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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Letter dated 1 June 1971 from the Permanent Representative of Syria
to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Acting upon instructions of my Government, I have the honour to inform you of the following.

The spiritual leaders, nine patriarchs and pastors, of all Christian communities in Syria, being greatly alarmed and profoundly distressed by the illegal measures the Israeli Zionist authorities are taking to zionize the Holy City of Jerusalem, and expel its Arab Christian and Moslem inhabitants in violation of Security Council decisions and General Assembly resolutions, adopted on 10 May "An appeal to Christian conscience". The text of the appeal is attached.

I shall be grateful if this letter and the attached appeal are circulated as a document of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

(Signed) George J. TOMEH
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* Also issued under the symbol S/10215.

AN APPEAL TO CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE

The events which are currently taking place in the city of Jerusalem are so grave that their dimensions and implications go beyond the local aspects to the framework of which biased propaganda is trying to confine them. Spiritually and morally, however, they are of the level of human civilization, which they are seriously threatening with destruction, as they are threatening the creative power of man.

The process of expelling the Christian and Moslem inhabitants of the city, their physical liquidation and their replacement by Jews - this process, in addition to being tragic and brutal, exceeds the political and demographic aspects of the subject.

Palestine, and more specifically Jerusalem, was the cradle of civilization in its human and divine sides: spirit was once incarnated in it and thereby gave its land a unique place in history.

For centuries the Jews, as a group, lived in this land with other communities and religious groups. There were centuries of peace and amity. Indeed, the Holy City was, and still is, the place in which the tradition of Abraham - the source of the three monotheistic religions - developed and from which it spread its light to the world. The civilization of the spirit thus replaced barbarism; man entered history and came to know the Lord of History.

What we are witnessing today represents a complete and radical distortion of the human and spiritual significance of civilization. For the goal of Zionism - implicitly or explicitly stated - is to destroy this human and spiritual heritage in merging it in a fanatical racist State. It claims that a haven is being founded for the Jews, but the whole world knows that this is being done at the expense of the Arabs. The farther goal of Zionism is even worse and much more serious: to uproot civilization. For Abraham was not a founder of a race or a state.

Real and true civilization emanated from a covenant, a genuine covenant between God and Abraham, in which this great prophet, called "the father of the believers", represented all believers. What is the tenor of this covenant? Surely it is the belief in the one God and his message of peace and love. The message was addressed to all men; and this made them all equal before God and the sons of the same Father.

/...

What the world is witnessing today - knowingly or unknowingly - is an abrogation of this covenant, the covenant of truth and freedom... That proves decisively that Zionism, when its logic is carried to its very limits, has in it the seeds of a new barbarism, or to use more modern terminology, the seeds of an anti-revolution.

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In its political aspects, the conflict is one concerning a land and a people, who have been uprooted and replaced by aliens. But the farther goal of Zionism is in fact to destroy a civilization which is the Civilization.

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Therefore, We Patriarchs and Pastors of the Christian Communities have met at the Orthodox Patriarchate in Damascus. After revealing the true dimensions of the Palestine Conflict and its concealed aims, we address this appeal to human conscience - Christian and non-Christian alike, but Christian first - to place it face-to-face with its historical responsibilities. The Christian, Moslem and Jewish communities, believers and unbelievers, are all equally concerned with the unfortunate consequences of Zionism. In short, it is the man as a man who is put in doubt.

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We hope that our voice will break through the thick wall of Zionist propaganda which is not allowing world conscience to see the truth and join with us, living witnesses of the tragedy, in defending a cause which is as universal as it is sacred.

Damascus, 10 May 1971

Greek-Orthodox Patriarch

(Signed) Elias IV
Patriarch of Antioch and all the East

Greek-Catholic Patriarch

(Signed) Maximos V Hakim
Patriarch of Antioch, Alexandria
and Jerusalem

Syrian Orthodox Patriarch

(Signed) His Holiness Moran
Mar Ignatius Yacob III

Syrian Catholic Archbishop

(Signed) Clement Abdulla Rahal
Syrian Catholic Archbishop of Damascus

Armenian Catholic Patriarcate

(Signed) Paul Archbishop Coussey
Armenian Catholic Patriarcal Vicar
in Damascus

Maronite Patriarcate
Latin Apostolic Vicar

(Signed) Père Louis Harfouche
Patriarcal Vicar in Damascus

Catholic Chaldean Vicar

(Signed) Reverend Emmanuel Al-Rayes
Chaldean Pastor in Damascus

Protestant Evangelic Church

(Signed) Reverend Daoud Mitr
