

## Netanyahu's Al-Aqsa Visit During Hanukkah Draws Palestinian Condemnation



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JERUSALEM – Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied East Jerusalem on Tuesday during the Jewish Hanukkah holiday, a move strongly criticized by Palestinian authorities.

In an official statement, the Jerusalem Governorate condemned the visit, describing it as a “new

provocative act” that further escalates tensions at the sensitive religious site. The governorate said such actions undermine the historical and legal status of Al-Aqsa Mosque and inflame an already volatile situation in the occupied city.

Netanyahu’s office released photographs showing the prime minister accompanied by several Israeli officials and U.S. Ambassador Mike Huckabee during the visit to the Western Wall, also known to Muslims as Al-Buraq Wall. The wall forms part of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and holds deep religious significance for both Muslims and Jews.

Hanukkah, an eight-day Jewish festival, is being observed from December 14 to December 22.

Palestinian authorities reported that since Monday, at least 210 Israeli settlers entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque complex under heavy police protection to mark the holiday.

Al-Aqsa Mosque is Islam’s third-holiest site, while Jews refer to the area as the Temple Mount, believing it was the location of two ancient Jewish temples. Israel occupied East Jerusalem during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and later annexed the city in 1980, a move not recognized by the international community.