



Peace be within thy walls and security within thy palaces | Ps 122

Religious Freedom Data Center

October – December 2024 report

Incidents against Christians in Israel Report compiled by Yisca Harani

Director of the Religious Freedom Data Center (RFDC)

The Religious Freedom Data Center, established in June 2023, documents harassments and anti-Christian incidents through a privately funded hotline.

The center operates independently, without affiliation with any governmental or political entities. As of July 2024, the Rosing Center for Education and Dialogue has joined our documentation efforts.

Mrs. Federica Sasso (Rosing Center) now collaborates with Yisca Harani.

As of December, cooperation began with the legal division of the Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC) of the Israel Reform Movement and with the assistance of the Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI). The legal department will follow up on complaints filed with the police and will act to see the law fully upheld by the authorities.

Despite the difficult times the region is undergoing as a shared religious space, we remain committed to the goals we have set for ourselves: to resolutely monitor any violation of religious dignity and freedom of religion and act to curb the phenomenon.

Methods of work

Ongoing activity: The hotline collects reports of harassment through a telephone line and an online system in different languages. The hotline volunteers are in continuous contact with Christians and religious institutions, collect information and documentation about cases of harassment, and offer their help in submitting complaints to the authorities and the police. The complaints, testimonies and documentation are gathered and archived in the center and the incidents are published in a monthly or quarterly report.

Pro-actions: Volunteers come to the area in an initiated activity, mainly on holidays and during Christian processions in the Old City of Jerusalem. They document harassment and perpetrators, and at times try to contact the attackers and explain the severity of their actions and their negative effects.

Advocacy activity: Collecting statements and publications of rabbis, known and respected in the ultra-Orthodox, Hardal (Haredi-nationalist) and national-religious public, against spitting and harming Christians and distributing them on-site and in various Jewish religious institutions.

Mediating contacts: The Hotline strives to establish contact with Jewish institutions that are in the area of Christian institutions suffering from harassment. For example: after repeated harassment of the monastery in Migdal Ha'Emek, we contacted the head of the Jewish religious council and met him with the monk. According to this model of building trust and cooperation, we will try to operate in other places as well.

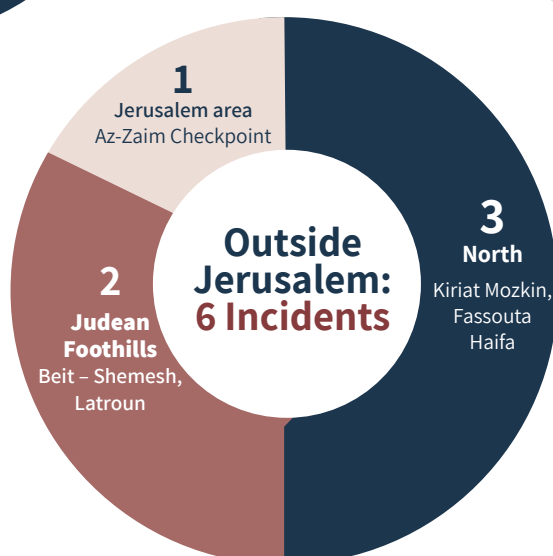
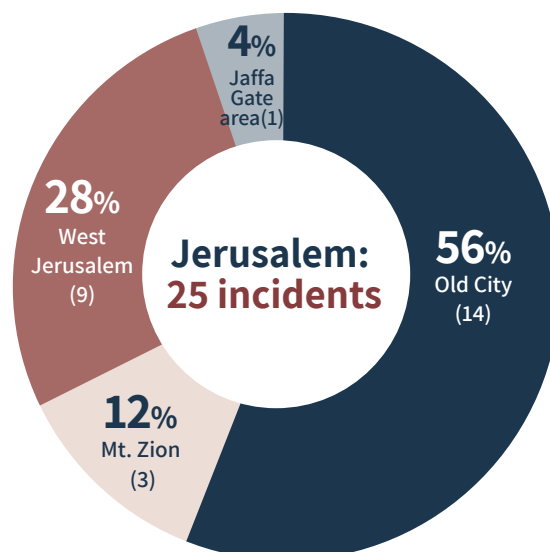
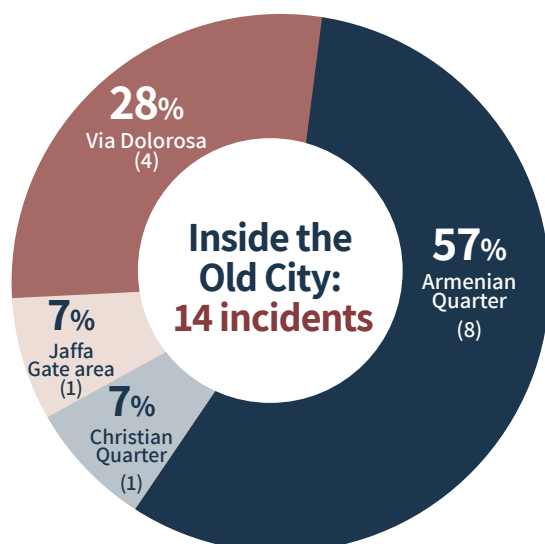
Collaboration: The RFDC tries to reach all the Christian communities in the Holy Land, and calls on them to contact us, to inform us, and to use us more closely in our effort to curb the increasing attacks against Christians in Israel. Our work was recognized by the **Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem**, in a letter calling on all Latin communities to share action with us: "With this letter I present to you Mrs. Yisca Harani who has taken on the responsibility of coordinating a pool of Volunteers in gathering information from the members of the religious communities in the Holy Land. Thank you for your welcome and collaboration". Likewise, the custodian of the holy places, **Custos Francesco Paton**, distributed a letter to all the friars and sisters in the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, encouraging them to cooperate: "I invite everyone to contact the center (RFDC) promptly every time an episode of violence and discrimination occurs, trying to provide as much information as possible ... with photos and videos". Vis-a-vis the **Armenian Patriarchate** there is an ongoing, full and continuous cooperation.

Report summary | 31 incidents between October and December 2024

Incidents by Type



Breakdown of incident location



Method of Collecting Data for This Report



Reported Incidents

	Location	Incident	Date	Response
1	Jerusalem, Old City. 2nd station of Via Dolorosa.	Spitting and hate speech: A Jewish man entered the compound, cursed and spat. He was removed by soldiers who were in the area but returned to do the same twice more.	2.10.24	
2	Haifa cemetery.	Other: A family of a deceased Christian soldier found that his tomb was covered with black cloth, in order to hide the cross engraved on the stone, not to be visible.	07.10.24	
3	Jerusalem, Old City. 2nd station of Via Dolorosa.	Spitting: On the eve of Yom Kippur, Jewish religious youth demonstratively spat, one after the other, towards the entrance to the compound.	11.10.24	
4	Jerusalem, a park near Yemin Moshe.	Spitting: Two Jewish teenagers spat at a capuchin friar.	15.10.24	
5	Mount Zion, Jerusalem. St. Francis, Ad Coenaculum Monastery.	Disturbance: A car blocked the entrance to the Monastery for a whole hour, preventing entry to or exit from the site. Upon returning, the car owner claimed he doesn't speak English.	18.10.24	
6	Jerusalem, 23 HaNevi'im Street.	Spitting and hate speech: Three sisters were standing in the street when several Jews shouted, cursed and one approached and blatantly spat in their direction.	19.10.24	The Sisters called 100. The operator could not take the call because "too many minutes have passed since the incident happened." A complaint was submitted via the Hotline, No. 359523/2024
7	Jerusalem, Old City. David's Tower Museum entrance.	Spitting: Two priests were passing by the stairs of David's Tower Museum. Jewish youngsters, sitting on the stairs, started to "clean their throats" and spit on the floor.	20.10.24	
8	Jerusalem, Old City. The Armenian Patriarchate.	Spitting: A Jewish man spat towards the Armenians monastery's gate.	20.10.24	

9	Mount Zion, Jerusalem. St. Francis, Ad Coenaculum Monastery.	Disturbance: A car parked in front of the monastery's door, completely blocking the passage.	21.10.24	The lawyer of the Franciscan Custody called the police and later the car was removed.
10	Jerusalem, Old City. The Armenian Patriarchate.	Spitting: An Ultra-Orthodox man spat in front of the Patriarchate gate	22.10.24	
11	Jerusalem, Old City. The Armenian Patriarchate.	Spitting: Three Jewish young men spat towards an Armenian monk.	22.10.24	
12	Jerusalem, Old City. The Armenian Patriarchate.	Spitting: some Ultra-Orthodox spat on the floor behind an Armenian monk who passed nearby.	22.10.24	
13	Jerusalem, Old City. The Armenian Patriarchate.	Spitting: A Jewish man spat after passing the gate of the Patriarchate.	22.10.24	
14	Jerusalem, Old City. 2nd station of Via Dolorosa.	Spitting: groups of religious Jews passed by. Several of them were caught on cameras spitting at the entrance of the church.	22.10.24	
15	Jerusalem, Old City. Near the Austrian Hospice.	Spitting: Jewish youngsters spat towards a church.	22.10.24	The suspects were identified by the police cameras, a police force was directed at the suspects, and they were arrested.
16	Beit Shemesh area. Highway 38, Junction towards Deir Rafat Monastery.	Vandalism: A road sign pointing to Deir Rafat Monastery was sprayed and the cross on the pictogram of a church was erased (The sign was vandalized for the second time).	26.10.24	The hotline volunteers contacted the contractor of Netivei Israel who immediately repaired the road sign.
17	Jerusalem, Mahane Yehuda Market.	Verbal harassment: A woman shouted aloud towards Russian sisters on shopping, to "Go away, because Christians shouldn't be in this country".	30.10.24	RFDC volunteers sent the video to the Jerusalem municipality.

18	Jerusalem, Mea Shearim. Third Wall Street, Dom Polsky Polish Monastery.	Spitting and stone throwing: Jewish boys spat, cursed Jesus, and threw a stone against the gate of the compound.	20.11.24	The sisters called 100 and the police came and identified the boy with the cameras. The boy, a minor, was brought with his father, accompanied by policemen, to the sisters to apologize and promise never to act this way again.
19	Latroun Monastery, Brotherhood Garden.	Vandalism: A statue in the "Brotherhood Garden" adjacent to the monastery was sprayed.	21.11.24	The RFDC contacted the Council for Conservation of Heritage Sites in Israel and the statue was cleaned, as before (see May 2024 report).
20	Jerusalem, Old City. The Armenian Patriarchate.	Verbal harassment and hate speech: a Jewish man saw an Armenian priest and loudly, repeatedly and provocatively cursed Jesus and Christianity.	26.11.24	
21	Jerusalem, Old City. The Corner of Saint Helen street with Christian Quarter street.	Vandalism: A Jew tore down sacred images of the Madonna (Mary) from the wall.	29.11.24	The police identified a suspect but the Patriarchate's refusal to file a complaint prevented further investigation. The RFDC, through a lawyer, submitted a complaint, in order for the case not to be closed: No. 510298/24
22	Jerusalem, Emile Botta Street.	Spitting: Two young Jews spat at a nun with a cross pendant. When asked why they did so, they answered: "Because of the cross."	30.11.24	
23	Jerusalem, Jaffa gate Street.	Spitting: Two Jewish women spat at nun with a cross pendant.	30.11.24	
24	Jerusalem, central station, near the light rail station.	Spitting: Two ultra-Orthodox youths spat on a Christian at the exit of the central station before crossing the tram tracks.	2.12.24	

25	Jerusalem district: A-Zaim checkpoint.	Disturbance: Coptic Monks and nuns were on their routine journey to their monastery in Jericho, when they were stopped and denied passage through the regular checkpoint, despite showing their Egyptian passports and the special A3 visas, for clergy and nuns, they were held for a long hour and denied entry	2.12.24	The monks contacted the ministries and the RFDC, but the same kind of incident unfortunately was repeated on other occasions.
26	Jerusalem, Old City. The Armenian Patriarchate.	Spitting: A man spat towards an Armenian deacon standing in front of the gate of the Patriarchate	7.12.24	
27	Jerusalem, Old City. The Armenian Patriarchate.	Spitting: Two Jews spat at an Armenian religious priest and his students from the seminary, when they crossed the street towards the seminary.	19.12.24	A complaint was filed with the police- No. 550990/2024
28	Fssuta village, Upper Galilee.	Stone throwing: A religious Jew threw stones at statues in the entrance to the village. The statue of Santa Klaus was damaged and the glass case of the statue of Mary was shattered.	20.12.24	The perpetrator was apprehended and handed over to the police. A complaint was filed, No. 542465/2024
29	Kiriat Mozkin, a city in the Haifa district.	A municipal inspector of the city of Kiryat Motzkin fined a shop for presenting a red ribbon in a shape of a cross, arguing that it is swastika-cross which is a symbol prohibited by law. Despite explaining that it is simply a cross, a symbol and expression of Christian faith, which is not illegal - the inspector insisted and issued a fine.	23.12.24	The mayor of Kiryat Motzkin came with other officials and the municipal inspector to apologize to the shop owner for the incident.
30	Jerusalem, Mount Zion. Dormition abbey.	Graffiti: On the wall of the monastery "death to Arabs".	24.12.24	The municipality was called, and the graffiti was taken off in an hour.
31	Jerusalem, A park in the Valley of the Cross.	Spitting: An Orthodox priest was spat at by 2 motorcyclists with helmets which passed near him	26.12.24	

Summary of the Report and Insights

The Importance of Deploying Hotline Volunteers and Maintaining Continuous Contact Between Volunteers and Christian Institutions:

A | More than two-thirds of the incidents recorded in this report were either photographed or observed and documented by hotline volunteers. Particularly significant is the real-time documentation of incidents by volunteers stationed in high-risk locations at peak times (as the data from October 20 -22 proves).

B | Ongoing and frequent communication between volunteers and Christian institutions fosters trust in the hotline and encourages Christians to report incidents. Unfortunately, many cases still go unreported due to a lack of communication or awareness of the hotline's existence.

Incidents in New Locations: This report highlights incidents in areas not previously associated with anti-Christian harassment: specific streets in western Jerusalem and towns in the north, such as Fassuta and Kiryat Motzkin. This geographic expansion suggests the phenomenon is spreading beyond sacred sites and churches. This trend warrants close monitoring.

The Need for Cameras and Real-Time Documentation: Armenian Patriarchate Street, Via Dolorosa, Jaffa Gate, and Mount Zion remain hotspots for recurring harassment against Christians. Without the presence of hotline volunteers, street cameras, or active surveillance of existing cameras, most incidents go unnoticed. There is an urgent need for street-facing cameras at Station 2 of the Via Dolorosa, and we continue to appeal to the Franciscans on this matter.

Police Involvement: This quarter, four police complaints were filed by the hotline, but so far, no updates have been received regarding suspects or investigation outcomes. Nonetheless, it is crucial to continue filing complaints, especially when photographic evidence exists. This documentation ensures the authorities cannot ignore individual incidents or the broader trend.

Two police officers in Jerusalem deserve commendation for their consistent and effective efforts to address this issue through initiatives and actions.

Legal Involvement: Most police complaints are closed, and in cases where investigations continue, tracking the case, the perpetrator, or the outcomes are often impossible. Thanks to the involvement of the legal department at the Reform Center for Religion and State, led by Attorney Ori Narov, and with the assistance of The Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI), there will be improved follow-up on filed complaints and closed cases until the authorities are held accountable.

Protective Presence: During holidays and periods like the month of Selichot, hundreds of thousands of Jews pass through the Old City and Mount Zion on their way to the Western Wall. This increases the risk of negative interactions with Christians and their institutions. The presence of RFDC volunteers at potential friction points serves as a somewhat deterrent factor—simply by being present with cameras and their efforts to engage in calming dialogue with potential aggressors. We hope the police, despite the immense workload, will station policeman near Christian sites and instruct them to act against attackers and detain anyone engaging in spitting.

Summary of 2024

In 2024, 109 incidents were documented (54 of which involved spitting, the most common form of assault). We relied on 55 active hotline volunteers who maintained regular contact with 36 institutions and clergy members. 25 police complaints were filed on behalf of clergy and various churches regarding these incidents.

This year has been challenging in many respects, but we remain determined to continue working to uphold the dignity and safety of the Christians of this land, as well as the pilgrims, clergy, and religious symbols across the country.

We encourage Christians and Christian institutions to maintain communication with us. Cooperation during these challenging times serves the common interest of all faiths committed to religious freedom and mutual respect.

As we began the Year 2025, we all pray and hope for an end to regional suffering and for the fulfillment of our shared vocation.

**Yisca Harani | Director
Religious Freedom Data Center**