



## Jerusalem 2016 Crime & Safety Report: Jerusalem, West Bank, and the Gaza Strip

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Burglary; Drug Trafficking; Counterfeiting; Intellectual Property Rights Infringement; Fraud; Money Laundering; Riots/Civil Unrest; Hate Crimes; Religious Violence; Significant Events; Religious Terrorism; State Terrorism; Anti-American sentiment; Political Violence; Earthquakes; Floods; Surveillance; Kidnapping

Near East > Jerusalem; Near East > Palestinian Territories

3/1/2016

### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

The security environment within Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip (Gaza) remains complex and dynamic, and U.S. citizens should be aware of the risks posed by travel in these areas. U.S. citizens traveling in these areas are urged to exercise caution as extremists are known to operate in the region. During 2015, there was a marked increase in lethal attacks involving both Palestinians and Israelis in Jerusalem and the West Bank, and while not being specifically targeted because of their nationality, a number of U.S. citizens were attacked and killed. While security cooperation between the Government of Israel (GoI) and the Palestinian Authority (PA) continued in 2015, tensions in the region remain high.

Post Crime Rating: Medium

### Crime Threats

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Incidents of violent crime, residential break-ins, and petty theft are reported to the Gol and the PA according to jurisdiction, through the Israeli National Police (INP) and Tourist Police, or the Palestinian Civil Police (PCP) respectively. Statistics for 2015 are not yet available, but the INP reported 1,711 burglaries and 2,220 stolen vehicles (the majority of which are not recovered) in Jerusalem in 2014.

In Jerusalem, most petty thefts occur in crowded tourist locations, including the Old City and its environs, and 2015 saw a number of reported security incidents affecting U.S. citizens near the several "gates" or entrances to the Old City. U.S. government employees continue to be recommended to avoid the Damascus, Herod's, and Lions' Gates of the Old City, as these gates have been the sites of numerous security incidents, including stabbing attacks against Israeli Security Forces (ISF) and ISF use of live fire against assailants.

Crime tends to increase in the Old City and the Talpiot Sherover/Haas Promenade areas after dark. U.S. citizens are advised to avoid open air public parks in Jerusalem after dark as they are poorly lit, making them potentially attractive to criminals seeking to rob or attack passers-by.

The Palestinian economy is primarily cash-based. Minor narcotics trafficking and narcotics-based money laundering are present, principally in Palestinian areas that fall outside of the PA's security control, which is the approximately 20 percent of the West Bank defined as Area A under the Oslo Accords. The PA's lack of effective control outside of Area A increases the risk of consumer goods smuggling. Bulk cash smuggling, intellectual property rights violations, and counterfeit currency cases also have been reported. Trade-based money laundering, customs fraud, and other illegal financial activities allow criminal organizations to earn, move, and store supporting funds and illicit proceeds under the guise of legitimate trade.

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Currently, trade-based money laundering and customs fraud are believed to be among the largest money laundering threats to the PA but are difficult to quantify. A lack of cooperation between PA and Israeli authorities complicates assessment and enforcement. Informal cash transfer networks called "Hawalas," both licensed and unlicensed, are widely used for legitimate as well as illicit purposes.

### Other Areas of Concern

Isolated street protests, demonstrations, and violence can also occur across Jerusalem, including throughout West Jerusalem, within the Old City, and in East Jerusalem neighborhoods (in particular Sheikh Jarrah, Shu'fat, Beit Hanina, Mt. of Olives, As Suwaneh, Silwan, Shu'fat Refugee Camp, Issawiyeh, Sur Baher, and Jabal Mukabber) with little or no advance warning. While these incidents have not been anti-American in nature, and there is no evidence to suggest that Americans are targets in political violence or terrorist attacks, these incidents nevertheless have harmed and killed U.S. citizens. For example, in October 2015, a U.S. citizen was among three Israelis who were killed in a shooting and stabbing attack by Palestinian assailants on a Jerusalem bus. Other U.S. citizens have been injured in such attacks as well. In July 2015, an attack by an Ultra-Orthodox Israeli extremist on participants at the Jerusalem LGBT Pride March killed one Israeli and injured several others, including a U.S. citizen.

U.S. citizens should exercise caution when traveling in the villages surrounding East Jerusalem, as these areas are not patrolled as frequently by the Israel National Police (INP), resulting in longer response times to crimes, emergencies, or other incidents. Travelers should also exercise caution at contested holy sites, particularly on Fridays, holy days, and the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. U.S. government employees are restricted from travel to the Old City on Fridays during Ramadan. Additionally, many Ultra-Orthodox Jewish

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communities in and around Jerusalem restrict vehicle traffic on Shabbat, and Ultra-Orthodox residents have attacked vehicles entering these neighborhoods.

U.S. government employees and their dependents are prohibited from traveling to most of the West Bank except for official business or other approved purposes. After completing a short security briefing, U.S. government employees may travel to Jericho and most parts of Bethlehem in personally-owned vehicles. However, such travel is carefully monitored and subject to various restrictions, which depend on the security situation. Additionally, U.S. government employees and their dependents are authorized limited travel through the West Bank using only Routes 1, 90, and 443 in order to reach areas such as the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge land crossing into Jordan, Galilee, the Sheikh Hussein Bridge land crossing into Jordan, the Dead Sea coast near Ein Gedi, Masada, and Qumran. While traveling on Routes 1 and 90, U.S. government employees are allowed to stop at roadside facilities, as well as visit all areas south of Route 1 and east of Route 90 (the Dead Sea area). All other roads and locations within the West Bank remain off-limits for personal travel for U.S. government employees and their dependents. U.S. government employees traveling to other areas of the West Bank for official purposes are required to do so with protective security assets in fully-armored vehicles.

U.S. citizens considering travel to the West Bank should take into consideration the potential danger of death, injury or kidnapping posed by travel in the area. On October 1, 2015, a U.S. citizen man and his Israeli wife were shot and killed on the road between Alon Moreh and Itamar settlements, near Nablus. In September 2015, five U.S. citizens were attacked and their car destroyed in Hebron before a Palestinian family gave them shelter. In November 2015, a Palestinian gunman shot and killed a U.S. citizen studying in Israel and two Israelis by firing at their car at the Gush Etzion Junction between Bethlehem and Hebron in the West Bank. Also in November 2015, a Palestinian gunman shot and injured another U.S. citizen near the Cave of the Patriarchs/Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron.

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The Gaza Strip should be avoided altogether. The security environment in Gaza and along its borders, including its border with Egypt and its seacoast, is dangerous and volatile. Given the current situation, all U.S. government employees are forbidden to travel to Gaza. The U.S. Department of State strongly urges all U.S. citizens to avoid travel to Gaza. U.S. citizens should be aware that because of the travel restriction for U.S. government employees, the ability of consular staff to offer timely assistance to U.S. citizens in Gaza is extremely limited. U.S. citizens traveling to Gaza, in spite of the Department of State's Travel Warning should maintain a very low profile while moving within the area, and should be aware that they may face difficulties when attempting to exit Gaza and Israel proper.

U.S. citizens should consult U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv's website at <http://israel.usembassy.gov/> for travel advisories when transiting southern and northern Israel or near Gaza, and reference U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv's Overseas Security Advisory Council 2015 Crime and Safety Report for information regarding Israel.

## **Transportation-Safety Situation**

### Road Safety and Road Conditions

Major roads and highways in Jerusalem and the West Bank are in relatively good condition, but tend to be crowded, especially in urban areas. Signs on major roadways in the region are usually posted in Hebrew, Arabic, and English.

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Drivers regularly violate posted speed limits, contributing to unsafe road conditions. Aggressive driving is common, and many drivers fail to maintain safe following distances, or signal before changing lanes or making turns. Drivers are also prone to stop suddenly on roads without warning, especially in the right lane. The use of cell phones while driving is illegal unless a “hands free” device is used. The GoI requires passengers in vehicles to wear seatbelts at all times, and mandates that headlights be used 24 hours a day during intercity travel between November 1 and March 31. Drinking alcohol while driving is strictly prohibited.

During the weekly Jewish observance of Shabbat, beginning on Friday evening and lasting until Saturday evening, many roads into Ultra-Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods will be closed and surrounding street lamps and traffic lights will be turned off, affecting routes. U.S. citizens should be aware that residents in Ultra-Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods consider driving on Shabbat offensive, and may heckle and throw objects at vehicles.

ISF controls most routes in and out of the West Bank with checkpoints. Travelers should be cautious when approaching checkpoints and should follow the instructions of security personnel working there.

Vehicles have also been the target of rocks, Molotov cocktails, burning tires, road blocks, barricades, and gunfire on roads in East Jerusalem, West Jerusalem, and the West Bank.

Individuals involved in accidents resulting in death or injury may be detained by police pending an investigation. Emergency services may be delayed by the requirement for

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Palestinian authorities to coordinate with Israeli officials.

If self-driving, one should always keep the windows up and doors locked. Keep all valuables out of sight, and seek covered and secure garage parking when possible. Avoid remote areas and maintain vigilance at intersections, leaving maneuvering room between you and the vehicle in front. Vary driving routes and times as much as possible to avoid being time and place predictable, and avoid congested traffic points during peak travel times.

### Public Transportation Conditions

U.S. citizens should exercise caution when using public buses and trains. U.S. government employees are prohibited from using public buses in Jerusalem and the West Bank, as they have been associated with a number of attacks in the past, including stabbings, shootings, and suicide bombings. Bus stops or stations have been the scene of random attacks or attempted assaults (e.g. stabbings and vehicle attacks) as well.

The Jerusalem light rail transit system is authorized for use for U.S. government employees; however, it may be subject to restrictions based on the security situation. During the second half of 2015, the light rail and some of its stops were occasional targets of violence, and in the context of demonstrations and clashes with Israeli security forces, individuals frequently threw rocks at the portion of the light rail system that runs through East Jerusalem.

### Aviation/Airport Conditions

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There are no airports offering commercial flights in Jerusalem, the West Bank, or Gaza. Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv is the only major international airport in Israel, and is approximately 45 minutes from downtown Jerusalem depending on traffic and weather.

### Other Travel Conditions

Due to narrow roads and sidewalks, heavy pedestrian traffic and aggressive driving, pedestrian fatalities sometime occur.

### Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: High

### Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

There are several groups designated as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) by the U.S. government that operate in the West Bank and Gaza, to include Hamas, Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). These groups have been in conflict with Israel for decades, and routinely express anti-Israeli, anti-Jewish and

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sometimes anti-American sentiments. There are a number of splinter groups that operate in the area with a degree of autonomy, and many do not differentiate between military and civilian targets. In Gaza, there are a number of small Salafist groups, some of which are ISIL-inspired.

Hamas, a U.S. government-designated FTO, continues to exercise de facto security and civil control in Gaza. Since Hamas' violent takeover of Gaza in 2007, extremist groups have periodically fired rockets and mortars into Israel from Gaza. During 2015, there was a significant decrease in the numbers, as well as sophistication of, rockets fired into Israel from Gaza compared to attacks in 2014. However, the IDF continues to occasionally conduct military operations against Gaza in response to rocket attacks or violent demonstrations along the border, including airstrikes, and strictly enforces the "exclusion zone," an Israeli enforced buffer area along the eastern and northern edge of the territory, taking lethal measures against individuals who enter the zone. From late October 2015 to late January 2016, IDF has killed dozens of Palestinian protesters partaking in demonstrations, some of which were violent, and Palestinians who infiltrated through the border fence. As Hamas controls Gaza, reliable police statistics are not obtainable.

The GOI often withholds announcing arrest operations targeting terror cells until a later date. However, the GOI reportedly thwarted multiple organized terrorist threats in 2015. The PA Security Forces announced in January 2016 that it had thwarted over 200 attacks against Israelis since October 2015. While not exhaustive, the below reporting lists notable interdictions occurring in Jerusalem and the West Bank in 2015.

- January 4, 2015 – West Bank – Shin Bet released for publication the details of a November 2014 arrest operation of a purported ISIL-inspired cell in Hebron. The three members of the cell allegedly threw an IED at an IDF soldier during the arrest, and had conspired to kidnap

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and kill Israeli civilians and military personnel in the area.

- February 23, 2015 – West Bank – Shin Bet released for publication the details of a January 2015 arrest operation of a Hamas cell in Hebron. The arrest and raid of the 11-member operation uncovered a cache of weapons and explosives. The cell purportedly planned terror attacks in Israel, including suicide operations in Jerusalem and Hebron. In December 2014, the group unsuccessfully attempted to detonate a large bomb in the Hebron area.
- March 22, 2015 – West Bank – Shin Bet reportedly conducted an arrest operation of a Hamas cell in Nablus. The group members admitted that they were recruited in Jordan, trained in Gaza, and operated an explosives lab in Nablus. IDF reportedly confiscated 10 kilograms of materials that could be used for making explosives.
- April 15, 2015 – West Bank – Shin Bet reportedly conducted an arrest operation of a Hamas cell in Nablus. The large-scale arrest operation resulted in 29 arrests. The group members were charged with planning to carry out unspecified attacks against Israel.
- May 2015, the PASF arrested five members of a Hamas cell in Hebron who were planning terrorist attacks in Israel, according to media.
- October 2015, the PASF arrested 19 Hamas members and other individuals suspected of planning stabbing attacks against Israelis, according to media.

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- November 11, 2015 – West Bank – IDF released for publication the details of an October 2015 arrest operation of a PIJ cell in Negohot Settlement (near Hebron). The five-member cell had placed a road block and planned to attack IDF with small arms fire and grenades. One of the grenades exploded, killing one of the group’s members; the other four were apprehended.
- January 1, 2016 – Jerusalem – Shin Bet released for publication the details of a March 2015 arrest operation of a Hamas cell in Abu Dis. The cell members planned on attacking Israeli Security Forces (ISF – which may be comprised of Israeli National Police, Border Guards, Defense Forces, or other security and counterterrorism forces of the GoI) soldiers on the last day of the Jewish holiday of Purim in March. ISF confiscated weapons, ammunition, and a vehicle planned in the attack. Cell members had reportedly conducted training and observations during the planning process of the attack before being apprehended. One of the cell’s members was employed at Abu Dis University as a cafeteria attendant.

While complete statistics are not yet available, there was a surge in what can be characterized as “lone wolf” attacks and attempted attacks that began in October 2015. Most attacks occurred in an uncoordinated manner and most assailants did not have any known political or FTO affiliation. The majority of the attacks and attempted attacks were stabbings, while there were also shooting, vehicular, and Molotov cocktail attacks, by Palestinians against Israelis. Many such attacks and attempted attacks have occurred in particular against Israeli “soft targets,” or targets of opportunity, where Israelis coalesce, such as near bus stops (and to a lesser degree, light rail stops) and at the entry to Jewish holy sites located within the Old City of Jerusalem and Hebron (both the location of historically significant religious sites for both Islam and Judaism). Accordingly, persons that are visibly identifiable as Israeli or Jewish, such as Ultra-Orthodox Jews and security personnel, have been the frequent target of such attacks. Following most “lone wolf” attacks, ISF and armed civilians typically respond with firearms. During a few such responses, the ISF injured, and in some cases killed, innocent civilians and responders by stray small arms fire. While the frequency of attacks and attempted attacks in Jerusalem began to decline as of late October, and in the West Bank as

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of November, they continue in the West Bank on a regular basis. When encountering these incidents, the best advice is to leave the area quickly, or take cover behind a hard object.

The below is a non-exhaustive list of attacks that occurred in Jerusalem and the West Bank in 2015:

- January 8, 2015 – Jerusalem – A Palestinian assailant stabbed with a screwdriver, and moderately injured, a U.S. citizen Yeshiva student at the Damascus Gate of the Old City. ISF conducted a search operation in the Old City, and there were reports of clashes between Palestinians and ISF. The ISF later arrested a Palestinian suspect.
- March 6, 2015 – Jerusalem – A Palestinian (Jerusalem ID holder) drove his vehicle into a group of ISF officers near the Israeli Border Police Headquarters on Route 60, injuring at least seven individuals. The attacker then exited his vehicle and attempted to stab several of the victims he had just run over. ISF officers shot and injured the Palestinian and then arrested him.
- April 15, 2015 – Jerusalem – A Palestinian drove his car into a bus stop near the Meinrtzhagen Square intersection in the French Hill area, injuring two Israelis. One victim later died due to injuries sustained during the attack. ISF arrested the Palestinian driver from Anata; he had no previous criminal record.
- May 14, 2015 – West Bank – A Palestinian rammed his vehicle into three Israeli settlers,

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injuring three, who were standing on the side of a road in Hebron. ISF arrested the attacker.

- May 20, 2015 – Jerusalem – A Palestinian drove his vehicle into a group of ISF officers in At-Tur, a Palestinian neighborhood on the Mt. of Olives, injuring two ISF personnel. ISF shot and killed the assailant. The driver's uncle, Alla Abu-Dheim, killed eight Israeli high school-aged students during the Merkaz Harav Yeshiva massacre in 2008.
- May 24, 2015 – Jerusalem – A Palestinian stabbed two Israeli youth on their way to the Western Wall near Damascus Gate of the Old City. ISF arrested the Palestinian assailant.
- July 30, 2015 – Jerusalem – An Israeli Ultra-Orthodox extremist stabbed six Jerusalem LGBT Pride March participants in Jerusalem, killing a 16 year-old girl, and injuring several others, including a U.S. citizen. ISF arrested the assailant, who had previously stabbed three people at the 2005 Jerusalem LGBT Pride March and served time in prison from which the ISF released him in June 2015.
- July 31, 2015 – West Bank – Israeli extremists destroyed by fire two homes in the Palestinian village of Douma in the West Bank, killing an 18 month-old infant and the two parents, and critically injuring a 4 year-old toddler. Israeli authorities found Hebrew graffiti with the words "Revenge" and "Long Live King Messiah" painted on the homes. Israeli authorities have arrested multiple suspects in the attack.
- August 17, 2015 – West Bank – ISF soldiers shot and killed a Palestinian after he stabbed

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and injured an ISF officer at Tappuah Junction, near Zatarra Checkpoint.

- August 24, 2015 – West Bank – Israeli extremists set fire to a Palestinian home in Douma village. Several Palestinians reportedly suffered from smoke inhalation.
- October 1, 2015 – West Bank – Palestinian members of a Hamas cell shot and killed a U.S. citizen man and his Israeli wife in a drive-by attack near the settlement of Itamar north of Ramallah. Their four U.S. citizen children that were in the backseat were uninjured.
- October 12, 2015 – Jerusalem – A Palestinian stabbed and injured an Israeli soldier near the String Bridge in Jerusalem. ISF arrested the assailant.
- October 13, 2015 – Jerusalem – A Palestinian from Jabal Mukabber ran over and stabbed several Israelis at a bus stop on Malkhei Israel Street in Geula neighborhood, injuring three and killing one Israeli. ISF shot and killed the attacker.
- October 13, 2015 – Jerusalem – Two Palestinian attackers shot and stabbed people on a bus in Jerusalem, killing three, including a U.S. citizen. ISF shot and killed both attackers.

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- October 14, 2015 – Jerusalem – A Palestinian from Ras al-Amud, who had been previously incarcerated in an Israeli jail, stabbed an Israeli at the Central Bus Station. ISF shot and killed the attacker.
- October 23, 2015 – West Bank – A Jewish extremist attacked and injured the head of an Israeli human rights organization near the settlement of Itamar.
- November 19, 2015 – West Bank – A Palestinian assailant shot and killed a U.S. citizen youth, an Israeli, and a Palestinian, and injured at least four others at a traffic jam near Gush Etzion junction.
- November 23, 2015 – Jerusalem – Two female Palestinians, 14 and 16 years-old, who were relatives from northern Jerusalem, stabbed and injured a Palestinian, assuming him to be Israeli, with scissors at the Mahneh Yehuda Market. Israeli guards shot and killed one youth, and shot and injured the other. Another Israeli security guard sustained injuries due to stray Israeli live fire.
- December 6, 2015 – Jerusalem – A Palestinian from Beit Hanina ran his vehicle into and injured two individuals. The assailant then exited his car and stabbed a pedestrian in the Ultra-Orthodox area of Yirmiyahu Street. IDF shot and killed the assailant.
- December 14, 2015 – Jerusalem – A Palestinian ran his car into a bus stop near the Central Bus Station, injuring 14 Israelis, including an infant. ISF shot and killed the assailant.

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- December 23, 2015 – Jerusalem – Two Palestinians stabbed two Israelis, killing one and injuring another, near Jaffa Gate in the Old City. A second Israeli died as a result of stray Israeli Border Guard live fire. Israeli border guards shot and killed the two Palestinian attackers.
- December 26, 2015 – Jerusalem – INP shot and killed a Palestinian near New Gate in the Old City after he reportedly took out a knife and approached them, not heeding their calls to stop.
- December 27, 2015 – Jerusalem – A Palestinian stabbed and injured an IDF soldier near the Central Bus Station. IDF apprehended the attacker.

This broad spectrum of attacks highlight the importance of remaining vigilant and situationally aware of one's surroundings at all times. U.S. citizens should exercise caution when in the vicinity of Israeli military sites, areas Israeli soldiers frequent, contested religious sites, and large crowds.

## Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

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None of the incidents discussed in this report targeted U.S. interests or citizens. However, several U.S. citizens were harmed/killed in Jerusalem and the West Bank in 2015 as a result of random acts of targeted violence.

## **Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence**

Post Political Violence Rating: High

Political violence has always been a concern in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza, and U.S. citizens have been killed/injured in criminal or terrorist actions and in military conflicts in these areas.

In December 1987, the First Intifada (“uprising”) began, leading to several years of low-level violence, including terrorist attacks. In September 2000, the Second Intifada began, and featured violence ranging from rock throwing to suicide bombings. From December 27, 2008 to January 17, 2009, and again from November 14-21, 2012, the IDF conducted major military operations in Gaza.

In response to a sharp increase in rocket activity from Gaza, Israel launched “Operation Protective Edge” on July 7, 2014, beginning the latest Israel-Gaza conflict that lasted for 51 days. The conflict caused substantial infrastructure damage, loss of life, and a humanitarian crisis within Gaza due to IDF air/land operations. While 2014 witnessed between 3,852 to 4,500 rockets and mortars fired from Gaza toward Israel (depending on the source), of which only an approximate dozen landed in Jerusalem or the West Bank, 2015 saw a significant

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decrease in the frequency and efficiency of rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza at approximately 25 rockets and mortars fired. While most ordinance has failed to reach Israeli territory due to ordinance error and interception by Israel's "Iron Dome" missile defense program, travelers should nonetheless be prepared for the possibility of incoming rocket fire. Prudent preparations include being familiar with the sound of the Israeli rocket alarm, and knowing the whereabouts of the nearest protective shelters in the event of attack. The Israel Home Front Command maintains considerable resources for emergency planning in Israel, to include rocket and mortar attacks: <http://www.oref.org.il/894-en/Pakar.aspx>.

The Gol maintains a listing of purported rocket and mortar attacks at [http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Pages/Palestinian\\_ceasefire\\_violations\\_since\\_end\\_Operation\\_Cast\\_Lead.aspx](http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Pages/Palestinian_ceasefire_violations_since_end_Operation_Cast_Lead.aspx).

## Civil Unrest

In Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza, demonstrations can occur spontaneously and have the potential of becoming violent without warning. Rock throwing, stabbings, Molotov cocktails, small arms fire, and clashes with police are common in the West Bank and Gaza, and to some extent in Jerusalem. If such disturbances occur, U.S. citizens should leave the area immediately and avoid neighborhoods that are blocked by INP as this indicates either ongoing violent clashes or police operations. In Jerusalem's Old City, where exits are limited, U.S. citizens should seek safe haven inside a shop or restaurant until the incident is over. Demonstrations can be particularly dangerous around areas such as checkpoints, Israeli settlements, Israeli military areas, and major thoroughfares, where protesters are likely to encounter ISF.

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Be alert to the possibility of spontaneous protests in/around the Old City, especially after Muslim Friday prayers. Protests can often devolve into violence that have resulted in strong responses from all parties involved. It is also vital to maintain a heightened sense of awareness during Ramadan due to the significant increase in the number of people (upward of 200,000) who come to worship at Al-Aqsa mosque. The augmented INP presence in/around the Old City along with the possibility of age restrictions imposed by INP on worshippers allowed into the Old City can further exacerbate the situation.

Travelers to Jerusalem and the West Bank should also be aware that a vast majority of security incidents and clashes occur in “seam areas,” where Palestinians and Israelis live in close proximity to one another. Civil unrest often occurs due to current events, including but not limited to, demolition orders of Palestinian or Israeli homes, Israeli restrictions on Muslim prayer at Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount (HAS/TM), and incursions by IDF into Palestinian or Israeli areas. Travelers should remain abreast of the news, and consider how developments may affect different areas.

While not exhaustive, the below reporting lists notable civil unrest occurring in Jerusalem and the West Bank in 2015:

- February 23, 2015 –West Bank – ISF shot and killed a 19 year-old Palestinian during a late night ISF arrest operation in Duheisha refugee camp. ISF wounded several Palestinians during subsequent clashes. Residents of the refugee camp purportedly threw Molotov cocktails and stones. One ISF soldier was injured and evacuated to a nearby hospital for treatment.

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- March 7, 2015 –West Bank – Approximately 2,000 demonstrators gathered to mark International Women’s Day at the Qalandia checkpoint. ISF proclaimed that the gathering was illegal, and dispersed the crowd using riot control measures. 18 Palestinians were injured.

- May 17, 2015 – Jerusalem –Thousands of Israelis marched in Jerusalem and inside the Old City on Jerusalem Day, marking the capture of East Jerusalem after the Six Day war in 1967. There were reports of skirmishes between the marchers and Palestinians. Palestinians held a counter protest at Damascus Gate in the Old City, which the ISF later dispersed. Four police officers were injured and six Palestinians were arrested. Some of the Israeli youth chanted racist slogans against Palestinians. An Israeli group held a counter demonstration, and distributed flowers to Palestinians in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City.

- July 27, 2015 – West Bank – ISF evacuated houses subject of an Israeli Supreme Court demolition order (Draynoff Houses) in Beit El. Widespread clashes between hundreds of Palestinians and Israeli settlers ensued.

- August 31, 2015 – West Bank – ISF conducted an arrest operation in the Jenin refugee camp. ISF reportedly received heavy small arms fire from Palestinian gunmen; ISF then launched missiles at the house causing severe damage. Four Palestinians were arrested, and five Palestinians and one ISF soldier were injured.

- September 27-29, 2015 – Jerusalem – Skirmishes occurred between Palestinians and ISF at HAS/TM after ISF imposed age restriction on Muslim worshipers entering Al Aqsa Mosque. ISF used riot control measures to disperse the crowd resulting in 22 Palestinians injured from rubber bullets and tear gas. According to ISF, young Palestinians had slept overnight at the

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mosque and also hurled Molotov cocktails at ISF during the clashes, which caused a small fire at the entrance to the Mosque.

- December 19, 2015 – West Bank – Sporadic fire between Palestinian residents of the Qalandia refugee camp and ISF personnel at the Qalandia checkpoint resulted in injury to a civilian Palestinian woman.
- December 29, 2015 – Jerusalem – Armed clashes erupted between Palestinians and ISF during an arrest operation in Beit Duqqu village. Three Palestinians were injured.
- December 29, 2015 – West Bank – Armed clashes erupted between Palestinians and ISF during an arrest operation in the Qalandia refugee camp. ISF used riot control measures to disperse the crowd. ISF shot and injured two Palestinians, and arrested three others.

## Religious/Ethnic Violence

Jerusalem is a holy city, a site of pilgrimage, and an object of devotion for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. It is made up of a wide variety of ethnicities and religions and the Old City has four traditional areas: Jewish, Muslim, Christian, and Armenian Quarters. The city is also politically-charged. Clashes between ISF and Palestinians are common, particularly in East Jerusalem, which is predominantly Palestinian. Violent acts frequently have religious or ethnic overtones. In a number of instances in Jerusalem and the West Bank, right-wing Israeli Jews have committed “price tag” attacks against Palestinian, Christian, and Jewish Israeli targets.

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U.S. citizens visiting the area should be mindful of their locations and be vigilant as they travel throughout Jerusalem and its environs.

While not exhaustive, the below reporting lists notable religious and ethnic violence occurring in Jerusalem and the West Bank in 2015.

- January 14, 2015 – Jerusalem – Tires of 11 Palestinian-owned vehicles were slashed and Jewish religious slogans were sprayed on one of the vehicles in Beit Safafa.
- February 25, 2015 – West Bank – Israeli extremists wrote Hebrew graffiti “we want the redemption of Zion” and set fire to a mosque in the town of Jaba.
- February 26, 2015 – Jerusalem – A fire was ignited in the Greek-Orthodox Dormition Abbey church on Mount Zion, and anti-Christian graffiti was sprayed on the walls.
- March 5, 2015 – West Bank – Two vehicles were torched and hate slogans were sprayed on a nearby wall in Al-Mughayyir; clashes erupted between Palestinians and ISF as a result.
- May 20, 2015 – West Bank – Israeli settlers set fire to 90 olive trees belonging to Palestinians in Sarta village.

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- August 4, 2015 – West Bank – Israeli settlers set fire to dozens of olive trees in fields near Azzun village, east of Qalqilya.
- August 9, 2015 – West Bank – Israeli settlers set fire to hundreds of acres of Palestinian land in Burin, south of Nablus.

## **Post-specific Concerns**

### Environmental Hazards

Jerusalem lies close to the Jordan Valley, the fault line that runs between the Arabian and African tectonic plates. Jerusalem and the West Bank have experienced earthquakes, including one in 1927 that registered 6.2 on the Richter scale and one in 2004 that registered 5.3. A 2013 quake, measuring 3.5, centered in the northern end of the Dead Sea, and tremors were felt throughout Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Israel is a semi-arid country that receives little/no rainfall for six months, and flash flooding poses a concern during the winter rainy season, especially in areas of lower elevation.

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## Critical Infrastructure Concerns

There is a chronic water shortage throughout the West Bank due to growing population and inadequate access to resources. The water supply situation in Gaza is even more severe, due to damaged and deteriorating infrastructure, depletion and contamination of the aquifer, increasing consumption, and lack of viable alternative sources of supply. In Gaza there also is a chronic shortage of electricity caused by damage to the sole power plant and periodic unavailability of sufficient fuel supplies.

## Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

Although intellectual property infringement and theft does occur throughout Jerusalem and the West Bank, these crimes are not a major focus of the policing agencies in either area. In the West Bank, the Palestinian Customs Police monitor and police intellectual property crimes, focusing primarily on counterfeit goods.

Visitors should be aware of potential copyright infringement when purchasing any sort of name brand items, DVDs, or electronics in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza, particularly when shopping from small vendors or in a local market. Potential investors should be aware that Palestinian authorities lack experience and expertise regarding protection of intellectual property rights (IPR).

## Privacy Concerns

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All forms of communication may be subject to compromise. While there is no specific information on those gathering the information, it is better to assume it is occurring.

## Personnel-Background Concerns

The U.S. government seeks equal treatment and freedom to travel for all U.S. citizens regardless of national origin or ethnicity. Even so, all persons applying for entry to Israel and the West Bank are subject to security and police record checks by the Government of Israel and may be denied entry or exit without explanation. On occasion, U.S. citizen visitors have been subjected to prolonged questioning and thorough searches by Israeli authorities upon entry or departure. Those whom Israeli authorities suspect of being of Arab, Middle Eastern, or Muslim origin; those who have been involved in missionary work or activism; and those who ask that Israeli stamps not be entered into their passports may face additional, often time-consuming, and probing questioning by immigration and border authorities, or may even be denied entry into Israel or the West Bank.

While the U.S. Consulate General cannot facilitate U.S. citizens' entry into Israel or the West Bank, those who feel they have been wrongly denied entry or unnecessarily subjected to additional security screening should report their experiences to our office or to the American Citizen Services Unit of the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv. The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy should be contacted for information and assistance related to ports of entry at Ben Gurion Airport, Haifa Port, the northern Jordan River-Sheikh Hussein and southern Rabin-Arava border crossings connecting Israel and Jordan, and the Taba border crossing between Israel and Egypt. The Consular Section of the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem

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should be contacted for information and assistance related to the Allenby Bridge-King Hussein crossing connecting the West Bank and Jordan.

### Drug-related Crimes

While drugs, including marijuana, synthetic marijuana, cocaine, and ecstasy are present in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza, narco-terrorism and narco-violence are not a significant threat. All U.S. citizens should be aware that all narcotics are illegal and are not tolerated by either Israeli or Palestinian authorities. Hamas-controlled Gaza has its own harsher penalties for narcotics possession/use.

### Kidnapping Threat

The threat of hostage-taking is a concern for U.S. citizens and foreigners in Gaza. Armed gunmen in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have kidnapped or planned abduction operations of Israelis and foreigners. Any U.S. citizens traveling to these areas should register with the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem prior to entry.

### Police Response

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The INP and the Palestinian Civil Police are responsive and usually act in a professional manner. There is an excellent relationship between the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem with both agencies, from the commanders down to the patrol officers.

## How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

U.S. citizens arrested by the INP and charged with crimes are entitled to legal representation provided by the GoI. They may also request consular notification and visitation. In some cases, there are significant delays between the time of arrest and the time the INP notifies the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv or the Consulate General in Jerusalem and grants consular access. American citizens who have been arrested by Israeli authorities are advised to be polite, cooperative, clearly identify themselves as an American citizen and request the U.S. Embassy or U.S. Consulate General be notified regarding the situation (or request to make such a phone call themselves).

There is no agreement between the United States and the PA regarding notification and consular access when U.S. citizens are arrested by PA security forces in the West Bank. However, PA security forces normally notify, although not always in a timely manner, the Consulate General of non-security-related arrests for criminal offenses. The notification procedure may be expedited if the arrested U.S. citizen shows a U.S. passport to the police and asks the police or prison authority to contact the U.S. Embassy or Consulate General. When access to a detained U.S. citizen is delayed or denied, the U.S. government can formally protest the lack of consular access.

Although the investigation and prosecution of a crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help victims to understand the local criminal justice process

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and to find an attorney, if needed. For more information about services for U.S. citizens overseas, visit <http://www.travel.state.gov>.

## Crime Victim Assistance

The INP should be notified immediately following any act of theft, burglary, or other criminal offense that takes place in Jerusalem or Area C of the West Bank.

The nationwide emergency phone number in Israel equivalent to 911 in the United States is "100," and works throughout Israel, Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza. While in the West Bank and Gaza, if you dial 100 from an Israeli-based cell phone, you will be put in touch with the INP. If you dial 100 from a Palestinian-based cell phone or landline, you will be connected with the PCP.

U.S. citizens should report crimes immediately to the police and the American Citizen Services section at either the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv or Consulate General in Jerusalem. Timely reporting can greatly benefit the subsequent investigation, resulting in arrests and items being returned if applicable. The U.S. Consulate General's American Citizen Services Unit in Jerusalem can be reached at 02-630-4000. The Consulate website is available at <http://jerusalem.usconsulate.gov/>.

## Police/Security Agencies

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In Jerusalem, the INP have the primary responsibility for civil security inside the municipal boundaries of the city.

The West Bank is divided into three administrative and security zones: Areas A, B, and C. Entry to/from the West Bank, as well as movement within the West Bank, is controlled by Israeli checkpoints.

Area A comprises most Palestinian urban areas and is under PA civil and security control. It is patrolled by the PA security forces, including the Palestinian Civil Police (PCP).

Area B covers most populated rural areas and is under PA civil control and Israeli security control. It is patrolled by the IDF, INP, and the Israeli Border Police.

Area C is made up of Palestinian rural areas, such as land near roads or land adjoining Israeli settlements, as well as the Jordan River Valley. It is under full Israeli civil and security control.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory (UN OCHA oPt) produces a yearly Humanitarian Atlas detailing the different zones and other important demarcations. The 2015 publication is available at [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/atlas\\_2015\\_web.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/atlas_2015_web.pdf).

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Hamas, a U.S. government-designated FTO, continues to exercise de facto security and civil control within Gaza, despite signing a reconciliation deal with Fatah in 2014.

Located throughout Jerusalem and the West Bank are a multitude of police/security agencies. Below is a list of the most commonly encountered agencies.

#### Israeli Forces:

**Israeli National Police (INP):** Traditional police agency in the city, equivalent to a standard U.S. police department. The INP wear dark blue pants and shirts. Some officers wear light blue shirts.

**Israeli National Police Border Guards (INPBG):** Under the command of the INP, they are at most checkpoints and borders crossings. They wear dark green uniforms.

**Yassam:** A special quick reaction unit, they patrol in teams of two on motorcycles. They wear black uniforms and carry rifles.

**Israel Defense Force (IDF):** IDF soldiers are ubiquitous in West Jerusalem on the streets, restaurants, and public transportation. They are present at many checkpoints in the West

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Bank as well. They usually travel in groups and can be identified by their traditional military uniforms.

Palestinian Forces:

National Security Force (NSF): The gendarmerie-type force that also supports other PA security forces, including the PCP, during large-scale operations. In addition, they staff some checkpoints within Area A. They wear green uniforms and are identifiable by their AK-47 (as opposed to the INP's M-16) rifles.

Palestinian Civil Police (PCP): A traditional police agency, similar to a U.S. police department. The PCP combats crime, maintains public order, and provides correctional services. They wear blue and black uniforms.

Presidential Guard (PG): The agency that provides protection for the president, his infrastructure (residence and headquarters), and high ranking VIP visitors. They wear a light green uniform and have a "Presidential Guard" patch on their right arm.

## **Medical Emergencies**

American Citizen Service's staff can provide U.S. citizens with information to assist in finding appropriate medical care, contact family members/friends, and explain how funds can be

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transferred. The U.S. Consulate General does not take responsibility for settling medical bills on behalf of U.S. citizens. Modern medical care and medicines are available in Jerusalem. However, some hospitals in Jerusalem and most hospitals in the West Bank/Gaza Strip are below U.S. standards.

Useful information on medical emergencies abroad, including overseas insurance programs, is provided in the brochure "Medical Information for U.S. citizens Traveling Abroad," available online at <http://www.travel.state.gov> or fax at (202) 647-3000. Travelers can also find information about emergency medical facilities and after-hours pharmacies in the English-language "Jerusalem Post" and "Ha'aretz" newspapers, and in the English-language "This Week in Palestine" magazine.

Emergency services usually have English speaking operators. The following are emergency services telephone number that work throughout Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza.

Police: 100

Ambulance: 101

Fire: 103

#### Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

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Please check the Consulate General website for an updated list of medical providers:  
<http://jerusalem.usconsulate.gov/>.

### Recommended Air Ambulance Services

Imer Air Ambulance Company

[ady@imer.biz](mailto:ady@imer.biz)

052-2555474

Medevac, Air Ambulance

001-941-536-2000

001-800-633-5384

[www.USAirAmbulance.net](http://www.USAirAmbulance.net)

### Recommended Insurance Posture

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Before going abroad, travelers should learn what medical services their health insurance will cover overseas. If one's health insurance policy provides coverage outside the United States, it is important to carry both the insurance policy identity card, as proof of such insurance, and a claim form. Although many health insurance companies will pay "customary and reasonable" hospital costs abroad, very few will pay for medical evacuation back to the United States. Medical evacuation can easily cost \$10,000 or more, depending on the travelers' location and medical condition, and travelers should consider purchasing separate medical evacuation insurance. Additional guidance is available at <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/go/health.html>.

## Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

Polio vaccination up to one year before travel is recommended. For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/israel.htm>.

## OSAC Country Council Information

For any OSAC or security-related questions, please contact U.S. Consulate General Jerusalem's Regional Security Officer, Dan Cronin, at 02-622-7298 or [CroninDS@state.gov](mailto:CroninDS@state.gov). Please note, that there is not an active Country Council in Jerusalem. Constituents interested in getting involved in a Country Council should be advised that there is an active Council in Tel Aviv; please visit [www.OSAC.gov](http://www.OSAC.gov) for additional information. To reach OSAC's Near East team, please email [OSACNEA@state.gov](mailto:OSACNEA@state.gov).

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## **U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information**

### Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Consulate General, Jerusalem

18 Agron Road

Jerusalem 94190

Monday – Friday: 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Post 1 Marines – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Consular facility

14 David Flusser Street, Arnona

Jerusalem 93392

Monday – Friday: 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM

### Consulate Contact Numbers

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Regional Security Officer: 02-622-7298

Post One: 02-622-6987

Consulate General Operator: 02-622-7230

Consular Affairs: 02-630-4000

Website: <http://jerusalem.usconsulate.gov/>

Department of State information line for Israel, Jerusalem, West Bank, and Gaza Strip

Within U.S. – 1-888-407-4747

Overseas – 1-202-501-4444

Nearby Posts

U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv: <http://israel.usembassy.gov/>

Consulate Guidance

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U.S. citizens are advised to monitor Consular messages on [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for any security updates, and should register with their closest U.S. embassy or consulate through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive updates directly.

U.S. citizens in the area should also check the U.S. Department of State's website for the latest information and, stay abreast of the latest news in the region. U.S. citizens are advised to monitor Consular Affairs messages daily for any changes to travel restrictions in these areas given the dynamic security environment.

## **Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim**

### Scams

Two ongoing criminal scams have occurred in Jerusalem and the West Bank:

The first is usually perpetrated by a taxi driver and/or small vendors in the local markets. It involves the driver/vendor asking the visitor to make change for a very large bill. This large bill tends to be counterfeit, and the perpetrator trades one fake bill for smaller legitimate bills.

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The other scam involves ATMs. There have been reports from visitors of identity theft after they depart Jerusalem. Card skimming involves a device placed on the ATM that electronically copies card information. The perpetrator obtains ATM card information and password and drains the account. Visitors are warned against using any ATM that is not in a well-established and well-illuminated commercial facility (bank). In addition, the INP reports that merchants have used iPhones and skimmers to steal identity/financial information of shoppers.

#### Situational Awareness Best Practices

One should be alert to street vendors who often aggressively harass tourists, and always be aware of their surroundings when out in public, exercising a high degree of caution and common sense when patronizing restaurants, cafes, malls, and theaters, especially during peak hours.

The local cellular infrastructure is very good, and works quite well with any world-capable phone in Jerusalem. Due to licensing issues, data services throughout the majority of the West Bank are often limited to 2G (GPRS/EDGE), and are not always consistent/reliable. Visitors should consider obtaining a form of local communication, such as a SIM card to use in emergency situations.

One should have their itinerary written down and made known to others. In addition, one's family members should have the Consulate General's contact information and travel itinerary.

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Gain as much information as possible about the current situation. If you are staying at a hotel, you can ask the concierge/front desk if there is anything going on in the area you plan to travel to that day. Since many people in Jerusalem speak English, you can find local newspapers and television channels in English. It is advisable to register with one or more of the following local media outlets to receive newsfeeds or updates via email or text message: Jerusalem Post, Palestine News, Haaretz, or Al-Quds. U.S. citizens should keep in mind that the security situation in Israel, Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza is fluid and has the potential to change rapidly.

U.S. citizens should use caution in the vicinity of Israeli military sites, areas frequented by Israeli soldiers, contentious religious sites, and large crowds, as these sites are commonly targets of random attacks or violent protest activity. Travelers should remain aware of their surroundings and should immediately leave an area if they feel unsafe.

In Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza, demonstrations, rallies, accidents, or other incidents attract crowds. If caught in a demonstration or disturbance on foot, get off the street and into a shop or public building. Remain in place until it is safe to leave the area. If caught in a demonstration or disturbance while in a vehicle, remain inside the vehicle until it can be safely driven out of the area or you can safely evacuate the vehicle to a nearby building.

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