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QUESTION OF PALESTINE

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Letter dated 16 December 1991 from the Chairman of the Committee
on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian
People addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I should like to draw your attention, as a matter of urgency, to further attacks carried out by the Israeli Government and settlers against the Holy Places and Palestinian property in East Jerusalem and adjoining neighbourhoods.

According to a report by the Reuters news agency dated 12 December 1991, approximately 30 Jewish settlers, protected by large numbers of police, forced an entry into six houses belonging to Palestinians in Silwan, an Arab neighbourhood situated in East Jerusalem, and expelled the occupants. The settlers moved into the neighbourhood following a decision by the Israeli Cabinet which authorized them to remain in Silwan after they had attempted for two months to dispossess Palestinian owners of their homes. According to The New York Times of 13 December, this act of usurpation was encouraged and financed by Housing Minister Ariel Sharon. As reported by the same newspaper, in the last few years, Jewish nationalist movements with Government backing have taken over houses in the Old City's Muslim and Christian quarters.

On 7 December, the Supreme Islamic Committee of Jerusalem published a statement in which it pointed out that the Israeli authorities, under the supervision of high-ranking police officials, had closed the portal of the mosque of the Ottoman School, a famous Islamic site situated in the precinct of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. According to the Supreme Islamic Committee, Israel was thereby attempting to conceal work carried out by the Israeli authorities in a gallery situated in the western part of the Haram al-Sharif wall, inside the precinct of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and was also trying to prevent the Islamic Waqf from closing the passage leading to the gallery.

On 19 November, the Information Centre on Human Rights in Palestine, which is based in Jerusalem, reported that on the previous day, Israeli information officers and elements from the special forces and frontier guards had broken into the Islamic Court and other premises situated in Salah el-Din Street in East Jerusalem and that they had seized archives dating back 500 years and connected with the history of Jerusalem, some of which related to the ownership of land and buildings.

On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I should like to express the gravest concern at these acts by the Israeli authorities and settlers, which constitute on the part of Israel a violation of its obligations as the occupying Power under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949. These acts are also contrary to the provisions of numerous Security Council resolutions, particularly resolutions 271 (1969), 298 (1971) and 476 (1980), concerning the Holy Places and religious buildings in Jerusalem, and resolutions 446 (1979), 452 (1979) and 465 (1980), concerning settlement activities by Israel, and they represent a serious obstruction to the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The Committee therefore addresses an urgent appeal to you as well as all the parties concerned to see that all the necessary measures are taken in order to induce Israel, the occupying Power, to put an end to all its illegal settlement activities, ensure respect for the Holy Places and guarantee protection of the Palestinians and their property in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 33, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Absa Claude DIALLO
Chairman
Committee on the Exercise
of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People
