

“The Security and guarding of Al-Aqsa Mosque (1948-2000) Historical and Documentary Research”

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Abstract

The Security Department of Al-Aqsa Mosque has been one of the most important and active departments of the Administration of Islamic Waqf since 1948. This Department has been historically assigned with the mission of guarding the Mosque with all components, maintain security and peace. Its structure as well as its administrative and security tasks has been developed throughout past decades starting from a few scattered gate guards to only guard the opened gates of the Mosque to a multi-function structured department which includes numerous scattered guards to numerous fixed and mobile security points, working 24 hours on a daily basis throughout the year as Al-Aqsa Mosque needs more security.

The structure and assignments of the Security Department and its relationship with the Polices Department have been affected by major incidents in the security history of Al-Aqsa like when it was occupied in 1967. The Jordanian Administration has been witnessing radical changes as well as First and Second Intifada events, popular revolutionary uprisings, attacks by extremist Zionist groups and successive massacres that took place in the Mosque by the Occupation soldiers, policemen and settlers.

This is the first historical and descriptive Documentary study of its kind in this important area which is basically based on the archive of the Department of Security that include documents, records and correspondences since the establishment of the Department in the beginning of the Jordanian period in 1948 to the outbreak of the Second Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000 which has never been studied. The first chapter includes a brief historical introduction on guarding Al-Aqsa throughout the past centuries before the establishment of the Jordanian Security Department, the managerial hierarchy of the Department, increase of

security guards, their distribution, assignments, equipment and training. The second chapter describes the Department executes a comprehensive network of procedures to maintain security of Al-Aqsa as a vivid sacred mosque subject to ongoing attacks. The last chapter describes the relationship between Mosque guards and the Police since the establishment of a police station inside the Mosque during the British Mandate, its relationship with the Jordanian Mosque Police and the Israeli Occupation Police and its different security forces which have been trying since the first day of the Occupation to interfere into Mosque security, administration and building as well as its attempts to limit the powers of Mosque guards with different means in order to put an end to the role of Awqaf and maintain full control over the Mosque gradually.

The performance of the guards and their powers in Al-Aqsa Mosque has been considered an actual indicator to the ongoing Jordanian Guardianship and Administration despite the Occupation. The Department of Security has intervened in all periods and important security incidents during the reporting period of this study such as the burn of Al-Qibli Chapel in 1969, armed infiltrations, incursions and massacres. Many Department guards have been killed as martyrs defending the Mosque like the martyr guard “Saleh Al-Yamani” may God bless his soul. Many security guards have been arrested, captured and injured as they defend Al-Aqsa Mosque during the study period. The Mosque guards confronted the escalating procedures of the Occupation to divide the Mosque by time and place as well as witnessed and documented it incursions by groups of Zionist extremists on a daily basis. Therefore, the archive of the Department of Security which includes exclusively important documentations and correspondences is considered a primary source to understand security and administrative procedures of Al-Aqsa Mosque. This study is an attempt to shed the light on some important aspects of this archive.

This study comes to the surface in a very sensitive period of Al-Aqsa Mosque as it is planned to destroy the Department of Security and its historical role, to mark a great period of the efforts of the Department of Islamic Awqaf in Jerusalem and the Department of Security. This study offers findings and recommendations to review and asses past experiences as well as strengthen and support Mosque guards in present and future to continue defending its occupied Mosque on behalf of the Nation.