

Adalah The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel
عدالة المركز القانوني لحقوق الاقلية العربية في اسرائيل
עדאלה המרכז המשפטי לזכויות המיעוט הערבי בישראל



Adalah demands cancellation of civil emergency declaration in Lydd (Lod) and the cessation of its selective enforcement by Israeli police against Palestinian citizens living in the city

Marks first declaration of civil emergency announced within Israel since military regime imposed on all Arab towns, villages, and neighborhoods in Israel from 1948-1966.

16 May 2021

On 16 May 2021, Adalah [sent a letter](#) to the Israeli Minister of Defense and Minister of Justice, the Police Commissioner, and the Attorney General to demand the immediate cancellation of a "declaration of a civil emergency", issued under Article 90B of the Police Ordinance (1971) regarding the city of Lydd (Lod), located in central Israel. The declaration was made by the Minister of Defense, Benny Gantz, on 12 May 2021 (during the Eid al-Fitr Muslim holiday) for an initial period of 48 hours that was subsequently extended.

It is the first declaration of a civil emergency announced within Israel since the military regime period that was imposed on all Arab towns, villages and neighborhoods in Israel from 1948-1966, following the establishment of the State of Israel.

The civil emergency on Lod was declared after demonstrations by Palestinian citizens of Israel, residents of Lydd, who joined nationwide protests against the imminent eviction of Palestinian refugee families from Sheikh Jarrah in occupied East Jerusalem, and the police's storming and blockading of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, attacking worshippers and preventing them from praying at the site during Ramadan. During these events, a Palestinian citizen of Israel living in Lod, Mousa Hassoun, was shot dead on 10 May 2021 by an Israeli Jewish settler, one of hundreds who arrived in Lod, and other cities in Israel, to attack Palestinian citizen residents and escalate tensions. Settlers also attacked the funeral, leading to further violent confrontations.

Officially, the declaration mandates a curfew, forbidding entrance to the city and presence in a public space in the city, and for residents to leave their homes in the evenings. The declaration also states that police may use "reasonable force" against a person or property for purposes of ensuring its enforcement. Alongside regular police forces, border police, which usually operate in East Jerusalem and the wider West Bank, were also brought to Lod to enforce the emergency.

In the letter, Adalah Attorney Sawsan Zaher argued that the Minister of Defense lacked the authority to declare a "civil emergency" in Lod, since Article 90B of the Police Ordinance requires the existence of "a special state of emergency" in accordance with the Civil Defense Law, 1951. The Civil Defense Law defines "a special state of emergency" as one in which the government is persuaded that there is a "high probability of an attack on the civilian population" (e.g., from abroad, natural disaster, mass exposure to hazardous materials, etc.)

Adalah also argued that the police and border police have not implemented the curfew and wider state of emergency equally, but selectively against Palestinian citizens of Israel in Lod. Since the declaration of a "civil emergency" in the city and the imposition of a curfew every evening, far-right

Israeli Jewish groups from outside the city – often from Jewish settlements in the West Bank – have been documented arriving in Lod in their hundreds by bus, armed with batons and other weapons, most of them concealing their faces with masks. Their movements were largely uncurtailed by police.

After entering the city, they patrolled Arab neighborhoods in smaller groups, attacking Arab homes, businesses, cars and other property. On the evening after the curfew first came into force, on 12 May, extremist Israeli Jewish nationalists launched attacks on three mosques. Thus, while Arab Muslim residents of Lod were confined to their homes on the eve of the Eid al-Fitr holiday, hundreds of settlers and other far-right groups entered the city, in breach of the curfew, and were allowed to attack them.

Not only did the police not prevent these extremist groups from entering Lod and roaming through Arab neighbourhoods for several hours, looking for targets to attack, but in many case they were accompanied by police forces, who marched alongside them either actively or passively supporting them. Police refused to enforce the curfew with respect to these violent actors, and were recorded standing by as they launched attacks on Palestinian citizens. On a limited number of occasions police confiscated weaponry, but failed to make arrests.

In a video recording, a Jewish resident of Lod is heard documenting the arrival of the extremist Jewish groups on the evening of 13 May 2021, and saying, "Friends, organizations of people from Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) with short-barreled M-16 [rifles]. Anyone who wants to come and safeguard the state is welcome. Today we'll break all their bones."

Adalah demanded in the letter that the state of civil emergency in Lydd be cancelled, given the Minister of Defense's lack of authority to declare it, and that the police's blatant selective enforcement of the emergency regulations, primarily the curfew, on Palestinian residents of the city, cease immediately.

[CLICK HERE to read the letter \[Hebrew\]](#)