

Israeli police banned on March 12 head of Manuscripts Department in al-Aqsa Mosque, Sheikh Najeh Bkeirat, from holding media interviews until the end of the year.

Bkeirat is considered one of the main sources of information in regards to the various issues concerning al-Aqsa mosque and Israeli policy in its regard.

While condemning the Israeli police decision to prohibit the Moslem clergy from talking to the media, JCSER believes that this policy of silencing advocates of Palestinian holy sites, tandems with other Israeli suppressive measures against freedom of religious beliefs.

According to the available data to JCSER, Israeli authorities escalated its measure in the past three years against Palestinians in Jerusalem. In this context, Israeli authorities prohibited 140 religious, political and academic figures from entering the Old City and al-Aqsa Mosque. They even issued some Palestinians travel bans.

Among victims of such Israeli measures, Head of the Islamic Movement inside the green line Sheikh Raed Salah; advisor of the movement for Jerusalem affairs Sheikh Ali Shekha; Fatah official who is in charge of Jerusalem Affairs Hatem Abdel Qader; Mustafa Abu Zahrah and Director of Mapping Department of the Arab Society Khalil Tufakji.

Israeli measures also targeted 30 guards of al-Aqsa Mosque in addition to some students and women.

In the past three years, Israeli authorities issued 70 orders banning Palestinians from entering al-Aqsa Mosque. Moreover, in certain occasions Israeli police used to ban all Palestinian under 45 from praying inside the mosque.

Such Israeli violations of the right to practice religious beliefs are not isolated from the regular attempts by extremists Jews to raid the mosque.

Israeli police also provide protection to extremists Jews who conduct daily provocative visits to the Islamic shrine under the coverage of tourism tours. This is not to mention the Israeli excavations under and around the mosque which are accompanied with the destruction of Islamic monuments namely the Umayyad castles which are locating to the south of al-Aqsa Mosque.