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Fresh clashes between Arabs, Jews erupt in Acre

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Clashes between Jewish and Arab residents in Acre broke out again on Friday after violent riots first erupted in the northern city on the eve of Yom Kippur.

Dozens of Jewish youths gathered in front of an Israeli Arab family's home on the city's Ehad Ha'am street, upon which a number of masked figures - apparently Arabs - were standing.

Large police forces succeeded in separating the sides, and later managed to enforce quiet in the city, according to Israel Radio.

Earlier Friday, Public Security Minister Avi Dichter vowed that police would deal firmly with those responsible for inciting Wednesday night's riots.

"The inciters and perpetrators will be located and brought to justice," Dichter pledged.

He also blasted both Jews and Muslims for the incitement that led to the escalation of the riots. "We will check the calls in Mosques for the Arab public to go out onto the streets," Dichter said.

The minister stressed that comparing the riots to Kristallnacht - the 1938 "Night of Broken Glass" Nazi pogrom - displayed in the best case ignorance and in the worst, incitement.

He said: "Calls [by Jews] for residents to carry arms is in effect incitement for its own sake."

Earlier Friday, Acre's mayor announced that the city has decided to cancel its yearly festival in the wake of the riots.

Mayor Shimon Lankri said the municipality has decided not to risk further clashes by allowing the festival, scheduled for next week, as tensions between the city residents are still high.

Meanwhile, police forces deployed in large numbers throughout the city on Friday in an effort to repress any residual violence.

An Israel Police source said on Thursday that the police had no prior intelligence about the possibility of clashes between Jewish and Arab residents, which erupted on the eve of Yom Kippur on Wednesday.

The riots, some of the worst the city has seen in years, began around midnight on Wednesday after an Arab resident of the Old City of Acre drove his car into a predominantly Jewish neighborhood in eastern Acre, where he said he lived.

Jewish teens at the scene said the Arab man was deliberately making noise and smoking cigarettes. The teens attacked the man and shortly afterward, a group of Arab teens arrived at the scene, igniting a riot.

When news of the incident spread, a crowd of Arabs began to gather along the main commercial street in the new city, Ben Ami Street. Dozens of cars and shops along the street were vandalized.

Police faced off against hundreds of Jewish rioters chanting "death to Arabs" and trying to block the city's main thoroughfare. Border Police and officers on horse-back meanwhile tried to prevent the rioters from reaching the city center, where hundreds of Arab rioters had gathered.

Arabs and Jews hurled rocks at each other at the Acre train station and police used water hoses and tear gas to disperse them. In the Old City, Arabs threw stones and burned tires. Two people were reported injured, one by a police horse and the other by a stone to the head.

Police summoned reinforcements from other districts earlier Thursday in anticipation of a renewal of the violent clashes. Hundreds of police are now stationed in the city.

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