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Letter dated 28 February 1979 from the Permanent Representative of
Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to refer to the letter of 31 January 1979 from the Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Jordan (A/34/72), concerning the University of Bir Zeit, north of Jerusalem.

As is well known, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan regards itself as being in a state of war with Israel. In 1948, it invaded the districts of Judaea and Samaria, in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, with the avowed purpose of destroying the fledgling State of Israel. Despite the terms of the 1949 Israel-Jordan General Armistice Agreement, it consistently refused to make peace with Israel between 1949 and 1967.

On 5 June 1967, King Hussein spurned an official message from Israel, delivered through a United Nations intermediary, inviting him to stay out of the Six-Day War which began that day. Instead, the Jordanian Army opened fire on Jerusalem and all along the armistice line with Israel and, as a result of that renewed aggression, lost Judaea and Samaria. Since 1967, Jordan has resolutely resisted all overtures to negotiate peace with Israel.

The above-mentioned Jordanian letter must be seen in this context - as an act of political warfare against Israel and as yet another effort to manipulate the United Nations machinery for propaganda purposes. It is also designed to give expression to Jordan's ongoing but illegal pretensions to Judaea and Samaria. (On the invalidity of Jordan's claims to these areas, I have the honour to refer to my letter of 22 November 1978: A/33/386-S/12933).

The Jordanian letter certainly does not reflect genuine concern for the well-being of the population in the areas in question - for Jordan has never entertained such concern. During the 19 years in which it occupied those areas,

* A/34/50.

the Jordanian Government deliberately curtailed their economic and educational development, so that they could not compete with the primacy of the territory which became the Kingdom of Transjordan in 1946 and which had previously been the eastern part of mandated Palestine. Hence, from 1948 to 1967, agriculture in the areas concerned was kept at a subsistence level. Industry was virtually non-existent, and no infrastructure was developed. Similarly, there were no universities, and the Jordanian authorities refused to grant university status to any institution seeking it.

However, since 1967, under Israeli administration, Judaea and Samaria have advanced rapidly in all fields, including education. Agriculture has been greatly boosted with the introduction of modern methods, mechanization, improvement programmes, convenient loans and widened markets. Produce is now exported, and income from this branch has gone up over tenfold. Industry has also surged forward, and scores of factories are in operation. Moreover, there are now two fully fledged universities and two colleges in Judaea and Samaria where, as indicated above, none existed during the Jordanian occupation. They are:

- (a) Bir Zeit University: granted university status in 1973; student body, about 600.
- (b) Bethlehem University: established in 1973; student body, about 650.
- (c) The Najjah College and Teachers' Seminary in Nablus: originally opened as a high school and constituted as a college in 1976; student body, about 1,400.
- (d) The Islamic Academy in Hebron: founded in 1971; student body, about 450.

What has become Bir Zeit University under the Israel administration had been a secondary school during most of the Jordanian administration. Only in 1966 did it begin to offer higher education courses. It is a private institution and enjoys full academic freedom. In the five years since it has been given degree-granting status by the Israeli authorities, its student body has doubled. Recently, approval has been given for the opening of new faculties, the enlargement of the University's Board of Trustees and a large-scale building programme. Similarly, the Government has authorized the employment of foreign lecturers at the University. For the current academic year, a list of 32 foreign lecturers was presented and all were granted work permits.

Israel does not impose any academic or administrative restrictions on the university. There is no interference in its programme of studies or in the running of its day-to-day affairs.

In recent years, Bir Zeit University has been the scene of student unrest and agitation. Terrorist organizations, with headquarters in Arab countries, have tried to take advantage of Israel's liberal attitude in order to plant

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their agents among the students and recruit accomplices. The security authorities cannot of course overlook these activities and are duty bound to take the appropriate steps. It is regrettable that, through a web of distortions and falsities, the Government of Jordan should attempt to cover up and condone these terrorist designs.

The Government of Jordan knows full well that the five students from Bir Zeit in detention were not apprehended because of normal activities within the established academic framework, and not because of any desire to limit their academic freedom or even because of their political opinions. The sole reason for their arrest was because of their membership in the so-called "Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine", a constituent of the terrorist organization known as the PLO, which, as is well known, has been responsible for numerous acts of indiscriminate terror against civilian targets in Israel and elsewhere.

The students concerned admitted immediately on their arrest that they belonged to the "Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine". Two of them also admitted that they had undergone military training in a terrorist base in Syria. Most of them had previous criminal records, and three had received suspended sentences.

These facts demonstrate that there have been attempts to form terrorist cells among the student body at Bir Zeit, hiding behind academic immunity, just as other terrorists take cover behind other Arab civilians, when and where it suits their purposes.

These facts once again underscore the need for the Government of Israel to take all measures necessary to prevent the exploitation of academic freedom for criminal purposes.

Given Jordan's unrelenting hostility to Israel and its deplorable record during its 19 years of illegal occupation in Judaea and Samaria, its above-mentioned letter is the height of political hypocrisy and should be dismissed as such.

I have the honour to request that this letter be distributed as an official document of the General Assembly, under item 25 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Yehuda Z. BLUM
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
of Israel
to the United Nations
