

Ribat in Palestine

The Growth of a Religious Discourse alongside Politicized Religious Practice

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An online music video, popular in Palestine, opens with a passionate voice proclaiming: “With our mountains and our valleys, with our men and our horses, [we are] *murabitin* [defenders of the faith]. With our hearts, our eyes, and arms, [we are] *murabitin*.”¹ Animated images of al-Aqsa Mosque, the Dome of the Rock, Israeli soldiers, and settlers scroll across the screen. Muslims are present, too, protesting and being arrested. The introductory monologue ends and the refrain begins, “God, God, God, God is with us, God. [We are] *murabitin* to the day of reckoning.”² The animated images turn to video clips of similar scenes: Muslims and Jews in confrontations in al-Haram al-Sharif. The video had over 147,000 views as of October 2017, but the number is hardly representative. Throughout the fall of 2015, the song played in Palestinian cafes and public spaces, and regularly accompanied local news broadcasts and programs. One Palestinian from Jerusalem put it this way: “*Murabitat* [female *murabitin*] are pioneers and heroes, the new virgins of the Palestinian resistance.”³

Who are the *murabitin*? How did they become pioneers and heroes? How might they be reshaping the way Palestinians articulate their resistance toward Israel’s settler-colonial practices in Jerusalem and beyond?

This article contends that the *murabitin* have fused innovative religious practices and discourse with the symbolic power of sacred space to redefine how Palestinian Muslims understand and articulate their resistance to Israeli settler-colonial practices, both at the Holy Esplanade and in Israel-Palestine more broadly. The foundation for the argument posits the notion of *ribat* (defending the faith) within the discursive tradition of Islam across time and space. *Ribat*’s emergence in contemporary Palestine is examined with relation to sacred space, the status quo, and

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gender.⁴ Finally, the practices and discourse of the murabitin, and the changing socio-political landscape which created space for this new phenomenon to emerge are described. The article concludes by arguing that Israel's response to the murabitin helped crystalize the notion of ribat in the Palestinian conscience and contributed to its proliferation. The study is based on ethnographic data collected in Jerusalem between 2013 and 2016.⁵

Ribat through Time and Space

Murabitin is the masculine plural active participle derived from the third form (*fā'ala*) of the triliteral root *ra-ba-ta*, meaning: "to be lined up, posted, stationed (troops); to line up, take up positions; to be moored (ship); to move into fighting positions."⁶ The noun *ribat* describes the activity: *ribat* is what murabitin do. Murabitin protect what is being aggressed upon; hence, they defend the faith.⁷ The notion is firmly rooted in the Islamic theological tradition occurring in the Qur'an and Hadith literature.⁸ Morphological definitions, however, fail to capture the broad and diverse ways *ribat* has been used and understood historically. Jacqueline Chabbi affirms: "The word [*ribat*] needs to be constantly related to a context and a chronology since the sense has been very evolutive."⁹ The earliest applications occurred in the western frontiers of the Islamic empire, describing coastal towns and the need to defend them from attack.¹⁰

Eventually, the term became associated with various Sufi groups who called their guesthouses and institutions of hospitality *ribatat*. Several *ribat* institutions of this type were established in Jerusalem in the Middle Ages. Yusuf Natsheh, director of tourism and architecture at al-Aqsa Mosque, affirmed that in Jerusalem *ribat* had been associated with these Sufi orders. The idea of protecting the city and al-Aqsa Mosque was also present, but historical occurrences were much different than the movement happening today.¹¹

Ribat emerged in contemporary Palestine at the confluence of several interconnected historical, political, and religious streams. The earliest documented use of the term occurred during the first intifada, when the newly formed group Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement) referred to Palestine as the "land of *ribat*" (*ard al-ribat*) and Muslims as murabitin in several of its leaflets.¹² Yitzhak Reiter also noted several instances in the 1990s where non-Palestinian Muslims referred to Palestine as the "land of *ribat*."¹³ The late Yasser Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization and later president of the Palestinian Authority, was known for quoting the Hadith which linked the people of Jerusalem to the notion of *ribat*. In each of these examples, *ribat* conveys the idea that since Palestine belongs to Muslims, some form of resistance toward Israel and its occupation are appropriate and necessary.

According to several key informants, the term gained widespread traction among Palestinians after the Ibrahimi Mosque massacre of 1994, when Israel began imposing limitations on Muslim worship and mandating security screenings at the site.¹⁴ Muslims saw these interventions as a transgression of their religious rights and began using the term *ribat* to express their disapproval and resolve to guard the mosque against further encroachment.¹⁵

Palestinian religious and sentimental connections to the Ibrahimi Mosque were strong, but Palestinian attachment to al-Aqsa Mosque was exceptionally intense. The term easily moved from Hebron to Jerusalem, given the aggressive intrusions of the Israeli settler-colonial project in both cities.¹⁶ Palestinians have been choked institutionally, politically, economically, geographically, and physically in Jerusalem, while Israel has more forcefully asserted its control over the city. Palestinians in Jerusalem have also grown deeply cynical about the real-world viability of achieving an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital and they are painfully aware of the unwillingness of international stakeholders to play a decisive role in resolving the conflict. All of these factors have created fertile ground for re-imagined articulations of their presence in the city and resistance toward Israeli settler-colonial practices. Ribat thus emerged in Palestine as an innovative and broadly appealing Islamic discursive mechanism to articulate and embody Palestinian resistance to Israel at this specific juncture in time.¹⁷

Sacred Space, Status Quo, and the Murabitin

Ribat at al-Aqsa Mosque has been inseparably linked to the notion of sacred space. After Mecca and Medina, al-Aqsa Mosque is the third holiest site in Islam. Jerusalem was the first direction of prayer (*qibla*) and the site of ascent during Muhammad's Night Journey. The heavens above are considered the portal to the divine, and the location is holy. The space must, therefore, be guarded with utmost devotion.¹⁸

The Status Quo has been "the product of tacit pragmatism, not formal understandings, since Jordan and Israel officially remained at war."¹⁹ The Jordanian Waqf (Islamic endowment) continued to administer the site while Israel took charge of access and security. Since the arrangement is *de facto*, informal, and pragmatic, there has been little agreement about the specific form, content, or scope of these understandings. Each side accuses the other of transgressing its commitments when conflicts arise. The result is a tenuous and unstable situation, fueled by a potent mix of religious fervor and misunderstanding.²⁰ One stark example was Israel's transgression in the year 2000 when the Israeli politician, Ariel Sharon, entered the site accompanied by over a thousand security guards.²¹ The egregious transgression ultimately led to the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada.

Both sides, however, agree that the status quo permits non-Muslims to visit the site. People of any (or no) faith are allowed to enter between 7:30 AM and 12:30 PM, Saturday through Thursday via Bab al-Maghariba, after first passing through Israeli security screening. Visitors are then free to walk through the compound, although they are forbidden from entering the physical structures.²²

Among these visitors are far-right Israeli groups who actively advocate for a change in the status quo.²³ These groups often have substantial ties to far-right political factions which had been on the political fringes historically and largely ignored. Today, however, they have representation in the coalition government.²⁴ These groups lobby for increasing the number of Jews allowed to visit the site, and advocate for the restoration of Jewish

religious practices. Some have even attempted to perform prayers on the site.²⁵ The more extreme groups call for the destruction of the mosque altogether in order to build the Third Temple.²⁶ Despite the political ascendancy of these groups, some debate continues to surround the political and religious advisability of focusing on the Temple Mount.²⁷ While the government might not officially support a change in the status quo, the importance of the Temple Mount has clearly been upgraded within Israeli society as a national-Jewish site.²⁸

Palestinians are acutely aware of these dynamics and have countered the threat by affirming their presence in the compound. One strategy has been simply to increase their physical presence. The late Faisal Husayni, a member of the Supreme Muslim Council in Jerusalem and the Palestinian Authority's Minister for Jerusalem Affairs, advocated learning circles at al-Aqsa Mosque for this purpose.²⁹ In the past five years, these circles have become associated with murabitin practices.

The Islamic Movement of Israel has also redoubled their efforts at al-Aqsa Mosque in response to the changing dynamics within Israeli society, engaging in restoration projects, awareness raising, and resistance activities in Jerusalem with the slogan "al-Aqsa is in danger."³⁰ They too have adopted the idea of murabitin to mobilize support for their activism.

The murabitin of al-Aqsa Mosque emerged at the nexus of Muslim religious sentiments, a tenuous and eroding status quo, and changing socio-political dynamics in Israeli society. They see themselves as the guardians of al-Aqsa Mosque, protecting it from Jews who seek to change the status quo on the site. Murabitin are typically older people or youth. Key informants accounted for these demographics in two ways: first, they noted the increased availability of older people and youth who tend to have more free time; more significantly, they discussed how Israeli forces typically treat older people and women in general less severely than men. Unfortunately, gender and age have not prevented Israeli forces from using force against these people.

Practice and Discourse

The following quote exemplifies multiple themes within murabitin discourse and practice:

Ribat is work, work for Almighty God, pure work for Almighty God. . . We are present at Bab al-Maghariba, this gate that the occupation forces have seized control over and through which the [Israeli] extremists enter. We are there at that gate. We are on the front line. We are on the front of the line of jihad. We are on the front of the line of ribat. This is our mosque. We will not give it up. We are murabitun, every day at al-Aqsa Mosque. Ribat is for Almighty God.³¹

At its core, murabitin view their activity as a work for God – a form of worship. It is not for family, community, or nation: ribat is for God alone. It has strong and direct ties to

personal perceptions of piety and faith, which, the murabitin argue, relate to the political context but are not governed by it explicitly. Some deny the political context outright; their dismissal highlights an authenticated and sincere self-perception, which validates their pious perceptions. Regardless how one interprets the overlapping and interrelated notions of religion and politics, *ribat*, as practiced and understood by these individuals, is fundamentally about worship.

Ribat as an act of worship manifests itself in a variety of forms. Key informants discussed the correlation between *ribat* and *i'tikaf* (the practice of spending extended periods of time in a mosque for prayer, meditation, scripture reading, and devotion). Palestinians practice *i'tikaf* most widely over the last ten days of Ramadan. It is a non-compulsory practice Muslims view favorably. The defining element of *i'tikaf* is the intention to dedicate oneself to God. In this sense, *i'tikaf* and *ribat* are similar: both acts include the explicit purpose of dedicating time to God. They differ in that *ribat* also includes the intention of guarding the mosque against an external threat.

Once inside the mosque and the intention of dedicating one's time to God is established, murabitin engage in a variety of religious practices, the most prominent being learning circles (*masatib al-'ilm*).³² As the name implies, Muslims gather to study sacred texts, attend religious lessons, and discuss religious topics. They range from informal encounters among friends to groups with formalized educational tracks. In some cases, participants are even awarded certificates of participation and accomplishment.³³

The murabitin affirm that non-Muslim visitors to al-Aqsa are acceptable; the exception is Jewish groups affiliated with the far-right organizations with explicit intentions to change the status quo. The murabitin easily identify these groups because they enter accompanied by Israeli security forces, as several murabitin explained:

We sit and study outside of the Qibli Mosque near Bab al-Maghariba. . . . The Jews enter from this gate, and they provoke us, saying and doing inappropriate things. Maybe they do it with their face or their hands, making movements that are despicable. . . . They always have seven or eight [security guards] around them. When the women [murabita] hear this, they say, "Allahu Akbar." The settlers keep walking, and we stay sitting. We don't move.³⁴

This sequence of events has repeated itself on multiple occasions,³⁵ as some degree of ritualized engagement between the various actors.

Declaring God's greatness in the presence of these Jewish visitors is a prominent feature of murabitin activity and discourse. Informants explained that it could be said spontaneously by individuals or by groups in unison who chant according to the prompting of a leader. The leader calls out *takbir* ("Say 'Allahu Akbar'") and the group responds, "Allahu Akbar." The expression is deeply rooted in Islamic tradition, ubiquitous and inextricably linked to religious sentiments and practices. The *Encyclopedia of Islam* defines the formula as "the briefest expression of the absolute superiority of the One God, [it] is used in Muslim life in different circumstances, in which the idea of God,

His greatness and goodness is suggested.”³⁶ In this context, the purpose is to express their disapproval toward the presence and actions of Israeli extremists. One participant explained, “It is a call, a declaration that this place is a mosque, not a synagogue.”³⁷ Others described it as an inevitable response: “What can we do? We can’t do anything except say ‘Allahu Akbar’ because of the oppression we experience.”³⁸

Murabitin also view “Allahu Akbar” as a weapon, as this woman explains:

The *takbir* is the only weapon we possess in al-Aqsa Mosque. They are afraid of the words “Allahu Akbar” in al-Aqsa Mosque because they are entering a place that is not theirs. “Who is more wicked than the men who seek to destroy the mosques of God and forbid his name to be mentioned in them, when it behoves these men to enter them with fear in their hearts?”³⁹ They enter this place, but [they are] afraid. Because of that, they are unjust to us. It’s not just injustice. It’s more unjust than injustice. They are preventing us from entering our beloved mosque. We’re prevented from entering our Aqsa.⁴⁰

“Allahu Akbar” is a weapon because it evokes fear. The murabita’s voice is a weapon of protest. She supports her claim with a Qur’anic verse: the fear of the Jewish invaders is more than a human response to the proclamations of God’s greatness, it stems from the transgression of divine principle.

The use of “Allahu Akbar” is also related to jihad and the ethical sensibilities of the murabitin. Palestinians have debated extensively the use of violent and non-violent means of achieving their national aspirations. What forms of resistance are religiously defensible, ethically justifiable, and politically efficacious? One shaykh employed by the Palestinian Waqf explained the ethical sensibilities of the murabitin in contrast to suicide bombers:

If someone wears an explosive belt on their chest and goes down to blow themselves up, this is refused in religion. In principle, if you’re supposed to protect your life, you can’t die like this. Religion compels you to defend al-Aqsa, but you can’t blow yourself up . . . but other means are permitted. Religion will tell you to go sit in al-Aqsa and die. It’s no problem because they [soldiers] are the ones assaulting you. It’s no problem. . . . Religion tells you that it’s forbidden to turn your back. Don’t blow yourself up – just stay standing. If he kills you [while in this position], it’s no problem. . . . If you understand [your religion correctly], you will know that you are supposed to remain standing. If you don’t know, maybe you will get an explosive belt and explode yourself.⁴¹

The shaykh is arguing that *ribat* is an ethically and morally defensible means of resistance, which correlates with its validity as an authentic expression of Islam.

While the trope “Allahu Akbar” can be emotionally or psychologically provocative to Jewish groups, the murabitin emphasized that the groups were in no physical danger. They

view Islam as a religion of peace and “Allahu Akbar” as a nonviolent means of resistance. The murabitin’s peaceful resistance is one of the main reasons their guardianship became such a potent force in Palestinian society so quickly.⁴²

Some murabitin, however, have taken their response a step farther and confronted these Jewish groups. The Jewish groups have felt physically threatened and Israeli security has intervened, with the situation deteriorating into violent clashes.

Actions and Reactions

When clashes erupt, Israel has used various crowd dispersal methods, including tear gas, physical force, and arrests. Palestinian responses have been particularly spirited for two reasons: they have been angered by Israeli interventions at their sacred site and they are infuriated by Israel’s forceful treatment of vulnerable people, particularly women. Many murabitat reported being hit and insulted by soldiers while being arrested. In some cases, soldiers removed women’s veils. These transgressions were a stark violation of women’s bodies and their dignity. Some altercations were recorded with mobile phones and spread on social media.⁴³ News and images of such incidents sparked widespread protest. Palestinians saw Israel’s actions as flagrant abuses of women’s sacred honor and were enraged. The murabitat were also admired for their courage, defending the mosque at any cost.

On a second level, Israel began implementing a system of physical displacement and prohibitions of the murabitin, starting as early as 2014.⁴⁴ When the murabitin were forbidden (or delayed) entry to the mosque they would protest, shouting “Allahu Akbar.” Thus, al-Aqsa’s gates also became locations for ribat. From the gates, the murabitin would also see exiting the compound Jewish groups who occasionally prayed and danced just beyond the threshold of the gate. The murabitin would be infuriated, and confrontations would result, an interaction that occurred on multiple occasions. Israeli security assaulted, arrested, and physically removed the murabitin from the area. Some were banned from the mosque altogether with no formal charge or expiration date for their suspension.⁴⁵

Eventually, the murabitin began gathering just beyond Bab Hutta on the Via Dolorosa north of al-Aqsa, a publicly conspicuous location conducive to assembly. They continued their practice of learning circles – praying, taking lessons, and reciting sacred texts. When threatening individuals and groups passed by, they would shout “Allahu Akbar.” After several months, Israel forbade them from assembly there, too, accusing them of harassing tourists and disturbing the peace.

Israel’s third level of response was to outlaw the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel and its affiliated murabitin and murabitat organizations.⁴⁶ The prohibition coincided with confrontations at the Holy Esplanade when Eid al-Adha, the Muslim holiday of the sacrifice, occurred one day after Yom Kippur, the Jewish day of atonement. Israel argued that the murabitin and murabitat were intimidating Jewish visitors at the Holy Esplanade by shouting “Allahu Akbar.” Ribat was vilified as a form of incitement initiated by the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement, which, Israel

argued, had financial and ideological ties to terrorist organizations such as Hamas and al-Qa‘ida.⁴⁷ Israel’s response dramatically raised public awareness for the murabitin, and Palestinians were infuriated by the prohibition. Palestinians saw Israel’s portrayal of the murabitin as fundamentally flawed, exaggerating the institutional role of the Islamic Movement in Israel. As one Jerusalemite explained:

Jerusalemites don’t see it [murabitin] as an organization. Everyone is one. It’s not just a religious category; it became a tool to defend – a religious and political defense mechanism. Palestinians also see it within the context of peaceful resistance of occupation. This is why it fell into place so quickly. This is indicative of a larger trend; women were seen as less threatening. But when these women were attacked, it was so repulsive.⁴⁸

In similar statements from Palestinians, the groups were described as informal networks, if organizations at all. Some argued that if the murabitin were, indeed, receiving money for their work, their worship was mercenary and therefore invalid. They emphasized the group’s nonviolent approach as the basis for its legitimacy and Israel’s forceful treatment of women as justification for the strong reaction.

In this way, the murabitin have fused innovative religious practices and discourse with the symbolic power of sacred space to redefine how Palestinian Muslims understand and articulate their resistance to Israeli settler-colonial practices in Jerusalem and beyond. Israel may be able to prohibit specific individuals and organizations, but they will remain incapable of controlling how Palestinians understand and articulate their faith. It is common to hear in mosques during Friday prayers the phrase, “O Muslims, o murabitin,” multiple times over the loud speakers. This is why one informant claimed that every Muslim upon crossing the threshold of al-Aqsa Mosque prays: “O God, I have intended ribat.”⁴⁹ And finally, why one Jerusalemite summed it up this way: “Those who go and stay in al-Aqsa, they are the true murabitin. But now, we are all murabitin.”⁵⁰

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Endnotes

- 1 *Bi-ijbalna wa suhulna, bi-rijalna wa khuyulna, murabitin. Bi-qulubna wa ‘yunna wa bisawa’idna, murabitin.* Alandalus Alandalus, “Anshuda murabitin – li-l-masjid al-Aqsa al-mubarak – intaj al-Andalus” [*Murabitin Anthem – For the Blessed Aqsa Mosque – al-Andalus Production*], YouTube, uploaded 15 October 2014, online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDmJPNKCHFw (accessed 4 October 2017).
- 2 *Allah, Allah, Allah, Allah wa ma’na Allah, wa murabitin la yawm al-din.*
- 3 “Options for Jerusalem and the Holy Sites,” Policy Forum, CITPax, Madrid, Spain, 20–21 November 2015.
- 4 While addressing gender in several places, the author has left an in-depth discussion of this important dynamic for a separate, forthcoming article.

- 5 This study is based on ethnographic data collected in Jerusalem between 2013 and 2016 within the framework of doctoral research at Exeter University: more than sixty ethnographic interviews were conducted with *murabitin* and Jerusalemites around the issue of *ribat*; in addition, extensive participant observation at al-Aqsa Mosque; a review of several promotional websites for *murabitin* activities; and monitoring of Palestinian social and news media throughout the study. Results were triangulated from these primary and additional sources. All interviews were conducted in Arabic and translated by the author.
- 6 Hans Wehr, *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J. Milton Cowan (Ithica: Spoken Language Services, 1994).
- 7 The Israeli website Palestinian Media Watch translates the term *ribat* as “religious war,” which is profoundly different from “standing guard.” See the political connotation of the site’s definition in “Mahmoud al-Habbash,” Palestinian Media Watch, online at palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=859 (accessed 7 September 2017).
- 8 A Qur’anic verse with a similar connotation is al-‘Imran 3:200. Three additional verses have related meanings: al-Anfal 8:11, al-Kahif 18:14, and al-Qasas 28:10. In al-Anfal 8:60, the term means to tie up a horse. For a detailed exposition of the Hadith literature concerning *ribat* from al-Aqsa Mosque, see al-Msjed al-Aqsa, “Dars al-Thulatha’ min al-masjid al-Aqsa al-mubarak lil-Shaykh Khalid al-Mughrabi – 18/03/2014 m. – 17 Jumada al-Ula 1435 h.,” YouTube, posted 18 March 2014, online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLffJ8nzsSw&feature=em-upload_owner (accessed 7 September 2017).
- 9 Jacqueline Chabbi and Nasser Rabbat, “*Ribat*,” in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. Peri Bearman, Thierry Banquis, Clifford E. Bosworth, Emeri van Donzel, and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 2012), online at dx.doi.org/101163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0919 (accessed 7 September 2017).
- 10 For more information, see Nazeer Ahmed, “*Murabitun*,” in *History of Islam: An Encyclopedia of Islamic History*, ed. Nazeer Ahmed (2001), online at historyofislam.com/murabitun/ (accessed 7 September 2017).
- 11 Author interview in Old City, Jerusalem, 11 July 2016.
- 12 Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, *Speaking Stones: Communiqués from the Intifada Underground* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994).
- 13 Yitzhak Reiter, *Jerusalem and Its Role in Islamic Solidarity* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 33, 120.
- 14 Author interview in Kafr ‘Aqab, 13 September 2015; Author interview in al-Ram, May 2015; Interview in Old City, Jerusalem, 10 February 2016.
- 15 For a detailed discussion of the transformations made at al-Ibrahimi Mosque, see Michael Dumper, *Jerusalem Unbound: Geography, History, and the Future of the Holy City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 137–142.
- 16 See, for example, Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, “Human Suffering in Colonial Contexts: Reflections from Palestine,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 4, no. 3 (2014): 277–290; Nahed Habiballah, “The Unmaking of Arab Jerusalem through Settlement Construction,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 65 (Spring 2016): 111–17; Thomas Philip Abowd, *Colonial Jerusalem: The Spatial Construction of Identity and Difference in a City of Myth, 1948–2012* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014).
- 17 The term “discursive tradition” is used here as described by Talal Asad, “The Concept of Cultural Transition in British Social Anthropology,” in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. George E. Marcus James Clifford (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 141–164.
- 18 Yitzhak Reiter, “Jewish-Muslim Modus Vivendi at the Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif since 1967,” in *Jerusalem: A City and Its Future*, ed. Marshall J. Breger and Ora Ahimeir (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002).
- 19 “The Status of the Status Quo at Jerusalem’s Holy Esplanade” (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2015), 5.
- 20 For a detailed discussion, see ICG, “The Status of the Status Quo.”
- 21 Barkan, Elazar, “Choreographing Upheaval: The Politics of Sacred Sites in the West Bank,” in *Choreographies of Shared Sacred Sites: Religion, Politics, and Conflict Resolution*, eds. Elazar Barkan and Karen Barkey (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 243.
- 22 Historically, non-Muslim visitors were allowed to enter the physical structures. Additional restrictions have been put in place due to deteriorating political circumstances.
- 23 The Temple Institute and Ateret Cohanim are two such groups.

- 24 Two Israeli Knesset members, Moshe Feiglin and Yehuda Glick, are known Temple Mount activists.
- 25 The YouTube channel of the Temple Institute has posted multiple videos of Jewish prayers on the site, online at www.youtube.com/channel/UCzAJMmlolVXnzXZVU7rlbfQ (accessed 7 September 2017). For a specific example, see the Temple Institute, “Prayer on the Temple Mount: A Moving Glimpse,” YouTube, posted 17 October 2013, online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=StoE7jPqh1c (accessed 7 September 2017).
- 26 Dan Cohen and David Sheen, “‘When I Have the Opportunity to Do It, I Will’: Likud Lawmaker Vows to Demolish al-Aqsa Mosque,” *Mondoweiss*, 29 February 2016, online at mondoweiss.net/2016/02/when-i-have-the-opportunity-to-do-it-i-will-likud-lawmaker-vows-to-demolish-al-aqsa-mosque/ (accessed 7 September 2017).
- 27 Regarding political considerations, see Sefi Rechlevsky, “Reconciliation Demands the Temple Mount Be Closed to Jews,” *Haaretz*, 15 October 2015, online at www.haaretz.com/opinion/premium-1.680484 (accessed 7 September 2017). Visits to the site challenge traditional rabbinic authorities, which forbid visits for fear of unintentionally treading on the Holy of Holies.
- 28 Yitzhak Reiter, “Narratives of Jerusalem and Its Sacred Compound,” *Israel Studies* 18, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 115–132.
- 29 See Dumper, *Jerusalem Unbound*, 121.
- 30 For detailed studies on the Islamic Movement, see Craig Larkin and Michael Dumper, “In Defense of al-Aqsa: The Islamic Movement inside Israel and the Battle for Jerusalem,” *Middle East Journal* 66, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 31–52; Tilde Rosmer, “Resisting ‘Israelization’: The Islamic Movement in Israel and the Realization of Islamization, Palestinization and Arabization,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 23, no. 3 (2012): 325–358.
- 31 Kelam Mubaşir, “Kelam Mubasir AydeSidavi – *murabitat maqdisiyyat fi al-masjid al-Aqsa*,” YouTube, posted 12 November 2014, online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=SAe_-AQbwfU (accessed 7 September 2017).
- 32 Literally, stone platforms of knowledge.
- 33 On the 2011 *masatib al-‘ilm* graduation, see Sulayman Bisharat, “Mu’asasat ‘imarat al-Aqsa takhrij dif’a jadida min talaba masatib al-‘ilm” [al-Aqsa Foundation Graduates a New Batch of *Masatib al-‘Ilm* Students], *Insan Online*, 11 July 2011, online at insanonline.net/news_details.php?id=16426 (accessed 7 September 2017).
- 34 Author interview, Old City, Jerusalem, January 2016.
- 35 Multiple videos capturing these offensive behaviors have been posted online. See, for example: The Temple Institute, “Singing & Dancing on the Temple Mount,” YouTube, posted 28 May 2014, online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xsWhjCq6FY (accessed 7 September 2017).
- 36 Arent Jan Wensinck, “Takbir,” in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., online at dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_7330 (accessed 7 September 2017).
- 37 Author interview, Old City, Jerusalem, 12 February 2016.
- 38 Author interview, Old City, Jerusalem, 10 February 2016.
- 39 The speaker is quoting from the Qur’an, al-Baqara 2:114 as in *The Koran*, trans. N. J. Dawood (London: Penguin, 1999), 21.
- 40 Kelam Mubaşir, “Kelam Mubasir AydeSidavi.”
- 41 Author interview, al-Ram, June 2014.
- 42 “Options for Jerusalem and the Holy Sites”; author interview, Old City, Jerusalem, 10 February 2016; author interview in Old City, Jerusalem, 12 February 2016.
- 43 See, for example, Fekra Mall, “Naz’ al-hijab wa al-i’tida’ bi-l-darb ‘ala al-maqdisiyya ‘Abir Ziyad 2” [Removal of Hijab and Beating Assault on Jerusalemite ‘Abir Ziyad 2], YouTube, uploaded 9 October 2014, online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTHnzR2Ddvk (accessed 7 September 2017); IslamOnline, “Darb al-nisa’ wa naz’ al-hijab ‘an al-akhawat fi al-masjid al-Aqsa al-mubarak ba’d man ‘ihinna min dukhulihi!!” [Beating Women and Removing Hijabs from Sisters in the Blessed Aqsa Mosque after They Were Denied Entry], YouTube, uploaded 8 July 2014, online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=yiYYaLRkizM (accessed 7 September 2017); AlJazeera Mubasher, “Shuhud: junud al-ihtilal hawalu naz’ hijab fata fi al-masjid al-Aqsa” [Witnessing: Occupation Soldiers Try To Remove a Young Woman’s Hijab in al-Aqsa Mosque], YouTube, uploaded 8 April 2015, online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBzMkc5HJAw (accessed 7 September 2017).
- 44 Israel has also suspended some Jewish groups and activists temporarily, though inconsistently. Jeremy Sharon, “Jerusalem Court Upholds Jewish Prayer on Temple Mount,” *Jerusalem*

- Post*, 3 March 2015, online at www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Jerusalem-court-upholds-Jewish-prayer-on-Temple-Mount-392744 (accessed 7 September 2017).
- 45 According to informal communication with members of the Israeli security establishment, approximately 120 murabitat have been forbidden from entering. This group includes some fifty women from the north of Israel and seventy women from East Jerusalem.
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- 47 Shlomi Eldar, "Who Are the Temple Mount's Mourabitoun?" *al-Monitor*, 18 September 2015, online at www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/09/israel-mourabitun-temple-mount-compound-settlers-islamists.html# (accessed 7 September 2017); Gili Cohen, "Israel Bans Two Muslim Activist Groups from Temple Mount," *Haaretz*, 9 September 2015, online at www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.675329 (accessed 7 September 2017).
- 48 "Options for Jerusalem and the Holy Sites."
- 49 *Allah-huma inyy nawayt al-ribat*. Author interview, al-Ram, January 2015.
- 50 Author interview, Kafr 'Aqab, January 2014.