Palestinians clash with Israeli police at Jerusalem holy site

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Muslim worshippers and Israeli police clashed Sunday on the Temple Mount during prayers marking the Islamic holiday of Eid al-Adha.

Palestinian medics said at least 14 people were wounded, one seriously, in the skirmishes with police at the site. The Israel Police said at least four officers were wounded. Witnesses said at least two people were arrested.

Tens of thousands of Muslims had flocked to the site – the holiest site for Jews and the third holiest for Muslims, after Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia – in Jerusalem's Old City early Sunday for holiday prayers, after rumors circulated that police would allow Jewish visitors to enter the site.

The protesters chanted "Allahu akbar" (God is the greatest) and threw stones at police, who then charged into the compound while firing stun grenades and rubber-coated bullets.

Israeli police had initially barred entry to Jewish visitors but reversed their decision. Several dozen entered the site under close police escort and Muslim worshippers began throwing chairs and other objects at the group. The Jewish visitors left the compound shortly thereafter.

The police said in a statement: "As of early [Sunday] morning thousands of worshippers had made their way to the site. A special situational assessment was held [early Sunday afternoon] headed by the commander of the Jerusalem District Police department, after which it was decided that in light of the number of [Muslim] worshippers and the high likelihood of friction, not to allow, at this stage, [Jewish] visitors to enter the Temple Mount compound.

"The Israel Police has been deployed in the area since Saturday night and throughout [Sunday] morning hundreds of police and Border Police officers have been taking part in a variety of missions, all with the objective of maintaining the public order and safeguarding the worshippers and visitors to the site," the statement said.