Army rescues 3 Israelis after Palestinians torch their car in Nablus

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The IDF rescued three Israelis who illegally entered the West Bank Palestinian city of Nablus late Tuesday night after their car was stolen and set ablaze, the army said.

The civilians were there in violation of military law prohibiting Israelis from entering into Palestinian-controlled Area A. The car theft and arson attack took place after the trio left their vehicle to roam through the city.

It was not immediately clear why they entered the city.

Separately in Nablus, the IDF gave special permission for some 1,000 Jewish worshipers to enter Joseph’s Tomb holy site. While the army said the prayers were carried out without incident, Palestinian media outlets reported clashes between local youth and Israeli forces.

The B’Tselem rights group condemned the increasingly routine practice in a Facebook post earlier this week, writing that “Israel has preferred the interest of Jewish worshipers over the rights of the Palestinian residents, their security, their safety and their daily routine.”

The post said that “the army imposes sweeping restrictions on the movement of Palestinian residents in the area (of Joseph’s Tomb), which turn them into prisoners in their homes.”

On an almost monthly basis, the army escorts Jewish, and occasionally Christian, worshipers to the shrine. Israelis are forbidden from visiting the site without the military’s permission. In the past, Nablus residents have attacked the groups visiting the site with rocks, Molotov cocktails and rifle fire.

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.

Israeli security forces also arrested six Palestinian suspects in overnight raids throughout the West Bank.