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Item 55 of the provisional agenda*
REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO
INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES
AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE
POPULATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Thirty-third year

Letter dated 18 August 1978 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i.
of the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to the letter of 22 June 1978 addressed to you by the Permanent Representative of Jordan (A/33/164-S/12762) in which an attempt was made to brush aside the Israel letter of 31 May 1978 (A/33/116-S/12725) on the shameful behaviour of Jordan in Jerusalem between 1948 and 1967. For want of a reply, the Permanent Representative of Jordan recirculated a letter originally written in 1972 (S/10517) containing a series of hollow charges against Israel. These charges have been refuted in numerous communications from the Israel Mission, which presented the facts as they are, notably, S/8439, 1/ S/9403, 2/ S/10138, 3/ S/10158, 3/ A/8766-S/10765, 4/ A/9046-S/10883, 5/ A/9527-S/11279, 6/ A/10204-S/11809, 7/ S/12020, 8/ A/31/303-S/12223. 9/

* A/33/150.

1/ Official Records of the Security Council, Twenty-third Year, Supplement for January, February and March 1968.

- 2/ Ibid., Twenty-fourth Year, Supplement for July, August and September 1969.
- 3/ Ibid., Twenty-sixth Year, Supplement for January, February and March 1971.
- 4/ Ibid., Twenty-seventh Year, Supplement for July, August and September 1972.
- 5/ Ibid., Twenty-eighth Year, Supplement for January, February and March 1973.
- 6/ Ibid., Twenty-ninth Year, Supplement for April, May and June 1974.
- 7/ Ibid., Thirtieth Year, Supplement for July, August and September 1975.
- 8/ Ibid., Thirty-first Year, Supplement for January, February and March 1976.
- 9/ Ibid., Supplement for October, November and December 1976.

No amount of bluster and distortion can exonerate Jordan from its bleak record in Jerusalem during 19 years of illegal occupation, characterized by religious discrimination, barred access to the Holy Places, destruction of synagogues, desecration of graves, and neglect of the environment and general fabric of the city. Nor can it, by falsifying and magnifying problems of an administrative nature which inevitably arise in the day-to-day running of a city, obscure the marked improvements and positive developments effected by Israel since the reunification of Jerusalem in 1967.

The latest Jordanian letter relates to two Jordanian notes verbales which were circulated earlier this year (A/33/60-S/12575 and A/33/88-S/12669). In the first of those, it was suggested that in some artificial and nefarious way, "world Jewry" had converted the "Wailing Wall" into a Holy Place and had thus created a source of conflict. The same note went on to allege that Israel was trying to convert the "Small Wailing Wall" (another part of the original Western Wall bounding the site of the First and Second Jewish Temples) into "a new Jewish religious shrine".

These crude efforts to question the unbounded reverence which Jews, for nearly two thousand years, have held for the most illustrious of their Holy Places, characterize Jordan's ongoing disregard for history and lack of sensitivity to established religious tradition and practice. Both parts of the Western Wall have been sites for Jewish prayer and devotion for many generations, interrupted only by forceful denials of access, as occurred during the Jordanian occupation.

According to the Jordanian note, proof of Israel's "covert designs" is to be found in the recent installation of some waterpipes in the vicinity of the "Small Wailing Wall". Nothing could be more preposterous.

Since the removal of the barriers which divided Jerusalem for 19 years, there has been remarkable development in all parts of the city, both old and new. All segments of the population, Jews, Muslims and Christians, are growing. The flow of tourists and pilgrims to the Old City has increased dramatically, bringing with it growing demands for better public utilities and services. Deeply conscious of the spiritual significance of Jerusalem and the need to preserve the integrity of its historical, cultural and aesthetic character, the municipality of Jerusalem has been guided by the Jerusalem Committee which it set up in 1969. Made up of some 70 outstanding personalities of different nationalities and faiths, this body acts as an international advisory council on matters pertaining to the preservation, restoration and beautification of the city.

Under the Jordanian occupation, public utilities fell into a sorry state of disrepair. For example, the sanitation system in the Old City and East Jerusalem left much to be desired. Sixty per cent of the households lacked running water and few dwellings were connected to the antiquated sewage system. Essential work was therefore begun to renovate these services within the Old City. A modern sewage and drainage system was designed. Work was started on the entire network of broken-down waterpipes, dating back to Ottoman times and before. Moreover, the opportunity was taken not only to replace the outmoded and inconvenient electrical and telephone systems, but also to install underground cables for central television

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antennas in place of the forest of aerials which disfigure the roofs of the Old City. By the summer of 1977 this work was completed in the Christian Quarter, the Street of the Chain, the Butchers' Market, the Spice Market and elsewhere. Later in 1977 the renovation was begun of the dilapidated infrastructure in the Street of the Valley and the streets to the east and west of it, including those leading to the Western Wall, "Ribat al-Kurd", and the Iron Gate.

It would appear that it was this work which provided the pretext for the Jordanian note. Any attempt to cast doubt on the urgent necessity of this project and even to go so far as to see in it a "criminal plan" with dark political designs ("to carry out a Jewish take-over of al-Haram-al-Shareef Holy Sanctuary itself"), can only be the product of a fevered mind, or a conscious attempt at religious incitement.

Within the same framework, the municipality is carrying out a number of vital projects for urban renewal and restoration. In 1977 alone, some 50 buildings and institutions were restored in the Muslim and Christian Quarters, with the co-operation of the owners and at considerable cost borne by the Israel authorities.

It was in this context that the diggings referred to in the Jordanian note (A/33/88-S/12669) were made. As explained in our reply (A/33/116-S/12725), they were connected with laying the foundations of a new building at a distance of 20 metres from the property belonging to the North African Waqf (religious foundation). This work was executed with the utmost caution so as not to impinge on the premises of the North African Waqf, and had there been any grounds to suspect that the work would endanger the old structure nearby, the builders would have been required to take appropriate preventive action.

The reality of present-day Jerusalem bears no relation to the impression which the Jordanian communications seek to create. Since 1967, the City and its Holy Places have been accessible to members of all faiths. It has opened its doors to larger numbers of tourists and pilgrims than ever before. New mosques have been built. Christian churches and institutions have been constructed and restored. The Jewish Quarter of the Old City, systematically destroyed under the Jordanian administration, has been rehabilitated. At the same time, public utilities and services have been greatly improved to the benefit of all. In these circumstances, the citizens of Jerusalem can scarcely be expected to comply with Jordanian demands that they continue to live with sorely inadequate drains and in otherwise unedified surroundings.

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under item 55 of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Shamay CAHANA
Ambassador
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.
