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LETTER DATED 29 FEBRUARY 1980 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
TUNISIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE
SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a message from Mr. Fahd Qawasmah,
Mayor of Al-Khalil (Hebron).

I would request you to have this message distributed as a Security Council
document.

(Signed) M'Hamed ESSAAFI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

To: Secretary-General of the United Nations

From: Fahd Qawasmah
Mayor of Al-Khalil

Follows text my intended speech, which I request you convey to President of the Security Council.

"Dear Members,

'Those who believe in the Qur-an, and those who follow the Jewish Scriptures, and the Christians and the Sabians, and who believe in God and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward'.

This is the spirit of Islam, so just, simple and constructive. Stated plainly many centuries ago practiced or accepted for so long a time and has been constantly reiterated as a democratic code for the Holy Land of Palestine.

Yet the military authorities of the racial Government of Israel have a different code to introduce and defend. Since their occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, these authorities have shown unwavering determination to change the geographic and demographic features of the occupied land in such a way so as to suit their modern code, 'Only Zionists shall have their reward'. Mere Judaism is even not sufficient.

One aspect of this racial policy has been the establishment of settlements on confiscated land. To achieve such a goal, the occupation authorities have used various illegal and oppressive measures. Among them were the deportation of national figures, the arbitrary arrestments and torture of innocent citizens and the collective punishment imposed on a whole area similar to what has recently happened in Al-Khalil.

The procedure of establishing a settlement has become well known by the Palestinian Arabs for it follows systematic steps. It usually begins with a military declaration that a certain area has, for security reasons, been considered closed. This means that neither owners of the land nor anybody else are allowed to enter it. The second step is usually the establishment of one building and for security purposes, of course. This will soon be followed by more and more buildings. Families accompanied with their dear pets will follow while the poor owners of the land have to strive dearly to find a shelter; or simply uproot themselves and immigrate for good. Verbal and written complaints and condemnation to both Israeli authorities and world organizations have done nothing to stop them.

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The total area of these settlements has arrived at an alarming figure. An area of one thousand and six hundred square kilometers has already been usurped for this purpose. Knowing that this area comprises more than twenty-six percent of the West Bank area, it is only logical to conclude that the future of the inhabitants of this land looks so gloomy.

Though settlements are scattered over the whole West Bank, those which lie in the vicinity of Arab Jerusalem and Al-Khalil are more conspicuous and expansible. Kiryat Arba' settlement established in 1968 is the cursed allotment of our town Al-Khalil. To establish this settlement 5 square kilometers were declared a military closed area. Lying along the eastern edge of the town and extending from north to south, this settlement is now capable of providing accommodation for 500 families. Potentially, however, the settlement is capable of accommodating ten times as many.

The settlers of Kiryat Arba' don't spare any occasion to translate their fanatical views into aggressive deeds against the inhabitants of Al-Khalil. It is very common to see these people marching in the streets of Al-Khalil while being fully armed. Needless to say that such aggressive and inciting actions greatly increases the possibility of friction between the settlers and inhabitants of Al-Khalil. The open support of the occupation government to these settlers has encouraged them to commit so many crimes against the Arabs. In March 1971 some settlers of Kiryat Arba' amused themselves with an inhumane game. They kidnapped 3 Arab pupils and released them while bleeding from injuries caused by wild dogs. In the same month the mufti of the town was insulted by these settlers. He was forced to remove stones and waste from the streets of the town. In May 1979, 500 grape trees were uprooted; and three months later 5 Arab families were invaded by these settlers. Arab families were beaten severely and the Israeli authorities were probably sorry for that. The Holy Quran didn't escape their hatred and violence. On the 1st of October 1976, some settlers entered the Ibrahimi Mosque and tore up the Holy Book into pieces. Since that date Moslems have been performing their prayers under the shadows of Israeli arms. Violence of Kiryat Arba' settlers mounted to the level of murder. In March 1979 Rabi'a Shalaldeh, a 16 year old girl student, and Nasri Anai, a 21 year old workman, were killed by the settlers bullets and in the presence of Israeli soldiers. No curfew was imposed on Kiryat Arba'.

The recent incident which resulted in the murder of one of these settlers who happened to be a soldier, together with the measures taken by the military government shows unequivocally the oppressive and inhumane line of policy the occupation authorities had taken. To sum up the incident and the reaction of the military government the following points have to be stated:

A. The soldier was murdered at the central part of the old town of Al-Khalil on the 31st of January 1980.

B. Soon after the murder a curfew was imposed on the central part of town. The curfew lasted for 12 days. During this period almost all services

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like medical, educational, social had come to a real halt. The only and poorly equipped hospital of the town was accessible to very limited cases.

C. Entrances of the town were guarded by check points to prevent cars from entering the town.

D. Tens of Arab residents were arrested and jailed under the pretext of security. Among them were: 60 year old secretary of Chamber of Commerce Kazem Hassoneh, the 80 year old ex-Member of the City Council Haj Mahmoud Dwaik, the journalist Sobhi Sharif and Chief of Preach and Guidance Saleh Zir.

E. Israeli soldiers invaded several Arab houses during night time ordering male residents to get out of their homes and wait for hours in the chilly wintery weather of mountainous Al-Khalil. Many were brutally beaten. Among them were Akram Abu Asab, Hilmi Dandis and Barakat Zahdi. Settlers of Kiryat Arba' seemed to be longing for such an opportunity for they had their real share in the attack. Awwad Zaro, Sailm Zaro, Sa'di Zaro, Arafah Ida'is and Jadallah Ja'bery were among those beaten by the settlers. One of them, the 70 year old man Jadallah Ja'bery had permanently lost one of his eyes as a result of being struck by a metal bar.

F. Moslem Arabs were prevented from holding their traditional prayers in their shrine - the Ibrahimi Mosque - on two consecutive Fridays: the first and the eighth of February. In the meantime, however, Jewish settlers of Kiryat Arba' were allowed to enter the Islamic Shrine, part of which had been converted to a Synagogue, and perform their prayers. Electric wiring of the building and the microphones of the minarets of the Mosque (used to call worshippers) were damaged. Another Mosque had its windows smashed into pieces.

G. On Sunday, the 10th of February 1980, the Israeli authorities gave permission to members of an extremely fanatical group called Gush-Emonim to organize a large demonstration which expresses the zionist determination to settle in Al-Khalil and the West Bank as a whole.

The procession of hatred took place as scheduled and the group held a meeting near the Ibrahimi Mosque. In the meeting demonstrators announced formally 'the return of Jews to Al-Khalil'. Rabbi Levinger, A Kiryat Arba' leader threatened that 'Mayor of Al-Khalil should be held responsible of the murder of the Israeli soldier'. He even threatened that he would launch a war against the inhabitants of the town.

H. On the same day the 10th of February, and while the curfew was still imposed and Levinger's threats were released the Israeli Cabinet responded positively to Gush-Emonim demonstrators and decided to allow Jews to settle in the heart of Al-Khalil. The alleged justification for this move was the claim that prior to 1929, five houses in Al-Khalil were owned by Jews. This decision has been looked upon by Arab inhabitants of Khalil as another flagrant violation of human rights and international law. It adds another

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dimension to the settlement policy of the racial authorities in Israel. Indeed it is a mockery and insult to both reason and humanity that at the time thousands of Palestinian families are denied their rights of returning home, an influx of hundreds of Jewish families are welcomed by the Israeli authorities on the basis that five houses in Al-Khalil were owned by Jews half a century ago. I happened to be one of the Palestinians whose houses have been occupied by Jews since 1948. My two houses are in Jerusalem, one in Baka' and the other in Katamoun.

The City Council of Hebron together with its population condemn all sorts of aggressive acts and racial discrimination practiced by the occupation authorities against Arab inhabitants. We also condemn the settlement policy adopted and encouraged by the Israeli Government and consider it a violation of international law and the UN Charter, as well as a provocation of the national and religious feelings of Arabs and Moslems all over the world. We all know that your Council as well as many other world organizations are against the policy of confiscation of land from its Arab owners for the purpose of establishing Jewish settlements. Let us together raise our condemnation of this policy. Let us also condemn those who supply the aggressors with the money to build their settlements and thus enhance their aggression.

The City Council and the population of Al-Khalil hereby declare their absolute rejection of Camp David accords and all their consequences especially the autonomy plan, and state firmly and unequivocally our adherence to our legitimate right to establish our own state on our land under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and only in so doing just and durable peace will be established."
