

Al-Aqsa mosque

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In news- Jerusalem's Al Aqsa Mosque courtyard was recently stormed by extremist settlers under the protection of Israeli forces.

About Al-Aqsa mosque-

- Originally built as a small prayer house, the mosque was **reconstructed by the Umayyad caliph Abd al-Malik in 705 CE.**
- It underwent renovations under various dynasties, including the Ottoman empire, the Supreme Muslim Council, and Jordan.
- In Arabic, "**aqsa**" translates as **farthest**, and is a reference to Islamic scripture and its account of the **Prophet Muhammad traveling from Mecca to the mosque in one night to pray and then ascending to heaven.**
- The mosque sits inside a 35-acre site known by Muslims as **Haram al-Sharif, or the Noble Sanctuary** and by Jews as the Temple Mount.
- The site is part of the Old City of Jerusalem, **sacred to Christians, Jews and Muslims.**
- Though Jerusalem's Old City is under Israeli control, the mosque has **remained under the administration of the Jordanian and Palestinian-led Islamic Waqf since 1967.**
- The Waqf is a religious trust that manages Islamic historical sites around the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.
- Jews and Christians are allowed to visit, but unlike Muslims (Al-Aqsa is the third holiest site in Islam), are prohibited from praying on the grounds under the status quo arrangement.
- For Jews, the **Temple Mount**, known in Hebrew as **Har Habayit**, is the holiest place because it was the site of

two ancient temples.

- UNESCO has classified the Old City of Jerusalem and its walls as a World Heritage Site.