

Religious Freedom Data Center

July–September 2026

Incidents against Christians in Israel
Report compiled by Yisca Harani

Director of the Religious Freedom Data Center (RFDC)

The Religious Freedom Data Center (RFDC) and its Hotline for Documenting Harassment against Christians were established in July 2023 to address a significant need that had previously received neither systematic documentation nor sustained attention. This report continues the series of quarterly reports submitted to the Israeli authorities during the past three years.

The Center operates a Hotline supported by a network of Israeli volunteers, alongside Christian institutions and individuals. It is funded and operated exclusively by private citizens, without governmental or political affiliation. It is Israel's largest volunteer network providing real-time assistance to the Christian community in cases of harassment. All activities— including management—are carried out on a voluntary basis, without remuneration.

Complex security and social realities continue to shape the conditions in which we work. Our commitment remains unchanged: to safeguard the dignity of the Christian community and protect freedom of religion and worship in Israel. The Center continues to document violations, upholding a vision of peaceful coexistence and respect for all believers—those who live in the country and those who visit it from around the world.

Methods of Operation

Ongoing Activities

The Hotline receives reports of harassment through a multilingual telephone hotline and an online reporting system. Volunteers maintain regular contact with Christian communities and religious institutions, collect information and documentation, and offer assistance in contacting the authorities and filing police complaints.
In cases involving vandalism, graffiti, or defacement of public signage, volunteers contact the responsible authorities and continue to monitor the case until repairs are completed.

Publication of Data

Publishing reliable information on incidents and the authorities' response remains at the core of our work. Documentation is maintained in an independent archive, and no names or photographs are published without the consent of those affected.
To further strengthen transparency and credibility, we recently added a documentation column to the incident table. Public authorities are welcome to contact us should they wish to review the supporting evidence.

Operational Methodology and Community Support

A | Proactive Field Activity

Volunteers are deployed proactively on field shifts, particularly during religious holidays and Christian processions in Jerusalem's Old City, to observe and document harassment. During this quarter, Hotline volunteers were present at various locations in the Old City on different occasions, particularly on the fast of Tisha B'Av, and during the Jewish High Holidays. This activity resulted in the doubling of the number of documented incidents compared with the corresponding periods in previous years. During their shifts, volunteers engage in public outreach, preventive presence, and documentation of harassment.

B | Protective Escort for Clergy and Religious

The Hotline provides protective accompaniment to clergy and religious upon request. Following the attack on a nun on Mount Zion in April, volunteers accompanied nuns for four consecutive months, six days a week, every morning and evening. The accompaniment recently ended when the nuns felt safe walking without an escort.

C | Educational Outreach

Ahead of the current school year and its educational trips, we partnered with Yad Ben-Zvi Institute on a dedicated program to prepare students for visits to Jerusalem. We hope that the program will increase awareness of the Christian presence in the city and help prevent hostility toward it.

Cooperation

- The **Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC)** provides legal assistance in police complaints submitted by the RFDC.
- The **Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI)** has been supportive of the Center's work.
- The **Institute for the Study of Relations between Jews, Christians, and Muslims** at the Open University, headed by Prof. Denis Charbit, is actively involved in supporting and assisting the organization.

An Appeal for Institutional Accountability and Policy Recommendations

We call upon Church Leaders, Clergy, Communities, and Public Authorities to Cooperate with the RFDC. The RFDC strives to reach every Christian community in the Holy Land and encourages communities to contact us, keep us informed, and make greater use of our services. We hold update meetings with community leaders and offer our presence and activities.

The RFDC approaches public authorities, such as the municipality and the police, and encourages them to regard it as a constructive source of assistance and information.

Third Quarter Data Summary | July–September 2026

The charts below present the quarterly report's data by type, location, and date of harassment. The full, detailed incident table is available on the Hotline's website. To view it, scan the accompanying QR code

The Complete Events Table

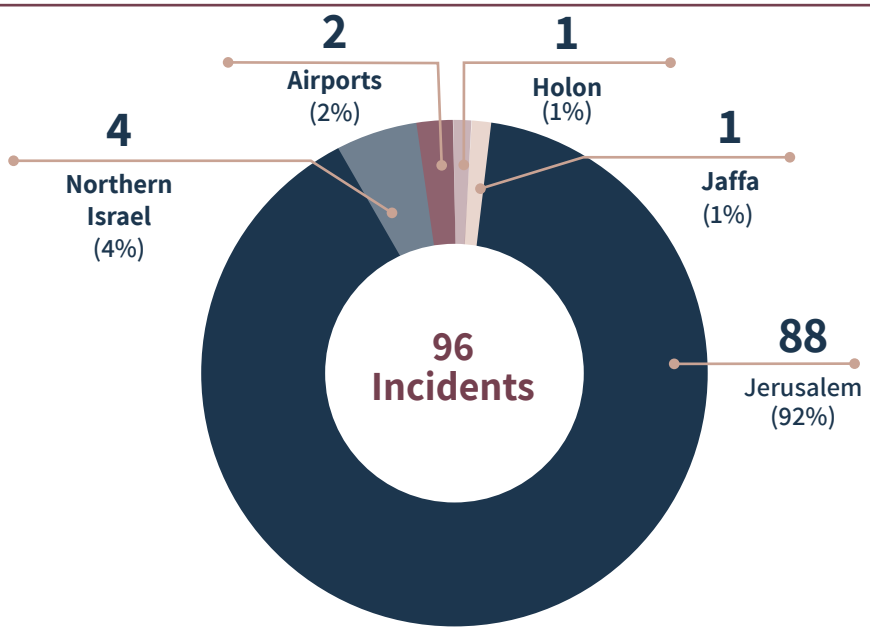
*Report summary | 106 acts of harassment in 96 incidents between July-September 2026

4	5	9	77
4% Throwing Objects	5% Physical Assault	8% Verbal Abuse	73% Spitting

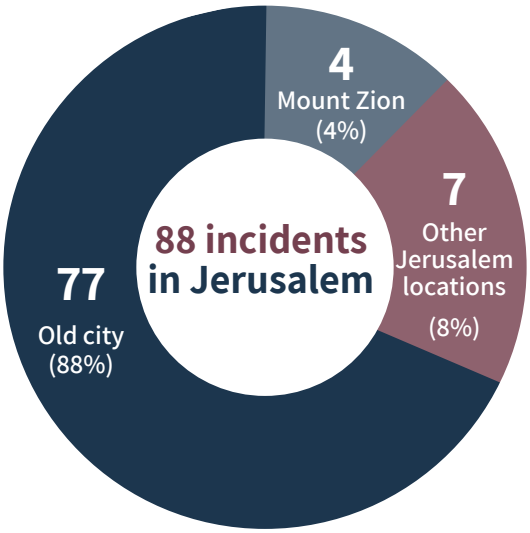
4	1	3	3
3% Other	1% Threats	3% Defacement of Signage	3% Vandalism

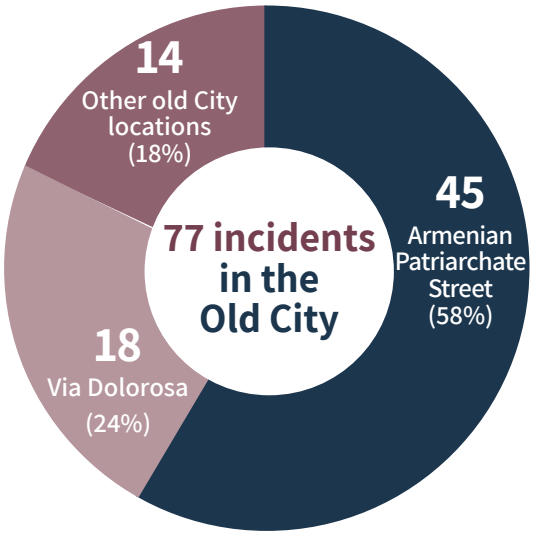
Some incidents involve more than one type of harassment. Percentages are calculated out of 106 acts. The percentages have been rounded and adjusted to total 100%.

Distribution of Incidents

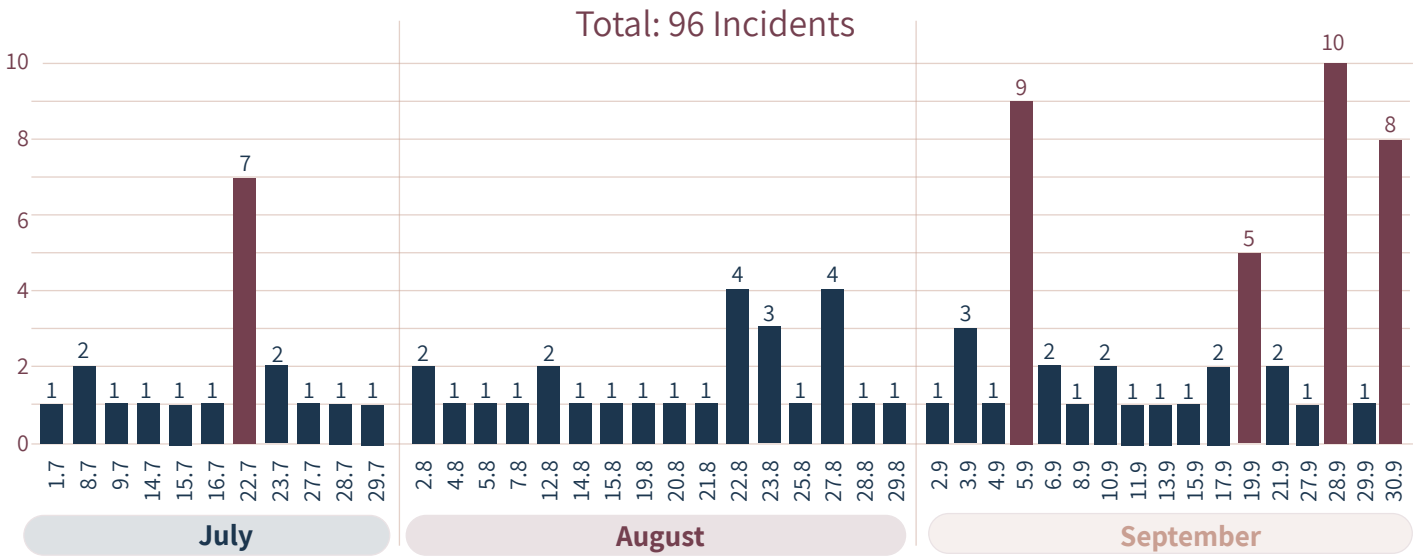


Distribution of Incidents by Location





Number of Incidents by Date | July-Sept 2026



Report Summary, Key Findings, and Assessments for the Coming Months

Spitting

As in previous reports, the high number of spitting incidents remains particularly striking: 77 incidents, accounting for 72% of all recorded acts of harassment. As in previous years, and even more markedly this year, numerous incidents were recorded during the Selichot period and the Tishrei holidays, when large numbers of Jewish visitors came to Jerusalem in general and the Old City in particular. The report shows that spitting takes place at all hours of the day and night, openly and at times in a deliberately demonstrative manner. The scale of the phenomenon compared with previous reports is linked to the prevailing climate and the rise in violence and hostility toward others among certain segments of the Jewish public. In some cases, perpetrators justified their actions to RFDC volunteers—and on camera—as being consistent with religious injunctions. In informal conversations with clergy, we repeatedly hear the statement: "Not a week goes by without someone spitting at me." We therefore estimate that dozens of additional spitting incidents occur each month; without reporting, documentation, or action to counter them, such acts become established as a norm among perpetrators.

The recent partial return of tourism once again exposes pilgrims to spitting and harassment and contributes to Israel being perceived as an unwelcoming destination for Christians.

Growing Boldness and Escalation

Harassment and attacks take place in public spaces without hesitation on the part of the perpetrators. The frequency of incidents and the perpetrators' self-confidence are readily apparent, including in their conduct toward volunteers in the field. The escalation in attacks culminated in the pepper-spray assault on a nine-year-old boy (case 75). If the punishment does not reflect the gravity of the act, the incident may send a message of tolerance toward religiously motivated violence, reinforce perpetrators' sense of impunity, and encourage further attacks.

Evidence of the worsening situation can be seen in the decision of monks and clergy to leave their institutions wearing ordinary clothes and in community members' choice to conceal necklaces bearing crosses beneath their clothing. The Armenian community suffers particularly severely: thousands of people walk through its streets on their way to the Western Wall, and it has the highest number of documented incidents of harassment. Regrettably, the community has received no specific attention, response, or action plan to put an end to its suffering.

The Absence of a Visible Christian Presence in Public Space

We once again alert the Jerusalem Municipality that the absence of symbolic and visible representation of the Christian presence in the public sphere, directly contributes to expressions of hostility by Jews toward Christians. From the Municipal Compound to Jaffa Gate, public space prominently reflects the Jewish presence through posters on Jewish themes, holiday greetings, and projections of images and films on Jewish subjects onto the city walls. Given that the Old City contains two Christian quarters, the Christian presence should also be visibly represented in the public sphere. At the entrance to the Armenian Quarter via Armenian Patriarchate Road, appropriate signage should indicate that visitors are entering a Christian quarter and present its historical, religious, and cultural significance. In the absence of visible representation of the Christian presence, we repeatedly encounter cases in which Jews, surprised to discover Christians in the city, react inappropriately. The exclusion of the Christian presence from Jerusalem's public representation is a matter of concern, and responsibility for addressing it rests with the Jerusalem Municipality.

The Israel Police and the Work of Hotline Volunteers in the Field

During the third quarter, and particularly during the holiday period, when the number of Jewish visitors to Jerusalem increased significantly, accompanied by a corresponding increase in harassment, the Jerusalem police demonstrated its commitment to preventing incidents, locating perpetrators, and responding in real time to reports from the field. During this quarter, we filed 35 police complaints, most supported by photographs or video footage of the harassment and/or images of the suspects. In the second quarter, 12 police cases were opened, of which 10 were closed.

While this report was being prepared, it was reported that the prosecution had filed an indictment against a person who spat at a church entrance on July 25, 2025. We must ensure that the judge and the prosecution do not dilute the significance of this incident through a plea bargain, but instead pursue a judgment that establishes a clear principle and is publicized in the media.

The Israel Police hold the full data on the number of complaints filed and suspects located and arrested. **The contribution of Hotline volunteers is clear: without the Hotline's work, dozens of incidents documented in this report would never have come to the attention of the authorities. Without the determined, continuous, and consistent presence of Hotline volunteers in the field—the documentation, reporting, filing of complaints, and submission of video footage—many incidents of religiously motivated harassment would continue to occur in the Holy City without being documented, reported, or addressed. The Hotline's work makes a phenomenon that was largely hidden from view visible, measurable, and open to action.**

Concluding note

Ultimately, the Religious Freedom Data Center does not aim to operate as a permanent institution, but to prompt state authorities to take full responsibility for eliminating religiously motivated harassment. Achieving this requires translating field documentation into proactive law enforcement, explicit legislation prohibiting acts of religious degradation, and inclusive municipal representation that honors Jerusalem's Christian heritage. The true success of this civil society initiative will be measured on the day it becomes obsolete, when all believers, clergy, and pilgrims can walk the city in safety, dignity, and enjoy freedom of worship.

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