

Weaponizing Christian Holy Sites Against Israel

THE LIE

Israel used the 2026 Iran war as a pretext to close the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for the first time in history, while allowing Jews to hold large mass gatherings at Jewish holy sites.

THE TRUTH

Israel closed all major holy sites, including both the Western Wall and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, to protect worshippers of all faiths. This was not the first time the Church was closed.

BACKGROUND

- On March 17, 2026, social media erupted with claims that Israel had closed the Church of the Holy Sepulchre “indefinitely for the first time in the history of Christianity.” ([X](#))
- Users argued the church “should be packed with hundreds of thousands in the coming weeks” but is instead being “forcibly shut and silenced.”
- They accused Israel of hiding behind “security concerns” while allegedly allowing Jewish Israelis to hold large public celebrations.

TRUTH EXPLAINED

- **Not Targeted at Christians:** Israel restricted access to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre after the war with Iran began on February 28, 2026—but the same restrictions were applied to the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Western Wall. ([Israel Foreign Ministry](#))
- **Security Concerns Were Real:** On Feb. 28, the first day of the war, an Iranian warhead impacted “just a few hundred meters” from Jerusalem’s Old City, where the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is located. The bomb was neutralized by the Israel Police. Then, on March 16, fragments from intercepted Iranian ballistic missiles fell across Jerusalem, including near the church. The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem condemned Iran’s attacks on civilian areas and holy sites. ([JNS](#)), ([Times of Israel](#))
- **The No-Win Scenario:** Had Israel kept the church open, it would almost certainly be accused of failing to protect Christians while taking stricter precautions for Jews.
- **No “Mass Jewish Gatherings”:** Israel initially banned gatherings nationwide, then allowed gatherings of small groups (up to 50) where shelters were available. Synagogues were closed along with churches and mosques. Even during the Jewish holiday of Purim, celebrations were restricted, and Jewish revelers in Jerusalem were forcibly dispersed by police. ([Times of Israel](#)), ([Jerusalem Post](#)), ([Jewish Breaking News](#))
- **Not the First Closure in History:** The church was closed in 2020 (COVID-19), in 2018 (church protest), and during the Black Death in 1349. It was also temporarily closed after Saladin captured Jerusalem in 1187. ([Grokopedia](#)), ([National Catholic Register](#)), ([Jerusalem Patriarchate](#))
- **Historic Precedent of Disruption:** The church was destroyed in 1009 by the Muslim conqueror al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah and heavily damaged in 614 during the Persian invasion under Khosrow II. ([Grokopedia](#))

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QUOTES

“Reports that Israel has closed Church of Holy Sepulcher & Al Aska Mosque omit an important fact—the Western Wall, Judaism’s holiest site is also closed. A large piece of an Iranian missile landed in the courtyard at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. If not closed, mass casualties.” — U.S. Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee

TAKEAWAY

These claims are not just misleading; they’re built on flat-out falsehoods. Israel restricted all major religious sites for public safety, yet the narrative insists it singled out Christians, ignoring identical limits on Jewish worship and other holy sites. The pattern is clear: spin security measures as discrimination, twist the facts, and frame Israel as guilty no matter what it does.