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## Protests center on car park opening times Ultra-Orthodox Jews clash with Israeli police



An ultra-Orthodox Jewish demonstrator flees from the police.

JERUSALEM (AFP)

Hundreds of Jerusalem's ultra-Orthodox Jews clashed with Israeli police on Saturday in the latest protest against the opening of a car park during the sabbath, the police spokesman said.

"Hundreds of Orthodox Jews tried to overrun police roadblocks by throwing stones against our men in several areas of Jerusalem," spokesman Micky Rosenfeld told AFP.

"The protesters also tried to block traffic, namely along the outskirts of the Mea Shearim ultra-Orthodox neighbourhood," Rosenfeld said, adding that police prevented them from gathering near the municipality building.

"So far there have been no casualties and no one was arrested," he added.

A series of protests in recent weeks -- referred to in local media as the "Shabbat wars" -- have pitted the city's large and growing religious community against secular residents and local authorities.

The protests centre on the decision by the municipality to require a car park outside the walls of the Old City to open on Friday and Saturday, when religious Jews observe a day of rest from sundown to sundown.

During "Shabbat," as the day is known in Hebrew, ultra-Orthodox Jews are forbidden from working, driving, handling money or using electric devices.

The demonstrators fear the parking lot will bring thousands of tourists into the area and encourage local merchants to open their shops, thus "profaning" the sabbath.

