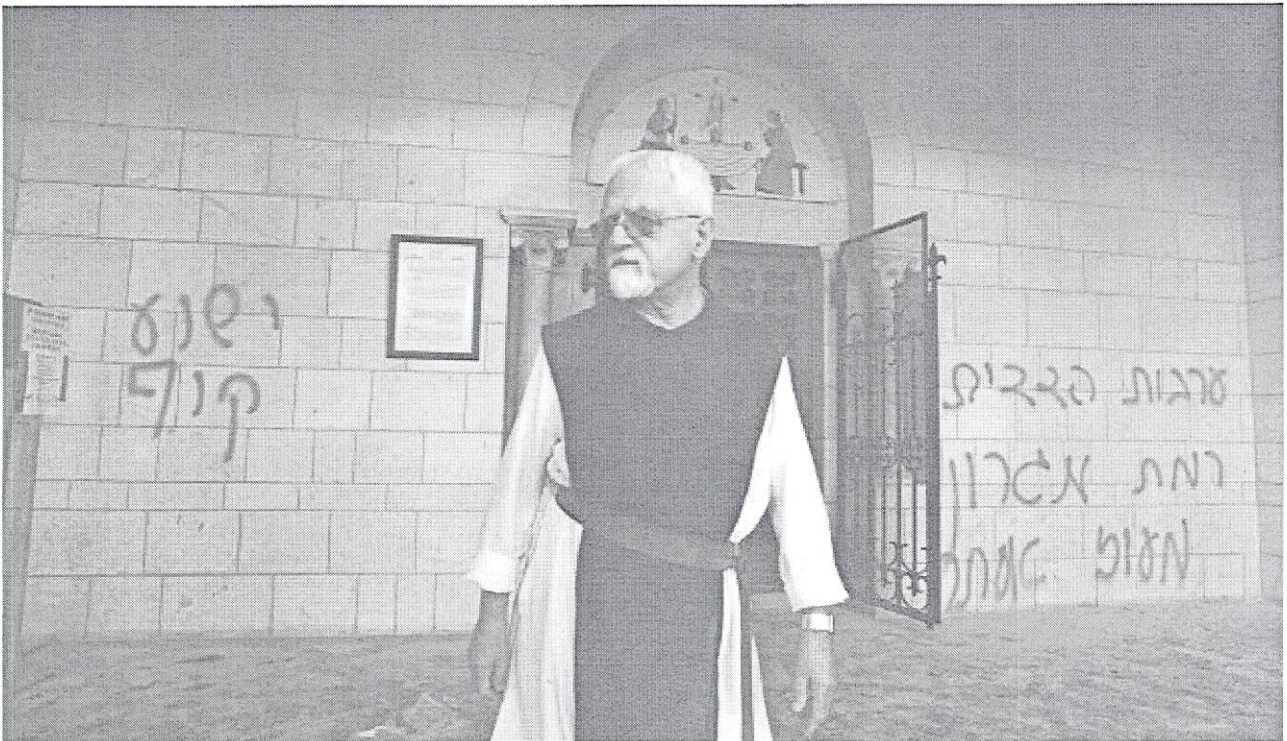# Haaretz

Christian monastery near Jerusalem vandalized, door set on fire

The incident, suspected to be a 'price tag' attack, follows the recent evacuation of Migron, a settlement in the West Bank; among graffiti found: 'Jesus is a monkey.'

By Oz Rosenberg | Sep.04, 2012 | 8:47 AM | ▪10

A priest walks between graffiti reading in Hebrew, "Jesus is a monkey" (L), which was sprayed on the wall of the Christian monastery near Jerusalem, September 4, 2012. Photo by AFP

The door of a Christian monastery in Latrun, near Jerusalem, was set on fire on Tuesday morning, and anti-Christian slogans were found spray-painted on the monastery's walls.

The arson and graffiti are suspected to be a "price tag" attack, following the recent evacuation of Migron, a settlement outpost in the West Bank.

Monks residing at the monastery noticed the burning door on Tuesday morning, and called police after extinguishing the flames. Graffiti sprayed on the monastery walls included the words "Migron," and "Jesus is a monkey."

One of the monks that resides at the monastery claimed that the acts of vandalism and arson are the first such acts of their kind in the monastery's 122 year history.

The Jerusalem Police's central unit has opened an investigation into the incident.

Baruch Marzel, a right-wing activist, connected the attack to the evacuation of Migron. "We said that evacuating Migron could fan the flames. There's an entire community that feels very bitter," said Marzel.

"Price tag" attacks are generally carried out by West Bank settlers and their supporters against Palestinian targets, often in retaliation for moves against settlements

Israel's Reform movement leader denounced the attack. "The attack on the monastery is additional proof that Israeli society is experiencing a wave of racism," he said.

Kadima MK Nachman Shai also condemned the attack. "The attack on the Latrun monastery is an ugly, despicable act, which reflects the religious extremism that exists in the Jewish state."

The incident is the first "price tag" attack to take place at the monastery. Roughly three months ago, racist graffiti was found at the nearby Jewish-Arab town of Neve Shalom. Then, the tires of 14 cars parked along the town's main road were slashed, and slogans such as "death to Arabs," "revenge," and "Ulpana outpost," were found sprayed on the vehicles.

In February, similar anti-Christian graffiti was found sprayed on the walls of the Greek church at a monastery in Jerusalem's Valley of the Cross, and a Baptist Church in central Jerusalem. In both incidents, the graffiti included phrases such as "Jesus is dead," "Death to Christians," "Mary is a prostitute," and "price tag."