



The Sabra Report

Fights Break Out Over Gender-Segregated Yom Kippur

Ariella Marsden, Jerusalem Post, September 25th, 2023

Recap:

Fighting broke out in Tel Aviv on Yom Kippur as worshippers tried to set up partitions to separate men and women. The Tel Aviv municipality and High Court of Justice had previously banned the use of partitions in public areas.

The Context:

- ✦ Since 2019, Rosh Yehudi, an NGO promoting a religious Jewish lifestyle, has organized public Yom Kippur prayers, attracting over 2,000 worshippers annually. On Friday, the Supreme Court rejected a petition for gender-segregated prayers in Dizengoff Square. During the prayer service, participants used Israeli flags as makeshift barriers between genders, but protesters removed them and disrupted the service. Afterwards, hundreds gathered in the square, playing drums, trumpets, and chanting. Similar incidents occurred in Jaffa, leading an orthodox event to relocate to a synagogue [1].
- ✦ Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu criticized the secular activists, accusing them of "rioting against Jews," while Opposition Leader Yair Lapid condemned religious groups for "bringing war" to Tel Aviv [2]. National Unity MK Matan Kahana condemned both sides saying "if anyone still has any doubt that extremists are on both sides, it's entirely an equation [3]."
- ✦ The conflict comes amid a growing national debate over the role of religion in public life which has become exacerbated as protests mount against Netanyahu's ultra-orthodox and ultra nationalist coalition. In 2000, the Supreme Court ruled that enforcing gender segregation in public spaces is illegal and a panel of three judges recently wrote that a ban on gender segregation in a public space is the "default." [4]

Conversation Points:

- ✦ Could both sides have exercised greater restraint in managing the situation?
- ✦ How has the rhetoric from leaders like Netanyahu and Lapid affected public discourse on religion in public life?
- ✦ How can orthodox and secular values be balanced in the public sphere?

Notes:

1. [Activists block public Tel Aviv Yom Kippur prayers as Orthodox group sets gender divider](#), Times of Israel, September 25th, 2023.
2. [PM slams 'left-wingers rioting against Jews'; Lapid: Messianists brought religious war](#), Times of Israel, September 25th, 2023.
3. [Ben-Gvir criticized for prayer service opposing Yom Kippur protesters](#), ARIELLA MARSDEN, Jerusalem Post, SEPTEMBER 26th, 2023.
4. [Activists block public Tel Aviv Yom Kippur prayers as Orthodox group sets gender divider](#), Times of Israel, September 25th, 2023.

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