**The significance of Jerusalem**

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For Christians, the Holy Sepulchre is holy because according to them the site is related to Jesus’ crucification, his empty tomb and resurrection. According to Jewish traditions the remnant of the wall ofthe Solomon Temple is the site where Hazrat Ibrahim prepared to sacrifice his son Hazrat Ishaq. The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) made the miraculous journey from Makkah to Jerusalem and led all the earlier prophets in prayer and then ascended to heaven. This is why it is significant for the Muslims as well. In the end, the Temple Mount is a holy site for all.

The temple was first destroyed by the Babylonians and second by the Roman Empire commander, Titus. Jews were forbidden from entering the city and the Romans used the site as a garbage dump. In 636, an Islamic force consisting of 4000 Sahaba led a siege to Jerusalem. It continued for six months and the Patriarch Sophronius of the Greek Church decided only to surrender to Caliph Umar Ibn Khattab. In 637, Byzantine’s army surrendered to Muslims and Patriarch Sophronius presented the keys of the holy city to Hazrat Umar.

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Hazrat Umar invited 70 Jewish families from outside to settle in Jerusalem and allowed them to build a synagogue to worship for the first time in over 500 years. Crusade was the concept of pope Urban-II and on November 27, 1095, he demanded the conquest of Jerusalem from the Muslims. It was also a sign of the rise of the West after centuries of Muslim superiority. It was during the first Crusade that Jerusalem fell after a siege of a week. According to the book, Lost Islamic History by Firas Alkhateeb, “For the first time since Umer entered the city in 462 years before, Jerusalem came under Christian control”.

Salahuddin Ayubi entered Jerusalem and in 1187 laid the siege of city. Later the city succumbed to his pressure and surrendered. After 88 years of Crusade control, Jerusalem was captured. A peace treaty was signed after the fall of Jerusalem in 1192. In it, Salahuddin promised to give free passage to the Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem and also allowed them to retain all the land he had conquered. The Seljuk Turks conquered Jerusalem in 1073 and later on in 1517, the Ottoman ruler Selim arrived to take possession of Jerusalem. The Ottomans allowed the Jews to pray at the Wailing Wall and made it an exclusive Jewish enclave. According to an Israeli paper, Haaretz, it was Theodore Herzl who talked of a Jewish state during his address to the first Zionist congress. He was the one who proposed a plan to declare old Jerusalem an international city. Therefore, in 1897, Jews in Europe decided to make Jerusalem a Jewish majority land.

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In 1897 Jerusalem had a three percent Jewish population, 87 percent Muslim population and rest Christian and in 1997, the population of Jews rose to 75 percent. After the holocaust forced Jews to seek a new home outside of Europe, Britain offered them Palestine which was under the British mandate. It was the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, which paved the way for the state of Israel. As a result, a large migration of Jews into Palestine took place and the Jewish state was established in the heart of Arab world in 1948.

Some 750,000 Palestinians were expelled from their homes, a stage set for ethnic cleansing. Israel took control of Western Jerusalem immediately after the 1948 war. It captured East Jerusalem during the Arab-Israel war of 1967 and in 1980, declared Jerusalem as a unified capital which is not recognised by the UN and international community. East Jerusalem and the old city remained in Jordanian hands for two decades before they were captured by Israel in 1967.The Palestinians want East Jerusalem to be the capital of a future Palestinian state. The ultimate mission of Israel is to construct another temple at the place of Masjid Al-Aqsa by hook or by crook.

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Muslims ruled Palestine for over 12 centuries whereas Christians ruled only for 88 years. Recently, the Israeli government ordered a number of Palestinian families to leave their homes of Sheikh Jarrah after a so-called court verdict and this was followed by preventing large gathering of Palestinians at the Damascus gate. Even praying at Al-Aqsa masjid was prohibited. Presently, Israel has built illegal settlements in occupied areas to further strengthen its control after the expulsion of several Palestinians families from their homes. The Israeli Defence Forces stormed Al Aqsa masjid ahead of Jerusalem Dayto mark the capture of East Jerusalem during the Arab-Israel war in 1967.

Israeli terror attacks have left over 300 dead, including 70 children, and thousands injured. Majority of the analysts are of the view that attacks on the innocent Palestinians is also due to political reasons. Recently, after the elections in Israel, Netanyahu was given a chance to form the government but he failed. There are also several cases of corruption against Netanyahu, his wife and his son. The aim of these attacks is to divert the attention of domestic audiences from cases and to gain sympathies by targeting Arabs. The international community and international organisations have failed to stop Israeli terror attacks as they, including the OIC, EU, UN, UNSC, are only condemning it but refrain from taking any concrete action. Turkey’s president Erdogan has suggested an international protection force to be sent to the occupied areas to protect Palestinians and that seems to be viable option. The international community must react immediately to stop brutalities against unarmed Palestinians.