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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-first year

Letter dated 3 November 1976 from the Permanent Representative of
Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to refer to my letter of 1 November 1976 (A/31/303-S/12223), in which I observed that in the "information", supplied by the Islamic Conference and circulated as annex II to the Secretary-General's report of 13 October 1976 (A/31/235), "all Jewish associations with the city of Hebron, both religious and historical, are completely brushed aside, if not denied outright".

I should like to draw attention to the fact that the plot of land, containing the Tomb of the Patriarchs and held holy by Jews throughout the ages as the "Cave of Machpelah", was purchased by the Hebrew Patriarch Abraham almost 4,000 years ago.

The details of this purchase are recorded in the Bible, in which the Jewish people enunciated the principles of human brotherhood that inspired the creation of this Organization. The relevant passage appears in the Book of Genesis, 23:2-20:

"... (2) And Sarah died in Kirjath-Arba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan; and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her. (3) And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the children of Heth, saying, (4) I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight ... (13) And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou wilt give it, I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there. (14) And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him, (15) My lord, hearken unto me: the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead. (16) And Abraham hearkened

unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant. (17) And the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure (18) unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city. (19) And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre: the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan. (20) And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a burying place by the sons of Heth."

Although of great historical moment and certainly of pertinence to the present day, this transaction was not, of course, registered with the Secretariat in accordance with Article 102, paragraph 1, since it was not in the nature of an international agreement and, in addition, it was concluded somewhat prior to the coming into force of the Charter.

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

(Signed) Chaim HERZOG
Permanent Representative of Israel
to the United Nations
