



## NEWS

# US First Lady Besieged by Protests in Jerusalem

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Laura Bush has visited Israel and the West Bank, her latest stops on a Mideast tour aimed at promoting American goodwill.

Laura Bush got a hot welcome from Palestinian Muslims when she visited the golden Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem's Old City, the third-holiest place in Islam.

"How dare you come in here!" shouted Palestinian hecklers. "Why are you hassling Muslims? You do not belong here!" they said. Israeli police formed a human chain to keep the protesters away.

Ironically, the first lady went to the mosque to show that America is a tolerant country. But anti-American sentiment has been running high in the Middle East since *Newsweek* magazine reported that U.S. soldiers had desecrated the Koran at a detention facility. *Newsweek* later retracted the report.

But it was not only Muslims who vented their anger. About 40 Jewish protesters greeted Mrs. Bush at the Western Wall, Judaism's holiest site.

"Free Pollard Now!" they shouted. "Free Pollard Now!" They were referring to Jonathan Pollard, an American navy analyst serving a life term for spying for Israel 20 years ago. The United States has turned down repeated Israeli requests for his release.

For Mrs. Bush, it was a first hand experience of the turbulent Middle East.

"You can tell from our day here this is a place of emotion everywhere we went," she said.

The first lady got a more peaceful welcome in Palestinian-ruled Jericho in the West Bank.

"I met with a group of Israeli women earlier, I just had tea with Palestinian women. All of them, many of them mothers, say that what we all want is peace" said Mrs. Bush.

Mrs. Bush concluded her day with a visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial, in a show of solidarity with Jewish suffering.

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