Israel: woman arrested fo praying with Torah at Western Wall

Tuesday 20 July 2010, by Correspondent(s) (Date first published: 12 July 2010).

ISRAEL - POLICE ARREST WOMEN OF THE WALL LEADER FOR PRAYING AT JERUSALEM WESTERN WALL WITH TORAH SCROLL

Anat Hoffman, the Israeli women's prayer group leader, was arrested for holding a Torah scroll in violation of a High Court ruling on prayer at the Western Wall.

Jerusalem Police on Monday arrested the leader of the Women of the Wall group for carrying a Torah scroll while praying at the Western Wall, Army Radio reported.

Photo: Anat Hoffman, Chairwoman of the Women of the Wall group, holds on to a Torah scroll as police attempt to take it from her and detain her outside the Western Wall, July 12, 2010AP

Anat Hoffman, the women's prayer group leader, was arrested and taken in for questioning after she was caught holding a Torah scroll in violation of a High Court ruling prohibiting women from reading the Torah at the Western Wall. Dozens of Women of the Wall members arrived at the holy site on Monday morning for the traditional festive prayer in honor of the first day of the month of Av.

"This is another example of the ultra-Orthodox establishment imposing its stances on the public," a spokeswoman for the group said.

Women of the Wall has previously clashed with ultra-Orthodox worshippers over the group's desire to pray at the Western Wall wrapped in prayer shawls or wearing phylacteries, which some rabbis have called provocations.

In November 2009, another of the group's women was arrested for wearing a prayer shawl (tallit). At the time, Western Wall Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz said the act was a provocation meant to turn the wall into a fighting ground.

"We must distance politics and disagreement from this sacred place," Rabinowitz had said.

The Masorti Movement said in response to Hoffman's arrest: "The arrest of the Women of the Wall chairwoman is a foolish act. The Western Wall plaza belongs to the entire nation and the Haredim have expropriated it."

Hoffman is one of the prominent activists of the Movement for Progressive Judaism in Israel and serves as head of the Religious Action Center – the public and legal advocacy arm of the Reform Movement in Israel.

P.S.

* Source: Haaretz Service - 12.07.10: http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/police-arrest-women-of-the-wall-leader-for-praying-with-torah-scroll-1.301457