‘I felt the hate’: German tourist mobbed by Palestinians says he feared for his life

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The Times of Israel

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/palestinians-attacked-german-tourists-thinking-they-were-idf-soldiers-says-pa/>

One of two German tourists attacked Saturday by a Palestinian mob while driving through Nablus told Hebrew media Sunday that he had genuinely feared for his life during the attack, saying the crowd was “full of hate.”

The two tourists drove on Saturday through central Nablus, a city in the north of the West Bank, in a rented car with Israeli license plates when they [came under attack](https://www.timesofisrael.com/german-tourists-attacked-by-palestinians-after-entering-nablus-with-israeli-car/?utm_source=article_hpsidebar&utm_medium=desktop_site&utm_campaign=israeli-man-seriously-wounded-in-west-bank-shooting-attack).

Gerald Hetzel, one of the tourists, told Israeli TV stations Kan and Channel 12 that he had visited Ramallah and Hebron on past trips to the region, and came to Nablus on recommendation from friends.

“I’ve never encountered a situation like this. It was a very very dangerous situation, and we really thought they wanted to kill us,” he said.

“Young men came from taxis around us … and started to knock on our windows, to scream at us in Arabic,” he said. “They were bringing stones and a traffic sign and throwing everything against the car. After one or two minutes they pulled out a knife and stabbed the wheels of the car, and also threatened my friend.

“I didn’t understand what they wanted. We tried to tell them in English that we are tourists, and we are not Jewish Israelis, that we are there to visit and see the town, but they seemed to not understand it,” Hetzel said.

“They continued coming after us and walking after our car. It felt like they were hunting the car,” he explained and said a PA police officer brought them over to the side.

The crowd got “really big” and “really angry,” Hetzel said, adding that police officers tried to tell the crowd in Arabic to go away.

“I really felt the hate from their eyes, and from the way they were acting. And they were throwing rocks, maybe double the size of my head,” Hetzel recalled.

He said he hadn’t understood the scale of the security sensitivities: “I thought they were only targeting religious-looking Jews, not international tourists.”

PA security forces were powerless to stop the crowd and instructed the tourists to drive away as fast as possible, Hetzel said.

An Arab Israeli man then signaled the pair to follow him and led the way out of the city through smaller streets. After they escaped the city, the Arab Israeli gave the pair a ride, because their rental car was so damaged.

“It doesn’t change my entire view on Israel. I think Israel is a very friendly country,” Hetzel said.

“It definitely changes my view on the Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority areas in Judea and Samaria,” he said, using the biblical name for the West Bank, then recalled a past trip to Bethlehem where he met a group of three 16-year-old boys.

“They told me if they meet a Jew on the street, they want to kill him, just like this. And I think it’s a big problem they have so much hate in their education,” Hetzel said.

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the Palestinian Authority security services claimed Sunday that the attackers had feared the tourists had been Israeli forces, stressing they have “zero hostility” toward Germany.

“A group of young men… hurled stones at a civilian car with Israeli license plates,” a local Palestinian security official said on condition of anonymity.

Germany’s ambassador to Israel, Steffen Seibert, said on Twitter: “A mob attacking tourists because they don’t like their license plate is disgusting and cowardly.”

Talal Dweikat, a spokesman for the Palestinian security forces, told AFP that “we clearly have zero hostility toward a country whose citizens visit our cities.”

According to Dweikat, those involved were “wary” of a “foreign” car, fearing it was being used by undercover Israeli forces, who often operate in the West Bank.

The spokesman said the tourists had been rescued by a Palestinian police officer who helped them exit the city center, while Seibert thanked “the Palestinian Israeli citizen who saved them.”

Tensions between Israel and the Palestinians have been high for the past year, with the IDF conducting near-nightly raids in the West Bank amid a series of deadly Palestinian terror attacks. Those tensions have ramped up even further in recent weeks, which saw a cycle of deadly Israeli raids and Palestinian attacks, as well as an uptick in settler violence.

The northern West Bank, and particularly the cities of Nablus and Jenin, have seen repeated deadly Israeli raids targeting Palestinian terrorists.

Palestinian terror attacks in Israel and the West Bank in recent months have left 14 Israelis dead and several more seriously hurt.

At least 85 Palestinians have been killed since the beginning of the year, most of them while carrying out attacks or during clashes with security forces, though some were uninvolved civilians and others were killed under circumstances that are being investigated.