

Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque

April 6, 2023

In news— A recent raid by Israeli police on Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque has triggered a furious reaction from Palestinians across the occupied West Bank and the wider Arab and Muslim world.

About Al-Aqsa mosque-

- **It lies at the heart of Jerusalem's Old City on a hill known to Jews as Har ha-Bayit, or Temple Mount, and to Muslims internationally as al-Haram al-Sharif, or The Noble Sanctuary.**
- Muslims regard the site as the **third holiest in Islam, after Mecca and Medina.**
- **Al-Aqsa is the name given to the whole compound** and is home to two Muslim holy places: the Dome of the Rock and the **Al-Aqsa Mosque, also known as the Qibli Mosque, which was built in the 8th century AD.**
- The **compound overlooks the Western Wall, a sacred place of prayer for Jews,** for whom the Temple Mount is their most sacred site.
- **Jews believe biblical King Solomon built the first temple there 3,000 years ago.** A second temple was razed by the Romans in AD 70.
- **Israel captured the site in the 1967 Middle East war** and annexed it with the rest of East Jerusalem and adjoining parts of the West Bank in a move not recognized internationally.
- **Jordan, whose ruling Hashemite family has custodianship of the Muslim and Christian sites,** appoints members of the Waqf institution which oversees the site.

It is the core point of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict-

- The Al-Aqsa compound has long been a flashpoint for deadly violence over matters of sovereignty and religion

in Jerusalem.

- Under the longstanding **“status quo” arrangement governing the area, which Israel says it maintains, non-Muslims can visit but only Muslims are allowed to worship in the mosque** compound.
- Jewish visitors have increasingly prayed more or less openly at the site in defiance of the rules, and Israeli restrictions on Muslim worshippers’ access to the site have led to protests and outbreaks of violence.
- **Clashes at the site in 2021** contributed to setting off a 10-day war with Gaza.
- In 2000, the Israeli politician Ariel Sharon, then opposition leader, led a group of Israeli lawmakers onto the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif complex. Palestinians protested, and there were violent clashes that quickly escalated into the second Palestinian uprising, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada.