians.

The police detained several Jews in the Old City in possession of lambs and goats on suspicion that they were intending to perform sacrifices on the Temple Mount.

Later that evening, Israeli forces entered al-Aqsa Mosque during evening prayers and attacked worshippers, reportedly amid concerns that Palestinians were stockpiling rocks and fireworks.

Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria: Militants reportedly associated with Palestinian Islamic Jihad launched another salvo of rockets at Sderot and other nearby communities. Israel responded with airstrikes targeting Hamas weapons facilities in Gaza.

Thursday, April 6

The Temple Mount and Jerusalem: An Israeli civilian shot a Palestinian teenager in the Old City, lightly wounding him.

Israel deployed additional security forces to the Temple Mount and denied access to Palestinians under the age of 40.

Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria: Militants in Gaza fired another nine rockets at Israel Thursday morning, most of which exploded before impact.

34 rockets were also fired from Lebanon at northern Israel, the most since the Second Lebanon War in 2006. Most were intercepted by the Iron Dome and two people were lightly injured.

Interethnic Violence in Israel: In response to violence at al-Aqsa, Arab citizens of Israel clashed with police in Umm al-Fahm, Sakhnin, and Nazareth.

Israeli Political Developments: Prime Minister Netanyahu convened the security cabinet for the first time in two months.

Friday, April 7

The Temple Mount and Jerusalem: Israeli police deployed 2,300 officers to the Old City.

Palestinians threw stones toward the Western Wall on Friday morning.
Security forces arrested 15 Palestinians for holding Hamas flags and inciting terrorism.

280,000 Muslims visited al-Aqsa, the most at a single time since 1986.

**Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria:** Israel struck Hamas targets in Lebanon in response to the previous day's rockets. Israeli security officials suggested that Hamas militants had launched the rockets.

**Interethnic Violence in Israel:** Police arrested over 20 people in East Jerusalem, Nazareth, Sakhnin, Baqa al-Gharbiya, and Kafr Manda during riots. According to the police, rioters lit tires and threw rocks at Police.

Suspects reportedly shot fireworks and threw rocks and Molotov cocktails at Jewish homes in East Jerusalem's Abu Tor neighborhood.

In Kafr Qasem, extremist Jews reportedly set fire to cars and vandalized a fence with "price tag" graffiti.

**Terror Attacks Against Israeli Civilians:** British Israelis Lucy, Maia, and Rina Dee—a mother and two sisters—were killed in a terror shooting attack near Hamra in the Jordan Valley. The manhunt for the perpetrators is ongoing.

Alessandro Parini, an Italian tourist, was killed in a car-ramming attack in Tel Aviv. Seven others were injured. Yousef Abu Jaber, an Arab Israeli citizen from Kafr Qasem, was named as the perpetrator.

**Saturday, April 8**

**The Temple Mount and Jerusalem:** Muslim visitors once again barricaded themselves inside al-Aqsa Mosque, although the police did not engage them.

**Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria:** Six rockets from Syria were fired at Israel. No injuries or damaged property were reported. Palestinian militants in Syria claimed responsibility. Israel responded by striking military sites in Syria.

**Israeli Political Developments:** Hundreds of thousands of Israelis attended protests against the judicial overhaul, despite security concerns amid rocket attacks and a wave of terrorism.

**Sunday, April 9**

**The Temple Mount and Jerusalem:** Hundreds of Jews visited the Temple Mount in groups of 20 and 50 at a time under police protection, while Muslims remained inside al-Aqsa Mosque from the previous day.

10,000 Jews attended the Priestly Blessing ceremony at the Kotel.
**Israeli Political Developments:** A Channel 13 poll showed the parties of the current coalition garnering a mere 46 seats if elections were held today. Prime Minister Netanyahu's Likud party would win 20 seats, behind both Gantz’s National Unity (29) and Lapid's Yesh Atid (21).

Prime Minister Netanyahu gave Opposition Leader Yair Lapid a security briefing at the Kirya in Tel Aviv.

**Monday, April 10**

**Israeli Political Developments:** At least 17,000 Israelis participated in a Nachala-organized march to the illegal West Bank outpost of Evyatar, including seven ministers. Protecting the marchers required diverting security forces from other arenas.

Opposition and coalition representatives continued negotiations on reaching a judicial overhaul compromise at President Herzog's residence. They reportedly discussed enshrining basic civil rights, a priority of Yesh Atid and other opposition parties.

In a televised address, Prime Minister Netanyahu announced that Defense Minister Yoav Galant, whom he had announced he was firing on March 26, would remain in his post. Netanyahu also blamed the opposition for eroding Israel's deterrence against terror organizations.

**Tuesday, April 11**

**The Temple Mount and Jerusalem:** Prime Minister Netanyahu and top security officials decided to close the Temple Mount to Jewish visitors starting on Wednesday, April 12 for the final 10 days of Ramadan.

**Looking Forward**

Heading into the end of Passover and the final 10 days of Ramadan, the uptick in violence on the Temple Mount and between Israel and militant groups beyond its borders has largely subsided. While a full-scale military operation like that of May 2021 does not appear imminent, the situation remains ripe for tensions to escalate as all sides remain focused on the Temple Mount through the end of the holiday period. The risk of a wider Israeli-Palestinian conflagration is compounded by internal instability and social strife in Israel surrounding the judicial overhaul and far-right figures in Israel's government with histories of stoking inter-ethnic conflict.