News



Ultra-Orthodox Jews pray outside the Cenacle in Mount Zion near Jerusalem's Old City, a hall revered by Christians as the site of Jesus' Last Supper. (OSV News/Reuters/Ammar Awad)

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Police in Israel announced the arrest of a man suspected in the assault of a French nun working in Jerusalem as a researcher.

In a statement posted to X April 29, Israeli police said it launched an investigation after the assault was reported, which led to the man's arrest and his detention is expected to be extended.

"The Israel Police treats any attack on members of the clergy and religious communities with the utmost seriousness and applies a policy of zero tolerance to all acts of violence," the statement read. "In a city sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike, we remain committed to protecting all communities and ensuring those responsible for violence are held accountable."

The police also posted a video of the arrest as well as an image of the bruised right side of the injured nun's head.

The nun, who worked as a researcher at the French Biblical and Archaeological School of Jerusalem, was attacked April 28 near the Cenacle, the site of the Last Supper, according to the school's director, Dominican Father Olivier Poquillon.

According to The Times of Israel, Poquillon told the French news agency Agence-France Presse (AFP) that in the late afternoon, the nun "felt someone come up behind her and throw her with full force onto a rock."

"While the sister was on the ground, the man began to kick her repeatedly," Poquillon told AFP.

The Dominican priest also took to X to condemn the "unprovoked assault" on the nun as an "act of sectarian violence" and called on authorities to "act swiftly and firmly" in a post on X.

The attack also drew condemnation from the French Consulate General in Jerusalem. Wishing the nun a swift recovery, the consulate called for the attacker "to be

brought to justice for this act and for justice to be served."

The Hebrew University's Faculty of Comparative Religion also took to social media to express its shock at the "heinous and utterly dangerous hate crime," which it said was "part of a deeply disturbing rise in Christianophobia that is becoming alarmingly prevalent in the Old City of Jerusalem and in many other places across Israel."

"We call on the police and the courts to bring the aggressor to justice, and upon Israel and Jerusalem's leadership, at all levels, to take concrete actions, in legislation, education, and enforcement, to squelch this dangerous trend that threatens us all," the university said on its Facebook page.

Following the man's arrest, the Israeli Foreign Ministry office issued a statement on X emphasizing "Israel's firm policy against violence and its determination to bring offenders to justice swiftly."

"We strongly condemn this despicable attack," the statement read. "Violence against innocent individuals, and especially against members of religious communities, has no place in our society. This shameful act stands in direct contradiction to the values of respect, coexistence, and religious freedom upon which Israel is founded and to which it remains deeply committed."

Expressing its "sympathies" to the nun and solidarity with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Israeli Foreign Ministry office said it was "firmly committed to safeguarding freedom of religion and freedom of worship for all faiths, and to ensuring that Jerusalem remains a city where every community can live, pray, and practice its faith in safety and dignity."

The Latin Patriarchate has not issued a statement on the attack. OSV News reached out for a comment and is awaiting a response.

The attack on the nun comes less than two weeks after an Israeli soldier was photographed striking the head of a statue of Jesus in Debel, a Christian village in southern Lebanon.

While Israel’s military removed two soldiers from combat duty and placed them in military detention for 30 days for the desecration, religious freedom organizations have noted continued attacks against Christian symbols and attacks on Christians in Israel.

According to the Religious Freedom Data Center, a Jerusalem-based group that documents incidents affecting religious freedom, particularly against Christians, an estimated 181 incidents of "harassment targeting Christians, Christian symbols, and Christian institutions" were committed in Israel in 2025.

The group also reported an additional 44 incidents between January and March 2026.

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