Bomb planted at West Bank holy site, is detonated safely

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Army sappers detonated a cellphone-operated explosive device that was apparently planted by Palestinians at the entrance to the Joseph’s Tomb holy site in the city of Nablus early Tuesday morning, ahead of a visit by approximately 1,000 Jewish worshipers, the army said.

There were no injuries or significant damage caused by the controlled blast, and the pilgrimage to the shrine continued as planned, an Israel Defense Forces spokesperson said.

The 1,000 or so worshipers were escorted to Joseph’s Tomb — believed to be the burial site of the biblical patriarch — by IDF soldiers, border guards and Israel Police officers, the army said.

According to the military, as the group was leaving the area, local residents began to throw rocks at the troops and the buses, causing no injuries, but some light damage to the vehicles.

One of the rioters was arrested, the army said.

Elsewhere in the West Bank, IDF troops arrested 10 Palestinian suspects in predawn raids. Two illegally owned guns were confiscated by Israeli soldiers in the town of Silwad, northeast of Ramallah, in the central West Bank.

Pilgrimages by Israeli or foreign civilians to the Joseph’s Tomb holy site are frequent catalysts for violence. In the past, Nablus residents have attacked the groups visiting the site with rocks, Molotov cocktails and rifle fire.

As a result, those interested in visiting the site require a military escort.

The left-wing B’Tselem rights group [has condemned](https://www.timesofisrael.com/army-rescues-3-israelis-after-palestinians-torch-their-car-in-nablus/) the routine practice, saying that “Israel has preferred the interest of Jewish worshipers over the rights of the Palestinian residents, their security, their safety and their daily routine.”

In August, two Palestinians were shot and wounded by Israeli troops who were providing protection to Jewish worshipers visiting Joseph’s Tomb.

In October 2015, Palestinian rioters set fire to the holy site. It was restored and reopened a few weeks later.