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After arson, parents at Jewish-Arab school fear kids are at risk

Concerns also arise that parents will be afraid to register their children at schools they think could become targets of violence.

By Nir Hasson

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A worker cleans up in a torched classroom in an Arab-Jewish school in Jerusalem November 30, 2014. Photo by Reuters

Parents of children at the Hebrew-Arabic bilingual school that [suffered an arson attack](#) have expressed fears that their children's safety might still be at risk.

On Saturday night, two first-grade classrooms were damaged by the fire at the Max Rayne Hand in Hand Jerusalem School; one classroom was completely burned. The arsonists piled up Hebrew and Arabic schoolbooks, poured flammable liquid on them and set them alight.

Parents are divided over how to respond — some want to shrink the media spotlight so as not to turn the school into a target for extremists. Others oppose the school's welcoming of right-wing politicians on sympathy visits.

The school has moved the first-graders to other classrooms, and a school next door is helping out. Hand in Hand has also accepted President Reuven Rivlin's offer to hold one day of school at the President's Residence.

"The children are asking 'what will happen to my coat? What happened to my drawing?'" said Shuli Dichter, the head of the Hand in Hand association, which operates the school.

Politicians from across the political spectrum visited the school Sunday, including Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat, Justice Minister Tzipi Livni, Housing Minister Uri Ariel and MK Moshe Feiglin (Likud). They all harshly condemned the attack but were unable to calm the fears.

"The day will come when parents start asking whether the school isn't putting children at risk," the father of a teenage Jewish student said.

As the father of an Arab child at the elementary school put it, "This is frightening. It's no longer graffiti, it's going into the school. These are children; they're helpless."

There are also worries that parents will be afraid to register their kids at schools they fear could become targets of violence. Dichter said he had sent a letter to the parents outlining new security measures.

"I'm not sacrificing the children on the altar of our ideas. Extra precautions must be taken," he said. "Some students, for example, don't wear the school shirt, which has Arabic writing on it, outside the school grounds."

Suha Kadari, whose three children are at the school, added a note of confidence.

"Whoever did this doesn't want to hurt Arabs or leftists. He wants to hurt the project; he wants fewer and fewer people to believe in this idea. I believe that now of all times the school's circle will expand."