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REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE
ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS
OF THE POPULATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Thirty-fifth year

Letter dated 5 February 1980 from the Permanent Representative of
Jordan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to bring to your attention the most ominous situation which has arisen in consequence of the recurring reports of Israeli elements in Jerusalem vandalizing and desecrating Jerusalem's Christian institutions.

It is tragically sad that the ecumenical spirit which has always been the hallmark of Jerusalem and its inhabitants should find itself a victim of such Zionist excesses in the Arab sector of Jerusalem occupied by Israel in 1967.

Press reports in Jerusalem have given detailed coverage on the recent violent attacks on the Christian institutions in Jerusalem and the lukewarm official response to the culprits which prompted the Christian organizations to send an appeal for international guarantees for the city's Holy Places and religious communities. In bold black and red Hebrew script, the scrawled slogans on the front of the Christian bookstore at 33 Street of the Prophets in Jerusalem have carried such messages as: "Missionaries!" "Pigs!" "Dirty dogs!" "Bloodsuckers!" "Get out of here!"

"Two weeks before, we had swastikas and slogans", said Charles Kopp, who owns the bookstore in Zion House. "We have our locks stuffed with matchsticks, glue. We had our place burned five years ago. They come in and tell us this is not our place, to leave. One of them said that he was the one who burned the place and he would do it again. There is occasional spitting on our window".

Four times, stones have been thrown and glass broken at the Dormition Basilica on Mount Zion on the site where the Blessed Virgin Mary is believed to have died. A spokesman for the Mayor said the Benedictine monks there had received threatening letters.

The Russian Orthodox church in Jerusalem staffed by Orthodox Russian priests had windows broken and walls scrawled with slogans. Another Christian bookstore

near the City Hall was visited by youths who threatened the owners if they did not close down. Two weeks later rocks were hurled through the shop's windows.

Occasionally, vandals enter the Anglican cemetery on Mount Zion and smash tombstones with crosses on them. Clerics believe the culprits are a band of Jewish vigilantes out to combat what they regard as an upsurge in Christian evangelism. Such activity had been the target of a resolution by the Orthodox Judaic Government "Agudat Israel" in its convention held in Jerusalem last month calling on the Israeli occupation authorities to curb Christian missionary work.

Mayor Teddy Kollek, aware that an integral condition to the creation of Israel in 1948 by the United Nations was the affirmation of right of religious institutions to remain in place unmolested, released a letter which he had sent to Prime Minister Begin. It said, inter alia:

"This kind of vandalism pretends to be Holy War against the missionaries.

"A lack of a proper Government response at high levels and strong efficient police activity will allow hostile groups to use this situation to link the actions of religious zealots with a purposeful policy of the Government."

He added that he hoped that in the future the police would prevent these terrible acts. This in turn led to a barbed cartoon in the Jerusalem Post in which a television viewer, talking back to a news announcer says angrily:

"He's the Prime Minister! He's not supposed to hope! He's supposed to do!"

To which the announcer replies:

"Dont's knock it! It took two letters from Kollek to get the 'hope' out of him."

The Police Minister, Yosef Burg, has been accused by many Israelis of treating religious extremists with kid gloves because he himself is a member of the National Religious Party.

This menacing situation, according to the Jerusalem Post and other Jordanian papers, has prompted local Christian groups to mention the vandalism in an appeal for international guarantees for the city's Holy Places of religious communities.

The statement signed by the Reverend Roy Kreider of the predominantly Protestant United Christian Council in Israel, Father Ignazio Mancini of the Roman Catholic Christian Information Centre and Father Bargil Pixner, of the Dormition Abbey refers to incidents in which young people, believed to be members of the right-wing extremist Kach group, smashed stained glass windows at the Dormition Abbey, damaged property at the Baptist House on Rehov Narkiss and tried to destroy a Christian display at the centre.

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A spokesman said that this was the first time such a statement had been signed by Christian groups from both pre-1967 Israeli occupation of Jerusalem and the West Bank. It is also the first statement by local churchmen relating anti-Christian vandalism to a demand for an "internationally guaranteed special statute concerning the rights and liberties of the three great monotheistic faiths in Jerusalem".

The attacks, it says, are motivated by "an exclusivist view of the character of the city of Jerusalem", and "it is therefore opportune to reaffirm that the Christian community in all its rich diversity, is present in Jerusalem as of right and on an equal footing with the other two great monotheistic faiths".

"The impression is persistent and pervasive within the Christian community that the civil authorities have so far failed to exhaust all the possibilities open to them to curb such manifestations ... It is not infrequently felt and said within the Christian community that the perpetrators of such acts enjoy a relative impunity." It adds that such an impression ought to constitute a singular motive to prove that the contrary is the case.

The recent incidents, in an obvious reference to Kach, an extremist Israeli movement, seem to involve a new element, noted more for its racist agitation and cult of violence than for religious zeal, and it recalls "the horrendous impact of similar ideologies a generation ago".

The statement by the Christian organizations of various denominations mentions the murder of a Greek Orthodox monk at Jacob's Well in Nablus last year, and points to the lack of information about the police investigation or even an interim report. The spokesman for the signers said that the absence of information has given rise in some circles to rumours that Jewish zealots murdered the monk.

The "internationally guaranteed special statute", it says, "is desired by the churches as well as by the international community" and it adds that such a statute "could not and should not impinge on, or prejudice questions of sovereignty and political boundaries". It asks the "civil authorities" to firmly put an end to "the present wave of anti-Christian fanaticism and vandalism".

Despite its forthright wording, the statement is not addressed to any particular person or government body. The spokesman explained that the signers, who represent churches which do not recognize the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem (or for that matter Israeli rule over West Jerusalem), were hesitant to address the Government. An appeal to the mayor was considered, but the spokesman said that Mayor Teddy Kollek is the one public official who has acted with complete propriety. The city even repaired damage to church property.

According to the spokesman, the Orthodox and Uniate Churches were in agreement with the statement, although they did not sign it. If the present statement brings no results, the spokesman said, then the local churches would take their case abroad to the churches around the world.

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The aforementioned reports are not only seriously disturbing, but they are in flagrant violation of the United Nations resolutions, particularly those relating to the protection of Holy Places and the ensuring of religious freedom for adherents of all faiths, as well as in blatant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relating to the protection of civilians under occupation. 1/

Before the Israeli occupation of Arab Jerusalem in 1967, the City enjoyed the serenity, the veneration and the tolerance which are characteristics of Jerusalem as the City of God and Peace. It is indeed a disaster of colossal dimensions that under Israeli occupation, this serene city, venerated by almost two billion people of the Christian and Islamic worlds should become rampant with vandalism, religious intolerance and acts of violence unknown before.

The desecration, vandalism and destruction of Islamic holy sites have been reported and proven to the world community ever since the occupation of 1967 and it is unnecessary at this point to recount them because they are in the records of both the General Assembly and the Security Council, which have consistently condemned them in no unambiguous terms.

It is the earnest hope and urgent request of the Government of Jordan that the United Nations will take the most serious view of the abyss into which Jerusalem has fallen since the Israeli occupation and act promptly to bring the Israeli occupation of Arab Jerusalem into accountability and to take effective measures to restore Jerusalem's unique position as the spiritual centre of the three great monotheistic faiths.

I request Your Excellency that this communication be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under the item entitled "Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories", and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Hazem NUSEIBEH
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

1/ United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 75, No. 973, p. 287.